

2015

Young Adults' Perceptions of High School Graduation Success and Long-Term Juvenile Incarceration

Simone Patricia Garwood
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>

 Part of the [Education Commons](#)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Simone Garwood

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Felicia Blacher-Wilson, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. Christina Dawson, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Kathleen Lynch, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University

2015

Abstract

Young Adults' Perceptions of High School Graduation Success and Long-
Term Juvenile Incarceration

by

Simone Garwood

MBA, Northern Caribbean University, 2004

BS, University of Technology, Jamaica, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Walden University

September 2015

Abstract

Officials in the juvenile and public education systems are working to address the education gap for incarcerated juveniles and to implement turning point programs. The purpose of the phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of previously incarcerated young adults and their perceptions of graduation success and long-term juvenile incarceration. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory, Merton and Agnew's general strain theory, Homan's theory of exchange, and life course theory informed this study. Research questions were developed to understand the experiences and perceptions of young adults related to graduation success during or after juvenile incarceration. Convenience, purposive, and snowball sampling techniques were used to identify 10 young adults who experienced juvenile incarceration and completed high school with a high school diploma or GED. In-depth interviews were conducted to understand the participants' lived experiences and how they were able to overcome their challenges and succeed academically. A combination of a priori and open coding was used to support inductive analysis. Eight themes were identified: challenges of incarceration, support systems, overcoming patterns, turning points, juvenile justice staff, advice to other young offenders, experiences of incarceration, and graduation success. Recommendations include enhanced training for staff members in schools and facilities and conducting a follow-up study to assess the continued success of young adults in this study. Positive social change contributions include identifying ways incarcerated juveniles can be reengaged in schooling and continuing education to decrease recidivism and enhance productive citizenship.

Young Adults' Perceptions of High School Graduation Success and Long-
Term Juvenile Incarceration.

by

Simone Garwood

MBA, Northern Caribbean University, 2004

BS, University of Technology, Jamaica, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Walden University

September 2015

Dedication

To my family, friends, and other support groups who provided positive encouragement during this challenging process and journey. You have all helped me to remember not to stop because I am tired, but I should stop when I am finished, especially my daughter Lasandra Jones.

Acknowledgments

It is imperative for me to say thanks to the dedicated people who invested their time and energy in ensuring the completion of this study. Firstly, I must acknowledge my creator who gave me the strength, abilities, and patience to endure until the end. The reminder from Philippians 4:13 is that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthen me." Jeremiah 29:11, when God said, "For I know the thoughts I have for you, to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Secondly, my dissertation committee: Dr. Felicia Blacher-Wilson and Dr. Christina Dawson, who ensured that I met all requirements and produced an effective and relevant study. Dr. Blacher-Wilson and Dr. Dawson invested time and provided effective support and guidance for the team to be successful, for that, I say thanks. To all my friends, family members, and co-workers who read, edited and made suggestions, thank you all for the words of encouragement and time invested. With a positive support system, I can contribute to the body of literature related to previously incarcerated students and graduation success.

I want to thank all ten young adults who participated in this study and allowed me the opportunity to experience how they were able to succeed academically after juvenile incarceration.

Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	v
List of Figures	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study	1
Background	2
Federal Policies	7
Statement of the Problem.....	9
Purpose of the Study	10
Research Question	10
Conceptual Framework.....	10
Nature of the Study.....	11
Definitions.....	12
Assumptions	12
Scope and Delimitations	13
Limitations	13
Significance.....	13
Summary	14
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature	16
Framework Elements	17
Graduation Success.....	17
Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Human Development Theory.....	21
Self-Determination Theory.....	26

Merton’s General Strain Theory	28
Life Course Theory	32
Positive Learning Climate for Students in Juvenile Detention Educational	
Environment.....	33
Academic Achievement and Characteristics of Juveniles in Secured Confine	
Facilities.....	37
Summary	38
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	40
Research Question	41
Role of the Researcher	41
Methodology	43
Procedures for Selecting Participants	45
Data Collection Instrument – Interview Protocol.....	45
Data Collection Method	47
Data Analysis Plan.....	48
Strategies Implemented.....	50
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	50
Credibility.....	51
Transferability.....	52
Dependability.....	52
Confirmability.....	53
Ethical Concerns.....	53

Summary	55
Chapter 4: Presentation of Results	57
Restatement of the Research Question	57
Setting	57
Demographics.....	58
Data Collection.....	59
Interviews.....	61
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	62
Credibility.....	62
Transferability.....	62
Dependability.....	63
Confirmability.....	63
Data Analysis and Results.....	63
Methods for Coding	64
Research Question 1.....	68
Research Question 1(A)	82
Research Question 1(B)	94
Discrepant Cases/nonconforming Data.....	102
Evidence of Data Quality	102
Summary	103
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations	104
Interpretation of Findings.....	105

Limitations of the Study.....	116
Recommendations for Action.....	117
Recommendations for Future Study	117
Implications for Social Change	119
Researcher’s Reflection	120
Conclusions	121
References.....	123
Appendix A: Letter to Participants and Consent Form	133
Appendix B: Interview Protocol	137
Appendix C: Interview questions	139
Appendix E: Invitation Flyer	143
Appendix F: Confidentiality Agreement	144

List of Tables

Table 1. Participants' Characteristics and Information	59
Table 2. Major Themes and Associated Categories From the 10 Interview Sessions	67
Table 3. Summary of Participants' Challenges Revealed in Interview Sessions Relating to Theme 1.....	73
Table 4. Summary of Participants' Responses Regarding Theme 2: Support System	77
Table 5. Summary of Participants' Responses Regarding Theme 3: Overcoming Patterns	81
Table 6. Summary of Participants' Responses Regarding Theme 4: Turning Points.	85
Table 7. Summary of Participants' Responses Regarding Theme 5: Juvenile Justice Staff	88
Table 8. Summary of Participants' Responses Regarding Theme 6: Advice to Other Young Offenders.....	93
Table 9. Summary of Participants' Responses Regarding Theme 7: Experiences About Juvenile Incarceration	97
Table 10. Summary of Participants' Responses Regarding Theme 8: Graduation Success	101

List of Figures

Figure 1: Data Management Process	64
---	----

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

All across the United States, educational demands and accountability measures are being increased for all types of schools, according to Heckman and LaFontaine (2008). Schools are expected to produce results and meet local, state, and federal guidelines for performances and safety. Butts and Mears (2011) suggested that state and federal government personnel are creating new programs and offering new services to narrow gaps for and meet the needs of nontraditional learners, high discipline demands, and disengaged students. Ossa (2012) supported Butts and Mears by stating that students are labeled by school officials in traditional schools as at-risk or troubled students because of the challenges they face to succeed academically, emotionally, and socially in the traditional education system. These factors increase the propensity for at-risk and troubled students to drop out of schools more than their peers. As such, this gap in traditional schools leads to the growing numbers of alternative school systems in the United States.

The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) education system is aligned with the alternative school systems but is simultaneously accredited by the same institution that awards accreditation for public or traditional schools in the southern regions. Even after several implementations of policies and guidelines by all levels of government to align the Department of Juvenile Justice and public school systems, there has been a disconnect, hence the gap that produced the idea for study. The main intent for conducting this study was to understand young adults' perceptions of graduation success after juvenile incarceration. I have provided a review of the literature to explain the relevance of conducting this study.

Background

According to Schaps (2005), it is important to create in-school communities and supportive school environments since these structures increase students' motivation and engagement in the academic activities of schools. Means (1991) revealed that many incarcerated youth are two or three grade levels behind and have some learning disabilities. Incarcerated youths are sometimes fearful to participate in educational activities because of previous academic failures and learning disabilities. Means further noted that students who believed their schools provide a positive, caring, nurturing learning environment will experience academic success rather than their peers who are disengaged from schools. Humphrey (2011) supported Schaps's (2005) concept that a positive, student-oriented school environment conducive to learning plays a significant role in academic success. Humphrey posited that effective communication skills, alignment with public schools, and community-based programs were needed to reform the juvenile justice system. The author recommended that there should be a removal of physical forces in the juvenile justice system, replaced with supportive programs that can develop and foster positive attitudes and outlook among juveniles.

An understanding of the juvenile legal system includes the perceptions of young adults who have experienced the juvenile system and also the relevant literature. Butler (2011) endorsed reformation of the juvenile system and that juveniles should not be placed with adults since new habits and fear can developed from these incarceration experiences with adults. Two U.S. Supreme Court rulings removed the death penalty for juveniles (*Graham v. Florida*, 130 S. Ct. 2011; *Roper v. Simmons*, 543 U.S. 551 2005). These rulings are important for the reformation of the juvenile justice system to help in

the rehabilitation of juveniles and provide tools and services to prevent an increase in juveniles' recidivism.

Based on reports published by the Department of Juvenile Justice (2011), graduations are conducted yearly for long-term incarcerated juveniles who complete requirements for high school diplomas or General Equivalency Diplomas (GEDs). These successes are significant for accreditations and ongoing funding by the state and federal governments. The NCES reported that in 2000, 86.5% of 18- to 24-year-olds had not finished traditional high school educations; however, they successfully attained high school diplomas or equivalent credentials such as the GED through alternative school settings or the juvenile justice systems.

Heckman and LaFontaine (2008) wrote that high school graduation successes contribute to the economic stability of U.S. society. In addition, technical skills and academic successes can affect the future workforce. The authors further stated, "Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, each new cohort of Americans was more likely to graduate from high school than the preceding one" (p. 1). The implications of this upward trend with the graduation rates are increased workers' productivity and economic growth, according to Bales, Mann, Piquero, and Berk (2011). Holman and Ziedenberg (2006) contributed to this discussion by highlighting that "up to 40% of incarcerated you have experienced learning disabilities, which presented additional academic challenges when returning to public school after leaving detention facilities" (p. 2). Rumbaut and Golnaz (2007) mentioned that the laws of the United States hold that all children up to the age of 21 years old must be offered a free and appropriate education. In other words, all children must attend school and have access to the public school system;

no partiality for particular races, genders, financial statuses, or ethnicities can be made to deny children of a public school education. The authors further stated that “many young adults failed to obtain adequate educational services in public schools or in juvenile detention centers” (p. 13). The DJJ (2011) highlighted its mission to fill this gap and ensure that incarcerated juveniles received high quality educational services to prepare them for successfully completing high school with diplomas or GEDs or transitioning to public schools successfully. The DJJ (2011) also indicated that the main intent of the Office of Education is to prepare incarcerated juveniles for graduation to enhance the quality of the workforce by improving workforce readiness skills.

According to Zweig (2003), educating youths of the 21st century is a challenging task for the educational systems since there have been massive changes in the world of work in the last couple of decades. In other words, with all of these changes, schools must stop educating young people using the same traditional methods and strategies, rather developing life-long learners prepared for the informational work world. Heckman and LaFontaine (2008) proposed that “to achieve this kind of shift, communities must recognize the need for change, examine current practices in schools, consider the demands of an informational society, and redesign teaching and learning to fit these future needs” (p. 8). The additional challenge is to develop an alignment between 21st societies and defining the functions for the public school systems.

Some young adults who have experienced juvenile incarceration developed a disconnection from traditional school systems. According to Waddell (2015), researchers have proven that there is a disconnection from public schools by troubled or at-risk students, hence the need for alternative school systems and programs. According to

Zweig (2003), “the alternative schools and programs may be a source of both disconnection from and reconnection to mainstream institutions” (p. 1). Waddell (2015) mentioned that for alternative schools to be successful there must be a nontraditional curriculum and programs developed for at-risk and troubled students. The curriculum should be focused on learning by doing and differentiation, since all at-risk and troubled students are at different academic level and sometimes require specialized curriculum based on individual needs. Waddell also mentioned that in traditional school systems, sometimes at-risk or troubled students are disconnected from schools because of the different treatment they receive from educational officials. In other words, some juvenile offenders believe that they are treated differently from their peers by schools administrators because of their involvement with the law and juvenile system.

Kirk and Sampson (2012) stated that how educational institution officials treat and label young adults who experienced juvenile incarceration are different from how they treat and label peers who have not experienced juvenile incarceration. These authors mentioned that “in the interest of accountability and school safety, students with criminal records may be pushed out of high school through exclusionary policies, and they may be segregated into specialized programs for problem youth or alternative schools” (p. 2). Leone, Krezmien, Mason, and Meisel (2010) drew on similar concepts as in the research of Kirk and Sampson by explaining that certain youth have characteristics of at-risk, incarcerated youth make them at higher risk to experience school failure, long before confinement within correctional facilities. Leone et al. (2010) contributed to the literature by stating the importance of providing meaningful and engaging educational environment so that juveniles can obtain high quality education to successfully transition to the next

academic level. In other words, at-risk or incarcerated juveniles by law should be given equal and fair opportunities to high quality education as their peers who have never experienced juvenile incarceration. Educational services available for incarcerated juveniles or at-risk youth should address their needs to achieve the goals of reconnecting them to traditional schools and communities and reducing recidivism.

Masten, Best, and Garmezy (1990) reported that young adults who were previously incarcerated in a juvenile facility or had dealings with juvenile court system were more likely to experience failure than their peers who had no contact with the juvenile system. However, Sturgill (2011) showed that with cost-effective treatments, strategies, and early intervention, juveniles can reach positive turning points in early adulthood. Loeber and Farrington (1998) documented success stories experienced by previously incarcerated juveniles such as graduation success, transitioning to public schools, improving academic performance, and reducing discipline problems among at-risk students. Loeber and Farrington further stated that these success stories are evidence that young adults who showed resilience succeed by graduating with a high school diploma or GED. The authors continued that successful adults with prior involvement with the juvenile system discovered successful turning points in early adulthood, which results in young adults becoming productive and positive citizens. In spite of the success stories, young offenders still deal with significant challenges as they transition to adulthood. Natsuaki (2008) suggested

That the pace of committing offenses over time was substantially slowed down for late starters who completed a high school education. Finishing high school

seems to serve as an effective turning point for later starters, but earlier starters did not appear to take a full advantage of it. (p. 11)

Students labeled as delinquent and at risk find it challenging to be successful in the traditional education system; hence, there are growing numbers of alternative school systems in the United States, according to Ossa (2012). The DJJ system is part of the alternative school system. Traditional schools and alternative schools are faced with the challenge of offering services to meet the needs of nontraditional, disengaged, and behavioral and emotional learners.

Federal Policies

The federal government created No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) in 2001 to ensure students are given fair and equal opportunity for quality education. The main goal for the act was to “close the achievement gaps with accountability, flexibility, and choices so that no child is left behind” (p. 15). The federal government created policies to ensure that juveniles who are incarcerated do not drop out of schools or become disengaged during the movement from the juvenile justice school system to the public school system.

Butts and Mears (2011) found that there are disconnections between traditional public schools and the juvenile justice school system, resulting in low academic achievements and increases in drop-out rates, juvenile criminal activities, and deviant behaviors. To address this gap between the public schools and the juvenile justice school system, the federal government made an amendment to Title 1, and included Part D, or State Education Agency–Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which is also called The Prevention and Intervention for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected,

Delinquent or At-Risk. This amendment enforces school system accountabilities for proper transition of students from juvenile justice school systems to their local schools, follow-up services needed for continuation of their education so that they can meet state standards to graduate successfully from high school.

Through Title 1 federal government programs, financial assistance is provided to support school districts with implementation of effective transitional plans, academic plans, and collaboration between public schools and the juvenile justice school systems. The overall goal is to close the academic achievement gap for at-risk and disadvantaged students, making this transitioning from juvenile justice system a priority. In other words, Title 1, Part D of NCLB and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) created policies and reentry programs to reduce the number of students, including at-risk youth, withdrawing from the high school system, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2012). Title 1, Part D of NCLB focuses on at-risk, neglected, and delinquent youth. The main goal for implementing this policy is to “prevent at-risk, neglected, and decreasing the number of delinquent youth dropping out of schools. The policy allows for educational institutions the opportunity to provide supports for youths, so they will be able to make successful transitions from the juvenile justice system to public schools, to continue their formal education” (Section 1432). One of the greatest challenges American society deals with is the reintegration of more than 700,000 individuals - including 200,000 juveniles and young adults under the age of 24” (Section 1).

Youth transitioning from juvenile justice school systems to public schools face challenges in making effective adjustments. Mears and Travis (2004) stated that youth incarcerated for a long time have difficulties making the transition to public schools,

resulting in an increase in recidivism rate, drop outs, and deviant behaviors. The authors further stated that graduation success among youth is a major concern for administrators, parents, and federal and state governments.

Statement of the Problem

With the implementation of zero tolerance policies in school, it is easy for juveniles to get arrested. Mendel (2011) explained this situation: “zero tolerance policies have caused a substantial increase in school suspensions and expulsions in the past two decades” (p. 2). Piquero, Cullen, Unnever, and Gordon (2010) highlighted that there is a link for adolescents who have problems at school with academic success and recidivism within the juvenile justice system. There are several studies on graduation rates and the juvenile justice system. However, there are no studies conducted on understanding young adults’ perceptions of high school graduation success after incarceration. The literature revealed the importance of seeking previous juveniles’ perceptions on graduation success after confinement.

Blomberg, Bales, Mann, Piquero, and Berk (2011) stated that at-risk youths are most likely entering the juvenile justice system with some learning disabilities that affect their school performances. The authors mentioned that when at-risk students experience academic successes, they form more of an attachment to school than those who do not achieve academic successes.

I completed 10 interviews and explored the perceptions of juveniles who overcame incarceration experiences and were able to experience high school graduation success.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to document the lived experiences and perceptions of young adults who completed high school diploma or GED during long-term juvenile incarceration.

Research Question

1. What are young adults' perceptions and experiences of high school graduation success and long-term juvenile incarceration?
 - a) How do young adults describe their experiences of long-term juvenile incarceration?
 - b) What perceptions do young adults have concerning long-term juvenile incarceration and its relationship to graduation success?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Merton's (1938) general strain theory and Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological human development theory. The strain theory endorses the concept "where humans are conforming organisms who only violate the law when the disjunction between goals and means becomes so great that the individual believes he or she can no longer pursue socially sanctioned goals" (p. 4). In addition, Merton explained that the general strain theory is based on the assumptions that social variables and society play a major contributing role in people's involvement in criminal activities. Merton's theory applied to the population in this study, since these young adults have violated the law and were juvenile offenders previously.

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) approach focused on progressive accommodation. The author stated,

The importance of understanding human development demands going beyond the direct observation of behavior on the part of one or two persons in the same place but – that it also requires examination of multi-person systems of interaction not limited to a single setting and must take in account aspects of the environment beyond the immediate situation containing the subject. (p. 514)

Bronfenbrenner stated that “throughout human’s life span, there is a link between the growing human organism and the changing environments in which humans actually lives and grows” (p. 513). This study explored the perceptions of young adults regarding graduation success after juvenile incarceration. Zweig (2003) supported Bronfenbrenner’s theory of ecology human development by stating, “A portion of America’s youth is not connected to society through mainstream public systems and agencies or in meaningful ways that are markers of important developmental transitions throughout adolescence and young adulthood” (p. 1). In other words, this unstable connection to society sometimes creates unacceptable behaviors by society’s standards. Bronfenbrenner highlighted the importance of young adults making connections in each system he proposed during their developmental stages.

Nature of the Study

I chose the phenomenological research design approach to understand the perceptions of 10 young adults 18–24 years old concerning their high school experiences, graduation success, and juvenile incarceration. This method provided information that was credible and reliable in supporting answers for the topic under investigation. The research method in this study was qualitative. In-depth interviews were conducted and recorded using audio. Transcripts of the interviews were provided to participants for

review upon request from participants, and the initial interpretations of the data were member-checked. Combinations of a priori and open coding were used to support inductive analyses. A peer reviewer assisted in the study to improve the objectivity and reliability of the study, such as ensuring quality materials, practical critique, wise judgment, and helpful recommendations.

Definitions

The following unique terms were used as defined within the context of the study.

Juvenile: “A persons who have achieved puberty, older than 12 yet are under the age of 18” (Agnew, 1992, p. 477).

Juvenile delinquency: “Unlawful acts including property offenses and violent offenses committed by youth under the age of 18” (Agnew, 1992, 477).

Juvenile justice school system: A system-wide alternative school curriculum addressing the needs of court appointed individuals between the ages of 8 and 21. The curriculum was created to meet the educational needs of incarcerated juveniles. The curriculum was developed according to state and federal education agency guidelines. The juvenile justice system adopts a mastery based curriculum (DJJ, 2011).

Long-term juvenile incarceration: Juveniles under the age of 18 who are adjudicated by the juvenile court system to serve six or more months in a restricted facility (Whitehead & Lab, 2012).

Assumptions

I assumed that the participants of this study reported honestly and accurately in recalling memories of their experiences of how they obtained graduation success after

juvenile incarceration. Another assumption was that young adults who participated in the study showed interests in reporting their previous juvenile incarcerated experiences.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope for this study was to explore young adults' perceptions of high school success after juvenile incarceration. Another boundary was that the study focused on young adults who have completed high school diplomas or GEDs and who have experienced juvenile incarceration. These young adults came from one southern state and so their experiences are reflective of that location and not of all of the United States.

Limitations

This study is limited by the data collection process; some young adults interviewed forgot pertinent information about their experiences and history within the juvenile justice system. Another limitation was that I knew a few of the participants that I interviewed since I have been employed with the DJJ for the past seven years. I ensured professionalism during the interview sessions, eliminated my personal opinions, and assumptions regarding the topic under investigation. I used member checking and peer review to help contain my biases. Time, resources, costs, and materials presented challenges in completing the interview sessions and compiling the information for the study such as setting times for the interview sessions, the cost for transcribing the audio tapes to transcripts, and contracting editing services.

Significance

The potential significance for positive social change from this study is to contribute to the field of public schools and to the juvenile justice education system. The information garnered from this study can help to address the transition processes from the

DJJ to public schools, higher level academic institutions, and communities. Juveniles who enter the DJJ system are approximately three grade levels below their academic grades (DJJ, 2011). The juvenile justice system rehabilitates juveniles for them to become law-abiding citizens, reduce recidivism rates, and to increase graduation rates. The findings and results from this study may help to improve the quality of the educational and non-educational services offered to incarcerated juveniles.

The overall goal for this study was to explore juveniles' perceptions of the juvenile system regarding their experiences and academic achievements. In addition, the study presents success stories of juveniles transitioning from the juvenile system to communities and public schools. Butler (2011) stated that listening to adults who have experienced the juvenile justice system yields insights that can help juvenile practitioners and public policy reformers as they create and develop programs that may help to reduce juvenile recidivism rates and increase graduation rates. Findings from the study can enable school principals, counselors, and teachers to make informed instructional decisions that will enhance students' learning experiences. The findings are unique to the alternative school settings within the DJJ school system.

Summary

Chapter 1 was an overall synopsis of the entire study. The fundamental theories for this study are general strain theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecology human development theory. The purpose of this study was to document young adults' perceptions of graduation success and how they overcame these challenges after long-term juvenile incarceration. There are several studies conducted about the juvenile justice system and graduation rates. However, the gap in the literature indicated that there was a

need for researching young adults' perceptions of graduation success after juvenile incarceration.

In Chapter 2, I provide a collection of scholarly literature about young adults' perceptions of graduation success after their experiences in the juvenile detention centers. I provide an explanation of how the ecological theory, self-determination theory, general strain theory, the theory of exchange, and life course theory significantly describe how young adults overcome obstacles and experience graduation success.

In Chapter 3, I detail the methodological procedures and processes used to collect data for the study as well as the selection of the population, instrumentation, and data analysis. In addition, in Chapter 4, I document participants' thoughts on their graduation successes after long-term incarceration. Finally, in Chapter 5, I present an in-depth discussion on the findings, possible recommendations, and a conclusion.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to document the lived experiences and perceptions of young adults who completed high school (diploma or GED) during long-term incarceration. The purpose of this chapter is to explore and analyze the literature related to young adults' perceptions and experiences of their graduation success after juvenile incarceration. I have divided the review of literature into several sections: Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, Ryan and Deci's (2004) self-determination theory, Merton and Agnew's general strain theory, Homan's theory of exchange, and life course theory to examine how juveniles interact with their environments, overcome obstacles, and experience graduation success in incarceration. The review of literature provides explanations of how these theories relate to academic success, adolescent development, juvenile involvement in crimes, and motivational factors. These theories explain the behaviors and rationale for young people involved in criminal activities and how they overcome obstacles and achieve graduation success after juvenile confinement

I developed the literature review by searching for key words, brainstorming, and reviewing existing studies related to young adults' perceptions of graduation success after juvenile incarceration. Some key search words or phrases were: *graduation success*, *juvenile incarceration*, *alternative education*, *juvenile justice system*, *adolescent development*, *troubled and at-risk youth*, *behaviors of incarcerated youth and those who were not incarcerated*, and *educating delinquent youth*. I searched online databases and search engines such as Education Research Complete from EBSCO host, Sage Full-Text Collections, ERIC, and Google Scholar. Peer-reviewed journals, articles, and books were not limited to past 5 years because it was difficult to locate literature on the research area.

However, there are peer reviewed articles and journals that are within the 5 year range. The first discussion is NCLB and the importance of protecting at-risk and incarcerated juveniles by ensuring all students have fair and equal educational opportunities and are able to experience graduation success.

Framework Elements

Graduation Success

According to Mendell (2011) incarcerated youths require more structure, mandatory school expectations, and academic achievements for them to experience academic success with their peers who have not experienced incarceration. In other words, previously or currently incarcerated juveniles need an academic and transitional plan to provide a guide for how they can achieve academic success like their peers without any criminal involvement. LoVioe (2007) endorsed this approach by indicating that structure and rewards can be used as a motivational turning point in young offenders' lives. Natsuaki, Xiaojia, and Wenk (2008) mentioned that positive school and academic experiences, school connections, and engagement and attachment to schools increase the possibility of at-risk and incarcerated juveniles to return to and stay in schools. In other words, when incarcerated youth return to and stay in schools, this will increase their attachments, engagements, and experiences with educational achievements. Natsuaki et al. (2008) further stated that there is a link between age of first arrest and completion of high schools; the number of times incarcerated can result in youths being 3 to 4 years behind academically. Youths who are able to overcome these challenges of education deficiencies and a history of poor school performances can experience educational

achievements, increase school attachments, remain in schools, and eventually graduate with a high school diploma or GED.

Sprott (2004) proposed that early interventions will encourage graduation success among at-risk or delinquent youth. Kellam (1976) and others have conducted several studies that elaborated on the importance of identifying early risk factors that lead to behavioral, mental health, and school problems. In other words, identifying early factors that can lead to students' deviant behaviors and school problems can help school officials to create programs and offer services to address these needs. Sprott (2004) indicated that identifications of early problems can lead to early interventions, which can possibly reduce deviant behaviors, academic failures, and drop outs within public school systems. The studies mentioned helped school officials and policy makers to create guidelines that aid in the successful movement of previously incarcerated juveniles to their public schools and provide positive support systems. Osgood (2005) highlighted that troubled or at-risk youths are assessed for strengths and weaknesses over a wide spectrum to implement early interventions. The aim of the assessment is to improve at-risk youths' opportunities of experiencing graduation success, especially after juvenile incarceration.

Toldson (2011) stated the importance of exposing at-risk youth or incarcerated juveniles to a positive school environment since this can help to retain them in the academic world, which leads to a reduction in recidivism rates. Stephens and Arnette (2000) mentioned that the public still view the school environment as a safe haven and productive place for at-risk and incarcerated juveniles. The authors further proposed that when schools are able to capture the attention of young people in the academic world then they are less likely to revert to criminal activities and deviant behaviors that can lead

to incarceration. In addition, the authors mentioned that schools provide young people with the right educational, technical, and social skills for them to become law-abiding citizens and employable.

Youth with previous juvenile justice histories face a greater challenge of experiencing academic success than their peers without a juvenile justice history (Ossa, 2010). According to Chung, Little, Steinberg, and Altschuler (2005), only “12% of formerly incarcerated youth had a high school diploma or GED compared with a national average of 74%” (p. 3). The authors noted that juveniles with prior incarceration history are frequent underachievers compared with their noncriminal peers. However, Black et al. (1996) conducted a follow-up study that proved juveniles who were incarcerated and experienced graduation success by obtaining their high school diplomas or GED were three times more likely to get employment than peers who did not experience graduation successes. It is a widespread epidemic where only few youth’s experience graduation success after incarceration, according to Foley (2001) and Leblanc and Pfannenstiel (1991). Overall, it is imperative to bridge the achievement gap through programs and support systems encourage incarcerated youth to stay in schools and achieve graduation success.

Even though spending time in detention centers can impact the future of young adults profoundly, there are success stories of young adults being productive citizens in society after incarceration (Bond, 2001). People who graduated with a GED or high school diploma and experienced success are those who received and accepted the various support services available while other juveniles who failed to make a successful transition experienced recidivism, according to Mcleigh and Sianko (2010). In other words, it is

imperative that public school systems and juvenile justice school systems collaborate to prepare incarcerated juveniles with the necessary tools and skills that will yield successful transition and academic success. Stephens and Arnette (2000) stated, “Open lines of communication among all organizations involved with juvenile offenders are necessary to establish a comprehensive treatment approach for offenders and their families” (p. 8).

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2012), U.S. school systems deal with the daily challenge of motivating and captivating students’ interests in academics. Bond (2001) provided evidence that some students fail in the school systems because they are unable to find relevance in their classes for real life. In other words, schools and courses offered should be relevant to students. Bond (2001) further stated that sometimes education has become an abstract art to the masses, which sometimes causes a high rate of drop out, juvenile crimes, societal issues, and low academic performances. Stephens and Arnette (2000) purported that students who complete a high school level of education will experience a better standard of living and earn more than those who fail to meet graduation requirements.

Heckman and LaFontaine (2010) suggested that high school graduation successes contribute to the economic survival and health of U.S. society. When young adults experience graduation, they will be prepared and equipped with skills to fill the vacancies of the future workforce. The authors further stated, “Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, each new cohort of Americans was more likely to graduate from high school than the preceding one” (p. 1). This upward trend with the graduation rates will lead to increased workers’ productivity and economic growth, according to Black et al.

(1996). Leone et al. (2010) indicated that statistics show upwards of “40% of incarcerated youth have a learning disability, and they will face significant challenges returning to school after they leave detention facilities” (p. 9).

Piquero, Cullen, Unnever, and Gordon (2010) drew attention to the fact that many adolescents who experienced recidivism within the juvenile justice system have had challenges academically and in the school environment. There are several studies that document graduation rates in the juvenile justice system. However, there are no studies conducted on understanding young adults’ perceptions of high school graduation success after incarceration. Piquero et al. (2010) revealed the importance of exploring previous juveniles’ perceptions on graduation success after incarceration. To explain young adults’ behaviors during development, I will discuss Bronfenbrenner’s ecological human development theory. This theory explains adolescent development process and how it can contribute to academic success.

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Human Development Theory

The two main approaches proposed by Bronfenbrenner’s ecological human development theory are risk causation and protective mechanisms. He focused on these two main areas by exploring how five environmental systems influence adolescent development: “microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem” (Santrock, 2012, pp. 21–23). In other words, Bronfenbrenner’s theory explores possible risk factors that will influence adolescent indulgence in deviant or unacceptable behaviors. Once these behaviors are identified, the model presents suggestions of effective ways to prevent or protect adolescents from further practicing unacceptable and inappropriate behaviors. Santrock (2012) stressed the importance of early interventions

and identifying risk factors, which helps to address the existing problems and protect against future occurrences (p. 426).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological human development theory explains how human developments are impacted by five systems, both internal and external. The theory is based on the importance of maintaining and making sure relationships in each system do not break down. When a break down in any relationship occurs in any system, the child will not be equipped with appropriate knowledge and skills to advance and develop into productive citizens. In other words, a child has to master skills and obtained knowledge in each system to move to the next level; only then will the child be able to demonstrate appropriate behaviors and avoid deviances.

Addison (1992) critiqued Bronfenbrenner's theory by suggesting that he endorsed children who are not exposed to constant mutual interactions with important adults and are not receiving the support needed for successful development, and as such, these children will seek these interactions and attentions in inappropriate places. Addison further stated when the child is an adult; these deficiencies would be evidence of antisocial behaviors, lack of self-discipline, and the inability to provide self-direction. Bronfenbrenner's ecological human development theory is referred to as a nested structure. Each of the five systems is within each other, where each system contributes to the development of an individual; also, each is assessed by the interconnection among all systems.

Based on Bronfenbrenner's theory, school systems and teachers play significant roles in students' developmental stages. My use of this theory was to explore how young adults were able to interact with different elements in their ecologies to overcome their

challenges and experience graduation success. Some of the young adults involved in criminal activities and deviant behaviors have been deprived of critical elements and lack early exposure to all systems proposed by Bronfenbrenner' in spite of the lack, some young adults are still able to overcome challenges and experience graduation success after juvenile incarceration. The exposure to each system provides students with knowledge and skills to function effectively in traditional schools with peers and in society.

Bronfenbrenner stated it is possible for teachers and other educational staff to fulfill the need for interaction in each system since they interact with their students daily and frequently. These interactions are critical in the developmental process, since the interactions can contribute significantly to the growth and success of students.

Bronfenbrenner projected that teachers can form primary relationships with students to enable academic success. Relationships developed with teachers and students are essential to provide stability and a sense of long-term relationships in the students' lives. Also, when teachers are aware of the deficiencies in students' lives, they can use resources and services within the school systems to fill the gap for these deficiencies for students to succeed academically. Bronfenbrenner warned that the school systems and teachers can only play a secondary role in students' lives and should attempt to achieve cohesive relationships with parents who are the primary adults in the children's life. School educational staff, teachers, and parents should maintain a cohesive relationship for students to experience academic and social successes.

Bronfenbrenner's theory highlights the importance for caregivers or parents (primary contact), schools, teachers, and school counselors (secondary contact) to

understand how developmental processes aid or prevent deviant behaviors among adolescents. The most significant connection for a child is the family (primary contacts) since the child spends most of his or her time within the family setting. Also, the family setting influences the child's belief, values, cultural, and emotional state. Bronfenbrenner emphasized the fact that when the family provides a loving and safe environment, then the child demonstrates positive attitudes. On the other hand, the lack of these behavioral skills can lead the child to search for security in inappropriate settings and demonstrate negative behaviors, which can lead to juvenile incarceration. When the family environment demonstrates nurturing and socializing skills, this can help to influence or deter the developmental growth of the child.

Bronfenbrenner's theory supports the idea that students must be understood in terms of their developmental process such as mental, emotional, social, and academics. When students are exposed to nurturing for the first time from secondary contacts, for example, teachers, counselors, and any other educational staff who work directly with students, then they tend to exhibit problems in areas such as school, socializing, emotional inappropriate behaviors, and poor academic performances. The point is that secondary contacts cannot substitute for primary contacts because each system has a role to play in the adolescent developmental process. Bronfenbrenner continued to elaborate on this by noting that substitution for primary contacts from teachers and other education staff (secondary contacts) is not sufficient to fill deficiencies primary contacts have not provided. As such, students project these deficiencies through negative behaviors that sometimes lead to juvenile incarceration, an increased rate in recidivism, and further indulgence in deviant behaviors.

Bronfenbrenner's theory points out that the differences in behaviors among children or students will depend largely on which one of the five systems the child is currently experiencing. In other words, how students act in the classrooms will be different from how they act at home or in other social settings. Each system is built on a norm or expected behaviors, which affects a child's developmental process.

Bronfenbrenner reiterated that when each system is aligned with the child's development, the process is smoother than when inconsistency and incompatibility are evidenced within each system. In essence, a child will act indifferently and display unacceptable behaviors if there is inconsistency and incompatibility, which in turn affect the child's performance in school, produce a sense of detachment from schools, and influence other educational processes. Hence, the roles of parents, support systems, teachers, and school officials are critical in the child's developmental stages. It is essential that children are provided with external influences that increase their inner drives to want to experience academic, graduation success and demonstrate appropriate behaviors. Ryan and Deci's (2004) self-determination theory also endorses the importance of internal and external motivational factors in the progression of development. For them, both the internal and external motivational factors are critical for students to experience graduation success and develop connectedness to schools.

Participants in this study had to adjust and rearrange aspects of their lives during and after juvenile incarceration to graduate. Participants transitioned from the juvenile system to public schools, communities, and homes. This study documented the lived experiences of participants and provides the voices of young adults' perceptions of graduation success and juvenile incarceration. Bronfenbrenner's ecology human

development theory explains how participants interacted with multiple environments and achieved graduation success.

Self-Determination Theory

Ryan and Deci's (2004) self-determination theory has three primary needs focuses: competence, relatedness, and autonomy (or self-determination). Ryan and Deci explained the three primary focuses of the self-determination theory by stating that, "competence involves understanding how to attain various external and internal outcomes; relatedness involves developing secure and satisfying connections with others in one's social milieu, and autonomy refers to being self-initiating and self-regulating of one's own" (p. 70).

The self-determination theory explains how a person will be intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to demonstrate positive interests and passions. According to Ryan and Deci (2004), an individual's interests and passions affect his or her growth and development. In other words, students will experience success or failure based on their positive internal and external drives. The self-determination theory supports the idea that incarcerated juveniles can achieve academic and graduation successes based on their innate drives to succeed, positive support systems, and resources available to aid their academic successes and school attachments.

Ryan and Deci (2004) mentioned human beings are motivated intrinsically, which means "the motivational factors are from within the individual, without any influence of outside forces" (p. 75). In other words, there are internal drives that influence behaviors, interests, actions and passions without any external forces or motivational factors. The self-determination theory endorses the idea that motivating factors should be intrinsic

rather than extrinsic factors. When the motivating factors are innate, the success and outcomes are permanent; when the opposite is true, the successes are short-term. When the motivational factors are temporary, then the individual will not have the drive to complete tasks or continue to achieve expected goals. In other words, when students are self-motivated, then they will have the drive to achieve the expected outcomes and graduation success. In spite of juvenile incarceration, students can experience academic success; with the presence of positive internal and external forces, incarcerated juveniles and at-risk youth can still accomplish and experience academic success.

Humans tend to act based on what is gratifying, regardless of the outcome, according to Ryan and Deci (2004). The authors stated that humans indulge in self-gratification and deal with consequences of their actions later. Hence, this concept explains juveniles' actions of participating deviant behaviors and criminal activities. Juveniles experiencing constant negative external forces can feel an internal drive to act on or out negative expectations. The implication is that teachers should provide positive learning environments that encourage and reinforce positive behaviors rather than focusing on negative behaviors and administering negative consequences.

Furlong and Christensen (2008) showed that when teachers focused on reinforcing positive behaviors rather than addressing negative behaviors, students act differently, since teachers are no longer giving attentions to students demonstrating negative behaviors. Ryan and Deci (2004) showed how the way others treat an individual has a direct effect on the degree that individual is successful in whatever task he or she attempts to perform. The influences of teachers, school officials, and parents impact students' internal drives in achieving academic goals and experiencing graduation

successes. In other words, teachers, parents, and school official can stimulate students' intrinsic motivational drives and interests in content areas in the classroom.

The self-determination theory implies that students will experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness when external sources stimulate students' inner drive in wanting to graduate and achieve academic performance standards. Ryan and Deci's (2004) self-determination theory explains that students experience competence through challenges when they receive prompt feedback. For students to experience autonomy, teachers must provide learning environments that allow students to explore, develop, and create solutions for problems. Also, students will experience competence through discovery learning and feeling a sense of support and guidance during the learning process. Finally, students will experience relatedness when they are able to connect to school and when they believe that others are listening and responding to them and their academic needs. Ryan and Deci (2004) stated that when these three needs are aligned and met, then students will be more intrinsically motivated to learn.

Merton's General Strain Theory

Another explanation for why juveniles act deviant and participate in criminal activities is Merton's and Agnew's general strain theory. Merton's (1957) original strain theory embraced the idea that an increase in aspirations and a decrease in expectations should lead to an increase in delinquency. The author further stated that delinquencies among minors were higher in lower class families than middle and upper class families. However, Agnew (1992) refuted such a theory. Agnew revitalized the theory to focus on three approaches. Agnew explained why juveniles get involved in deviant behaviors and criminal activities. Agnew's new approach to the general strain theory predicts three

causes of juvenile delinquency: Juveniles become delinquent when they are prevented from achieving positive goals, when they perceive that positive goals will be removed or threaten to be removed, and when they are exposed to constant negative stimuli at home, school, and in society. Agnew believed that a clear understanding of why juveniles become delinquent and involved in criminal activities will be useful to the individual who deals with at-risk and troubled juveniles on a daily basis.

The strain theory proposes that juveniles will resort to criminal activities when they think their desired goals are blocked or when they are not able to connect with the formal education system (Agnew, 1992). For juveniles to have a sense of gratification of achieving desired goals, according to Agnew (1992), they will replace a positive goal with a negative goal, especially when youth believe the positive, desired goals are blocked or threatened to be removed. When students find it difficult to make connections with schools and achieve low grades, the tendency is for them to revert to or get involved in deviant and criminal activities as a way to divert attentions from their deficiencies. Hence, low achievers and students who are unable to make positive and realistic connections with schools tend to be the students who experienced suspensions, expulsions, and juvenile incarceration and were generally at risk for disengagement from schools (Agnew, 1992). According to Merton's (1957) strain theory, "the premise is that juveniles will commit deviant acts because they failed to achieve desired acceptable goals" (p. 95). It is imperative for schools and society to provide tools, knowledge, and skills to help juveniles in making better choices and know how to achieve desired goals without becoming delinquent and participate in deviant behaviors.

Juveniles who are unable to separate from negative home lives or school experiences become frustrated, which can lead to continued participation in delinquent and deviant behaviors, according to Agnew (1992). In other words, juveniles become frustrated with their living conditions, lack of parental supervision, lack of academic achievements, and lack of positive role models in their social surroundings. To regain autonomy of the situation, according to Ryan and Deci (2004), these students or children will channel their efforts in achieving negative goals, which will produce some immediate satisfaction for the positive goals they were unable to achieve. Agnew (1992) explained that in the child's view point, he or she achieved a goal even though it was not the intended goal. Most times, juveniles are aware of the negative consequences of participating in deviant behaviors or criminal activities; however, sometimes the immediate gratifications outweigh the consequences and penalties they will have to deal with later.

The key to preventing frustration and deviant acts is early interventions from schools, homes, and society (Agnew, 1992). According to Martinez (2008) character building and decision-making programs have helped to increase academic performance among youth who have been detained and those who are involved in deviant and criminal behaviors. In other words, helping students to become competent in decision-making skills can possibly reduce criminal and deviant involvements. Since youth will now have the knowledge to weigh the consequences of each negative act and decide to achieve only positive goals, this strategy or tool will help to eliminate juveniles' involvement in criminal and deviant behaviors, according to Martinez (2008).

Agnew (1992) did not just revitalize Merton's theory, but he also built on Homan's theory of exchange (1961) in a way to further support his theory and explanation of why juveniles sometimes commit deviant and criminal behaviors. The main idea of Homan's exchange theory (1961) is that "social behavior is an exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, and more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two persons" (p. 13). In other words, Homan proposed that when an individual does not receive the desired goal anticipated, the individual will become frustrated and involved in deviant or negative behaviors. Homan's exchange theory explained that the individual will justify any negative act; this is an aggressive-approval approach.

Homan (1974) stated, "when a person's action does not receive the reward he expected, or receives punishment he did not expect, he will become angry; he becomes more likely to perform aggressive behavior, and the results As such behavior become more valuable to him" (p. 37). In other words, how juveniles view their behaviors and consequences for their actions will determine the outcomes; hence, juveniles weigh costs and benefits to be derived from an action. However, some juveniles revert to negative behaviors because of the instant gratifications derived from the action in spite of the negative consequences.

General strain and Homan's exchange theory are critical in the planning process for teachers, parents, school officials, policy makers, and all other educational staff. Educational staff and school officials can create policy and school environments that can reinforce positive behaviors rather than negative behaviors (Agnew, 1992). Also, teachers within the public schools and juvenile school system should provide classrooms that cater to a wide spectrum of academic abilities for students to develop connectedness to schools

and motivation to achieve academic success for graduation success after juvenile incarceration, any other challenges, or life changing events.

Life Course Theory

The life course approach, according to Benson (2001), “is a new way of thinking about how an individual’s life is determined through the occurrence of certain life events” (p. 20). The life course approach was explained by Elder (1985) “as viewing life events in the context of life stages, turning points, and pathways, all of which are embedded in social institutions” (p. 210). In other words, life’s situations will impact the outcomes for individuals based on how they perceive and react to life-changing events. Additionally, the experiences encountered by an individual will definitely influence the outcome for the individual’s life; this influence can either be a positive or negative outcome. Another critical concept embedded in the life course theory is the perceptions and reactions of the individual based on the life events experienced. Some people are able to use negative experiences as turning points in their lives, while others are not able to overcome the negative experiences and hence deny themselves potential positive opportunities. Life course theory applies to incarcerated juveniles since they have to be able to perceive and react positively in spite of the negative associations of incarceration to experience success after this life changing event.

Another useful theory is the concept of social control developed by Sampson and Laub (1993); they suggested that “the ability of certain institutions to control criminal or conforming behavior is dependent on age-graded variability” (p. 1). Sampson and Laub explained that both formal and informal structures in society affected individuals’ behaviors. In other words, behaviors are influenced by external social bonding and the

occurrences of life events. As such, teachers, parents, guardians, and school officials who are directly and indirectly interacting with at-risk or incarcerated students should aim to provide positive life changing events through the education systems.

Sampson and Laub (1993) continued to focus their work on “identifying specific events or transitions that affect behavior trajectories due to changes in informal social control” (p. 40). The authors endorsed the ideas that positive connections to society by an individual are important for a successful transition from childhood to adulthood. As such, juvenile justice system and public schools need to provide positive rehabilitation experiences, offer quality programs and resources that can help to reduce recidivism and deviant behaviors. Positive connections to society also result in productive and law-abiding citizens. Elder (1985) indicated that, “the concept of turning point is essential for incarcerated youth to experience academic and social success” (p. 200). The author defined “turning point, or transition, as the precipitated by various events and can redirect paths, subsequently modifying future outcomes” (p. 210). Elder mentioned that each person will react differently to life events based on his her experiences in life. Based on the studies conducted, turning points experienced by adolescents can either be both negative and positive.

Positive Learning Climate for Students in Juvenile Detention Educational Environment

In the juvenile detention classrooms, teachers are challenged to maintain a positive environment and reduce negative behaviors to achieve academic success, according to Cox, Visker, and Hartman (2011). In other words, incarcerated students need supportive learning climates to experience school success. Blomberg et al.'s (2011)

research revealed that juveniles who made academic improvement while incarcerated were more likely to experience successful transition from delinquent behaviors than their peers who did not experience academic success. The study showed that education is a significant part of rehabilitation. As the research indicated, it is imperative that incarcerated juveniles are provided with the same opportunity to receive a quality education.

Juvenile detention education systems are successful when incarcerated students can obtain their educational needs and experience academic success. Blomberg et al. (2011) highlighted the importance of education for students while incarcerated. These researchers elaborated that juvenile education system programs should provide life opportunity and social capital for incarcerated juveniles for them to succeed in education and the world after their release. Programs and services are a critical component of the rehabilitation process for incarcerated juveniles (Blomberg et al., 2011). Other researchers such as Foley (2001) and Katsiyannis and Archwamety (1997) have suggested that academic improvement in confinement has resulted in a reduction in recidivism and increase in the employment rates among previously incarcerated juveniles. That is to say, juveniles are amenable to change, and as such educational and noneducational programs must be geared to rehabilitate for successful transition to communities, schools, and workplaces. Studies have proven that despite previous academic failures and educational deficiencies, incarcerated juveniles may find schools to be a positive and influential environment. The mandated attendance of incarcerated juveniles in schools provides them with the experience of attending school for an extensive and consistent time, which they might not have experienced when they were

not incarcerated; this consistency alone sometimes has proven to yield successful educational results. The ripple effects are juveniles staying in schools and reattaching, reengaging, and experiencing the advantages of obtaining an education.

Another theoretical support for ensuring a positive learning environment for incarcerated juveniles is the social cognitive theory. Albert Bandura (1986) promoted the concept that students learn in different social environments. As such a great portion of learning takes place outside the classroom in different social settings and through observations of the environment and its elements. One of the assumptions presented by Bandura for the social cognitive theory is that personal behaviors and environmental factors are intertwined. In other words, learning is affected by students' thoughts, beliefs, interpretations, and experiences within the context of the classroom and environment. Bandura presented a second assumption that people have the abilities to influence their behaviors and the environment in a purposeful and goal oriented directions to yield favorable results. The final assumption presented by Bandura is that learning can occur with an immediate change in behaviors, and as such, learning sometimes takes place at a later date in another social context than the environment learning initiated. Based on Bandura's social cognitive theory, teachers play significant roles in the teaching learning process. Teachers should provide the appropriate tools, knowledge and skills with the highest quality delivery methods, to initiate and encourage learning among students. Bandura stated that learning occurs at different stages in students' lives.

Based on Bandura social cognitive theory incarcerated juveniles can acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, tools, and still participate in deviant behaviors or criminal activities. The individuals have to reach their turning point, interpret and place values on

the knowledge dispersed. In effect, juveniles or adolescents must perceive and examine their environment, form ideas and make inferences about how the information garnered are useful to improve their lives. At each stage of the developmental process knowledge acquired can influence behaviors, according to Bandura (1986). Teachers are challenged to facilitate and maintain a positive learning environment. Based on the social cognitive theory, teachers might not witness academic achievement or the actual learning occurring in the classrooms. Since students can process the information garnered at different stages of their adolescent life through adulthood or in different environments.

Educators have the task of creating, providing, maintaining a supportive learning environment for incarcerated juveniles. Nance and Novy (2011) discussed the approaches educators can adopt in the juvenile detention classroom environment to ensure effective learning teaching process. Based on their study conducted they recommended that educators use incremental success approaches. In other words, educators must approach each day with new mindsets ready to build, deliver, witness accomplishments, offer educational praises, and increase students' anticipations. Nance and Novy (2011) also mentioned that teachers should use incremental success as a way to recapture students' anticipations for learning, especially in the juvenile education setting. Another approach is that teachers should set high and realistic goals for incarcerated juveniles. In other words, high expectations should be customized for students based on their academic needs and abilities. The Annie E Casey Foundation (2008) report indicated that "youths should be able to access learning and growth opportunities. Programs such as skill attainment, pro-social network building, self-discipline, and individual empowerment can

yield to learning opportunities.” (p. 62). Furthermore, these approaches will help incarcerated juveniles to form a connection to schools and communities.

Academic Achievement and Characteristics of Juveniles in Secured Confine

Facilities

Gagnon, Brian, Van, and Leone (2009) purported that juveniles in confinement have additional issues to deal with outside of being an adolescent, such as behavioral issues, school issues, and perhaps mental health issues. These authors further expounded on the idea that academic difficulties are significant factors affecting educational and post school success of incarcerated youth. Most times juveniles detained in a confined facility are academically behind their peers, indulged in deviant behaviors, and have mental health issues. Foley (2001) endorsed Gagnon, et al. (2009) study by reporting that, “academic functioning of students in juvenile correction facilities typically was between the fifth to ninth grade levels” (p. 8). Foley noted that many youths incarcerated have done poorly in traditional high schools and might not have any course credit at the time of being incarcerated. The literature reveals that most incarcerated juveniles experienced academic failures, mental and learning disabilities, and behavioral issues. Therefore, interventions for successful transitions must be customized to each juvenile based on specific needs and deficiencies.

Archwamety and Katsiyannis (2000) said that academic achievement has a bearing on recidivism, and delinquent youth who needed remediation in math and reading were twice as likely to reoffend. In summation, students struggling in mathematics and reading tend to demonstrate deviant behaviors and revert to previous criminal activities. Additionally, the national longitudinal survey conducted with youth revealed that

incarcerated youths were twenty-six percentages less likely to graduate from high schools than non-incarcerated youth (Aizer and Doyle 2013; Hjalmarsson, 2008). In essence, incarceration will affect graduation successes among juveniles and as such early interventions and services offered should be customized for each juvenile.

Nance and Novy (2011) mentioned that “court involved youths often have repeated experiences of alienation, failure, isolation, and dehumanization in school and community situations” (p. 15). Nance and Novy explained that most incarcerated youth’s experiences provide additional barriers for educational successes. These barriers range from having no school records, missing schools regularly, and served by under qualified staff. Despite the study’s results, educators believe that juveniles can change and reaching turning points that can yield positive outcomes.

Summary

In summation, the discussion included a relevant body of literature demonstrating how and why juveniles participated in deviant behaviors that sometimes leads to incarceration. In spite of juvenile incarceration, the federal and state laws mandate that all juveniles are entitled to a fair, free and appropriate education as their peers who are not incarcerated. The study presents additional information for readers to understand why juveniles seek instant gratification in spite of the consequences their actions. Hence, juveniles channeled their energies such as attitudes, passions, and interests in pathways that yield the fastest gratification. Most incarcerated juveniles are two to three grades levels below their peers in the educational system, because of high absenteeism, disengagement from schools and lack of positive rewards. The literature shows that early

interventions are preventive factors, which assist in the reduction of recidivism, reattachment to school and high school completers.

In chapter 2, I explain ways in which the literature supports the themes of the study. Through the discussion, information was included that explained why juveniles sometimes commit crimes and act inappropriately, how the adolescent developmental processes influenced behaviors, learning processes, and graduation success. I also discussed self-direction and internal drives as characteristics that help juveniles overcome negative obstacles.

In chapter 3 I explain the methodological procedures and processes used to report the lived experiences of participants. Chapter 4 documents the thoughts of participants as it relates to graduation success and long-term juvenile incarceration. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses and interprets the findings, recommendations for further follow-up studies and a conclusion.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to document the lived experiences and perceptions of young adults who completed high school (diploma or GED) during or after long-term incarceration. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodology adopted, which is used to capture the lived experiences of participants. This chapter includes contents that explain the research design, roles of the researcher, methodology, instrumentation, and issues of trustworthiness, and a summary.

Research Design and Approach

The qualitative tradition adopted for this study is the descriptive phenomenological approach, which documents the thoughts of young adults about their experiences and perceptions regarding graduation successes after juvenile incarceration. A narrative, qualitative research approach would not have allowed for several individuals to report their lived experiences. Ethnographic studies examine the practices and behaviors of a cultural group while case studies examine a case with set boundaries. However, “phenomenological research essentially describes rather than explains, and starts from a perspective free from hypotheses or preconceptions” (Husserl 1970, p. 50). It is imperative for the phenomenological researcher to understand that this approach focuses on the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their perspectives (Husserl 1983). In addition, Husserl (1970) stated that “phenomenological study uses the concept of bracketing to maintain objectivity, where bracketing is eliminating researcher’s preconceptions about the phenomenon” (p. 25).

In the phenomenological approach, the researcher cannot begin with a pre-existing theory rather aims at exploring the lived experiences of people. Furthermore,

phenomenological approach describes commonalities among several participants as they experienced a particular lived situation or phenomenon. This type of study allows for novice researcher to categorized data into meaningful themes and engaged in effective analysis by coding information gathered from participants. Also, Merriam (2002) stated that phenomenology study zooms in on the “essence or structure of an experience.” In other words, “this form of inquiry attempts to deal with inner experiences un-probed in everyday life” (p. 7). To produce an effective study, I will set aside personal opinions and record the lived experiences of participants and the phenomenon, to understand the essence or structure of an experience.

Research Question

1. What are young adults’ perceptions and experiences of high school graduation success and long-term juvenile incarceration?
 - a) How do young adults describe their experiences of long-term juvenile incarceration?
 - b) What perceptions do young adults have concerning long-term juvenile incarceration and its relationship to graduation success?

Role of the Researcher

My roles in conducting this study were observations, recording, listening, and compilation of information collected to produce a credible study. Husserl (1983) stated that “a phenomenological approach requires a researcher to be objective and neutral in the research process” (p. 27). Husserl (1983) further mentioned that to conduct a meaningful research, it is imperative for the researcher to record the participant’s thoughts and perspectives about their lived experiences. Therefore, giving meanings to

participants' experiences, and identifying commonalities among juveniles that contributed to their turning points to succeed academically. Husserl continued to highlight four fundamental processes for a researcher to consider when producing an effective phenomenological research, such as: intentionally, phenomenological reduction, reduction, description, and essence. The overall point Husserl mentioned is that "the researcher must be able to reduce personal bias (bracketing), no presumption (epoche) and theorizing about the phenomenon" (p. 23). The researcher must be able to be objective about the phenomenon, report and analyze only the perspectives of the participants.

The phenomenology research allows participants to be the main focused rather than the research. Alternatively, I had to ignore my personal beliefs and prejudices to document the perceptions of young adults about their lived experiences of juvenile incarceration. Also, how they overcome these challenges to become high school completers and experience graduation successes. Another active role, was been objective to collect pure unbiased data and produced an effective analysis. I have been teaching within the Department of Juvenile Justice system for seven years and have observed the high recidivism rates among juveniles. My observations also led me to realize that students are three or more academic grade levels below their peers. Students are dropping out from traditional high schools, and many will not graduate from high alternative schools. Through these observations, I listened and understood perceptions of young adults without interjecting my personal beliefs and opinions. Merriam (2002) endorsed that the researcher must put aside personal attitudes and beliefs to understand the essence or structure of an experience through the views of the participants.

I acted in a professional role, having prior contact with participants since I taught a few of the participants while they were incarcerated in juvenile justice detention facilities. This existing relationship fostered a comfort level and participants were able to share in-depth information. As such, I found myself playing several roles, which assisted in the discovery of information to justify worthiness and relevance for this study. In these roles, I ensured that only the most relevant, current, and credible information presented in the data analysis process.

Methodology

The sample size for this research was critical to gathering of sufficient information to report young adults' perceptions of graduation success after long-term juvenile incarceration. My intention was to use a small sample size to garner in-depth information and present participants' points of view. Husserl (1970) supported the idea of smaller sample size, to explore in-depth information about participants' experiences from their perceptions. Phenomenological study aims at understanding phenomena experienced by individuals rather than generalization. This approach in research supports smaller sample size for more in-depth data. The decision that drives sample size is the research questions, and when the researcher has exhausted the information in the investigated field. Mason (2010) suggested that researchers used various methods to incorporate fewer participants, as well as multiple in-depth interviews with the same participants.

The research approach was a qualitative phenomenological research using 10 young adults who have completed high school diplomas or its equivalence during or after incarceration as juveniles. The rationale for choosing this sample size range was to ensure

that participants explained and documented their experiences of graduation success after juvenile incarceration. I believed if the sample size were too large, then the information collected could be overwhelming and difficult to report within the time constraint of completing an effective and thorough study. Participants requirements were: they must have been incarcerated in the juvenile system, high school completers with a high school diploma or GED, and between the age ranges of 18 through 24.

My hope was that when these young adults shared their experiences; it would clearly add to the existing body of knowledge. The intention was to show how overcoming challenges of incarceration can help offenders to succeed in schools, communities, colleges, and workplaces. This qualitative phenomenological study explores and documents young adults' perceptions regarding graduation success during or after juvenile incarceration by conducting several in-depth interviews. I reported participants lived experiences and ways they overcome juvenile incarceration and achieved graduation success.

After careful consideration of the sample size, I realized that each young adult's perception of overcoming juvenile incarceration and graduation successes differed vastly. Hence, I conducted in-depth interviews rather than using a focus group for data collection. In this phenomenological research, the smaller sample size yielded greater level of understanding of participants lived experiences as it relates to their perceptions of graduation success during or after juvenile incarceration.

The participants in this study shared similar experiences of incarceration in the juvenile justice system and graduation successes; as such, the homogenous sample applied to this unique population. As a new researcher, I was flexible and willing to make

the necessary changes that provided answers for the research questions and ensured a credible and relevant study. The best suited data collection method for this study was conducting in-depth interviews. Each participant signed consent forms as in Appendix A. Participants knew that they could withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

Procedures for Selecting Participants

Participants were selected based on three requirements: previously incarcerated in a juvenile facility; high school completers with high school diploma or GED; and between the ages of 18-24. The methods used to locate participants for this study was to place flyers on bulletin boards, referred to Appendix E for the flyer. I also used social media to reach out to past students, getting referrals from past students, and asking those who contact me to refer someone they thought was able and willing to participate in this study.

My plan in locating possible participants was to get permissions from the places listed below to place flyers on their bulletin board. The places of interests were: adult education centers that offer GED.; Juvenile Probation Officers' offices; 2-year technical colleges; Job Corps (educational institution for at-risk youth); and behavioral institutions for juveniles. To verify participants' graduation successes, I asked participants to show or send copy of either their high school diploma or GED. I assured potential participants that their identities and privacies were held in confidence and information shared was only used for the purpose of this study.

Data Collection Instrument – Interview Protocol

The aim for conducting this research was to understand young adults' perceptions of graduation success and long-term juvenile incarceration. Each interview was

approximately an hour. For additional time, I asked participants and once consent was given the interview session continued not exceeding half an hour or participants agreed to meet another time to complete the interview. The interview questions were developed by brainstorming, advanced qualitative course, and professors previewing and editing questions to ensure alignment with the research questions. The aim of these structured questions was to elicit participants' experiences as it relates to their graduation successes and long-term juvenile incarceration. The structured questions ensured that participants' responses were comparable, or themes or commonalities can be identified (Turner, 2010). The questions were broad and open-ended, which did not coerce responses. I injected probes, which allowed participants to expand on their ideas or supply more in-depth and detail stories. Turner (2010) suggested that probing and reframing questions encouraged the continuation and elaboration of more effective conversations with participants during the interview sessions. To avoid bias interview questions, I ensured that: the same question was used during the interview sessions, I deliberately ensured that I refrained from using emotional and body languages during my interactions with the participants. These were the different forum, which the participants and I met: face-to-face meeting, telephone conference, emails, or Skype conference call. My intention was to communicate with each participant at least two different times.

The first interaction was a face-to-face meeting, where participants and I assigned dates and places for the official interviews. At the first meeting, I obtained signed consent forms from participants of their willingness to participate in the study, explained the study, and addressed any questions to clarify misunderstanding. Burton and Steane (2009) stated, "as a result of Nuremberg code, informed consent has become an essential

part of research when human participants are involved” (p. 62). The second meeting was the actual interview sessions that lasted for an hour, I asked for additional time before the hour expired or sought to set another interview date. The third meeting was optional for participants to review the findings and conclusions of the study, which was conducted by emails. Each participant was familiar with the interview protocol in Appendix B.

Data Collection Method

In this phenomenological study, the interview method used to collect information from young adults’ perceptions of graduation success during and after long-term juvenile incarceration. Participants gave consent in advance for me to take notes and record the interview sessions. Participants knew that information was only used in this study and kept in a safe and secure location to protect their privacy. Participants knew they could discontinue at any time. Participants had the opportunity to review the interview questions in Appendix C before the actual interview, this allowed participants to become familiar with the questions, and shared in-depth information of their lived experiences, and gave them more time to think about the questions. Prior access to the questions resulted in an easier flow during the interview sessions and required less overall time for each interview session.

There was a beginning and ending script for each interview session, and all participants were asked the same questions, which eliminated biases and improved the integrity of the study. In advance, I reserved the conference room at libraries convenient for participants because I wanted to make sure that all other audio sounds did not interfere with the clarity of hearing participants and incur no additional costs for participants. The other factors to determine locations for interviews were: convenient for

participants, comfortable for both the researcher and participants, and whether the conditions are suitable for audio recording.

All steps and procedures were written and explained to participants, to eliminate unexpected challenges. I ensured that participants and I did not make any assumptions regarding the study since this can lead to confusion and frustration among participants and results in participants refusing to complete interviews and withdraw from the study. Refer to Appendix B for interview protocol. These are some strategies employed in the study.

1. The recording of each interview was transcribed, labeled, and dated.
2. Immediately after each interview, I rewrote field notes according to each research question.
3. I cross-referenced between all interviews and created notes and themes to group and organized data collected.
4. Interview notes were placed in separate envelopes for tracking purposes.
5. The interview notes were placed securely and safely to ensure participant's privacy.

There was separate interview session for each participant and lunches were provided at each interview for those participants that wanted to partake. Participants were aware that this was a voluntary study and no monetary compensations were distributed.

Data Analysis Plan

The phenomenological approach provides several ways in which a researcher can analyze data effectively. The aim of the phenomenological study is to collect pure data from participants about their lived experiences Moustakas (1994). For the purpose of this

study, data was collected by conducting ten interview sessions; transcripts were verbatim from audio-taped interview sessions. Moustakas (1994) highlighted several ways of analyzing data to present systematic and meaningful data findings.

These are the data analysis methods that were employed which were proposed by Moustakas (1994). Horizontalization according to Moustakas (1994), “is listing every relevant expression and performing preliminary grouping that is all elements of the text are deemed initially to be of equal value” (p. 183). Another approach is reduction, where I tested each expression and ensured that it was relevant to document the lived experiences or moments shared by participants. In addition, I included participants’ thoughts that brought meaning to the experiences of the participants, which captured the true meaning of each experience shared during the interview sessions. I applied thematic labels approach, which allowed me the opportunity to group experiences into common themes, which will yield greater understanding by the readers and captured the lived experiences in a meaningful way. Another data analysis approach mentioned by Moustakas (1990) is to include creative synthesis by bringing together various pieces of experiences and showing existing relationships (commonalities). During the interview sessions, themes emerged and I analyzed whether these themes contributed to the body of literature or the relevance of the study. A coding system used to identify themes and groups based on the responses provided by the participants. The data collected was organized and presented using tables, figures, and other visual forms for greater understanding by readers.

Strategies Implemented

Data collection is a rigorous process for a qualitative researcher, and great care and time must be given in maintaining the trustworthiness of the study. Some schools of thought described qualitative research as a “mountain of words”. These are some strategies I implemented when I organized, documented, and tracked the data collection analysis process.

1. I used envelopes to store related forms and documents. These envelopes were labeled, dated, and kept in a secured area.
2. I used Mendeley to organize related articles suitable for the topic under investigation.
3. In note taking, I recorded exact words from participants. Notes were properly labeled, and appropriate headings were used to manage and store efficiently.
4. Immediately after an interview, I labeled, wrote, and transcribed participants’ thoughts. This helped me to remember the conversation.
5. Data and information collected was organized in categories or coded in such a way to provide for easier retrieval in the future.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In this section, I outlined the plan for ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These four areas helped readers to understand how internal and external checks influenced the trustworthiness of the study.

Credibility

The target goal of this section was to document a true picture of the phenomenon under investigation. According to Merriam (2002), “the qualitative investigator’s equivalent concept, that is, credibility, deals with the question”, “How congruent are the findings with reality?” To ensure the credibility of this study, I have adopted the phenomenological research method, since it is a popular method of collecting the perceptions, thoughts, and memories of participants. According to van Manen (2007), phenomenological research borrowed other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences (p.62); this allowed readers to understand the meaning and significance of participants’ lived experiences.

Another critical factor to ensure the credibility of the study was to ensure prolonged engagement with participants. Lincoln (1995) and Guba (1981) recommend prolonged engagements since researchers will be able to develop an understanding of the environment or participants under investigation. The prolonged engagements foster and create relationships and communication patterns between participants and researchers before the data collection process begins.

To enhance validity in this study, I implemented procedures, while simultaneously checked to make sure procedures are working according to plan or making adjustments to ensure validity in the study. Creswell (2009) mentioned eight validity strategies: triangulate, member checking, rich thick description, clarify bias researchers bring to the study, present negative or discrepant information, spend prolonged time, peer debriefing, and external auditor. In this study, I implemented three

of the eight validity strategies: member checking, rich thick description, and external auditor (committee members, peer reviewers, and URR).

The member checking ensured that the research accurately reflects participants' perceptions in the findings and interpretations. The rich thick description validated the authenticity of information included in the study, and readers will understand participants' perceptions of graduation success during and after juvenile incarceration based on the description presented in the findings and interpretations of the study. Finally, I made use of external auditors such as committee members a peer reviewer, and URR representatives. These external auditors reviewed and provided detailed independent feedback, and checks and balances to ensure credibility, reliability, integrity, and relevance. Each person who read this proposal such as editors, transcriber, and peer reviewer signed the confidentiality agreement in Appendix F.

Transferability

Merriam (2002) mentioned that external validity "is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (p. 39). Many researchers refuted the idea that qualitative research can be transferred to another situation since it is unique experiences shared and lived by participants. The data collected and findings reported in this study are not transferable to other studies. However, Stake (1994) and Denscombe (1998) stated that in spite of the uniqueness of qualitative research information, transferability should not be immediately rejected.

Dependability

To ensure dependability in this study, I outlined in detail, all strategies, processes, and methodologies utilized to gather information from participations. Detailing

procedures and strategies helped future researchers to adopt methods and repeat work, even if the findings are different. Lincoln (1995) and Guba (1981) stressed the importance of close ties between credibility and dependability. As such researchers must ensure proper use of research designs and data collection methods, which will provide research plans for future researchers and determine whether research practices and protocols are in compliance.

I ensured reliability and accuracy by documenting step-by-step procedures implemented in this study. I checked to ensure that transcripts did not contain any error made during transcription; maintained a consistent coding process and definitions for codes; and collected feedback from the dissertation committee. These three reliability strategies helped to produce consistent findings and recommendations.

Confirmability

To address confirmability, the researcher ensures objectivity (Patton 1990). I ensured that the reported findings were the results of the lived experiences of participants of the study. Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that the key to confirmability is when the researchers are can admit to their predispositions. As a researcher, my personal bias, opinions, and any predisposition were stated to make sure that reported findings are from the perspectives of the participants and not the researcher.

Ethical Concerns

As a researcher, I ensured that I protected the rights and privacy of participants. According to Israel and Hay (2009) researchers must ensure the protection of participants, build and develop a trustworthy relationship, which can enhance the integrity of the study. The procedures and processes explained to participants and

clarification of the purpose of the study were constantly reiterated to participants.

Participants knew that they had the right to review and retract any statement they wished not to be included in the official transcript for the study. Participants were given the privileges of asking questions regarding the study, and understanding possible benefits to be derived from the study. Each participant received a copy of the consent form.

Participants' rights were explained to them, such as the right to withdraw from the study; protection and security of privacy and identity; be informed of the interview questions; be informed about the research, and change their mind at any time before and during the study.

Burton and Steane (2004) clarified the difference between privacy and confidentiality. They stated that "privacy is violated if data are collected or disseminated without participants' knowledge, while confidentiality is the management of data to prevent participants' identities from being linked to their response" (p.67). Participants were not subject to any danger in participating in this study and their identities were coded and secured. Participants' personal information was not included, and any information that identified the participant was eliminated from the study. All information collected from the interviews -- transcripts, audio tapes, note taking, and any other hard copy or electronic medium -- were secured in a safe place, and the information was only accessible to the researcher. This is a step-by-step check and balance method to ensure that I was protecting participants' privacy:

1. Participants were notified in writing that their participations were voluntary and they had the right to withdraw from the study and the right to refuse to answer any questions during the interview process.

2. The procedures and process were explained to each participant.
3. Each participant signed a written consent form.
4. Data collection methods, procedures, and analysis were explained to participants.
5. The data collection process was checked and monitored to ensure participants' privacy and safety.
6. Written transcripts, notes, and data analysis were available for participants to view.

As the research evolved, I included other strategies to make sure that participants' privacy was protected and no harm or dangers were imposed on participants because of their participation in this study. I ensured that I was professional at all times during my contact with participants by respecting participants' perspectives and opinions as they shared information concerning their lived experiences of graduation success after juvenile incarceration.

Summary

Chapter 3 provides detailed information on method, design, and implementation processes. The phenomenological research answers the research question that allows for in-depth gathering of information from several participants. The intention of this study is to document the lived experiences and perceptions of young adults' graduation success during and after juvenile incarceration. Interview sessions conducted, provided the answers to the research question in this study. Participants answered both closed- and open-ended questions. I focused on a small sample size, which yielded in-depth information and effective data analysis.

The methodology included steps taken to increase integrity and relevance of the study to capture the true stories and experiences intended by each participant. After each interview, I labeled, stored and grouped responses based on the themes derived from each interview session. Included are the procedures used to ensure safety and security of all participants' identities and privacy. Chapter 4 documents the thoughts of all 10 participants as it relates to their juvenile incarceration experiences and graduation successes.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Results

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to document the lived experiences and perceptions of young adults who completed high school successfully by graduating with a high school diploma or GED during or after long-term incarceration. The purpose of this chapter was to present participants' thoughts expressed during the interview sessions as it relates to research questions. Included in the discussion was additional information on how data were gathered, recorded, and analyzed.

Restatement of the Research Question

1. What are young adults' perceptions and experiences of high school graduation success and long-term juvenile incarceration?
 - a) How do young adults describe their experiences of long-term juvenile incarceration?
 - b) What perceptions do young adults have concerning long-term juvenile incarceration and its relationship to graduation success?

Setting

To begin the study, I created a Facebook page, posted invitation flyers at probation officer's offices, and GED centers to solicit potential participants. The invitational flyer was posted on Facebook because of the potential participants' ages, and the likelihood that they would have a social network account. Participants were able to contact me by email address and phone numbers that were included on the flyer. After approximately two weeks, potential participants contacted me through Facebook. I had a brief discussion on the Facebook messenger to ensure that participants were eligible, based on the criteria for the study. Once eligibility was established, the participant and I

worked on possible dates for interview sessions, which were convenient for participants in terms of cost and time.

There were some personal and emergent issues that prevented participants from attending interview sessions; hence I had to reschedule meeting times most convenient for participants. I sent reminder texts the day before and day of the interview. Participants were available on late evenings and weekends since many are working or attending college, upon their released from juvenile detention facilities. Participants were eager to share their stories and told me that they were willing to participate. However, because of time constraints, there were days when we were unable to meet as scheduled. Participants suggested times for interviews and then they would be scheduled to work, creating a need for rescheduling. Based on my observations there were no apparent personal problems experienced by participants that affected or influenced the outcome of the study. Participants did not share any current stories that indicated that they were experiencing any negative personal issues that affected them from recalling and sharing their thoughts of their juveniles' incarceration experiences and graduation success.

Demographics

The table below presents information about each participant interviewed. Participants' official names were not included; rather, I created pseudonyms for all participants to keep their identities protected and secured. The table indicates the following for each participant: alias names, age, gender, race, and age of first juvenile's arrest, high school diploma or GED, employed / unemployed and attending college.

Table 1

Participants' characteristics and information

Alias Names	Age	Gender	Age when 1 st arrested	High school diploma	GED	School (S) Employed (E) Unemployed (U)
Karl	20	M	10		X	E
Jerry	19	M	15		X	UE
Clifton	20	M	16		X	UE
John	19	M	12	X		S
Bill	18	M	14	X		S
Robin	19	M	9		X	S
Tom	19	M	13		X	S
Ruford	18	M	16		X	S
Duran	19	M	13		X	S
Wilton	19	M	16		X	E

Data Collection

Data were collected by conducting 10 interview sessions with young adults regarding their perceptions of graduation success during or after long-term juvenile incarceration. All participants were 18-20 years old, had a high school diploma or GED, and once experienced incarcerated in a juvenile justice facility. The following questions were asked to verify the ages of participants: date of birth, length of juvenile incarceration, and age of 1st incarceration. The Facebook page created was made in a

public status, for potential participants to request me as friend. In addition, to creating a Facebook page, flyers were posted on bulletin boards of adult education centers that offer GED.; Juvenile Probation Officers' offices; 2-year technical colleges; Job Corps (educational institution for at-risk youth); and behavioral institutions for juveniles.

After several days, one potential participant added me as a friend, and I accepted the invite. Some of the potential participants recommended other peers, who might be willing to participate and share their stories. Initially, 16 potential qualified participants were contacted; however, due to their work and school schedules all were not able to participate. However, some young adults denied the opportunity to participate in the study.

The young adults were interested to share their success stories corresponded several times by the Facebook messenger, cell phones calls, and texts. The first meeting was set up in public places such as the mall nearest to where the participants resided. The reason for these meetings was to explain the reasons for conducting this study and the signing of the consent forms. It was difficult to accomplish since participants were working at different times, attending community mandatory meetings and schools. In spite of the difficulties, the participants and I were able to meet, for me to explain the reason for conducting the study and to get their signatures for the consent forms.

During these meetings, participants asked questions about the study such as, what information would they have to reveal? Would their names be included? And if the information shared will be linked to them?" I assured them that all information shared, will be kept in confidence and protected, and their identities were eliminated from the study since an alias will be attached to each participant. Some participants shared that

they felt nervous, since this was their first interview. I encouraged them to treat the interview as a discussion, where they are sharing their success stories.

Interviews

Written consents were received from all participants to record interview sessions, which were recorded using a digital audio recorder. Each interview session lasted between 30 – 60 minutes. In the interview sessions, only open-ended questions were asked, so that participants would share their thoughts about their experiences and success stories. I also used probing questions, which helped to encourage participants in sharing their stories. My interest was to capture the thoughts of young adult's experiences of juvenile justice, graduation success, and their turning points.

A few participants were nervous in sharing their experiences, and some were not very expressive; hence shorter interviews were conducted than the original time. However, I was able to gather adequate information from all interviews conducted. Sometimes, the participants included information that was not pertaining to the questions asked, but I allowed it, unless it was too excessive. In that respect, I would re-direct participants to the original question by using probe questions.

After each interview, I replayed and reviewed the quality of sound and clarity of the voices to ensure that accurate and precise transcription of each interview. Audiotapes were transcribed by two external parties. The external parties signed agreements not to disclose any information transcribed. Once I received the transcriptions, I read and reread using color pens to highlight main themes in each participant's response, and searched for commonalities among the answers provided.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The explanations below are the four areas that increased the trustworthiness and accuracy of the study. These areas helped me to ensure balance and fairness with all interview session, effectively handling data once collected from participants, and reported the original stories shared by participants accurately.

Credibility

To ensure credibility of this study, I ensured that the data collected provide evidence of participants lived experiences. In other words, the phenomenological research method allowed me to capture the true essence of participants' perceptions, thoughts, and memories related to their experiences of juvenile incarceration and graduation success. According to van Manen (2007), phenomenological research borrowed other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences (p. 62), thus allowing readers to understand the meaning and significance of participants' lived experiences. I was also able to build relationships with participants, because of the prolonged engagement through texting, face book messenger, and phone calls. To enhance the validity, I implemented and followed procedures while simultaneously checking to make sure procedures worked according to plan and made adjustments.

Transferability

The data collected and reported findings are not transferable to other studies. However, the information might be used as motivational experiences for other young offenders who are currently incarcerated. The information in this study is unique to the population of this study; however, findings might help other researchers in building a framework for the future study.

Dependability

Strategies, processes, and methodologies utilized to gather information from participations are detailed in this study. The purpose of this information is to ensure that future researchers will know of the steps taken to ensure the success of this study and might be able to adopt methods and repeat work, even if the findings are different. For dependability and reliability, I compared transcriptions with the audio tapes making sure the information contained in both was the same and error free.

Confirmability

I ensured that reported findings were the results of participants sharing their lived experiences of graduation successes and juvenile incarceration. I made sure during the interview session that my personal bias, opinions, and any predisposition were reduced or eliminated to make sure that reported findings are from the perspectives of the participants and not a researcher.

Data Analysis and Results

All interview sessions were transferred from the digital recorder to the computer, and then transcribed to hard copies which were filed in different folders and stored securely. Notes and audio tapes were labeled using participants aliases and placed in different labeled folders in a safe location, only accessible by the researcher.

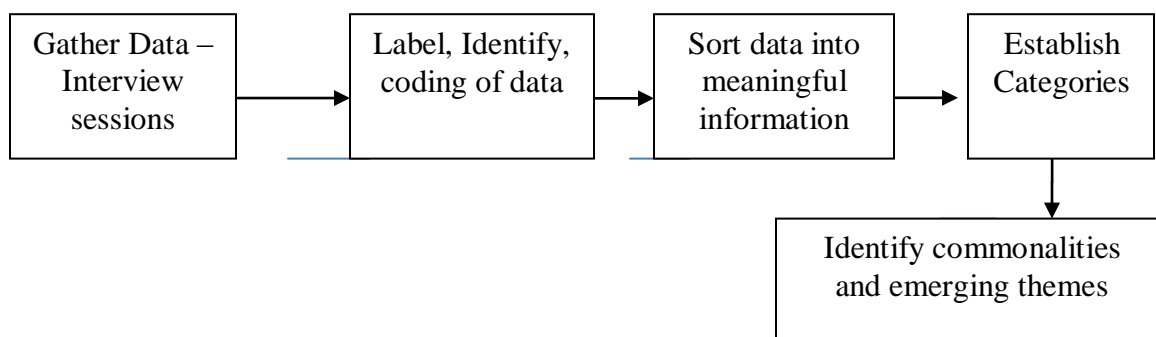


Figure 1: Data Management Process

Figure 1 above indicates the processed used to collect, arrange, sort, code data into meaningful information. The same process was used for every interview session, to ensure consistency and accuracy. The process helped to identified themes and commonalities among participants’ thoughts and stories. I used highlighters, as I read through each transcription. This strategy helped me to focus on main points expressed by participants.

Methods for Coding

Coding was a critical part of dissecting of information into meaningful information. Each transcription was read several times to compile similar ideas, themes, or experiences. Participants were willing to express their experiences and As such I had the responsibility to extract and compile the stories for readers to gain meaningful understanding of participants’ experiences. It was a privilege to be able to share in this journey with participants. There were several coding methods used to ensure the true meanings of participants’ experiences were captured. Below are coding methods used to dissect the data collected from different interview sessions-

Open coding. The transcription of each interview session was read several times. In my second and third readings key points were highlighted and were crucial in identifying answers for the research questions. This method allowed me to focus only on meaningful information which relevant to the research questions driving the study. With the open coding method, I used different color highlighters to identify broad categories or heading from each transcript, which allowed me to identify the same categories or commonalities among participants' responses.

Axial coding. After reading all 10 transcripts, there were several common themes, so these themes were placed into groups like a way to narrow the number of themes to be analyzed. A non-hierarchical or flat code will be used to group responses for each of the interview questions. In addition, I have used subcodes which are the same as hierarchical coding. This method allows for each grouping of themes and experiences that were similar among all participants.

During the interview sessions, participants were asked several questions to understand and explore the thoughts of young adults' perceptions of graduation success after and during juvenile incarceration. Their responses were categorized into eight main themes as shown in Table 2. The eight themes are: *challenges, support systems, overcoming patterns, turning points, juvenile justice staff, and advice to other young offenders, experiences, and graduation success.*

Each major theme will be described in this section using verbatim passages from interview sessions with participants to support the specific themes related to the one main research and two sub-questions. In other words, major and associated themes or concepts

are discussed to increase readers' knowledge about young adults' perceptions of graduation success and juvenile incarceration.

Table 2

Major Themes and Associated Categories From the 10 Interview Sessions

Research Question	Major Themes	Associated Concepts
What are young adults' perceptions and experiences of high school graduation successes and long-term juvenile incarceration	Challenges	Fighting Bullying Death/Sickness Lack of family support Staff disappointments Lack of dedicated juvenile staff members Staff members working for a paycheck.
	Support System	Family members Friends
	Overcoming patterns	Incarcerated peers Changing mindsets Belief system
	Turning points	Religion Education Support System Changing mindsets Self-motivation Death/Sickness of family and friends Role Models
1(A) How do young adults describe their experiences of long-term juvenile incarceration	Juvenile Justice Staff	Positive personnel Dedicated and supportive staff Staff working only for a paycheck Uncaring Juvenile Staff
	Advice to other young offenders	Positive support system Stay in school Develop a belief system Changing mindsets Self-Motivation

1(B) What perceptions and reflections do young adults have concerning their long-term juvenile incarceration and graduation successes?	Experiences	Juvenile detention incarceration Incarcerated schools vs. public schools Educational Curriculum
	Graduation Success	Obtaining a high school diploma or GED Develop learning skills Successfully reentering society.

Research Question 1

What are young adults' perceptions and experiences of high school graduation success and long-term juvenile incarceration?

There were three themes that emerged from the interview sessions that provide answers to the research question stated above. The three themes were: challenges, support system, and overcoming patterns. These were answers gathered from participants through the interview sessions.

Theme 1: Challenges of juvenile justice system. Participants mentioned several challenges they experienced while incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities. Participants shared how these challenges could have prevented them from being successful and caused offenders to get deeper in trouble and continued on a criminal pathway.

Karl shared different challenges, he experienced while incarcerated in a juvenile detention facility.

Well, I mean there is always gonna be challenges for anybody who is incarcerated and that's you know kids picking on you, calling names, always trying to fight

you, experiencing bullying, you know disciplinary reports for things you have done go on

lock down. (Karl)

Clifton mentioned the difficulties he faced in attempting to do the right thing while incarcerated.

I have a lot of conflict and challenges within, the challenge of meeting friends who were not doing the right things, and not wanting to do the right thing,

because I was away so long I felt like I was not a part of the family any more.

(Clifton)

Participants expressed that they daily encountered or were involved in fighting and gang related activities while incarcerated. Duran explained what he considered to be his challenge “Even with the support I have been through challenges like going back to my old self like fighting, gang banging things like that.” John challenges were similar: “Things such as, fighting, bullying, and etc, was always around me and it demanded my attention that I may not fall victim to those things. It is a constant distraction and impeded my education.”

Tom stated he faced challenges of losing loved ones and friends while he was incarcerated:

Losing an aunt to cancer, losing 6 friends in the community while being detained, continuing being proactive with gang activity. Seeing most of my old friends go to prison. My mother got a stroke. I was dealing with anger and depression emotions while incarcerated. (Tom)

During the interview sessions participants mentioned other challenges like bullying, lack of family support, and lack of dedicated juvenile justice staff working with youth. Participants also mentioned the challenge of convincing others that they will not be repeat offenders or be labeled as criminal, inmates, or juvenile delinquent.

Ruford noted that he faced the challenge of convincing people that he has been rehabilitated while incarcerated.

There are a lot of people who sincerely, believe I will re-offend, when I am released. I know I won't, but convincing others of that is a major challenge that I may never overcome. I have come to realize that I don't like being called a juvenile delinquent or an inmate and even labeled as a youth under DJJ is demeaning. (Ruford)

Participants, in their responses, expressed their fears about planning for the future and how to explain to people why they were not in traditional public schools, and about re-entering society successfully.

Bill supported this theme as he shared his thought. "Planning has been hard for me. What will I do? What job can I get? How people will judge me? What I will say when people ask about my work history?"

From the responses gathered through the interview sessions, these were the findings regarding challenges experienced while incarcerated:

1. Four of the 10 participants mentioned dealing with the challenge of people wanting to see them fail or being convinced that they would reoffend.

2. All of the 10 participants mentioned dealing with internal conflicts and wanting to give up, because of being incarcerated and the disappointment of family members and friends.

According to participants John and Don fighting occurred constantly between incarcerated juveniles. John and Don mentioned that, “fighting was always around me” and fighting is a constant distraction and impede my education.” Jerry shared his thoughts on challenge he experienced while incarcerated, as it relates to fighting, “Many fights are also over respect or what’s perceived as such. Riots are often created when two or more groups have issues and wish to settle them out.” One participant stated that people believed that incarcerated juveniles will re-offend, Ruford stated, “There are a lot of people who sincerely, believe I will re-offend, when I am released.” And Robin supported this view when he said, “I think that the biggest challenge I have faced since being incarcerated is the fact that some people want to see us fail. It is hard to be motivated to do well in that situation.”

Other participants mentioned family sickness and death, such as Tom who stated that, “during my incarceration period, I experienced the challenge of death of close friends and loved ones”, and Bill stated also that, “bad part is there has been a lot of frustrating things happen like a loss my Grandfather.” Wilton shared that youth are dealing with personal issue as a challenge, “many youth act out negatively and try to maintain their self-identities, own thoughts, and beliefs that they know best, and return to the community believing that.” Another challenge was the lack of positive support system and re-offending, Bill shared that, “I believe it is a lot about the mind set and having positive people to keep you on track when you get out, because the lack of

positive people in my life will result in future juvenile or adult incarceration.” Lastly, Wilton shared how gang involvement is a serious challenge for most youth, including himself, within the juvenile system, “continued to being proactive with gang activity, gang initiation, and ganging banging.” The participants shared their thoughts related to challenges faced during incarceration openly.

Table 3

Summary of Participants' Challenges Revealed in Interview Sessions Relating to Theme 1

Alias Names	Fighting	Bullying	Death/Sickness	Internal Personal Issues	Gang	Family's disappointment	Re-offending
Karl	X	X		X	X	X	
Jerry	X		X	X	X	X	X
Clifton	X	X		X	X	X	
John	X	X		X		X	
Bill	X		X	X	X	X	X
Robin	X	X		X	X	X	X
Tom	X		X	X	X		
Ruford	X			X		X	X
Duran	X		X	X		X	
Wilton	X	X		X		X	X

Theme 2: Support system. All 10 participants said that support system was a major contributing factor to their successes, both within the juvenile detention facilities and upon released in society. Participants further explained that their positive support systems helped them overcome challenges of criminal activities and deviant behaviors. One common support system among all 10 participants was family members' support systems. Family supports proved to be influential in the success of the 10 participants interviewed.

Ruford shared how the family support he received even after he committed his crime, motivated him to strive to become successful. Ruford thoughts were: "I have had a surprisingly high amount of support, mainly from my mother and my step-father. They have given me their advice but have stepped back to let me make my own decisions."

Jerry remembered how his family support was important for him to experience success in the following way:

My mom and my sister were the greatest support system. My family ahh they don't want me to get into trouble. If I was still on the street I would probably get in trouble. My family supported me because they basically push me to do it and kept me going.

Clifton expressed similar thoughts as Ruford and Jerry concerning the support he received from his family members:

My mother and my brother and me, well stepfather, my cousins and family, auntie, uncle, basically they just motivate me to get my education. And inside DJJ I had my friend that I met while I was incarcerated and we all decided hey we gonna do this together, we gonna graduate together. (Clifton)

Karl showed, in his response, the extent of the family support system he received while he was in a juvenile detention facility.

My mom always supported me 118 %. I mean my mom was always there for me she would always come and visit me you know like every weekend she would be there she'd check on me call me and everything. (Karl)

Participants mentioned other support systems that they relied on during juvenile incarceration such as: time served, changing their mindsets, and dedicated staff, especially teachers. Duran recalled how one teacher impacted his life in a positive way and supported him in achieving his academic success.

I had major support from my teacher Mrs. P and among other teachers; they helped to motivate me when I wanted to give up. I would be in the class like forget this. Ms P. didn't know what was going on but she would talk to me and see why I was down. (Duran)

Karl shared his experience regarding supportive teachers he met while he was incarcerated in a juvenile detention facility.

My teacher's name was Mr. D. He was a wonderful teacher one of the best social studies teacher I think I ever had in my life. You know like another teacher Mr. Barnes a science teacher, you know always cracked jokes however in the end he was always pushed me like Mr. D. always try to help me get extra credit. (Karl)

Clifton expressed thoughts about how teachers supported him while he was incarcerated.

My GED teacher, she wanted it more than us because she said because of our race and the statistics she wanted us to beat the odds and prove everybody wrong. When somebody want it that bad for you can't do anything else than want it too. I

was helped to change because of my support system and willingness to want to work; it does really work if you don't want it. (Clifton)

All these were areas in which young adults expressed that they received support that helped them to strive for greatness, success, re-entry successfully in society and becoming law-abiding citizens. All participants contributed their successes to positive support from family members, friends from the outside, incarcerated peers, and juvenile justice staff, Don shared this, "My family plays a big part in my life. They help to motivate me to get my education." Wilton supported this point, when he mentioned, "The support came from our instructor, who looked up instructional videos for us. She really did help us to succeed and she is a big reason why I graduated early."

Participants stated that the encouragement received from their support system helped them to succeed in life in spite of their criminal involvement. Wilton shared that, "I have had a surprisingly high amount of support, mainly from my mother and my step-father. They have given me their advice but have stepped back to let me make my own decisions." and Tom shared that, "My support comes from my family, my mom and sisters, some come from other family members too but most of all it comes from God." Ruford mentioned that even after his sister found out about his crime, "she still expressed how much she loves and will always support me".

Table 4

Summary of Participants' Responses Regarding Theme 2: Support System

Alias Names	Family Members	Friends	Incarcerated peers	Teachers	Juvenile Justice Staff	Religion	Belief Systems/Mind sets
Karl	X	X		X		X	X
Jerry	X		X	X	X	X	X
Clifton	X		X	X		X	X
John	X	X		X		X	X
Bill	X		X	X		X	X
Robin	X	X		X	X	X	X
Tom	X			X		X	X
Ruford	X		X	X	X	X	X
Duran	X	X		X		X	X
Wilton	X		X	X	X	X	X

Theme 3: Overcoming patterns. All 10 participants revealed how changing their mindsets helped them to overcome the setbacks of juvenile incarceration. Participants shared ideas and ways that helped them to overcome while experiencing incarceration in juvenile detention facilities.

Clifton expressed how a change in mindset could contribute to a life of success or failure of young offenders in the following.

For me, I was not mislead or peer pressured, If you are around someone that's negative, everybody wants to do negative things, then you are going to become negative. If you do something positive, then everyone will do positive, and keeping a positive mindset. (Clifton)

Duran explained similar thoughts as participant Clifton when he spoke of the importance of changing mindset.

Some have their minds made up already. If you got your mind made up that you are not going to change then that is what is going to happen. My support comes from my family, my mom and sisters; some come from other family members. (Duran)

Karl showed in his response how young offenders can overcome challenges or obstacles by having a great support system by stating,

With my support system I had I knew all I had to do was to ask to talk to somebody. I overcame one of my problems because I had people there who had either been through what I'd been through to know what I'm going through or what not and they would say this is how I did it you know so i... overcoming obstacles in juvenile detention it all depends on your support system.

Developing a belief system proved helpful in overcoming destructive or negative patterns, as it related to juvenile incarceration, and graduation success according to participants.

Ruford alluded to this fact by stating:

The only difference between people who fail, and people who succeed is their belief system. There has to be something you believe in. Whether you want to serve others, change the world, or to serve God. Once you have established your belief system you'll learn that the stupid stuff that got you in trouble isn't worth it.

(Ruford)

Another helpful source the participants found in the overcoming pattern experienced was dedicated staff and role models within the juvenile justice facilities.

Karl shared how staff members were influential and helped him to overcome his challenges of incarceration.

The teacher was always there for me, he was like a father figure to me I mean there wasn't a day that went by that I didn't ask just to ask for him to come and talk to me. He gave me knowledge and wisdom and like life experience whether it is about what should I do. (Karl)

All participants developed and created a system or leaned on a system that lead them to the next level of success in their lives, The changing of mindsets, positive support systems and building a relationship with God were common expressions of all 10 participants interviewed, "Robin elaborated on the point that, "my thing was to go talk to God, asked him to show me what he has planned for my life and what he wants me to do

now.” And Bill said, “I chose to change my mind set and asked God to help me most of all helped me to change from my past.”

Tom also contributed by stating, “that through all my life struggles from then to now that nothing in past is going hinder stop me from being somebody in life. I have a new outlook on things and do things differently that how I used to.” Also Ruford shared similar views, when he stated, “The only difference between people who fail, and people who succeed is their belief system.”

Most of the 10 participants placed the emphasis on the individual, that changes must come from within and the individual has to want these changes before changes can really happen. Karl said, “changed in mindset and belief system, John reiterated this point when he said, “I developed a new belief system”, Wilton said, “I started to think my past and decided to try something new”, Wilton: “I said to myself try this thing called education, and I tried and it worked out for me.”

The participants also mentioned that works for them might not work for another person, since each experience will bring about different reactions and attitudes. Jerry said, “I would say the experience is different for people. Some have their minds made up already to win or lose. If you got your mind made up that you are not going to change then that is what is going to happen.” And Clifton shared that, “I can only speak about what worked for me, As I got older I started learning how to do things different. I started reading the Bible more. I also had to keep myself busy. When I would stay busy it kept my mind off of the things that would get me upset.”

Table 5

Summary of Participants' Responses Regarding Theme 3: Overcoming Patterns

Alias Names	Changing Mindsets	Future Plans	Positive Support System	Building Relationships with God	Eliminate deviant behaviors/Gang Involvements	Re-Building Relationships
Karl	X	X	X	X		X
Jerry	X		X	X	X	
Clifton	X	X	X	X		
John	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bill	X		X	X		
Robin	X		X	X	X	
Tom	X	X	X	X		
Ruford	X		X	X	X	X
Duran	X	X	X	X		
Wilton	X	X	X	X	X	X

Research Question 1(A)

How do young adults describe their experiences of long-term juvenile incarceration?

Through the interview sessions, three emerging themes related to this research question and seek to provide answers. Participants shared experiences that lead to turning points in their lives.

Theme 4: Turning points for young juvenile offenders. Below are turning points experienced by young adults, while incarcerated or when they were released. Participants passionately expressed how important it was to experience these turning points at the time they did, since they would have possibly been on the a wrong path or be dead, as their other friends.

Bill shared that having a belief system and working hard to achieve his goals helped him to reach his turning point

My turning point was when I realized if I give it all to God and trust in him with everything. He will guide me on the right path to take. They helped me to realize I can be successful if I put my mind to it and work hard at it. (Bill)

Jerry mentioned life changing experience that lead to his turning point as the birth of his child, the death of loved ones and the death of some of his friends.

My incarceration was an eye opener and turning point, of course. The birth of my daughter, while incarcerated, opened my eyes to realize, I need to change my habits. The death of my father, aunt, grandmother, helped and forced me to change for the better. These things have been turning points in my life. I realized

my education would be my tool in succeeding the fate that awaits me on this path.

(Jerry)

Ruford stated how watching the positive reactions of family members in spite of their disappointments, but still they extended love towards him helped him in his turning point. He said:

One of the things that led me to my turning point was getting arrested. Ever since that day my life has never been the same. The biggest thing that hit me when I was arrested was when I saw my mom cry, when they put hand-cuffs on me. I had seen her cry before, but this was different. These turning points are what got me to my graduation. (Ruford)

Academic achievements have been the key that led some participants to their turning points and the desire to be successful in life. This is how Russell puts it:

My major turning points were the possibility of early release and obtaining my GED. My friends, family and supportive staff were the people who led me to my turning point. My incarceration experience forced me to look at my life and become motivated to graduate. (Russell)

Jerry shared that his turning point was academic achievement, the same as Russell. I wanted to do better and wanted to have a successful life. I don't want to get out without my GED or high school diploma and I don't think anybody would want that so I want to turn my life around and do what I'm supposed to do and do my time and get out. (Jerry)

For Clifton, academic achievement as well as his friends on the outside and those he met on the inside helped him to reach his turning point. Speaking of that he said:

All of my friends were on the wrong path and they were going to prison and getting in deep trouble and none of them were getting an education, high school diploma or GED. I thought to myself that I did not want that... so I decided to try a new path. I want to get my education even though I messed up, because I want to be someone in life. (Clifton)

Based on the responses from the participants' interview sessions, the main turning points experiences include positive experiences, painful experiences, insight and self-awareness or realization, and interactions with the juvenile justice system.

Table 6

Summary of Participants' Responses Regarding Theme 4: Turning Points

Alias Names	Graduation Success	Religion	Self-Motivation	Separation from loved ones	Incarceration Experiences	Support System
Karl	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jerry	X	X	X			X
Clifton	X	X	X	X	X	X
John	X	X	X			X
Bill	X	X	X	X	X	X
Robin	X	X	X		X	X
Tom	X	X	X	X		X
Ruford	X	X	X	X	X	X
Duran	X	X	X			X
Wilton	X	X	X	X	X	X

There were four main common turning points among the 10 participants were: positive support from family members and friends, building a relation with God, graduating, family members' disappointments. Each participant expressed that these factors led to their changing and wanting to be successful and become law-abiding citizens. Another turning point for all the participants was being arrested. They mentioned that they had been getting away with their criminal activities for years, but when they were arrested and sentenced for a long period of time, then the realization of accountability led them to deviate from a life of crime to the desire to be successful. Then and there they made a decision never to be incarcerated in the future.

Theme 5: Juvenile Justice Staff. These are the responses from all 10 participants on how they viewed staff members working within the juvenile justice system:

Karl shared how one staff member significantly helped to change his life

Mr. R a counselor and a wonderful guy I mean he was a Christian guy, started his own bible study with the youth everything you know always trying to help the kids playing basketball with us. I mean I looked up to him I mean he was like my role model. (Karl)

Jerry shared that staff members' influences were life changing events, for him when he was incarcerated.

Ah... teachers, counselors, director. Cause they put me on the right path to go where I need to go whenever I asked the questions that I needed ah... answered they answered for me. Like tutoring, offering safe programs and other certificate programs. (Jerry)

Not all participants thought that all staff members were exemplary. Some staff members were not influential for young offenders' successes. Ruford said some staff members:

I'd like to say to the staff in DJJ, the officers, and teachers. Some staff got to learn how these youth work and be mindful of the way you talk to them and respond.

This is a critical moment in their lives and they need your help. Give them your support and stop treating them like criminals. (Ruford)

Clifton's response differed from Ruford and instead expressed his gratitude and appreciation for juvenile justice staff members that raised the bar to another level for him to be successful,

I would say thank you and having high expectations of me and writing me up, even though DJJ is not the place I wanted to be, it was not a bad place and I like the educational program, continue doing what you are doing and keep up with the good work. Continue helping those youth who don't know. Keep up with it and without you I would not have my GED. All DJJ staff played a big part in my life. They took a personal interest in my spiritual and educational life. Thanks.

(Clifton)

Based on the responses 8 out of 10 participants thought that the staff within the juvenile justice system were supportive and caring, while the other 2 participants mentioned that workers were undedicated and did not care about young juveniles, but instead, viewed them as criminals and as such, treated them like criminal and not as young adults. Overall, participants felt that workers within juveniles were doing a good

job, but the juvenile justice system was no place for young adults and offer rehabilitation services.

Table 7

Summary of Participants' Responses Regarding Theme 5: Juvenile Justice Staff

Alias Names	Support Staff	Undedicated Staff	Male Role Model
Karl	X		X
Jerry		X	X
Clifton	X		X
John	X		X
Bill	X		X
Robin	X		X
Tom	X		X
Ruford		X	X
Duran	X		X
Wilton	X		X

Theme 6: Advice to other young offenders. Below are participants' responses expressing ways in which other young offenders could avoid getting into legal trouble or redirect from a path of deviant behaviors or criminal activities.

All 10 participants shared their personal experiences on how they were able to avoid reoffending and how they learned from their mistakes during their juvenile incarceration experiences. Participants gave advice based on their juvenile incarceration experiences

Bill said based on his experiences at a juvenile detention facility, this is not a place for young offenders.

There is not enough room or time here but I would say briefly, this is not a place for no one. If you can trust in the Lord, he will give you the right mindset to change and give up your old ways. Also surround yourself with positive role models. People have way more influence on you than you can imagine. (Bill)

Duran stated that the criminal life is not all that it appeared to be and young offenders must be brave to try a different lifestyle, before they destroy their lives. He said:

I would tell them that the life they think they are living is not true. This life is going to tear them down and either kill them or put away for life. My thing should go talk to God ask him to show you what he has planned for your life and what he wants you to do now. (Duran)

Ruford shared similar thoughts like participant Duran in offering advice to young offenders:

I want to tell all young offenders that, if you don't change your mindset, if you don't realize that something, just aren't worth it, and if you don't realize that every time you take a step forward inside one of these gates, you take a step back in life. (Ruford)

Tom explained the stress of incarceration on family, friends, and most of all yourself

It puts a major strain on not only yourself but to people you love. If you like people to tell you what to do all day long 24/7 being away from family and friends and only getting to call them once a week for 10 minutes or taking a shower with cheap soap that break out your skin and only being able to wash-up for 7 minutes nothing more. (Tom)

Clifton told of ways to be successful rather than involving in criminal activities I would tell them that it is not the end of the world, and they can change and some young offenders' charges will not be on their records, so they have the chance to do the right thing and become successful citizens. You don't have to do illegal things to get the cash money or whatever. (Clifton)

All 10 participants said that juvenile detention is not the place to be, since juvenile staff members are dictating your every movement and activity of the day. Also, participants encouraged young offenders to reflect and change their mindsets before their release dates, since changes in mindsets will help young offenders to succeed upon reentry into society. Other advice they offered were to: (a) build a relationship with God, which will help one to focus on positive aspects of life, and (b) surround one's self with positive support system.

Participants were asked - what else they would like to tell and these were the participants' responses. Five of the ten participants said they did not have any additional information to share at the time of the interview sessions. Below are the responses of the five other participants responses.

Bill, in his response below, suggested that young offenders who are experiencing incarceration should not believe that they are in a number system. Bill stated, "Letting youth know they are cared for, and that they are not just another number in the big system. A lot of the youth feel that no one here cares that they are just an easy pay check for someone."

Ruford gave words of encouragement for other young offenders who might help them to change from a criminal lifestyle. Ruford shared this, "Just stop looking for success in death, killing and hurting people, because you won't go anywhere. Change the person you see in the mirror, because, that's the only way you'll finish this race."

Tom shared how his personal outlook had changed because of juvenile incarceration.

I have a new outlook on things and do things differently that how I used to. And I also want to acknowledge and give glory to God for my change and for life changes because without I was surely lost and was headed for pure evilness and destruction. (Tom)

Wilton by sharing his own personal experience of life after incarceration, showed the importance of accountability for young offenders, by giving his own personal experience of life after incarceration:

I am out here where you don't have anybody telling you what to do and you have to develop your own schedule and way of life and now it is time for real responsibilities because what I do now in society counts. As I reflected on that situation when I was incarcerated it gave me motivation, I never want to go back there and I will never go back there. (Wilton)

Only five of the ten participants responded to the question, what else would you like to share? The following are some of the thoughts expressed by the five participants:

The five participants basically gave encouraging words and helpful strategies on how they were able to stay out of trouble upon their release from juvenile justice detention facilities. They mentioned the daily struggle they experienced after incarceration, in their efforts to readjust to being independent and making their decisions. Participants also said that they had to take one day at a time to not get overwhelmed with re-entry into society, after being separated from society for such a long time.

Table 8

Summary of Participants' Responses Regarding Theme 6: Advice to Other Young Offenders

Alias Names	Positive Role Model/ Mentors	Make a Plan	Change mindsets/ Lifestyles	Incarceration not for Young Adults	Take sentence time seriously	Preplanned Scheduled while incarcerated
Karl	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jerry						
Clifton	X	X	X	X	X	X
John	X		X	X	X	X
Bill						
Robin	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tom						
Ruford	X	X	X	X	X	X
Duran						
Wilton						

Research Question 1(B)

What perceptions and reflections do young adults have concerning their long-term juvenile incarceration and graduation success?

Participants' responses will be categorized based on the two emerging themes *experiences about juvenile incarceration and graduation success*.

Theme 7: Experiences about Juvenile Incarceration. Of the 10 participants interviewed, only one did not respond to the interview question that provided answers to this research question. Below are the responses from participants as they shared their stories about their experiences of being incarcerated within a juvenile detention center.

Wilton shared stories and experiences about incarceration within a juvenile detention facility.

I just thought I was going to go in there and do my time and get out not meet anybody. I got to meet new people and I shared some advice they shared some advice with me about my future and how I can become successful and do other things with my life and while being locked up or after incarceration. (Wilton)

Duran talked of his juvenile incarceration experiences in four different facilities. I have been to four different facilities. While being there I obtained my GED and have stayed out of trouble for a little bit. In one of the facility I was enrolled in a course called Auto body collision Repair, and I liked it and the course helped me developed a plan for my future. (Duran)

Tom recalled, with passion, his experiences of being incarcerated in a juvenile justice facility.

Being incarcerated gave a better outlook on the things I was doing out in the community could have gotten killed or seriously injured. Also, I had to deal with a lot of stress and depression. Just with being here going through the daily hassle, the death of friends and loved ones and just doing the time. Through it all I feel that the 4 years I served was needed and I really was going down a path of destruction and without it there's no telling where I would be. (Tom)

Clifton spoke of his lack of educational goals prior to juvenile incarceration and how he created and achieved his education goals in a detention facility.

When I first entered the juvenile facility, I didn't feel like I was going to get an education until I got to the last juvenile detention facility. I had teachers who were willing to work with me and inspire me to go gain my GED. I got saved in jail at the detention center it really changed my mindset and future plans. (Clifton)

Karl talked about his realization of the importance of having some interest in educational aspirations like Clifton

I finally realized, well I can't make it in life unless I have some kind of education whether it be a GED or high school diploma. So one day I just said you know what I'm gonna go ahead and get my education and I enrolled in GED class and graduated. (Karl)

From the 9 participants' responses, these are some common thoughts that were expressed as it related to their lived experiences of being incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities. Below are the summaries of participants' experiences of being incarcerated in the juvenile detention facilities:

The nine participants who responded to this question mentioned that they thought incarceration was a life changing event for them, since significant positive changes occurred during incarceration. Participants attributed the changes in their lives to the positive influences around them. The interaction with positive staff, and offering programs that addressed their needs and problems were crucial in changing their mindsets. All nine participants mentioned changing their outlook on life. Two participants noted that having negative mindsets can lead to involvement in deviant and criminal behaviors.

Another major factor that contributed to the experience shared by participants that the juvenile detention staff was positive, encouraging, and motivating. Participants agreed that when they realized the level of staff dedication towards them, it gave them the extra push to want to succeed in life and become law-abiding and productive citizens in society.

Table 9

Summary of Participants' Responses Regarding Theme 7: Experiences About Juvenile Incarceration

Alias Names	Positive Role Model/ Mentors	Riots	Change mindsets/ Lifestyles	No Social interactions	Gang Involvements	Regaining Hope	Support System
Karl	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jerry	X		X	X		X	X
Clifton	X	X	X	X	X		X
John	X		X	X		X	X
Bill	X		X	X	X		
Robin	X	X	X	X		X	X
Tom							
Ruford	X	X	X	X	X		X
Duran	X	X	X	X			X
Wilton	X	X	X	X		X	X

Theme 8: Graduation Success. Participants shared their graduation successes while they were incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities. All 10 participants obtained a high school diploma or a GED. while they were serving time in juvenile detention facilities. Participants Jerry, Bill and Wilton earned their high school diplomas, while Karl, John, Clifton, Russell, Tom, Ruford, and Duran earned their GED. diplomas (the GED diploma is a high school equivalent diploma).

John said that when he obtained his high school diploma, he felt proud of his academic achievement. John shared this, “I forced myself to see the opportunities of achieving my educational goal. After I had motivated myself, I was able to find help in my education and graduate with my high school diploma.”

Ruford explained why he got his GED instead of a high school diploma while he was incarcerated. Ruford stated, “I have my GED because, I don’t agree with the way the new common core curriculum is taught so I decided to go ahead and get my diploma so I could go to college.”

Karl shared similar stories as participant Ruford about earning his GED rather than high school diploma.

I finally realized that I wasn’t gonna be graduating with my classmates. Then I said to myself, well if I am not going to get my high school diploma, you know what I’m going enrolled in GED class and graduate when I’m supposed to and graduate earlier than my peers. (Karl)

Russell shared this experience related to his academic achievement while he was incarcerated. Russell stated that “My experience with the educational system in DJJ has

been really positive. I feel as though the state is focusing really hard on the education aspect of incarceration. I obtained my GED. while incarcerated.”

Jerry shared his high school experiences within juvenile justice facility, and why he choose a GED rather than high school diploma

Well I really didn't go to high school. I got locked up in the 8th grade, so all my high school experience was within the juvenile justice system. I never got a high school diploma I just enrolled in the GED program. (Jerry)

Wilton said that his lack of academic interest prior to juvenile incarceration prevented him from attending traditional high school.

I didn't care about graduating I was not with all that waking up and going to school early morning. Once I got incarcerated and realized the opportunity was still open it was something new to me, I changed my mindset and earned my high school diploma. (Wilton)

All 10 participants said they re-focused their interests and attentions on education while being incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities. Participants mentioned that once they were incarcerated school was no longer a choice, it was a mandatory program. All participants graduated while they were incarcerated. Three of the ten have high school diplomas and the other seven have GED. Participants mentioned the difficult experiences of readjusting to go school, since on the outside they would skip school or get suspended from school. As participants recalled their education experiences while incarcerated, they shared how sometimes school and classes were boring and difficult to attend all day, because it was their first time attending school on a consistent basis for all day.

Participants said that to succeed, they had to channel their negative emotions into learning and achieving their education. They also expressed the pride they felt, their parents, friends, and incarcerated peers had when they walked across the stage. One participant stated that, he was the first to graduate in his family even though he was the youngest child. All 10 participants agreed that their education will help them to be successful in society like getting a job and going to college.

Table 10

Summary of Participants' Responses Regarding Theme 8: Graduation Successes

Alias Names	High School Diplomas	GEDs	Obtained New skills/Refocused Interests	Knowledgeable/Highly Qualified Teachers	Support System
Karl		X	X	X	X
Jerry		X	X	X	X
Clifton		X	X	X	X
John	X		X		X
Bill	X		X	X	X
Robin		X	X	X	X
Tom		X	X		X
Ruford		X	X	X	X
Duran		X	X		X
Wilton	X		X	X	X

Discrepant Cases/nonconforming Data

Nearly all data collected were placed in categories identified in table 2. I allowed participants to express themselves freely; however participants were re-directed by using probe questions, especially when the information was not relevant in providing answers to the research questions. I used the method of reduction coding to eliminate unnecessary information in the study. Participant's responses were screened carefully to ensure only relevant information was included in the discussion that was significant meaning to the body of literature. I sensed the information shared was personal to participants and hence I did not ask for further explanation based on participant's reactions and emotions as they answered the questions. There were two participants who mentioned scriptures and the other about the birth of his child.

Evidence of Data Quality

Information presented was gathered from the 10 interview sessions. After each interview session, I listened to the audio tape ensured clarity in sound and conversation, to verify that participant's responses are captured. The process used assisted in ensuring that I was able to report the actual lived experiences of young adult's juvenile incarceration and graduation success. The data presentation and findings are based on the voices of participants. I ensured that all of my personal biases and judgment was eliminated by using member checking, and peer reviewer. The significance for this study is to share young adults' success stories about their juvenile incarceration and graduation success experiences. I used the method of reduction to include only relevant experiences that will answer the research questions for the study. Also, for validity, I ensured all

information were collected using the same procedures, kept in a safe and secured location only accessible by the researcher.

Summary

In Chapter 4 I reported the results regarding young adults' perceptions of graduation successes during long-term juvenile incarceration. There were 10 interview sessions conducted to gather information from young adults regarding their lived experiences. Based on the data analysis procedures implemented, there were eight emerging major themes: challenges, support systems, overcoming patterns, turning points, juvenile justice staff, advice to other young offenders, experiences of juvenile incarceration, and graduation success. The discussion was aligned with the major themes to provide meaningful answers to the research questions. In addition, the discussion was extended to how data were gathered, recorded, grouped, and analyzed. Information regarding participants' demographic descriptions was displayed, and how trustworthiness was maintained during the study. The 10 interviews were approximately between 30 to 60 minutes. In Chapter 5, the interpretation of the findings, recommendations for actions and for future study, implications for social change, and researcher's reflections were all included in the discussion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to document the lived experiences and perceptions of young adults who completed high school successfully by graduating with a high school diploma or GED during or after long-term juvenile incarceration. Based on extensive research, I was unable to find existing literature that explored thoughts, experiences, and success stories of young adults who were once incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities. Hence, I was able to identify this gap, which allowed me the opportunity to capture 10 young adults' thoughts and experiences regarding their juvenile incarceration and graduation success. Participants passionately and eagerly shared their success stories and suggested advice for other young offenders of the dangers involved in criminal lifestyles. Most participants were incarcerated at the age of 16 and did not experience high school in a traditional school setting. They also showed the lack of interest in school prior to incarceration, and had a high level of criminal involvement. While recent data show that as of 2011, "juvenile incarceration rates have declined by 42% from 1997" (Hockenberry, 2014), "the United States still has the highest rate of juvenile incarceration among industrialized nations (196 per 100,000 adolescents)" (Hockenberry, 2014). By comparison, "England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Sweden and Australia all have youth incarceration rates below 50 per 100,000" (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013). The research questions below were the driving force for conducting this study.

- 1) What are young adults' perceptions and experiences of high school graduation success and long-term juvenile incarceration?

- a) How do young adults describe their experiences of long-term juvenile incarceration?
- b) What perceptions do young adults have concerning long-term juvenile incarceration and its relationship to graduation success?

Eight themes emerged from conducting 10 different interview sessions with young adults about their perceptions of graduation success during long-term juvenile incarceration: *challenges, support systems, overcoming patterns, turning points, juvenile justice staff, advice to other young offenders, experiences of juvenile incarceration, and graduation success*. I used verbatim quotes from participants' responses to develop the information presented in the findings section of this chapter.

Interpretation of Findings

Participants were recruited by posting the invitational flyers at different locations and online social media – Facebook. In the initial phase, I was frustrated trying to locate different young adults and set up interview sessions. My frustration was reduced after I was able to contact potential participants and set up my first interview.

Findings suggested that young adults' experiences prior to juvenile incarceration had negative elements such, as no interest in school, lack of positive support and role models, and a life of criminal involvements. Participants found support during incarceration by:

- building a relationship with God
- surrounding themselves with positive role models
- inner motivation to succeed and focus on their educational goals.

The information garnered from the theories mentioned in Chapter 2 provided evidence to support answers to the research questions:

What are young adults' perceptions and experiences of high school graduation success and long-term juvenile incarceration?

Theme 1: Challenges. All participants expressed various challenges they experienced while incarcerated in juvenile justice facilities. The most common challenges were: separation from families and friends, families' disappointments, lack of support, long sentencing time, gang related activities, fighting, peer pressures, and lack of inner motivation. Participants mentioned how these challenges could have prevented them from succeeding, could have led them to revert to criminal lifestyles, and prevented them from re-entering society as law-abiding citizens. According to Piquero, Cullen, Uneever, and Gordon (2010) there is a direct alignment between young adults or at-risk youths who were repeatedly detained in a juvenile justice system, that they are mostly likely to experience lack of academically achievements and problems at schools. All 10 participants stated that prior to juvenile incarceration they demonstrated no interests in school successes, since school did not appeal to their current involvement in criminal activities, and there were no connectivity and relatedness to school activities, hence participants had no desire to achieve academic goals. Another challenge expressed is that fact that upon release, they returned to their original natural environment, which is a challenge of keeping their focus achievement oriented.

Participants were ecstatic to share how they were able to overcome these challenges and experience graduation success. Participants mentioned how experiencing these challenges motivated them to change their mindsets, set future academic goals, and

having the desires to succeed and become productive citizens. Participants continued to share that experiencing these challenges strengthen them as individuals, to accept their mistakes and learn life's lessons from the experience. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2013) reported that there is a reduction in the number of juveniles incarcerated in several states. In other words, programs, services, and early interventions are effective in preparing juveniles to re-enter society successfully. Additionally, juveniles are prepared and armed to re-connect and re-engage with society in positive and law-abiding ways.

The Merton and Robert Agnew's General Strain theory provided answers for the reasons young offenders participated in criminal activities. Merton (1957) and Agnew (1992) predicted three causes of juvenile delinquency. They named these are: juveniles become delinquent when they are prevented from achieving positive goals, when juveniles perceived that positive goals will be removed or threaten to be removed, and when juveniles are exposed to constant negative stimuli at home, school, and in society. All 10 participants mentioned that before incarceration they skip classes and demonstrate lack of interests for school, become bored and lack the abilities to achieve academically, and hence they turned to a life of crime to divert feelings of failure. Once the goal seemed attainable, all 10 participants started to succeed academically during their juvenile incarceration. Participants admitted that attending school consistently, gaining knowledge, and succeeding were all new experiences for them.

Theme 2: Support systems. Shanahan and Agudelo (2012) mentioned that when incarcerated juveniles can maintain positive relationships and communicate with friends and families while they are incarcerated, they will possibly react positively to treatment offered by juvenile justice facilities and in the community. In other words, maintaining

stable healthy relationships with friends and loved ones help incarcerated juveniles to maintained positive mindsets and behaviors. All 10 participants mentioned the importance of surrounding themselves with a positive support system and how this positive support influences their successes during, and after incarceration. Participants' support systems were family members, friends, incarcerated peers, expressions of encouragement, financial support, and juvenile justice staff and teachers. All 10 participants realized the positive effects of their support system during and after incarceration. Most participants mentioned that the support and encouragement received from family members and juvenile staff members greatly impacted their successes since they would not be able to re-enter society successfully. One participant mentioned that his purpose for being successful was for his parents, and also to prove to them that he has the inner motivation to succeed.

All participants realized that their support system was a contributing factor to their success. Several participants shared that receiving supports even after their criminal involvements gave them the desires to succeed for themselves and appreciate family members, friends, and juvenile justice staff members. Participants even shared that they appreciate and respect the laws better and understand the reason for becoming law-abiding citizens.

The reason for using the Bronfenbrenner's theory was to explore the influence of relationships building on young adults and the impact of the lack As such relationship on failure. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory examined the importance of adolescent's development and their interaction with the different level of society. Bronfenbrenner explored possible risks factors that would influence adolescent indulgence in deviant or

unacceptable behaviors. Santrock (2012) posited that the key, “to treat existing problems and protecting against the future occurrences is to identify the risk factors” (p. 426).

Bronfenbrenner’s theory is based on building significant relationships to experience successes in life. He further stated that a breakdown of relationship will lead to unacceptable behaviors among adolescents. All 10 participants mentioned that building relationships and receiving positive support systems helped them in achieving academic success and prepare them to be ready to succeed in society.

Theme 3: Overcoming patterns. Participants shared ways in which they overcame the challenges of juvenile incarceration and experienced graduation success. One common way among all 10 participants was that of changing their mindsets. Participants referenced the fact that that their changing mindsets assisted in them experiencing graduation success and enabled them to maintain positive outlooks even after juvenile incarceration. In addition to changing their mindsets, participants mentioned that there were other factors that contributed to their overcoming incarceration and succeeding academically. Some of the factors that enabled such were changing their lives positively, time served, reflecting and evaluating their lives, and making decisions to revert from deviant behaviors to a life of positive behaviors.

As participants continued to share their stories, they mentioned that the importance of a belief system, and building a relationship with God changed their mindsets. It helped to rehabilitate them successfully to transition to public schools and or society. They also, said that after juvenile incarceration they went home to the same externalities and negative environment as before incarceration. However, they learned

new skills, tools, change of mindsets and knowledge that helped them to overcome the temptations of reverting to a criminal lifestyle, and avoid negative behaviors.

Homan's theory of exchange, which means expectations and rewards, must be equitable from the perceptions of the person with the expectations. All 10 participants succeeded academically in spite of incarceration, because they had hopes of achieving goals for their efforts and time invested academically. Based on the information gathered, it was apparent that participants were working on overcoming the pattern of juvenile incarceration. Barnert, Perry, Azzi, Shetgiri, Ryan, Dudovitz, Zima, and Chung (2014) argued that there is a need to break the cycles of juvenile incarceration, and to achieve this goal all stakeholders such as: legislators, educators, community leaders must create laws that make community-based programs first choice than incarceration. The authors continued the discussion by stating the importance of early interventions and community-based programs that will equip young people with coping skills and knowledge needed to make positive decisions and avoid deviant and at-risk behaviors. In other words, the first choice for at-risk juveniles should not be incarceration but rather community-based programs that offer programs and services for the rehabilitation of previously incarcerated juveniles.

How do young adults describe their experiences of long-term juvenile incarceration?

Theme 4: Turning points. Participants mentioned that self-motivation helped them to experience turning points during and after incarceration. Participants stated that they had a desire to be successful and avoid a criminal lifestyle; these desires motivated them to succeed and experienced academic successes, even when the odds of incarceration were against them. Participants said that before incarceration; they showed

lack interests in schools, greater involvement in criminal activities, repeat recidivism, and lack of self-motivation to succeed and achieve academic goals. Participants stated that incarceration, time away from family, length of time served and family supports, contributed to their academic success during and after juvenile incarcerated. Zaff, Ginsberg, Boyd, and Kakli (2014) shared their findings of how “disconnected youth who participated in reengagement programs have a potential for steeper gains than youth who are connected to school” (p. 530). The responses gave by; all 10 participants showed that they were disconnected at one point or another from schools, families, society. However, during incarceration, juveniles were given opportunities to participate in several programs that helped them to reach their turning points and reenter society successfully.

Several participants thought that after serving incarceration time, they would revert to their old criminal lifestyle, but as time passed they became more receptive to programs offered, and the academic activities provided and then realized that the fear they had about these programs diminished, and their mindsets for change started. Once this process started, they were ready to allow themselves to experience new opportunities. Participants also stated that the life changing experience of being incarcerated impacted their lives and motivated them to change, achieve their dreams, and experience academic and graduation success. According to Rodriguez (2013), stated that some recidivism reduction was experienced among youth who received early interventions. In other words, participants experienced turning points because of interventions, tools provided, and the knowledge and training garnered from services offered by juvenile facilities and upon being released.

All 10 participants said that the change of mindset, and wanting success for oneself, helped them to succeed. Clifton alluded to this when he said, “no one can succeed unless they want it for themselves.” Having the desire to succeed is crucial for while external motivational factors are important, being self-motivated is the key to success. All 10 participants recognized the importance of being self-motivated and working hard in helping them to achieve their personal goals in life, Ryan and Deci (2004) supported this comment when they mentioned, that motivating factors should be intrinsic rather than extrinsic factors. Ryan and Deci (2004) in their self-determination theory alluded to the fact that incarcerated juveniles can achieve academic achievements and graduation success based on their innate drives to succeed with - positive support systems, and resources available to aid their academic successes and school attachments. The sample population for the study provided evidence for this theory, since all 10 participants succeeded academically by graduating with a high school diploma or GED. In spite of juvenile incarceration, students can experience academic success, with the presence of positive internal and external forces. Thus the argument can be made that incarcerated juveniles and at risks youth can still accomplish and experience academic success.

Theme 5: Juvenile Justice Staff. Another emergent theme gleaned from participants is that of having confidence in staff members. Such was the important in helping them to regain their trust in people. Nine participants mentioned that staff members helped them to succeed academically. However, one participant suggested that few staff members were not dedicated to helping youth, but instead were merely doing their job for the salary or to gain experiences to advance to other careers. While some

participants agreed that several staff members contributed to their turning points that led them to experience academic success and being able to cope with incarceration. Bonnie, Johnson, Chemers, and Schuck (2013) highlighted the importance of treating incarcerated juveniles fairly and with dignity. These authors further stated that it is imperative to allow youth to perceive that they are being treated fairly; this perception of fair treatment can contribute to reducing recidivism and increase the possibility of positive outcomes. In addition, “these positive outcomes can contribute to the normal processes of social learning, moral development, and legal socialization during adolescence.” (p. 78).

Participants showed appreciation for juvenile justice the time and effort staff members invested for incarcerated juveniles to experience success in their lives during, and after incarceration. Participants also expressed gratitude for dedicated staff members who replaced their biological family while they were incarcerated, by sharing words of encouragement, listening to their stories, recommending services, role modeling, and contacting external professional assistance for after incarceration services.

Theme 6: Advice to other young adults. I asked previously incarcerated juveniles, who are successful to share advice for other young offenders eight participants were eager to share their thoughts, while three participants stated that “they did not have any advice to share at the time of the interview.” The eight participants explained what their experiences and expectations were, and then revealed that criminal lifestyles were not what they envisioned. Participants showed their determination to encourage young offenders, because of their personal experiences while incarcerated. They ready to share what they missed out on with families, friends and society. All participants wished that they had taken another path in life than the one they chose to travel on in the past, said

they had someone taken the time to share, in detail, experiences they might have had the opportunity to make better decisions and choices. Cullen and Jonson (2014) supported these contemplations when they indicated in their study that the amount of time spent in juvenile confinement will mostly likely help juveniles to assess the impact of the consequences of their inappropriate behaviors. In other words, juveniles need to ponder seriously about the impact of juvenile incarceration on their future in the community and schools. When juveniles reflect and assess the consequences of involving in criminal activities and lifestyles, they are less likely to continue on that path which prevents them from being successful and becoming productive citizens.

What perceptions and reflections do young adults have concerning their long-term juvenile incarceration and graduation success?

Theme 7: Experiences within the Juvenile Justice System. There were several experiences shared by the 10 participants during the interview sessions. Incarcerated experiences vary from negative to positive, ranging from being a part of fights, and gang related activities to becoming role models for others, and joining mentoring groups, concentrating on school work and assisting others to excel academically. Even the participants thought that they gained positive experiences while incarcerated; they wished they had taken another path than the criminal path that led them to juvenile incarceration. According to Aizer and Doyle (2013) when juveniles encountered incarceration, this increases the probability of high school drop outs and future incarceration later in life. However, with the change in approach based on the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2013) reported that the U.S. juvenile justice system policies endorsed community-based programs rather than incarceration for juveniles with minor offenses. With the recent

changes to community-based programs and treatments rather than incarceration among juveniles, the yields from this approach have beneficial to youth, families and society. The report highlighted the financial gains to provide community-based programs and treatments rather than incarceration.

Theme 8: Graduation success. According to Mendell (2011) incarcerated youths require more structure, mandatory school expectations, and academic achievements, for them to experience academic success with their peers who have not experienced incarceration. These contributing factors seem to be true for participants in the study since all 10 participants experienced graduation successes while incarcerated in juvenile detention facilities. Several times during the interview sessions participants echoed the fact that they were excited about placing ownership on something that they achieved for themselves and how their achievements increased their self-esteem and confidence about achieving their dreams in life. Several of the participants stated that they were the first to achieve graduation milestone in their family, which led to a sense of pride and accomplishment. In addition, participants shared that graduation success now allows them to value themselves and make them ready to take positive risks to succeed in life and become law-abiding and productive citizens. All 10 participants are now free, back in society, making significant changes in their lifestyles and demonstrating positive attitudes about their future goals and dreams. Some participants are now working and attending schools or preparing to attend schools in the near future. According to Sum, Khatiwada, McLaughlin (2013):

“The value of a high school education cannot be measured in dollars alone, among 16-to 24-year-olds who were incarcerated during 2006-07, only 1 in 1,000

had a bachelor's degree, while 6.3 % were high school dropouts who didn't have a GED." (p. 40).

In other words, the 10 participants that shared their stories overcame the challenges of juvenile incarceration and still experienced academic success and graduation success.

The theories that supported the concept of this study is Life Course Theory endorsed by Elder (1985), Benson (2001), and Sampson and Laub (1993). The theory proposed that there are several factors contributing to the success or failure of an individual's life. In other words, major life changing experiences will impact the outcomes of the person's life. All 10 participants mentioned the shock of incarceration on families, peers, and themselves. All participants in giving advice to other young offenders, stated that criminal life was not worth it, being separated from families and friends, and being incarcerated were life changing events that brought about changes in their lives. All participants achieved graduation successes while they were incarcerated in a juvenile detention facility. They all attributed their educational successes to the life changing event of incarceration.

Limitations of the Study

In conducting this study these were some limitations experienced by the researcher:

1. Participants were trying to recall pertinent information.
2. Findings are unique to the population of this study
3. Some participants were shy or not expressive with sharing their experiences about juvenile incarceration and graduation successes.

Recommendations for Action

Juvenile justice officials need to recognize the importance of hiring staff members that will make differences in the lives of young adults entrusted to their care. Juvenile justice officials can implement or improve on training courses that will prepare staff members on how to effectively deal with young incarcerated juveniles. An added component would be to improve the mentoring program, so that upon release, young adults would have assigned mentors in their communities other than their probation officers.

The education officials in the Department of Juvenile Justice should collaborate with community outreach organizations to ensure that upon being released from juvenile detention facilities, young adults would receive the follow-up services, resources, and assistance needed to ensure continued success in society. Collaborating with technical colleges to offer more trade courses for juveniles while incarcerated would also be beneficial to ensure that participants leave with skills to prepare them for the job market and thus enabling them to obtain employment.

Inviting successful young adults to speak to the currently incarcerated young offenders could disseminate the results of this study. Allowing previously incarcerated juveniles, who are successful in society, could help to give hope to incarcerated young offenders that there is a future after juvenile incarceration. My intention is to continue research on the successes of previously incarcerated juveniles and conduct follow-up research on their successes.

Recommendations for Future Study

Listed below are recommendations from conducting the phenomenological study of

understanding young adults' perceptions of graduation success during, or after long-term juvenile incarceration. Future research can be conducted in the following areas:

1. A yearly follow-up research to find out the continued success of the young adults participated in this study. This study can help the Department of Juvenile Justice and juvenile officials to track the continued successes of previously incarcerated juveniles. This tracker study can help to prove that previously incarcerated juveniles are responding to programs and services offered during or after juvenile incarceration.
2. Research on previously incarcerated juveniles who did not graduate with a high school diploma or GED. The purpose for this future study is to track the number of juveniles who are not experiencing graduation successes. The study can help to create programs and services to provide needed assistance to previously incarcerated juveniles, which could result in increased in high school graduation and a reduction in recidivism.
3. A comparative study on graduation success after juvenile incarceration among incarcerated males and females. The aim is to understand whether females or males are more receptive to the services and programs offered during and after juvenile incarceration. Also on the other hand, whether there are no differences between males and females juveniles previously incarcerated in juvenile facilities.
4. The impact of teachers' perceptions of the success of incarcerated juveniles. Conducting such study can help to understand if there is a relationship between teachers' perceptions and graduation success of incarcerated

juveniles and also understanding the impact of teachers' perceptions on incarcerated juveniles.

The above recommendations will help to increase and enrich the body of literature, which can help to provide better rehabilitation services for incarcerated juveniles. Future researchers can use this study as the basis to conduct research to document the progress and failure of incarcerated juveniles regarding academic success and juvenile incarcerated.

Implications for Social Change

The potential significance of the positive social change from this study is to contribute to the public schools and juvenile justice educational systems. The information garnered from this study is relevant and helpful to aid in addressing the transition processes from the Department of Juvenile Justice to public schools, institutions of higher learning, and communities. The juvenile justice system should re-evaluate programs offered to ensure effective rehabilitation of juveniles. The reevaluation of current programs could ensure that previously incarcerated juveniles become law-abiding citizens, help reduce recidivism rates, and increase graduation rates. The results and findings from this study might help to improve the quality of the educational and non-educational services offered to incarcerated juveniles. The findings of the study can be applicable to incarcerated juveniles, juveniles transitioning from juvenile detention centers in society, schools, and jobs. Also to educators and juvenile justice staff that helped to implement programs for rehabilitation.

Researcher's Reflection

At first, my thoughts were that all participants would have a lot of information to share and I would have difficulties gathering and analyzing relevant information for the study. However, I realized by the second interview that participants were rather shy and not forthcoming with information. As I listened to participants in the interview sessions, it dawned on me that these young adults were never given the support to succeed academically, and that some participants were yearning for something else. However, they did not know how to find it; hence they turned to a life of criminal activities.

I now understand the importance of structured and positive learning environments, because as educators, we have to direct the minds of our students, or else they will channel their energies into negative pathways. Parents must understand the developmental stages of their children and become more involved in the struggles experienced by their children. While I thought about the role of educators and parents, thought provoking questions of, how will at-risk youth be taught? How will parents' involvements help to prevent young adults from a criminal lifestyle? began to haunt me. My aim was to ensure that participants' success stories can be used as motivational tools for other young adults who were once incarcerated or are incarcerated.

I have never experienced incarceration; however the opportunity to interview the 10 participants helped me to recognize some of the challenges young adults face daily. Challenges range from the lack of great support system, to peer pressure and making wrong choices. Before conducting this study, I thought that young offenders were from broken homes, and low income families. After the interview sessions, I realized that young offenders can come from all kinds of family configurations and income levels.

Also, I came to understand more clearly, the significant roles of the education system in the success of the lives of young offenders. It takes committed and dedicated individuals to work with incarcerated and at-risk youth. In addition, the juvenile justice officials must demand accountability by providing high quality training and screening of its staff members. Such measures will help to ensure that our young offenders become productive and law-abiding citizens in society.

Conclusions

This study has been profoundly meaningful to me and my desire is that it will offer a tool for assisting those who are working with incarcerated individuals. I deemed this journey a privilege; I had the opportunity to report the lived experiences of 10 participants, who willingly shared their thoughts regarding long-term juvenile incarceration and graduation successes. It is also my desire that it will add to the body of literature as it relates to how young adults perceived the impact of long-term juvenile incarceration and turning points in their lives. Participants' success stories have inspired me, and it is my conviction that they can serve as motivational tools for currently incarcerated juveniles and at-risk youth by encouraging them to experience academic successes, become productive, and law-abiding citizens.

Findings from the study indicated that prior to juvenile incarceration, participants were on a negative and downward spiral in life; they lacked positive support and role models, attachment to school, and plans for their future. Hence, they were all involved in criminal activities. Further findings showed that participants' turning points in life contributed to positive changes that led to graduation successes. The social contributions from conducting this study are that participants were re-engaged and attached to school,

employable, enrolled in college, reduced or the eliminated criminal involvement, readjusted successfully in society, and have become positive role models.

Juvenile justice officials must continue to invest in follow-up programs and services for young offenders upon release, which can result in increased success stories in society. Another major highlight from conducting this study is that educators within juvenile justice system and public schools are tasked to create and maintain structured and positive learning environments, since findings from the study proved that academic success does contribute to the reduction of recidivism among incarcerated juveniles and at-risk youths.

These are some unanswered questions from this study: What are the best methods to capture the minds of at risks students to experience academic success? How will parental involvement prevent at-risk youth from a life of criminal activities? The overall significance of this study is that all 10 participants successfully integrated into society, became law-abiding citizens furthering their education or were employed.

References

- Aizer, A., & Doyle, J. (2013). Juvenile incarceration, human capital and future crime: Evidence from randomly-assigned judges. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. doi:10.3386/w19102
- Agnew, R. (1992). Foundation for a general strain theory of crime and delinquency. *Criminology*, 30(4), 475-487. Retrieved from <http://www.criminology.fsu.edu/crimtheory/agnew.htm>
- Annie E. Casey Foundation (2008). A road map for juvenile justice reform. 2008 Kids Count Data Book: State profiles of child well-being. Baltimore, MD. Retrieved from http://www.kidscount.org/datacenter/db_08pdf/2008_databook.pdf
- Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2013). Youth incarceration in the United States. Baltimore, MD. Retrieved from: <http://www.aecf.org/resources/youthincarceration-in-the-united-states>
- Archwamety, T., & Katsiyannis, A. (2000). Academic remediation, parole violation, and recidivism rates among delinquent youths. *Remedial and Special Education*, 21, 161–170. doi:10.1177/074193250002100306
- Bales, B. T., Mann, W., Piquero, K., & Berk, A. (2011). Incarceration, education and transition from delinquency. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 39, 355–365. doi:10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2011.04.003
- Barnert, E., Perry, R., Azzi, V., Shetgiri, R., Ryan, G., Dudovitz, R., ... Chung, P. (2014). Incarcerated youths' perspectives on protective factors and risk factors for juvenile offending: A qualitative analysis. *American Journal of Public Health*, 1–7. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2014.302228

- Black, T., Brush, M., Grow, T., Hawes, J., Henry, D., & Hinke, R. (1996). National bridge transition program follow-up study. *Journal of Correctional Education, 47*, 4–12.
- Blomberg, T., Bales, W., Mann, K., Piquero, A., & Berk, R. (2011). Incarceration, education and transition from delinquency. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 39*, 355–365. doi:10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2011.04.003
- Bond, L. (2001). Operation outreach: Reaching out to youths through real-life experience. *Corrections Today, 63*(1), 46–49.
- Bonnie, J., Johnson, L., Chemers, M., & Schuck, J. (2013). *Reforming juvenile justice: A developmental approach*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Butler, F. (2011). Rush to judgment: Prisoner's views of juvenile justice. *Western Criminology, 12*(3), 106–119. Retrieved from <http://wcr.sonoma.edu/v12n3/Butler.pdf>
- Butts, J. A., & Mears, D (2011). Trends in American youth crime. In D. W. Springer & A. R. Roberts (Eds.), *Juvenile justice and delinquency* (pp. 23–52). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett.
- Chung, H. L., Little, M., & Steinberg, L., Altschuler, D. (2005). The transition to adulthood for adolescents in the juvenile justice system: A developmental perspective, *20*, 68–91. Retrieved from <http://transitions.s410.sureserver.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/chung-juvenile-just-formatted.pdf>

- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cullen, T., & Jonson, L. (2014). Labeling theory and correctional rehabilitation: Beyond unanticipated consequences. In D. P. Farrington & J. Murray (Eds.), *Labeling theory: Empirical tests* (pp. 63–88). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Denscombe, M. (1998). *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.
- Department of Juvenile Justice. (n.d.). Office of education history. Retrieved from <http://www.djj.state.ga.us/>
- Elder, H., Gimbel, C., & Ivie, R. (1995). Turning points in life: the case of military service and war. *Military Psychology*, 3, 215–231.
- Foley, R. (2001). Academic characteristics of incarcerated youth and correctional education programs. A literature review. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 9, 248–259. Retrieved from <http://ebx.sagepub.com/content/9/4/248.short>
- Fullan, M. (2006). Change theory: A force for school improvement. *Seminar Series Paper: Center for Strategic Education*, 157. Retrieved from http://www.catalyst-chicago.org/sites/catalyst-chicago.org/files/michael_fullen_change_theory.pdf
- Furlong, M., & Christensen, L. (2008). Engaging students at school and with learning: A relevant construct for all students. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45(5), 365–368. doi:10.1002/pits.20302
- Gagnon, J., Brian B., Van Loan, C., Leone, P. (2009). Juvenile correctional schools: Characteristics and approaches to curriculum, education and treatment of

- children, 32(4), 673-696. Retrieved from <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/IR00000472/00001>
- Guba, E. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational communication and Technology Journal.*, 29, 75-91. doi: 10.1007/BF02766777
- Hay, I., & Israel, M. (2009). *Private people, secret places: Ethical research in practice. In aspiring academics: A resource book for graduate students and early career faculty.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Heckman, J., & Lafontaine, P. (2008). The declining American high school graduation rate: evidence, sources, and consequences. Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/reporter/2008number1/heckman.html>
- Heckman, J., & Lafontaine, P. (2010). The American high school graduation rate: trends and levels. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 92(2), 244-262. doi: 10.1162/rest.2010.12366.
- Hockenberry, S. (2014). Juveniles in residential placement, 2011. *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: National Report Series.* Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Holman, B., & Ziedenberg, J. (2006). The dangers of detention: The impact of incarcerating youth in detention and other secure facilities. *Justice Policy Institute.* Baltimore, Maryland. Retrieved from http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/dangers_of_detention.pdf
- Homans, G. (1974). *Social behavior: Its elementary forms.* (Rev. ed.). New York, NY: Harcourt.

- Husserl, E. (1970). *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press. (Original work published in 1936).
- Husserl, E. (1983). *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy. First book* (F. Kersten, Trans.). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff. (Original work published 1913).
- Kirk, D., & Sampson, R. (2012). Juvenile arrest and collateral educational damage in the transition to adulthood. *American sociological association*. Retrieved from www.soe.sagepub.com
- LaVoie, R. (2007). *The motivation breakthrough*. New York, NY: Touchstone.
- LeBlanc, L., & Pfannenstiel, J. (1991). Unlocking learning: Chapter 1 in correctional facilities. Washington, DC: US Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED339778.pdf>
- Leone, P., Krezmien, M., Mason, L., & Meisel, S. (2010). Organizing and delivering empirically based literacy instruction to incarcerated youth: Exceptionality. *A Special Education Journal*, 13(2). doi: 10.1207/s15327035ex1302_3
- Lincoln, Y. (1995). Emerging criteria for quality in qualitative and interpretive research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 275-289. doi:10.1177/107780049500100301
- Maten, A., Best, K., & Garmezy, N. (1990). Resilience and development: Contributions from the study of children who overcome adversity. *Development and Psychopathology*, 2, 425-444. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2948722/pdf/wpa030145.pdf>
- McLeigh, J., & Sianko, N. (2010). Where have all the children gone? The effects of the justice system on America's children and youth. *American Journal of*

Orthopsychiatry, 80(4), 334-341. doi:10.1111/j.1939-0025.2010.01037.x

Means, B., Chelemer, C., & Knapp, M. (Eds.) (1991). *Teaching advanced skills to at-risk students*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mears, P., & Travis, J. (2004). The dimensions, pathways, and consequences of youth reentry. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.urban.org/pyblications/410927.html>

Mendel, R. (2011). No place for kids: The case for reducing juvenile incarceration. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/OurWork/JuvenileJustice/JuvenileJusticeReport.aspx>.

Mendler, A. (2000). *Motivating students who don't care: Successful techniques for educators*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Merriam, S. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merton, R. (1938). *Social structure and anomie*. : American Sociological Review, 3(5), 672-682. Retrieved from <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00031224%28193810%293%3A5%3C672%3ASSAA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-8>

Miles, M., & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Moustakas, C. (1990) *Heuristic research: design, methodology and applications*. Newbury Park, Sage.

Moustakas, C. (1994) *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage.

- Natsuaki, M., Xiaojia, G., & Wenk, E. (2008). Continuity and changes in the developmental trajectories of criminal career: Examining of timing of first arrest and high school graduation. *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 37, 431-444. doi:10.1007/s10964-006-9156-0
- Nance, D., & Novy, F. (2011). The power of education in juvenile justice: In A.R. Roberts and D.W. Springer (Eds.), *Juvenile delinquency and juvenile justice: policies, programs, and intervention strategies*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers. Retrieved from <http://www.utexas.edu/ssw/dl/file/cswr/institutes/yji/dl/power-of-education.pdf>
- Osgood, W. (2005). *On your own without a net: The transition to adulthood for vulnerable populations*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Ossa, L. (2010). Alternative high school graduates' assessments of the quality of their high school experience: Seven years later. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/501670072?accountid=14872>. (501670072).
- Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. (2nd ed.). Newbury Park: Sage.
- Piquero, R., Cullen, T., Unnever, D., Piquero, L., & Gordon, A. (2010). Never too late: Public opinion about juvenile rehabilitation. *Punishment and Society*, 12, 187-207. doi:10.1177/1462474509357379
- Rios, J. (2009). From foster care to college: Perceptions of young adults on their academic success. In M.S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the eighth annual college of education & GSN research conference*. Miami Florida International University Conference, 112-118. Retrieved from

http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference

- Rodriguez, N. (2013). Concentrated disadvantage and the incarceration of youth: examining how context affects juvenile justice. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 50(2), 189-215.
- Roper Donald v. Simmons Christopher, 03-633 543 U.S. 551 (2005).
- Rumbaut, R., & Golnaz, K. (2007). Young adults in the united states: A mid-decade profile. *Social Science Research*. doi:0.2139/ssrn.1887844
- Ryan, R., & Deci, L. (2004). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78. Oxford, University Press.
- Sampson, R., and Laub, J. (2005). A life-course view of the development of crime. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science – Sage Journal*, 602, 12–45. Retrieved from <http://ann.sagepub.com/content/602/1/12.short>
- Sampson, R., & Laub, J. (1993). *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points through Life*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Shanahan, R., and S. Agudelo. (2012). Families as partners: supporting incarcerated youth in Ohio. Washington, DC: Vera Institute of Justice. Retrieved from <http://www.vera.org/sites/default/files/resources/downloads/families-as-partners.pdf>.
- Sprott, J. (2004). The development of early delinquency: Can classroom and school climates make a difference? *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 46(5), 553-557. Retrieved from <http://www.ccja-acjp.ca/en/cjc.html>
- Stake, RE. (1994). Case Studies. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of*

Qualitative Research (pp. 236-247). Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.

Sturgill, R. (2011). Improving high school completion through a community-based reentry program for previously incarcerated juveniles. Retrieved from [http://srcea.info/Final_SRCEA-Journal_Fall\[1\].pdf#page=56](http://srcea.info/Final_SRCEA-Journal_Fall[1].pdf#page=56)

Sum, A., Khatiwada, I., & McLaughlin, J. (2013). *The consequences of dropping out of high school: Joblessness and jailing for high school dropouts and the high cost for taxpayers*. Northeastern University. Center for Labor Market Studies, Boston, MA.

Terrance Graham v. Florida, 130 S. Ct. 2011 (2011).

The governor's office of student achievement. (2009). State of Georgia 2008-2009 report card, three year comparison of graduation rates. . Retrieved from <http://www.gaosa.org/>

Toldson, A. (2011). Breaking Barriers 2: Plotting the pathway from juvenile detention and toward academic success for school-age African American males. *Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc., Washington, DC*

Turner, D. (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators. *The Qualitative Report*, 15. 754-760. Retrieved from <http://www.dism.ssri.duke.edu/pdfs/Tipsheet%20-%20Qualitative%20Interviews.pdf>

Waddell, R. The effects of transformational humane education on at-risk youth in an alternative school setting. *Journal of Education and Human Development*. 4(1), 189-195.

doi: 10.15640/jehd.v4n1a17

- Whitehead, J., & Lab, S. (2012). *Juvenile justice: An introduction*. New York, NY: Anderson/ Reed Elsevier Publishing.
- Van Manen, M. (2007) Phenomenology of practice. *Phenomenology & Practice*, 1(1), 11-30. Retrieved from <http://www.maxvanmanen.com/files/2011/04/2007-Phenomenology-of-Practice.pdf>
- Zaff, F., Ginsberg, K., Boyd, J. & Kakli, Z. (2014), Reconnecting disconnected youth: Examining the development of productive engagement. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 24: 526–540. doi: 10.1111/jora.12109
- Zweig, J. (2003). Vulnerable youth: identifying their need for alternative education settings. *Charles Stewart Mott Foundation*, 1-23. Retrieved from http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/UploadedPDF/410828_vulnerable_youth.pdf

Appendix A: Letter to Participants and Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of understanding young adults' perceptions' of graduation successes and juvenile incarceration. The researcher is inviting young adults who have experienced incarceration and graduation success to share their stories in this study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher name Simone Garwood, who is a doctoral student in the K-12 educational Leadership program at Walden University. I am a classroom teacher within a juvenile justice education school system.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to document the lived experiences and perceptions of young adults who have been incarcerated as juveniles and still were able to experience graduation success.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

1. Read and sign the consent form and all other required paperwork.
2. Meet with the researcher individually at designated location and time. The first meeting will be approximately 15 to 20 minutes, to clarify information the participants might not understand and to eliminate fears.
3. Agree to meet a second time to conduct a formal interview, where you will be ask questions of your perceptions of your experience of juvenile incarceration and how you were able to overcome and experience graduation success. The

interview will be recorded with an audio tape. The interview session is no longer than an hour.

4. Review transcript from your interview. Participants will have the opportunity to review the notes and listen to the audio tape from the interview session through Skype. The review session will last for approximately 15-20 minutes.
5. Participants will have the opportunity to review the initial interpretation and recommendations through phone conversations and google drive (where participants will be able to view the document). This session should last for 10 to 15 minutes. This opportunity allows for participants to express concerns or confirmations to the written information.

Here are some sample questions:

1. Please tell me about your experiences related to graduation success and to juvenile incarceration.....
2. Can you tell me about your high school experiences.....

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one and no organization will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. Also, no one will be able to identify you as regarding to your juvenile experiences. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are minimal risks involved in being in this study. Your real name and details will not be included in the study. I will be the only person having access to your

name and personal information. The benefits to be derived from your participation in this research are: you will have an opportunity to share your success story, document your experiences, and possibly helping others to be motivated in overcoming their challenges.

Compensation:

Your consent to participate will give you an opportunity to receive the results of the study through email or google drive or through telephone conversations.

Refreshments will be provided before and after the interview session.

Confidentiality:

All information collected and recorded will be used for the sole purpose for this study. All personal information will be stored in a safe and secure location. I will be the only one who has access to your information. The recorded and written versions of the interview will be shared with members of my dissertation committee, and they will not be able to tell who you are. Your identity will be withheld and information shared will be confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the University.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via email or phone XXX-XXX-XXXX. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Walden University's approval number for this study is IRB 09-24-14-0015816 and it expires on **September 22, 2015**.

The researcher will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

By signing this consent form, I am agreeing that I have read and understand the information presented and have the opportunity to ask questions for further clarification. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study and understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Print Name of Participant

Date of Consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

I am thankful that you are here today. My name is Simone Garwood, and we have spoken on the phone several times. I am a student at Walden University, conducting a study to understand young adults' perceptions of graduation success and juvenile incarceration. I am interested in understanding how you were able to overcome the challenges of juvenile incarceration and still experience graduation success and by the way, Congratulations. Please relax and treat this discussion between you and me, there are no wrong or right answers. I am expecting the interview session to last for an hour.

Before the interview, I want to remind you of the information on the consent form you signed in our first face to face meeting; you signed two copies, one for me and other for yourself. Is there anything you would like to change on the consent form or the interview sessions? Please let me know and again thanks for agreeing to participate in this study. I will briefly explain the content on the form. In this interview session:

1. You and I will review how the interview will be conducted to avoid any surprises.
2. You can share what you want, and if you wish not to answer a question please indicate so I will move to the next question.
3. You can choose to withdraw your participation at any time without any consequences.
4. I am asking for your permission to tape record the interview session. You have the opportunity to listen to audio session, and read the transcript for the interview. After your review, you can choose to have me edit, erase, or include additional information.

5. You can contact me at any time after the interview to understand the progress of the research.

Introductory interview questions:

1. Background information:
 - a) Please state your age
 - b) Are you attending college?
 - c) Are you full time or part time employed?

Appendix C: Interview questions

1. Please tell me about your experiences related to incarceration and to graduation success...

Probe = what stories can you share regarding your experiences being incarcerated in a juvenile detention center?

Probe = From your residential experience, what can you share regarding the educational component (e.g., school and counseling services) within your program?

Probe = please tell me about your high school experiences

2. Reflecting on your past experiences in and out of residential treatment programs, why do you think some (including yourself) succeed and others fail?

Probe = what kinds of supports have you had?

Probe = what kinds of challenges have you faced?

Probe = how were you able to overcome the repeating pattern of further delinquency?

3. Tell me about the kind of experiences that were supportive or prevented you in achieving your academic success.....

4. What do you identify as 'turning points' experiences?

Probe = what lead you to your turning points?

Probe = how did these turning points help you to experience graduation success?

5. Given your experiences in the juvenile justice system and your successes in life to date, I hope you can make some recommendations:

- a. What advice would you share with young offenders?
 - b. What would you say to personnel in juvenile justice systems – especially in relationship to education supports and about any other topics?
 - a) Probes = positive support, academic achievement, relationships with family members and teachers, connection to school....
6. What else would you like to tell me today?

Appendix D: Interview Questions alignment with research question chart

Research Question	Interview and Narrative Queries
<p>Research Question 1 What are young adults' perceptions and experiences of high school graduation success and long-term juvenile incarceration?</p>	<p><i>Interview queries and probes</i></p> <p>Reflecting on your past experiences in and out of residential treatment programs, why do you think some (including yourself) succeed and others fail?</p> <p>Probe = What kinds of supports have you had?</p> <p>Probe = What kinds of challenges have you faced?</p> <p>Probe = How were you able to overcome the repeating pattern of further delinquency?</p> <p>What else would you like to tell me?</p>
<p>Research Question 1 (A): How do young adults describe their experiences of long-term juvenile incarceration?</p>	<p><i>Interview queries and probes</i></p> <p>Tell me about the kind of experiences that were supportive or prevented you in achieving your academic success.....</p> <p>What do you identify as "Turning points"?</p> <p>Probe = What lead you to your turning point?</p> <p>Probe = How did these turning points help you to experience graduation success?</p> <p>Given your experiences in the juvenile justice system and your successes in life to date, I hope you can make some</p>

recommendations:

- a) What advice would you share with young offender?
- b) What would you say to personnel in juvenile justice systems – especially in relationship to education supports and about any other topics?

Probe = Positive support, academic achievement, relationships with family members and teachers, connection to school....

What else would you like to tell me today?

Research Question 1 (B):

What perceptions do young adults have concerning long-term juvenile incarceration and its relationship to graduation success?

Interview queries and probes

Please tell me about your experiences related to incarceration and to graduation success...

Probe = What stories can you share regarding your experiences being incarcerated in a juvenile detention center?

Probe = From your residential experience, what can you share regarding the educational component (e.g. School and counseling services) within your program?

Probe = Please tell me about your high school experience.....

What else would you like to tell me today?

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH ON UNDERSTANDING YOUNG ADULTS' PERCEPTIONS ON GRADUATION SUCCESS AFTER JUVENILE INCARCERATION

We are looking for volunteers to complete an interview session on juvenile confinement and graduation success memories. As a participant in this study, you would be asked to recall some memories from your own life and answer questions. In appreciation for your time, you will receive refreshments and a summary of the results of the study.

This study is being conducted by a Walden University doctoral student. The study has been approved by Walden University.

If you are interested, please contact *Simone Garwood* at email or XXX-XXX-XXXX for additional information and scheduling meeting time.

THANK YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Juvenile Incarceration and Graduation Success Simone Garwood Email:	Juvenile Incarceration and Graduation Success Simone Garwood Email:	Juvenile Incarceration and Graduation Success Simone Garwood Email:	Juvenile Incarceration and Graduation Success Simone Garwood Email:	Juvenile Incarceration and Graduation Success Simone Garwood Email:
---	---	---	---	---

Appendix F: Confidentiality Agreement

Name: _____ **of**
Signer: _____

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: **Phenomenological Study of Young Adults' Perceptions of High School Graduation Success and Long-term Juvenile Incarceration**. I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: _____

Date: _____