

RESILIENCY FACTORS AMONG YOUTH

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The thesis of Lindsey Reyes, “Resiliency Factors Among Youth”, approved by her Committee, has been accepted and approved by the Faculty of the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Forensic Psychology.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper first and foremost to God because I would have never found my passion to help innocent children find the confidence and perseverance within themselves to become more than they ever could have imagined without His guidance and the experiences He placed in my life. Next, I would like to dedicate this paper to my parents for never giving up on me when I was a child struggling to find who I wanted to be and for giving me the motivation I needed to get to where I am today. I would also like to recognize my brother, Ryan. Although our time was cut short and I would do anything to have you back in my life, I hope this paper will do you proud and show you that I am not taking life for granted. I am doing everything in my power to help others and honor your memory.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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The psychological outcomes of children who experience adverse life events can include critical developmental impairments such as adopting maladaptive coping skills, conforming behaviors according to the behaviors of others, inappropriately responding to social cues, and even becoming perpetrators of the same maltreatment that was committed against them as children. Under similar circumstances, studies have found that some children do not display such patterns; these children are capable of resisting the temptations of associating with delinquent social groups and demonstrate resilient characteristics such as impulse control, strong problem-solving and socialization skills, and provide themselves with an abundance of supportive resources that assist in their recovery. Utilizing a case study design in which a triangulation of three sources was gathered, the common characteristics among adolescent youth who appeared to be resilient towards an adverse life event(s) was evaluated. First, a 25 item Likert-type survey was administered to assess the participants' initial responses to questions about resiliency factors. Then, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a set of five

open-ended questions. Finally, a journal was given to each participant and the participants were prompted to answer four open-ended questions. All three sources of information were analyzed and coded for themes between each participant's written, verbal, and survey responses in order to categorize the key elements. This study was able to identify common characteristics amongst adolescents who showed resilience after adverse life events. It was found that psychological treatment was extremely beneficial to an adolescent youth's psychological healing and increased his or her chances of obtaining resilience towards adversity compared to those who did not.

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Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Problem Statement

More research needs to be conducted to identify the key factors in achieving resilience after adolescent youth who have endured one or more adverse life experiences and when a child exhibits troublesome behavior with no reasonable explanation behind it. The majority of such adolescents are suffering due to the lack of attention that is needed immediately after these behaviors are recognized. Any delay can impair the individual's ability to function productively in society in any environment that calls for social interaction and meeting the demands of authority figures. Recidivism rates within the juvenile detention centers is an increasing issue due to the lack of encouragement in rehabilitative services in and immediately out of incarceration. It can be difficult to motivate troubled youth to take part in counseling services because they may not believe they have any psychological or behavioral problems or they believe it is a sign of weakness, making them more susceptible to being bullied.

Other factors that have shown to contribute to an adolescent youth's success in achieving resilience are the family's socioeconomic status, parental negligence, refusal by the juvenile to accept any assistance, or a combination of these factors. For the adolescent who has developed disruptive behaviors due to parental negligence, steering one back in the direction of obtaining a healthier mentality and becoming a successful adult in society is the ultimate challenge. This is where research in the area of resilience

among juveniles is imperative and can greatly reduce the recidivism rates of incarceration and the rates of criminal behaviors overall.

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this research project was to find the common elements and characteristics that contribute to resiliency - whether it be after experiencing adversity or consistent behavioral concerns - and apply each participant's responses to enhancing the success of current resiliency programs. This information is critical to decreasing the population and recidivism rates within juvenile detention centers as well as decreasing the populations and recidivism rates within jails and state prisons.

This study attempted to pinpoint specific traits and methods that are considered to be the most successful among adolescents who have already achieved resilience or are currently working towards it. Many adolescent males and females in society are struggling to function successfully due to their delinquent behaviors and are constantly finding themselves in trouble with major authority figures. Most adolescents desire to find the motivation within themselves to finish school, avoid the use of illegal substances, and attain a stable job. Too many, however, are being encouraged by their peers to take the criminal means to an end because it is considered faster and simpler than finishing school and running through the process of finding an honest job.

Research Questions/Objectives

There were three research questions evaluated throughout this study: (1) Is an adolescent less likely to be drawn towards criminal activity if his/her parents or guardians do not condone it? (2) If a child does not receive psychological treatment after adversity,

is he or she always more likely to become offenders themselves? and (3) For the adolescents who did not receive psychological treatment and did not become involved in criminal activities, what type of characteristics did they portray as opposed to the adolescents who did become involved in the criminal activities? It was expected that similar psychological and environmental contexts in which each individual endured as a child will be found.

The first hypothesis was that psychological treatment for a child after he or she experiences an adverse life event would be beneficial to his or her future success in becoming resilient. The second hypothesis states that parental involvement and significant amount of support would determine how far an adolescent would test the foundation of beliefs, opinions, and morals instilled by their parent/guardian(s). The last hypothesis states that the more financially available and conveniently located resources that are in reach of the adolescent, the more likely he or she would gain the tools for adaptive coping skills and be able to build resilience in response to adversities.

Delimitations

This study only focused on the narratives and survey responses from eight teenage boys and girls from an at-risk youth program in a major metropolitan area in the western United States of America. This program involves adolescents who have dropped out of high school and have voluntarily committed themselves to making a significant change in their life to improve the quality of his or her future. It was acknowledged that most adolescents exhibiting delinquent behaviors are not always in favor of changing their habits and this may not be applicable to them directly. However, this could become a

source of motivation for those who have not yet taken the first step in wanting to improve themselves mentally, physically and socially.

Assumptions

It was presumed that resilient children have a weak desire to conform to other individuals or social groups that demonstrate criminal behavior compared to delinquent children who have an innate desire to conform to the maltreatment that was forced upon them as children. It was also assumed that those who have chosen to take part in the at-risk youth program and in this study have realized that their behaviors have been inhibiting their ability to achieve success. It was expected that this population had the desire to help those who may have experienced the same dilemmas as themselves. It was expected that the adolescent youth from the at-risk program would thoroughly share their experiences for the benefit of not only the current study, but the community at large. It was also expected that this population would be very intrigued and inspired to continue their success in the program and post-graduation.

Definition of Key Terms

Active Coping. Individual is taught to think positively, plan, and take action (Ayers et al., 1996; Gonzales et al., 2001; and Tolan et al., 2002)

Active effect. Child seeks out environment consistent with their genotype (Scarr & McCartney, 1983)

Conservation of Resources Theory. the number of resources an individual can acquire, both within and externally, ultimately determines whether or not he or she can successfully cope with stress (Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001)

Coping. “The cognitive and behavioral efforts individuals use to manage negative or stressful situations” (Klott, 2012, p. 9)

Delinquent Behaviors. Activities such as gang affiliation, involvement in drugs, alcohol and use of weapons, lack of respect towards authority figures, excessive absences from school, violence towards other, etc.

Epigenetic Changes. Early experience “can and does have lifelong consequences at all levels, from the molecular to the behavioral” (Diamond, 2009, p.1).

Evocative Effect. Temperamental characteristics of child evokes responses from others (Scarr & McCartney, 1983)

General Strain Theory. created for predictive purposes of a child or adolescent’s future when delinquent behaviors become increasingly persistent (Agnew, 1992)

Genotype→ Environment Effects Theory. One’s genotype (genetic constitution) influences which environments one encounters and the type of experiences one has (Bjorklund, 2012)

Group Socialization Theory. During adolescence, teenage boys and girls seek out relationships with peers of similar morals, attitudes, and parental expectations (Garnier & Stein, 2002), in which this type of behavior promotes a destructive lifestyle from adolescence into adulthood (Harris, 1998).

Passive Effect. Biological parents provide both genes and environment for child (Scarr & McCartney, 1983)

Poly-violence Perpetrators. Those who committed criminal violence, child abuse, and intimate partner violence (Milaniak & Widom, 2015)

Posttraumatic Growth. The positive well-being one finds after trauma through strengthening the five most crucial elements of life: social relationships, personal strength, spirituality, and new possibilities (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004b)

Protection Motivation Theory. One resorts to maladaptive coping skills due to unsuccessful attempts at finding significant resources in overcoming traumatic experiences or if they feel as if obtaining resilience is not achievable (Boer & Seydel, 1996)

Resilient. Ability to achieve positive outcomes in adulthood despite the significant threat to their overall psychological wellbeing (Newton, 2007).

Routine Activity Theory. Delinquent behaviors derive from the everyday convenience for driven criminals to search for potential victims within unsupervised communities (Cohen & Felson, 1979)

Secondary Victimization. Those who felt they were treated unfairly by the criminal justice system (trial, judge, lawyer, police officer) had also reported more posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms after their own traumatic experience (Wemmers, 2013)

Sensitive-Critical Period. The most impressionable moment for psychological and physical growth to be gained

Socio-Cultural Perspectives. How the social and cultural environment surrounding an individual can influence their overall development

Social Disorganization Theory. When a community lacks a strong connection between one another, delinquent activity in the community is highly likely to increase (Bursik, 1984; Kornhauser, 1978).

Social Learning Theory. Any physical abuse or neglect a child endures from his or her parents increases the likelihood that the child will then enforce the same violent behaviors upon their own future children as a result of observational learning (Milaniak & Widom, 2015).

Theory of Differential Association. Those who resort to criminal behaviors begin to rationalize, develop a strong desire to violate laws, and perfect their techniques in committing crimes (Sutherland, 1995)

Theory of Personality. It is crucial to find one's true purpose in life through developing healthy and encouraging social relationships with others (Adler, 1956)

Vampire Syndrome Trauma. When the victim becomes the abuser (Matthews, 2014)

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The bio-psychosocial outcome of a child who has been exposed to traumatizing events, such as abuse, loss of a loved one, or neglect, can be bleak. Early life trauma puts these children at serious risk for developing criminal behavioral traits. Without proper and immediate treatment, a majority of these children turn to coping behaviors that result in becoming perpetrators themselves or in becoming increasingly engaged in the use of harmful substances (Liu et al., 2016). Many psychological studies have focused on men and women whose actions resulted in incarceration due to the lack of positive support from family and peers (Glassner, 2016). A second focus of research includes a small percentage of individuals who are able to develop a resiliency toward their adverse life experiences. Some of these studies have analyzed the various types of unfavorable experiences and the possible treatment programs that can be implemented to cater to an issue (Rosenberg et al., 2014). These studies are essential in developing more efficient forms of treatment for children and adolescents and aiding understanding of what helps them bounce back from unwanted pain and suffering.

It is hypothesized that children who have a strong desire or feel the innate need to conform to other individuals or groups will have a lower likelihood of achieving resilience after experiencing one or more adverse life events. It is expected that similar psychological and environmental contexts that each individual endured as children will be found. It is also hypothesized that psychological treatment for a child after he or she

experiences one or more adverse life events will be beneficial to his or her future success in becoming resilient. The goal of this research project is to find the common elements and characteristics that contribute to resilience after facing adversity and apply each participant's responses to enhancing the success of current resiliency programs. This information is critical to decreasing the population and recidivism rates within juvenile detention centers as well as decreasing the populations and recidivism rates within jails and state prisons

Cognitive Processes

The world that our societies have developed into today have been a great reflection of the social behaviors modeled for young children by their own parents/guardians and peers. Social media, such as local news stations, Instagram, Facebook, etc. have displayed the increasing delinquent behaviors among adolescents especially in regard to the use of physical violence in place of exercising healthy forms of communication. These destructive behaviors are installed in all of us from conception but are not enforced until we are born, and that is where the role of parental guidance is extremely crucial. Both the parents and peers of young children can either encourage these genes to express themselves or to remain dormant within the individual's biological gene pool. Several mechanisms that can help explain this issue are: Epigenesis, the Sensitive- Critical period, Genotype→ Environment theory, and sociocultural perspectives. The focus of this paper is to analyze the underlying foundation of what elements contribute to forming a socially delinquent cognition.

To start, it is important to understand that human genetics play the initial role in structuring the human brain's cognitive processes. At conception, all men and women have a specific genetic composition designed for them. Throughout childhood development, experiences have the power to manipulate these genetic designs until the individual has reached full maturity. This progression is also known as Epigenesis which dives further in depth on how the activity of the organism itself influences its own cognitive development (Bjorklund, 2012). For instance, if a child placed his or her hand on a hot frying pan, he or she will immediately learn that touching a hot pan will inflict a severe amount of pain and the child will likely know better not to touch the pan any time after the initial negative encounter. Other situations where a child is influenced throughout his or her cognitive development is through observing the variety of responses a parent could display according to the behavior the child is exhibiting. When a child breaks out into a temper tantrum because their parents did not agree to allowing him or her to have a dessert, it is crucial that the parent(s) stand firm to their answer being final. However, if the parents give into the child's tantrum to put an end to the loud whaling, that child has now figured out that to get whatever he or she wants, all he or she has to do is scream or cry until the parents finally comply.

If this particular behavior-response encounter persists from childhood and throughout the adolescent years, it will permanently structure the child's cognition into believing that he or she is are entitled to whatever he or she so desires, and this will also take away any level of authority the parents may have had originally. Throughout his or her adolescent years, social behaviors typically seen will be a lack of respect for

authority, including that of teachers, other parents, and even law enforcement. This is due to a lack of structure in these children's households and the parents' abilities to enforce consistent and reasonable punishments for undesirable behaviors. Novak (1999) believed this type of cognitive development emphasized skills that are molded by the genetic composition of the child and the structure parents establish within the home. Essentially, the behaviors that are deemed acceptable within the child's household are what he or she will portray to those outside of the home, which, could place a child in serious danger of exhibiting delinquent behaviors among peers at school and within neighborhoods. On the other hand, there would be a completely different cognitive product if the child was raised with rules, discipline and was involved in athletic activities outside of school. Such children, as adolescents, tend to be more respectful and demonstrate cooperative characteristics with people in positions of power.

Delinquent behaviors have the power to be passed down from generation to generation, also known as the evolution of epigenesis. Although there are hundreds of programs that provide therapeutic and employment services for struggling families, most parents reach out for assistance to redirect their child's disturbing behavior far too late. By the time most children receive help, they have reached their adolescent or adult years, have become increasingly defiant, and refuse most services offered to them. Soon enough, these delinquents will have children of their own and will reinforce the same socially delinquent behaviors onto them. "From a developmental perspective, the recurrence from generation to generation of the specific developmental resources and interactions that make up an organism's ontogenetic niche serves as a primary basis for

the developmental and maintenance of its species-typical behavior” (Lickliter, 2012, p.659). This provides further evidence of how easy it is to encourage future generations of delinquent behavior among youth. When parents utilize the same parenting skills as was learned from their own caregivers, they continue to enforce the same social cognitive skills, which makes it more likely for their kin to follow in the footsteps of family members before them.

In addition, each experience a child endures has a great effect on controlling the future of his or her cognitive wiring and how he or she behaves socially. “Early experience can and does have lifelong consequences at all levels, from the molecular to the behavioral” (Diamond, 2009, p.1). In a situation where a young boy who witnesses his father physically abusing his mother on several occasions, it could also be assumed that his father is the only role model he has had on how men should treat women, especially a wife. This child is most likely going to develop a cognition that believes physical force is the only way to communicate to another whenever they are upset or angry. Eventually, the child will start testing out his father’s cognitive processing and behavioral patterns for himself by pushing young girls his age as an act of affection, irritation or disagreement. As an adolescent, it is likely that romantic relationships will consist of verbal and physical violence such as slapping, pinching, punching, and using degrading terms to belittle the spouse. “If such epigenetic changes in response to the environment occur in germ cells, they might be transmitted to future generations genetically as well” (Anway, Cupp, Uzumcu, & Skinner, 2005, p.1, as cited in Diamond, 2009). The evidence provided through learning the general process of epigenesis has

continuously demonstrated that violence breeds future violence through the pre-wiring of delinquent cognitive processing in the future generations' neural structures.

As was previously discussed, children are extremely susceptible to being molded, whether negatively or positively, by their environment and the genetics internally programmed into the neurons responsible for cognition. Particular characteristics of children's genetic coding will be emphasized based on what they are exposed to in the earliest stages of life. These first stages of life, the Sensitive-Critical period, is the most impressionable moment for psychological and physical growth to be gained. If the basic skills are learned too soon or too late, the ultimate skill may not be obtainable (Bjorklund, 2012). If a young boy or girl is born deaf, the neurons responsible for vision will counteract for the lack of exercise in the auditory neurons; providing the infant with above average levels of vision compared to other infants who have attained both auditory and visual cognitive abilities. In relation to criminal behavior, if a child is deprived of affection and sufficient care or is harshly handled by the caregiver(s), these children are expected to be more at risk to duplicate similar behaviors upon others. Exposure to these kinds of experiences cognitively programs the child with the inability to demonstrate compassion, affection or nurturing characteristics in future relationships.

Fox (2014) conducted a study in which children were selected from an institute in Romania to analyze the severity of timing in his or her possible cognitive outcomes and social behavior. It was discovered that the timing of placement with a family had no legitimate effect on a child's cognitive development when considering their IQ scores, but timing was a crucial element in their potential social manners:

Children placed after 24 months of age had no secure attachment relationships with their caregivers compared to those placed before age two, and these same children had better social skills (by observation) and were more morally competent (by teacher report) at age eight. (Fox, 2014, p.174)

Although the child is academically intelligent, the child's cognitive files on how to successfully and appropriately socialize with others suffer due to being abandoned at an early age. They have stored the concept that commitment an attachment is not necessary to be successful in life, which sabotages his or her chance at ever maintaining any sort of long-term relationship.

Furthermore, this kind of cognitive thought processing results in severe antisocial tendencies, which could lead to sociopathic or psychopathic symptoms (Morrison, Smith, & Dow-Ehrensberger, 1995). Researchers have discovered that specific cognitive processes are developed through the unique experiences an individual may encounter (Morrison, Smith, & Dow-Ehrensberger, 1995). The cognitive proficiency of being competent in socializing with others who come from different environments and exposed to different life experiences is typically disoriented among delinquent children and adolescents. Without this skill and the consistent lack of company from others, a child's future is placed in jeopardy when socially unacceptable behaviors are exhibited, possibly involving the violation of criminal laws.

Again, the Sensitive-Critical period is a time in every human's life that can determine a healthy or harmful lifestyle. Without steady encounters of cognitive stimulation necessary between a parent and a child, the young boy or girl can almost

definitely suffer in all other aspects of basic human socialization and academic skills. “The productivity of parents’ time with children - in terms of their ability to translate time investments into positive achievement outcomes - largely depends on the cognitive stimulation and verbal engagement that these parents can provide” (Hsin, 2009, p.125). Parents are the first and most vital role models that have the ability to guide their child right from wrong, how to work well with others and how to successfully progress into a competent adult among society. Whatever parents demonstrate, the child will essentially imitate.

The third concept that contributes to delinquent characteristics among children is more specifically known as the Genotype→ Environment Effects theory. This theory was proposed by Scarr and McCartney (1983) who suggested “one’s genotype (genetic constitution) influences which environments one encounters and the type of experiences one has” (Bjorklund, 2012, p. 40). These experimenters mentioned three kinds of effects on how one’s genes drive the experiences he or she endures: (1) Passive effect- biological parents provide both genes and environment for child, (2) Evocative effect- temperamental characteristics of child evokes responses from others, and (3) Active effect- child seeks out environment consistent with their genotype. The three effects briefly explain the role of genetics throughout an individual’s development. Both passive and the evocative effects have been discussed among the studies by Fox (2014), Morrison, Smith, & Dow-Ehrensberger (1995), Hsin (2009), Bjorklund (2012), Novak (1999), Lickliter (2012), Diamond (2009), and Anway et al. (2005) concerning the role a child’s parents have in making their initial life events healthy and productive.

On the other hand, the active effect is another major contributor to a child's life as an adult because the environment in which he or she chooses to spend most of his or her time in and the kind of people typically associated with those environments are a direct reflection of their own cognitive development (Bjorklund, 2012). If the child is continuously seeking methods of gaining the attention of others and begins acting out in school due to the lack of attention he or she receives at home, he or she is more likely to become involved in risky conduct. Whether the attention is positive or negative, achieving the attention of others is the basic goal and the only way to fuel cognitive and emotional needs (Hsin, 2009). In addition, the type of individuals a child chooses to associate with reflects morals and values that have cognitively matured over time (Bjorklund, 2012). If the child also chooses to relentlessly exhibit defiant behaviors, the child has demonstrated to others his or her nonexistent desire to change disruptive behaviors and will do so regardless of any outside help from someone such as a counselor, for example.

Some of the most vital moments to save a child's future are the opportunities offered in programs that specialize in helping the child recognize his or her own social impairments and cognitive distortions. Most of the opportunities that come about in a child's life are a result of the parents' ability to make valuable connections that can benefit both themselves and their children (Bjorklund, 2014). However, if the child is provided with minimal to no opportunities to achieve a thriving life, the likelihood that these children will resort to delinquent behaviors to obtain wealth will increase, including: selling and using illegal substances, violence, etc. For the guardians who find

it challenging to guide their child or children down a healthy path, programs have been created over the years to ensure that every child is offered the opportunity to reflect on their defiant behaviors and learn to adapt healthier coping skills and more cooperative behaviors. Chang and his colleagues (2009) performed a study to provide evidence on how the parents who become more involved in their child's academics also improved their own parenting techniques; increasing the social cognition of their child as well. "Clinical parenting class program has proved to have similar positive effects on improving conduct disorders in children" (Chang, Park, & Kim, 2009, p.159). Provided that low-income families have been found to be at risk to have family members that demonstrate delinquent behaviors, these programs supply such families with an abundance of services and training for parents to make a dramatic and uplifting change within their own household and create a more cooperative and loving environment for everyone in which to feel successful.

The last component of the social cognitive development among the delinquent population can be analyzed within the socio-cultural perspectives of life, which illustrate how the social and cultural environment surrounding an individual can influence their overall development. "Relationships of cooperation, reciprocity and discussion among equals form an essential context for the development of moral autonomy and rational thought" (Nicolopoulou & Weintraub, 2009, p.321). Without the improvement of these particular traits, especially in the ability to create logical thoughts and collaborate effectively with others, children are more vulnerable to secluding themselves from cognitively valuable and challenging social environments. Consequentially, this could

jeopardize the child's skills in developing meaningful and healthy relations with other members of society.

Overall, studies have indicated how delinquent behaviors can arise among the population of youth from generation to generation and how parents can prevent it from becoming a more serious dilemma into adolescence and adulthood. From birth to adolescence, children endure a critical period of development that can dramatically alter the way they cognitively process information in his or her brain; it determines how they are able to interact with other members among society (Morrison, Smith, & Dow-Ehrensberger, 1995). Parents have the ability to influence the direction in which their child chooses to journey. By implementing specific training programs for guardians to engage in before having children of their own, learning how to appropriately discipline a child will be more consistent and efficient. This is critical in preventing future criminal behaviors and danger placed upon others within a community. The studies previously mentioned in the literature are a great start to comprehend the early signs of criminal tendencies in young children. Future studies can have the potential to improve already existent family service programs by developing a stronger grasp of the importance in constructing healthy and cognitively stimulating environments for children. By providing the proper training for parents, encouraging them to become more involved in their child's academic career and making sure their own actions are portraying valuable characteristics, the well-being of the child's home as well as the overall community environment has the potential to drastically improve.

Risk Factors

To develop a better comprehension of the risks victims may face after an adverse life event, researchers have focused on the increasing threats those individuals face if untreated. In one particular study, a longitudinal design was utilized to assess the gradual process of adopted violent behaviors among children who suffered from abuse and neglect - criminal violence, child abuse, and intimate partner violence. Milaniak and Widom (2015) found that maltreated children were three times more likely to perpetrate child abuse and more likely to report perpetration of intimate partner violence. Although only 3.6% were considered poly-violence perpetrators (those who committed criminal violence, child abuse and intimate partner violence), about 70% of perpetrators demonstrated violent behaviors in more than one domain (Milaniak & Widom, 2015). Knowing the specifics can help future generations of children who have undergone neglect and abuse with identifying the early signs of violent behaviors. Without being addressed in a therapeutic setting, the neglect or abuse could produce Vampire Syndrome Trauma, which is when the victim becomes the abuser (Matthews, 2014). Social workers, psychologists, and even law enforcement can identify these children at a young age and place them in therapy and treatment programs to help prevent them from passing on the cycle of violence to future generations.

Milaniak and Widom (2015) also found about 30% of the maltreated children were able to become resilient by utilizing protective coping strategies. “Coping has been defined as the cognitive and behavioral efforts individuals use to manage negative or stressful situations” (Klott, 2012, p.9) and those who become resilient have developed

consistent and healthy coping techniques in order to protect themselves and others from any psychological or physical harm. The fact that 30% of maltreated children were able to adopt and practice positive coping skills is an important statistic to acknowledge because researchers can conduct further examinations to identify what characteristics need to be enhanced or depressed for other trauma victims to achieve similar results as the resilient population. The other 70% of maltreated children may reflect a certain degree of conformity among those who become the perpetrators because the only way children knew how to cope was to conform to the personality and behavior of their own abusers.

It is also important to acknowledge the stages in development of destructive behaviors. A child's ability to become a competent adult or possibly posing a threat to the general safety of society can be determined by how severe the child's level of behavior has reached. In analyzing the effects of violent youth victimization, researchers found that victims began to exhibit the same or similar behaviors inflicted upon them by his or her perpetrator, after an eight-week follow up survey was administered (Glassner, 2016). As many as 53% of victims have already threatened someone else (Glassner, 2016). These findings indicate the immediate effect of trauma on its victims and how imperative it is to provide these children with care such as cognitive behavioral therapy and placement in a safe and supportive environment. Doing so will increase the child's opportunity to learn healthy coping skills as well as the possibility of a positive future. Consistent exposure to a healthier atmosphere inclusive of therapists and support groups

is more likely to aid him or her in reflecting on the consequences of one's own antisocial tendencies and preventing future altercations with the law.

Secondary Victimization

Other ways in which victims can suffer is within the criminal justice system. Wemmers (2013) found that the criminal justice system could potentially pose a threat by increasing a victim's suffering by the lack of fairness provided by the authorities immediately after trauma. This type of suffering is referred to as secondary victimization and is classified as those who felt they were treated unfairly also reported more posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms as a result (Wemmers, 2013). Both studies conducted by Glassner (2016) and Wemmers (2013) demonstrate how the lack of emotional and psychological support can determine the long-term outcome of each victim.

More in-depth assessments, such as the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) and General Factor of Personality (GFP), are being utilized to identify first signs of delinquent behavior among United States male prisoners (Van der Linden, Dunkel, Beaver, & Louwen, 2015). Other documents were also considered (e.g., criminal records, history of adjustment and social problems, and adjustment to prison life) to compare the childhood development of an inmate with his performance on the CPI and GFP. Lower scores were indicative of criminal behavior during adolescence and how young an inmate may have been when first arrested (Van der Linden et al., 2015). An inmate's current mental diagnoses can impact the reliability of results on the GFP and CPI scores, especially in the instance that individual suffers from delusional cognitive processes.

Orbke and Smith (2013) developed a study to show how personality is a main determining factor in whether or not a state of resilience is possible. Non-resilient adults, such as the inmates in the previous study, were described as being trapped inside of the developmental age in which the trauma occurred. Almost permanently threatening their ability to move forward in adapting critical thinking skills required to be able to consider the legal consequences of felonious behaviors (Orbke & Smith, 2013). Resiliency oriented programs could improve the quality of life within the prisons, between inmate-to-inmate relationships and towards the officers on site.

In comparison, Asberg (2009) analyzed the survivors of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) between females who were incarcerated and female college students and found that two-thirds of the women serving time in correctional facilities displayed higher levels of clinical levels of depression, substance abuse and more frequent occurrences of re-victimization in adulthood than did their female college student counterparts. The differences between the incarcerated women and those who had without legal issues were based on several factors. One to consider was the type of support these women may or may not have had in response to trauma incurred. It is also possible that those who functioned normally among society may have had a better support system among friends, family, therapy, and law enforcement. Like other traumatic events, support is essentially the main difference between why victims either recover and live a productive life or fall into a downward spiral because of unresolved psychological distress (Asberg, 2009). In contrast, the female college students in Asberg's study (2009) were categorized as resilient due to their outstanding ability to achieve positive outcomes in adulthood despite

the significant threat to their overall psychological well-being according to Newton (2007). The explanation as to why incarcerated females had not achieved resiliency compared to the female college students was due to the formation of unhealthy avoidance coping skills, such as drug or alcohol abuse, and the deficiency in support from others (Asberg, 2009). The evidence found in this particular study further supports the notion that the quantity and quality of resources from within one's environment determines a poor or successful outcome.

Theories

Several theories have been developed to better characterize traits within resilient behaviors, as well as how these same traits can be contributing factors to criminal behaviors and destructive coping skills. *The Resilience Theory* defines the state of resilience as “the ability to sustain healthy development in the face of significant adversity” (Rosenberg et al., 2014, p.431). Individuals who undergo one or more traumatic life events are forced to make the decision between negative and positive coping skills in order to forget or accept their experience. As defined by Compas et al. (2001), coping is comprised of the process in which an individual implements cognitive and behavioral tactics during times of stress and trauma. Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck (2007) constructed a list of ‘normal’ coping skills identified among non-delinquent adolescents such as the capacity to develop new thoughts about particular circumstances, problem-solving skills, and the ability to determine the appropriate time and most reliable people to depend on for support. The goal is to have at-risk youth inherit these coping

skills in order to replace the negative and destructive behaviors with more a positive and productive set of tools.

However, the coping skills of at-risk youth are compromised when he or she continues to associate with other delinquent peers in typical social settings (school, mall, park, etc.) and during incarceration (juvenile hall and prison) - these patterns of behavior can lead to an increased development of antisocial conduct (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999; Poulin, Dishion, & Burraston, 2001). Johnson and Lynch (2013) identified different ways in which the abused sibling chose to survive, and the negative side effects certain coping mechanisms posed later as an adult. The negative side effects involved the utilization of maladaptive coping skills such as substance abuse, cutting one's wrists, and suicidal thoughts were shown to progress into adulthood (Johnson & Lynch, 2013). It was also found that if a child was compliant to the abusive sibling, he or she might develop submissive traits as an adult. This could ultimately lead to a loss of personal sense of control and to being manipulated into performing risky behaviors (Meyers, 2016). This is consistent with the protection motivation theory (Fry & Prentice-Dunn, 2005), where most juvenile delinquents resort to maladaptive coping skills due to unsuccessful attempts at finding significant resources in overcoming traumatic experiences or if they feel as if obtaining resilience is not achievable (Boer & Seydel, 1996).

An adolescent's inability to obtain autonomy and resources such as transportation, housing, money, employment, self-esteem, etc. (Chen et al., 2015), can best be explained through Hobfoll's (1989, 2001, 2002) conservation of resources theory. This theory

explains how the number of resources an individual can acquire ultimately determines whether or not he or she can successfully cope with stress (Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001). As a result of the child's failed attempt to acquire supportive resources after trauma, Sutherland's theory of differential association (1955) further explains how juveniles who resort to criminal behaviors begin to rationalize, develop a strong desire to violate laws, and perfect their techniques in committing crimes.

The types of coping strategies children apply to their particular case can be reflective of his or her cultural expectations, as well as that of race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Newton (2007) examined the relationship between protective factors of resiliency, such as attachment, self-control, and initiative, and possible behavioral concerns, such as attention problems, aggression, withdrawal, depression, and emotional control problems and found a large negative correlation of behavioral concerns, in which lack of self-control was representative of Attention Deficit Disorder, Oppositional Defiance Disorder, and aggression. This is not to say these preschool children had already developed the previously mentioned disorders, but it is reflective of the possibilities a child may face in the future when he or she is not shown more effective coping strategies by their parent(s) or caregiver(s). Lack of self-control is a common characteristic among disorders that are also highly correlated with criminal behaviors across race and gender. For instance, if a child throws a tantrum in order to get what he or she wants and the parents give in just to stop the kicking and screaming, that child is likely to carry those same behaviors into adolescence. Such children tend to have no self-control in terms of how to handle situations in which they may not get their way.

According to Ayers et al. (1996), Gonzales et al. (2001), and Tolan et al. (2002), the following coping strategies such as active coping (where the individual is taught to think positively, plan, and take action), social support seeking (teaching the child to seek advice and comfort from others), self-distraction (teaching them to engage in activities that are unrelated to current stressors), and avoidance (denial of the reality of the stressor) were found to be the most effective across races and socioeconomic backgrounds. All of these were found lacking or non-existent among those with delinquent behaviors throughout adolescence and are among the main focus throughout this research study.

Additionally, Newton's (2007) study compared externalizing behavior and internalizing behaviors and found that Caucasian boys displayed equal levels of protective factors as Hispanics and African Americans once they controlled for socioeconomic status. This indicates a high cause-and-effect relationship between a family's income and the potential for a child's future maladaptive behaviors in efforts to earn money. Females were found to become more susceptible to developing internalizing difficulties such as eating disorders and depression as they developed into adolescence (Newton, 2007). Girls have been viewed as more empathetic than boys, this is thought to be due to the Estrogen hormones, which may contribute to the lack in physical aggression. However, the one problem that continues to remain is the ability to generate studies that generalize across culture, race, and economic standards. The next step in improving resilience studies in early childhood is to create a culturally appropriate scale for a variety of races.

Resiliency has also been studied alongside posttraumatic growth (PG) to determine whether or not PG is a result of resiliency. Although PG and Resiliency have been recognized by some researchers as the same concept, other researchers strongly believe that there is a very distinct difference. PG can be defined as the positive well-being one finds after trauma through strengthening the five most crucial elements of life: social relationships, personal strength, spirituality, and new possibilities (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004b). It is the state in which an individual achieves the will to move beyond the event, emotionally and psychologically, and abandons the personality that existed prior to the trauma for an enhanced, more knowledgeable persona (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, 1996). Oginska-Bulik (2015) viewed resilience more as a set of personality traits an individual acquires and is able to successfully practice during times of adversity; this also includes the regulation of emotions. Therefore, resilient personality traits are a major influence, if not the main reason, why men and women are able to flourish after trauma in a way that not only provides insight to some of life's most harsh realities but to also find meaning in the pain he or she endured (Janoff-Bulman, 2006). The most pronounced of these resilient traits that contributed to PG were extroversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Linley & Joseph, 2004). These particular traits can provide an individual with the advantage in the process of building a strong sense of confidence as well as perceiving any available resources and support (e.g. counseling, family, friends, etc.) in a positive light (Evans et al., 2013).

When a man or woman experiences PG, there are several commonly reported beneficial changes to one's overall wellbeing. Many people have reported being more

able to create relationships with others they genuinely cherish than they would have prior to the trauma and feeling more mentally equipped for any future adversities that they may encounter (Helgeson, Reynold, & Tomich, 2006; Sawyers, Ayers, & Field, 2010).

However, the outcome depends entirely on the individual's willingness to make intimate social connections with others (Adler, 1956). The main variable in predicting a dysfunctional or psychologically strong set of social skills is the level and type of socialization exercised amongst his or her community (Adler, 1937). Without these social skills is where researchers commonly find individuals who demonstrate anti-social tendencies, traits commonly associated with criminal behaviors (Fox, 2014). Another benefit correlated to PG is the individual's ability to find significant value and purpose in their existence after the traumatic life experience (Reker, 2000; Yalom, 1980). In doing so, these men and women are building psychologically healthy coping mechanisms, higher self-esteem, and an overall satisfaction with life (Steger et al., 2006; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992). Linley and Joseph (2011) suggested that there are two distinct states in which one searches for meaning (or has a sense of meaning already present) in his or her life. When people have a present sense of meaning in their life, they manifest fewer symptoms of depression and neuroticism, which generates greater positive changes in their daily life style and cognitive processes. However, those still in search for their purpose in life, tend to experience the exact opposite and are commonly found to choose a more delinquent pathway (Steger et al., 2006; Steger et al., 2008).

Ogińska-Bulik (2015) created a PG Inventory and a Resiliency Assessment Scale to evaluate if there were overlapping similarities or a cause-effect relationship between

the two concepts. They found that PG was the core of what it meant to be resilient to one's own traumatic experience(s). This is explained in depth through Alfred Adler's theory of personality, in which it is crucial to find one's true purpose in life through developing healthy and encouraging social relationships with others (Adler, 1956). The direction in which a man or woman chooses to cope with their traumatic life experience can mean the difference between a psychologically healthy state of being or settling for maladaptive coping skills - all based upon their social connection with humanity (Ewen, 1998). Just like a baby born addicted to heroin needs human touch to survive past birth, children and adolescents need to develop valuable relationships in order to cope with any stressors and traumas they may encounter throughout their lifetime. It is critical to survival and to avoid the consequences of potential criminal behaviors.

According to Bandura's social learning theory (1977), any physical abuse or neglect a child endures from his or her parents increases the likelihood that the child will then enforce the same violent behaviors upon their own future children as a result of observational learning (Milaniak & Widom, 2015). These children often adopt the behaviors his or her parents demonstrate because they strongly believe that is the social norm among all family households. This theory supports Matthews' (2014) term, Vampire Syndrome Trauma, in which children are put at a higher level of risk in potentially demonstrating similar, if not the same, violent behaviors as their parents or guardians. Without exposure to a healthy home, adults can also put their children at risk for potential substance abuse, poor morals and attitudes, and selecting relationships with peers of a similar home environment.

From birth to early childhood, children are greatly influenced by their parents/guardians' own values and attitudes towards drugs, alcohol, and the type of people they choose to associate themselves with daily (Block et al., 1988; Brook et al., 1985; Kumpfer & DeMarsh, 1986). Essentially, parents or guardians set the foundation for which their children begin to choose their own paths based on what has become familiar to them and is utilized throughout the phase of human development; it can predict the future outcome of a criminal or a successful adult. During adolescence, teenage boys and girls seek out relationships with peers of similar morals, attitudes, and parental expectations (Garnier & Stein, 2002). This can best be explained by Harris' group socialization theory (Harris, 1998) in which this type of behavior promotes a destructive lifestyle from adolescence into adulthood.

Another factor contributing to the socialization aspect of delinquent and non-delinquent juveniles is the power in effectively networking among the communities these youths inhabit. It was discovered through the social disorganization theory that when a community lacks a strong connection between one another, delinquent activity in the community is highly likely to increase (Bursik, 1984; Kornhauser, 1978). Delinquent behaviors among small groups of adolescents have commonly been known to develop into larger groups, also referred to as gangs. In most cases, gang organizations are established due to the lack of supervision and lack of social control over the actions that take place in the communities of law-abiding civilians (Bordua, 1961; Reiss, 1986b; Shaw & McKay, 1942; Short & Strodtbeck, 1965; Thrasher, 1963). The social disorganization theory provides support for an emphasis to create strong lines of

communication in every community in order to avoid and potentially prevent delinquent behaviors from occurring altogether. Furthermore, this mutual effort between communities could prevent more adolescents from participating in criminal activities and demonstrating to the already existent delinquent groups that those particular behaviors will not be tolerated. Small but very impactful efforts such as this can deter a youth from pursuing criminal lifestyles in his or her future. Krohn (1986) described this community effort as the social-network theory in which a vast population of people are able to closely monitor and implement community rules among adolescents who may be violating the law in any shape or form.

In correlation to the social disorganization theory, the routine activity theory explains how delinquent behaviors derive from the everyday convenience for driven criminals to search for potential victims within unsupervised communities (Cohen & Felson, 1979). This theory further supports the idea that the power of structure within families and communities, as well as the supervision from authority figures - law enforcement and parents - is detrimental for the adolescent population to thrive. The more involved authority figures are in the everyday lives of adolescents, the less likely they will be tempted to become involved in deviant behaviors such as substance abuse, violence, truancy, and committing serious criminal offenses. The stage of adolescence is typically recognized as the phase in which young teenage boys and girls begin to test the beliefs, opinions, and morals that their parents enforced throughout their childhood.

When the parents are actively involved in their child's life, the adolescent is significantly less likely to take part in delinquent acts. However, the less parents and

other authority figures make a significant presence in an adolescent's life, the more likely he or she is to act impulsively and commit incriminating acts. According to Osgood and colleagues (1996), the routine activities theory exemplifies how "peers increase the ease of deviant behaviors...and are subject to group processes that increase the 'symbolic rewards of enhanced status and reputation' associated with deviance" (p.639).

Understanding that most authority figures will disprove a teenager's deviant behaviors, adolescents may feel more inclined to act on their criminal behaviors amongst their fellow peers because they encourage the behaviors disproved by parents, teachers, law enforcement, etc. The main concept of the routine activities theory is to identify the convenience in delinquent behavior when adolescents consistently surround themselves with a group of peers who guide them down a corrupt and self-damaging path.

One of the more commonly known theories, general strain theory, has been considered an important criminological theory when analyzing the relationship between deviance and strain in youth (Lin, 2012). Agnew (1992) created the general strain theory for predictive purposes of a child or adolescent's future when delinquent behaviors become increasingly persistent. This measurement contained three core components such as strain, negative emotions, and coping strategies. Each of these components was used as a general tool for the types of traumatic stress a child may endure and were correlated with the possible internal and external behaviors. Researchers found that victimization was statistically significant and produced considerable effects on all outcome variables and on both anger and depression (Lin, 2012). In correlation to Agnew's General Strain Theory, Lin found that the children who suffered from the inability to escape from

aversive experiences had greatly increased his or her chances in joining the population of juvenile delinquents (Lin, 2012).

Organizations, such as Child Protective Services, typically try to remove children from violent or neglectful households. The organization does so in order to provide a safer home and the psychological help he or she needs to stay on track with their overall cognitive development and to deal with their trauma in a healthy way. However, when children are placed in foster care, most will experience discrimination from other foster children and will do what is necessary to survive. This may involve skipping class, substance use and/or aggression towards others (Lin, 2012).

Treatment

During the developmental stage of adolescence, which can range anywhere from 10 years old to 21 years old, paying attention to the emotional, physical and mental well-being of these young boys and girls is critical in creating a positive future. Many researchers believe there is great reliability and validity in the act of empowering our youth, not only the youth who are at-risk for incarceration and serious criminal offenses. As defined by the Cornell Empowerment Group (1989, p.2, as cited in Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2017), "Empowerment is the intentional, ongoing process...through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over these resources." Providing the necessary resources for at-risk youth who come from families who are unable to produce the financial means in order to have access to services such as counseling, participating in sports and other extracurricular activities. These types of opportunities have the potential to stimulate a child's mind and

keep them away from the many temptations criminal behavior has to offer inexperienced youth. Researchers have also found that increasing levels of empowerment positively correlate with significant improvements in one's academics and psychosocial/behavioral health, and has shown to be significant across gender, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status (Benson, 2006; Holden et al., 1998; Scales et al., 2000; Scales et al., 2006). In the attempt to analyze the influence of empowerment among our youth, the Youth Efficacy/Empowerment Scale-Mental Health (YES-MH) was created in order to "assess youth's perceptions of efficacy and empowerment with respect to managing their own mental health conditions, managing their own services and supports, and using their experience and knowledge to help peers improve service systems" (Walker & Powers, 2007, p.551, as cited in Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2017). This scale provides researchers with the opportunity to assess how fit adolescents are in taking full responsibility for his/her own actions regarding success in school, improving and stabilizing their mental health/coping skills and building a strong support system of friends and family who affect their lives in a positive manner. This type of assessment supports similar goals to that of the research that will be conducted in this current study, which will greatly aid in the process of improving youth programs that are focused on the growth, resilience and empowerment of the adolescent population.

Other treatment programs, such as *Real-Life Heroes*, have been analyzed for the procedures used in assessing the trauma-specific behaviors, treatment applied, and the resiliency coping mechanisms that are used once a child is capable of self-regulation (Kagan & Spinazzola, 2013). These procedures may have been clinically proven in a

residential home setting but comparing it to the “treatment as usual” or other clinically proven programs for foster children will determine which one should be considered the most effective. In some instances, aiding the child in becoming more in tune with his or her reflective processing can mean the difference between suffering from psychotic disorders and thriving as an adult. Being able to reflect on one’s past knowing: 1) he or she is not to blame for the abuse or loss of a loved one, 2) he or she is now capable of helping others who may be currently in a similar situation and 3) he or she is in full control of one’s own emotional response to future stressors (D'Angelo, 2006). Regaining and maintaining these healthy cognitive processes could decrease the likelihood of their chances in developing future negative behaviors and even ending up in prison.

A more well-known form of treatment for adolescent youth who have undergone traumatic life events is known as Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT). This specific type of therapy is well supported by empirical evidence in improving the negative effects associated with many traumas (Cohen, Mannarino, & Deblinger 2017; Deblinger, Mannarino, Cohen, Runyon & Heflin, 2015), such as symptoms consistent with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, embarrassment, and problematic conduct; this also includes the anguish parents feel in their attempt to reprogram their child’s behaviors (Cohen, Deblinger, Mannarino & Steer, 2004; Deblinger, Mannarino, Cohen & Steer, 2006). In the study conducted by Deblinger, Pollio, Runyon, and Steer (2017), there were 157 youth aging from seven to 17 years old and 148 caregivers that were present during the youth’s treatment. After conducting the Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, the youth in this study reported

significantly increased levels of mastery in their emotional reactivity to stressors and emotional connection to others, more specifically in their relationships with his or her caregiver(s). These results indicate the positive effect that TF-CBT can have on youth, as well as their parents, who are struggling with the aftermath that trauma can inflict on the human mind and body. Furthermore, providing more evidence on how researchers can improve current programs within the juvenile justice system, schools and private organizations.

Summary

Although no child should have to endure severe adverse life events, whether it be the loss of a loved one, neglect, or abuse, the purpose of this study is to identify the main characteristics found among children who learned to develop healthy and socially acceptable coping mechanisms and to function normally among society (Klott, 2012). Research must focus on how to liberate the lives of adolescents who are at risk of becoming incarcerated, harming themselves, or abusing drugs because they did not have access to treatment after facing adversity (Asberg, 2009). This study will aid in developing future programs for young children and adolescents by utilizing the narratives of young adults who have achieved resiliency after enduring adverse life events.

Chapter 3

Method

Participants

Participants included eight young adults from an at-risk youth program ($N=8$) in a major metropolitan area in the western United States of America. Participants were chosen because these individuals demonstrated impressive resiliency skills and traits after enduring adverse life events by seeking help. Of the eight participants, five were male (62.5%) and three female (37.5%). All participants were 18-years of age who have either dropped out of high school or have been expelled. Out of the eight participants, the majority were of Hispanic/Latinos (75%) and the remaining were of White/Caucasian (25%) ethnicity. All participants were single and unemployed. The highest grade completed for the majority of participants was 11th grade (87.5%) and one participant had completed the ninth grade (12.5%).

Design and Instrumentation

A Case Study design in which a triangulation of three sources of data was gathered to discover the common characteristics among adolescent youth who appear to be resilient towards an adverse life event(s) he or she had faced. First, a 25-item survey was administered to assess the participants' initial responses to questions about resiliency factors such as optimism, perseverance and self-esteem. The Survey utilized a Likert-type scale from 1-5, with 1 being Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The survey was divided into five categories where each category contained five questions concerning: optimism/personal competence, peer influence,

motivation, self-esteem, and emotional regulation (See Appendix A). Next, a semi-structured interview was conducted with a set of five open-ended questions in which the participants were asked about his/her future goals, whether or not they had a plan to maintain a physically and psychologically healthy life, and what he/she believed had contributed to their progress towards resilience (See Appendix B for the interview questions). The purpose of these questions was to help the researchers identify common themes among the participants.

During the interviews, an audiotape-recorder was present to accurately record each participant's response. Finally, a journal was given to each participant and he or she was asked to answer four open-ended questions in regard to the types of treatment methods preferred by the participant and a reflection of his/her personal life decisions that catalyzed a change in their behaviors (See Appendix C for the journal prompts given). Each participant received his or her own private journal to secure confidentiality. All three sources of information provided the researcher with the opportunity to compare and contrast the consistencies between each participant's written, verbal and survey answers in order to categorize the key elements that differentiate delinquent adolescents from resilient adolescents.

Procedure

Institutional Review Board approval was obtained before data collection began. Participants were recruited through a brief description of the purpose of the study and were informed of how their answers would help to prevent future generations from delinquent behaviors, unemployment and incarceration (See Appendix D for recruitment

script). All participant data was de-identified by limiting the demographic information and assigning an identifying number prior to entering the data into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS 24) database. Once entered into the database, all original paperwork was shredded, and all tapes kept in a locked filing cabinet with access limited to solely the researcher. The researcher dispersed recruitment scripts by visiting each platoon with an on-site counselor (one female counselor, one male counselor), and verbally announced to each platoon(group) of the intention of collecting data, both written and verbal, and that it was to learn more about the characteristics that contribute to helping adolescents to recover from adverse life events. The researchers encouraged potential participants to take and read a recruitment flyer, and if they were interested, a consent form to participate in the study.

Individuals who chose to participate in this study signed a consent form agreeing to be interviewed with an audiotape recorder, were provided journals to record their answers in, and filled out the 25 item Likert-type survey (See Appendix E). The consent forms also authorized the researcher to gather his or her name only once in order to develop a coding key only utilized by the researcher to assign unique numbers to each participant. These assigned numbers were applied to each participant's journal and survey questionnaire and were verbally documented on the audiotape recorder by the researcher. Only the participants' assigned numbers were used thereafter to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

Before the study began, the researcher communicated with the controlling agent's counselor(s) to secure a set date to meet with each consenting participant. Dates and

times were scheduled for all three phases of the study - survey questionnaire, audiotape-recorded interviews, and journal prompt questions. Each participant only met with the researcher once and all three phases were finished within an hour.

The researcher and participant were in a safe and private room to conduct the study that had been previously approved for use by the controlling agent of the at-risk youth program and counselor on site. The on-site counselor escorted the participant to the assigned room. The researcher informed each participant that if at any time he or she felt uncomfortable, he/she must simply notify the researcher that he or she no longer wished to be a part of the study and leave the room, no questions asked. Participants were directed to physically hand the researcher his or her completed survey once they had made sure that every item had been completely and accurately filled out to the best of their abilities. The participants were then given verbal directions to begin the next phase of the study.

The researcher and participant remained in the same assigned room to conduct the audiotape-recorded interview. The semi-structured interview was conducted with a set of five open-ended questions in which the participants were asked about his/her future goals, whether or not they had a plan to maintain a physically and psychologically healthy life, and what he/she believed contributed to their progress towards resilience. The purpose of these questions was to help the researchers identify common themes among the participants (See Appendix B for interview questions). During the interviews, an audiotape-recorder was present to accurately record each participant's response. Upon completion of the interview, the researcher and participant reviewed the material together

to ensure all responses were recorded accurately. The researcher also allowed participants to add or remove anything they did not agree with. Once the participant acknowledged that the responses given during the audiotaped recording were accurate, the audiotape recorder was turned off.

In the last phase of the study, the researcher wrote the participant's assigned number on the right-hand corner of the journal cover and provided each participant with a journal that consisted of five open-ended questions to be answered. The researcher again informed each participant that if at any time he or she felt uncomfortable, the researcher was to be notified that he or she no longer wished to be a part of the study, was to leave the room, and any information he or she provided would be safely discarded.

Once the participant had completed answering each question, the researcher requested to have him or her submit their journal to the researcher. Upon submission, the researcher handed the participant a debriefing form that explained the true intentions of the study (See Appendix F for debriefing form). The researcher thanked each participant for his or her time committed to the study through a hand written *Thank You* letter and allowed the participant to leave the assigned room.

Passive deception was used to prevent participants from providing faulty answers by answering in a manner he or she may have believed the researcher desired.

Participants were initially given a vague explanation before filling out the survey on how the study would investigate a human's ability to handle adverse life events. What the participants were not initially aware of was that the researchers were looking for the common elements and characteristics that contributed to resilience and that the

researchers plan to apply the participants' responses to enhance the success of current programs that focused on the empowerment of at-risk youth.

Survey answers were entered into SPSS and analyzed utilizing a Frequency Analysis to record the rate of occurrence in which similar resiliency traits and responses were provided. The qualitative features provided in both the interview and journal prompts were initially coded for structure (specifically, the characteristics of resiliency), and then a second time for similarities, differences, and major themes that emerged. Categories were based on the themes that emerged and developed based on the common characteristics associated with a specific category shared across all participants. Once the interviews, journals, and surveys are analyzed, the researchers then triangulated the information through a compare and contrast process. Once entered into the database, all original paperwork was shredded, and all tapes placed in a locked filing cabinet with access limited solely to researchers.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Summary

The first hypothesis evaluated in this study proposed that psychological treatment for children after they experience an adverse life event would be beneficial to their future success in becoming resilient was partially supported across all three sources of data by three out of the eight participants. Additionally, the hypothesis that parental involvement and significant amount of support would determine how far an adolescent would test the foundation of beliefs, opinions, and morals instilled by their parent/guardian(s) was fully supported across all three sources of data by six out of the eight participants. The last hypothesis proposing that the more financially available and conveniently located resources were in reach of adolescents, the more likely he or she would gain the tools for healthy adaptive coping skills and be able to build resilience in response to adversity was also fully supported by seven out of the eight participants. Across all three sources of information the most common themes reported by participants was: family, the at-risk program, and mental/physical well-being.

Surveys

Participant responses to the survey provided partial support for all three hypotheses in peer/social environment, self-esteem, and motivation/drive (See Appendix A).

Personal Competence/Optimism. Survey questions 1-5 tested a participant's degree of optimism and personal competence. The first question indicated that less than

half of the participants (37.5%) were in agreement on whether he/she was able to become stronger after overcoming a difficult situation. The second question determined that less than half of the participants felt neutral (37.5%) and less than half strongly agreed (37.5%) that they were able to get back up after being knocked down. Half of the participants (50%) felt neutral in their ability to adapt to change in the third question and half of the participants agreed that they did understand that he/she does not have control over everything in the fourth question. The majority of participants answered in a manner consistent with agreement in their ability to find one positive thing in every negative situation in the fifth question and less than half of the participants (37.5%) disagreed.

Peers & Social Environment. Participants' opinions about the influence of their peers and social environment was analyzed in questions 13 and 20-23. The first question was designed to analyze the participant's level of agreement in regard to whether or not he or she surround him or herself with people he or she could trust. Although less than half (37.5%) answered that they felt neutral towards this statement, there were a variety of responses ranging from disagree (12.5%) to strongly agree (25%) recorded across participants. There was no mutual agreement among participants on questions 20 and 21, which asked about support and whether they were surrounded by driven individuals who helped them make positive and safe decisions. There was a high level of agreement (75%) on question 22, which asked whether the participants felt that he or she did not fall under peer pressure. Unfortunately, a majority of participants (75%) also indicated that he or she did not feel that they stayed away from substances that could inhibit their ability to make safe decisions.

Motivation & Drive. The third trait analyzed in the survey was the participant's level of internal motivation and drive to pursue anything he or she desired in life. Half of the participants (50%) agreed he or she would continue to pursue a task even when it became more difficult whereas the rest of the participants felt ambivalent (37.5%) or disagreed (12.5%). Additionally, half of the participants (50%) felt ambivalent about their level of comfort in asking others for help whereas the rest of the participants either disagreed (37.5%) or agreed (12.5%). More than half of the participants (75%) agreed to feeling proud of their own achievements, they did not let small failures discourage them from pursuing their goals (62.5%), and they were capable of staying focused under pressure (62.5%).

Self-Esteem. The next trait that was analyzed was the participant's perception of their own self-esteem; this was used to determine how they viewed their ability to take control in their life. More than half of the participants agreed that communication is important in solving problems (75%), believe they are capable of achieving their own goals (75%), and feel like they have a purpose in the world (62.5%). On the other hand, the majority agreed to feeling ambivalent towards their willingness to challenge their own beliefs in order to be more open to others (62.5%) and half of the participants reported they believe in trusting his/her gut feeling in making difficult decisions (50%).

Emotion Regulation. The last trait examined in the survey was the participants' perception of how they regulated their emotions in a variety of situations. Most were ambivalent about being able to recognize when they were angry; less than half either agreed (37.5%) or disagreed (37.5%). More than half believed that if someone were to

upset them, that they would not be able to communicate their feelings (87.5%), half of the participants felt that they would not be able to avoid making drastic decisions whenever they were upset or angry (50%), and would not be able to take a deep breath in order to think more clearly whenever feeling anxious (62.5%). However, the majority of participants (75%) were ambivalent about not allowing their emotions to control their actions.

Interviews

Within each question, the ideas participants frequently mentioned across interviews were broken down into themes, and then individually, unique responses provided by each participant (See Appendix B). Overall, the participants provided full support of all hypotheses and were in agreement with the idea of pursuing an education, employment, mental and physical health, becoming role models, valuing the role of a mentor, improving his or her family and social environments, and appreciation for the at-risk program in which they were currently enrolled.

Each participant is referenced through the following codes: K9AMH, FTCSA, ESCAP, AOWIT, DBAOF, BWYAP, LEATC and WHFGR to maintain their anonymity.

Question 1: Where do you see yourself three years from now?

This question was designed to encourage participants to make a connection with the traits of resilience that were selected to formulate the survey questions (optimism/personal competence, peer influence, motivation, self-esteem, and emotional regulation).

Theme 1: Education. The first theme that emerged was the desire to pursue higher levels of education. Seven out of the eight participants also expressed the desire to further his/her education by attending colleges and universities in order to achieve a Bachelor's degree that could apply to their career fields of interest. Most participants felt motivated to pursue college degrees and special certifications after successfully completing the program.

“Finishing high school and getting a part-time job” (K9AMH).

“Definitely college. Well I was gonna do electrical engineering before aviation mechanic but now I'm just trying to get my bachelors and maybe move forward from there...I was gonna go to a two year” (FTCSA).

“Uh, going to college and being employed... Uh, study medicine so I can be a pharmacist” (AOWIT).

Well, my plan after this is to work in job corps, probably be working being an electrician or x-rays. That's where the money is at. I don't wanna struggle, not at all. So I have like a set mind set, so like after this like, if it's not that it's school. So if I go to school, I don't know, ever since I got in here I've had a set mindset on like trying to do good...when I was talking to my mom I apologized for like my actions, I told her before I was in here I wouldn't do nothing good for myself. I wouldn't go to school. I would smoke all day. (DBAOF)

“Three years from now I see myself in college studying to become a teacher, a history teacher” (BWYAP).

“I wanna go for college I wanna try for architecture, maybe from there...”

(LEATC).

“Um, I see myself in college” (WHFGR).

Theme 2: Employment. The second theme was found through all participants having the strong desire to become employed after or before achieving a higher education.

“Finishing high school and getting a part-time job” (K9AMH).

Hopefully as an aviation mechanic, trying to work towards that right now...Um, well I guess coming here they um help you out like with a lot of things and that was one of the things that they put out there and I looked into it and it sounds pretty cool and stuff and you make good money like starting off. (FTCSA)

I see myself possibly in like the army or something like that so I can get out of my environment and start all over. I was gonna go to this thing called job corp and I was gonna hang out there and you know maybe work for security or something. It's pretty much like here. You live there, you wake up in the morning, they'll teach you like your, uh, whatever you're going there for. It's pretty much like school but you live there. (ESCAP)

“Uh, study medicine so I can be a pharmacist” (AOWIT).

Well, my plan after this is to work in job corp, probably be working being an electrician or x-rays. That's where the money is at. I don't wanna struggle, not at all...I really wanna work for my money now. Like in here you put so much work like even though you don't get that much of a great outcome, it feels good to

put that work in and know you actually did it and you know instead of going the easy way and going the wrong way. Need to think about things twice. (DBAOF)

“Three years from now I see myself in college studying to become a teacher, a history teacher” (BWYAP).

Um, I see myself in three years from now probably, um, already having my apartment my car and my job. Um, probably working at a cafe or um not sure but I wanna be a business woman, probably a restaurant...I think like the only thing that will motivate me towards that would probably be like I don't know running, running in the morning. (LEATC)

Um maybe I wanna work like a psychologist or like writing books to help people, a therapist or someone that helps people with drug abuse and stuff like that. I wanna be working like helping my parents making them like struggle less financially. (WHFGR)

Theme 3: Living arrangements. The third theme that emerged was coded: *living arrangements* and came from the participants' motivation to move away from their previous neighborhoods.

“Um, hopefully have enough money to move out-out of the hood” (K9AMH) .

“I see myself possibly in like the army or something like that so I can get out of my environment and start all over” (ESCAP).

“In a house. Away from all the drugs and gangs” (DBAOF).

I don't know I always wanted to travel and I've been thinking about the military to kind of like you know get away from where I am, explore what's out

there 'cause even just being here alone I didn't think I would be doing half of the things I am and yea so I just wanted to see what's out there. [Marines] and Airforce I've thought about as well. (BWYAP)

"Um, I see myself in three years from now probably, um, already having my apartment...." (LEATC).

Theme 4: Counseling. The fourth theme that came from the data was coded: *counseling type services*. This included participants discussing the possibility of participating in some type of counseling services.

I'm not sure, um, I have a lot of things that like I need to work through like anger issues I get angry really quick um but its like the things that I've been through so they're trying to get me into counseling but like I don't talk about nothing even to my parents like they try getting me to talk but I just don't like talking about that stuff so like I don't know hopefully I can maybe little by little start talking about it 'cause I know like the stuff I haven't said got to me where I'm at right now, like gangs, drugs and stuff like that so maybe hopefully i get counseling I can open up a little. It's not as bad I just don't like doing it, especially to a stranger that I don't even know talking about my feelings and stuff, nah. (FTCSA)

"Not reacting to every fight- controlling my anger and making better decisions like not falling back into my old habits, not kicking it with the homies no more..." (AOWIT).

Being more positive with my lifestyle like not hanging around with the crowd I was hanging around with like no substance at all I just wanna be like clear minded always sober always going forward instead of going backwards. I just wanna be someone healthy and wealthy. Mmmm by just staying in my lane not worrying about them. Less fighting, less altercation. I just wanna snap, pop and swing. I wanna stop all that, stop being so violent because it's not right because I grew up fighting my older brother all the time...be able to communicate with someone and be able to tell them what I feel. I take anger management classes. I don't know how to be nice to people sometimes. (WHFGR)

However, there were some differences noted: LEATC and ESCAP did not care to try counseling again upon completing the program.

I was doing counseling for a long time.... honestly, I wouldn't wanna go back to it because it's just honestly I thought it was a waste of time. I don't think I'd go back to counseling unless I got really bad again and I don't think that's ever going to happen again, hopefully not...Um, honestly it probably could have been the counselor or something like that because I didn't like him and some of the things we did I didn't really like it at all. (ESCAP)

I would like to see some new changes like mmm go to the gym a lot because I used to not to... and then I wanna see a change with my attitude because I do have attitude problems...and I wanna change...what else...my eating habits, I wanna stop eating junk food. Maybe but I think if I be independent

enough I would focus on something that I'm busy with that way it can keep me away from my quote to quote emotions that I go through. (LEATC)

Question 2: What does resilience mean to you?

This particular question was designed to analyze whether the participants already had a current understanding of the concept of resilience and to see if they were able to relate it to one of their own personal experiences. All participants except BWYAP initially understood the meaning of resilience and was able to apply it to his or her past behaviors that resulted in his or her decision to enroll in the program. Irrespective, all participants understood the more simplified idea of *when you fall down, get back up again*:

“I don't know. Um, being able to fall and recognize that it's just more of a challenge and you have to keep going” (K9AMH).

What it means to me is I guess when you like have hard times you just try to work through them the best you can but then also its not that easy. Like resilience like, you have to put up a fight with it like if you really want to or else you're going to stay where you are. (FTCSA)

I've been stuck like that for a couple years but I came here and like and now its like changing me. I was stuck like in all the gangs and crap and like I always posted up and everything and i just got caught up and everything. I don't trust nobody. We're like born into it, we just can't get out of it sometimes. I changed a lot but like that's the problem, I only changed, so like when I go out there I still have to face everything else. I really think my attitude has changed a

little bit 'cause I used to not talk to nobody. I was that person that was just quiet and like as soon as you looked in my direction I would go off on you and like now I'm more calm I talk to way more people and like I'm more interactive with everybody. (ESCAP)

“Within yourself to like say no to something. Um, I don't know. I kinda wasn't really resilient. Well I made the change to come here like this was my decision nobody pushed me. I'm working on it still”(AOWIT).

I just feel like I could prove them wrong. Outside of here, I didn't really talk to nobody but my boys. They still my friends, but if I'm here and I'm able to succeed without all that (drugs), I wanna go back out there and help them succeed without all that either. So that's my plan, that's a big goal I have right now to get what I'm learning here, take it out there and help them be better with themselves and like not smoke all day...I really wanna go back and be a big part of their lives when it comes to change. (DBAOF)

I actually learned that word my freshman year...Like I've seen my mom go through a lot of stuff...like no matter what she always finds a way to push through it even if she's not fully recovered, but she still pushes through and that's what resilience is to me. Like even if you're not completely okay to push through it, you still do it...not only for yourself but for the bigger picture. (BWYAP)

When I'm angry I run and I don't know why, I just run. And when my heart starts pounding really fast, I stop...Running, only running. Running from something I don't want to deal with and then I come back to it. (LEATC)

Resilience means being able to keep pushing forward, keep your head up. Like even after the struggles and stuff maybe just keep going like. I think...being strong, being able to move forward from what happened and not letting it affect you and just take it as a lesson and keep moving forward. (WHFGR)

Question 3: What do you think contributed to your success so far?

This question was designed to encourage the participants to reflect on self and outside influences that they believe impacted their positive decisions they began to make upon attending the program.

Theme 1: Role models. The first theme that came from the data was coded: *role models* and this came from who the participants may idolize, look to for guidance or trying to set a good example for someone they know.

“My younger siblings; to have them never go through what I’ve gone through” (K9AMH).

I feel like the only reason I didn’t get into gang-banging, nothing like that really heavy was because I played [Identifying Information Removed] was my sport. I feel like that was my only outcome, like that was the only way I was able to like free my mind but the right way. So like whenever I played, I played with like aggression with like so much like...so much like...Nothing could stop me. That’s when I’m able to actually pay attention. My boys listened to me...I reached my hands out to lots of them to help them out. (DBAOF)

Theme 2: Parents. The second theme that came from the data was coded: *parents* and this came from the participants' recognition of why his or her parents wanted them to enroll in the program.

I volunteered to come here. I could have easily said 'no', but I don't know like, the day before I wanted to come my mom asked me if I wanted to come and like at first I said no but something just told me to say 'yeah' so I said 'yeah.'
(K9AMH)

I think my parents wanting the best for me 'cause what I was doing wasn't the best for me but I didn't care. Like I didn't care if I ended up in jail or not, like I've been to Ju-V (juvenile hall) already so like I got a taste for it already and I kind of like the lifestyle I was living. I kind of liked it always suspenseful, the adrenaline you get when you do things. Um, especially because I get angry so quick, I love getting down (like fighting) especially people that think they can beat me up and stuff, to make my place known, to shut someone up when I wanna like have that respect like that. (FTCSA)

I hated this place....the second time I came back I have a suit, I was dressed up and all that so I could prove my mom wrong and here I am and that's honestly like this is pretty much all the success I've had in my life right now.
(ESCAP)

"Uh, my mom and my brother always telling me what I was doing wrong. Um, I mean I wasn't always a bad kid, I don't know what happened. I just know I started skipping school to sell drugs..." (AOWIT).

I think, um it's just kind of wanting to prove people wrong, you know. Like I've always well, there was a certain point in my life where I was like an 'A' student and good kid like...everyone made me like this golden child, you know. Then all of a sudden my parents got divorced and then all of a sudden my whole world fell apart and then, um, so yeah like that just kind of brought me down to this really low place and just looking at myself I didn't feel happy with myself anymore. I was like I don't wanna do this anymore I don't wanna be that person where they were like 'oh she was you know good, she was so smart, she was all these things' you know like that was like the thing I hated hearing most like 'oh she could have done something with her life...my mom started making those remarks. So I think even just hearing those certain remarks and knowing that like I was, they were kind of painting me out to like comparing me to my brother basically. I didn't wanna, I wanted to prove them wrong basically. So yeah and I wanted to show them that no matter what I'll make it through with or without them. (BWYAP)

Theme 3: Mentors. The third theme that came from the data was coded: *mentors* and this came from the participants remembering those who gave them hope, other than their family, to change.

"I had this one teacher...he always told me I was a smart kid but he couldn't care for me more than I cared for myself" (AOWIT).

Not sure...my mentor. She's like provided here and I like her. She motivates me. She's always happy. I like the way she's always happy. She's like,

I don't know if something more than a mom just exists, probably God, but she's like above and beyond the better woman that will like smile every day and like you will never see that woman sad. (LEATC)

Theme 4: At-risk program. The fourth theme that came from the data was coded: *at-risk program* and this came from the participants' reflection and opinion of the program they chose to voluntarily attend.

I volunteered to come here. I could have easily said 'no', but I don't know like, the day before I wanted to come my mom asked me if I wanted to come and like at first I said no but something just told me to say 'yeah' so I said 'yeah.'
(K9AMH)

Honestly you would have to have some bad things happen in your life to be successful you just don't come up successful like that just doesn't happen you have to have like a couple down points in your life. For me it's been like most of my life, always down, it's always bad like. For me it's been like most of my life, always down, it's always bad like... now, for the past year, I'm living my life like it's been better but the most successful is probably when uh I came here the first time I applied here. I was like 'man I ain't coming here'. I hated this place....the second time I came back I have a suit, I was dressed up and all that so I could prove my mom wrong and here I am and that's honestly like this is pretty much all the success I've had in my life right now. (ESCAP)

"Maybe go to more classes [anger management classes]" (WHFGR).

Question 4: Do you have a plan to maintain a stable and healthy lifestyle after you have successfully completed this program? If so, what does that plan entail?

This question was developed to encourage the participants to think of a plan that they would be successful in enforcing in their daily lives outside of the program and how they are going to keep themselves accountable for their actions.

Theme 1: Moving out. The first theme that came from the data was coded: *moving out* and this came from the participants' desire start over in life without past temptations around to hinder his or her progress.

“Just to move out because if I don't I might get caught up into some stuff, and more like minding my own business and stick to myself, my family” (K9AMH).

The biggest thing is moving out and stuff out of my house and um, I'm gonna do that right away. I already saved up a lot of money so yea I used to work a part time job so and then to save enough for that so hopefully when I get out of here I own an apartment and stuff. (FTCSA)

“In a house. Away from all the drugs and gangs” (DBAOF).

“Right now I live with my mom, but when I graduate I'm probably gonna move out. I'm move out somewhere where it's like city-wise like New York. ” (LEATC).

Theme 2: Family. The second theme that came from the data was coded: *family* and this came from the participants' understanding of who has been there to support them and guide them.

Well just surround myself with my family 'cause all my family is successful. I didn't want to be the only one not to be. My family keeps me

motivated. I'm just gonna make sure I don't fall into my old habits. I don't know I guess keep a positive attitude stay motivated..my niece, gotta set a good example.(AOWIT)

Well, um, I just kinda started blocking people on all media. I was even thinking of deleting certain media. I don't know if I still am, but probably will. I just realize what a big distraction that is, you know....and because like certain family members came and certain ones didn't and I guess you just realize who is actually there for you and who isn't. Trust for me is like a big thing and who I surround myself with, so I just started realizing you know like there's certain people who shouldn't be in my life and it's for a reason and even being here, you notice who writes to you and who doesn't. You notice who actually reaches out and does everything they can to see you, and then you notice who doesn't. And even those people who say they miss you but don't do anything to do anything about it, ya know. So I think just cutting certain people out of my life and just thinking about what's best for me. (BWYAP)

Theme 3: Optimism. The third theme that came from the data was coded: *optimism* and this came from the participants' desire to be more trusting and have hope that he or she can improve.

“To see the good in people. I have trust issues. I like push people away”
(K9AMH).

“I don't know I guess keep a positive attitude stay motivated..for my niece, gotta set a good example.”(AOWIT).

“Eliminating all negativity. Just kind of isolating myself...Just having little goals. Having goals throughout the day” (BWYAP).

Theme 4: Friends. The fourth theme that came from the data was coded: *friends* and this came from the participants’ recognition of how they need to choose friends wisely and not return to the his or her previous peer social groups.

Just not going back to like my friends and stuff, like seperating myself from that and really knowing like who are my friends and who are my homies, like there’s a difference. Like friends are like people who look out for you and homies are... they look out for you too but in different ways like they look out for you not to get jumped but friends look out so you don’t get involved in getting jumped and then like friends are like always there when you need them and homies are just there when they need you, like they recruit people and that’s all they want you for. (FTCSA)

That’s why I was talking about job corp for like you get to live there so I was gonna stay there for a little while and like stay there for maybe like a year or two...so I was thinking about doing that for a couple years and then so like I would have a backup plan just in case I would get accepted into the army or something ...for about 6 years... and when I would get out of that so I would have experience and a job and I wouldn't be getting out and having no clue what to do. (ESCAP)

Theme 5: Education/employment. The fifth theme that came from the data was coded: *education/employment* and this came from each participants hope that his or her

education would help achieve his or her career goals in the hopes of a more positive lifestyle.

“Um well I do like I said aviation mechanic, going to college”(FTCSA).

So I was thinking about doing that for a couple years and then so like I would have a backup plan just in case I would get accepted into the army or something ...for about 6 years... and when I would get out of that so I would have experience and a job and I wouldn't be getting out and having no clue what to do. (ESCAP)

Well, my plan after this is to work in job corps, probably be working being an electrician or x-rays. That's where the money is at. I don't wanna struggle, not at all. So I have like a set mind set, so like after this like, if it's not that it's school. So if I go to school, I don't know, ever since I got in here I've had a set mindset on like trying to do good... (DBAOF)

“I'm not sure. Definitely, I mean no matter what I do I would still have to, um, be with my mentor for 16 more months even though I graduate” (LEATC).

Theme 6: Mental/physical. The sixth theme that came from the data was coded: *mental/physical health* and this came from each participant's hope that his or her education would help achieve his or her career goals in the hopes of a more positive lifestyle.

Well like I said maybe like maybe coming forward to counseling maybe opening up a little more and then also maybe have a partner to help like a friend or something. Um drugs are like one of the hardest things that are gonna be the

hardest for me 'cause I've done drugs so much I've done so many drugs I'm surprised I'm not addicted to any drugs. (FTCSA)

"I'm just gonna make sure I don't fall into my old habits"(AOWIT).

"[Identifying information removed] was my sport. I feel like that was my only outcome, like that was the only way I was able to like free my mind but the right way...That's when I'm able to actually pay attention..." (DBAOF).

Physically, um, something I do here is 'run club' ...before I hated working out so it's just weird hearing me talk about these things...I think what I like so much about running is just the isolation, there's no one around you, it's quiet ya know. Running has been a big part and mentally, like here we have meditation. I've never even thought about that before...it also comes back to isolation, it's just being in your mind for that minute, not worrying about everything outside.

(BWYAP)

Maybe go to more classes [anger management classes]. As soon as I get outta here, get to a program where I can like talk to people about what I feel and stuff and I like I wanna be able to take my little sister with me. (WHFGR)

Question 5: What could others do to help those who have had similar experiences like yours achieve resilience?

This question was designed to give participants the chance to imagine themselves as a mentor so they could formulate a plan or offer ideas on how to help other young adults like themselves recover from difficult situations.

Theme 1: Mentality. The first theme that came from the data was coded, *Mentality* and this came from each participant's personal view on the type of people who decide to make significant changes in his or her life.

“Like just to listen to ‘em and like try to understand what they’re going through. Like ‘cause sometimes they won’t tell you but like you just have to kind of see through it like what’s really going on” (K9AMH).

Honestly it’s, it’s just it’s up to them it’s not up to anyone else. It’s like if you like, I didn’t have the right mindset when I first came here. This place sucked. I wanted to go home. I tried to leave a couple of times and they wouldn't let me leave and one point I was just done. I hated this place, but it’s not really up to like other people to make that decision it’s up to them. If they don’t want to do this 100%, they’re not going to do it and like you would have to have positive people in your life and if you don’t have those people you’re just going to stay there in the same spot and you’re never going to go nowhere at all. (ESCAP)

They could tell me what they did wrong and I’m like that person like I could see and learn from it. They could tell me what they did wrong and tell me how they did after that and what they did to get back on their feet. Like I’ll learn how not to do that, how not to do that and how to do it...the fact that I didn’t listen and things weren’t going so well for me. I liked to learn the hard way, I was a hard-headed kid like I liked to do things on my own. It takes a real man to ask for help. (AOWIT)

Their mentality. I don't think anything else could help. You say you can change then you'll change but if you say you can't then you're not. It's like, how do I put it...like when I'm working out and I'm pushing myself...only reason I didn't stop is because I'm telling myself I'm not going to stop, but if you tell yourself to stop 'well I'm tired or this or that', you're just gonna quit you're not going to keep going, not gonna go nowhere... (DBAOF)

I don't know just...I mean depends on what I experienced and if they experienced the same probably experienced in a different way. If I experienced it in a different way I'd probably help them to make it through if they're still going through it in a better situation. Like If I had this similar situation to hers but its not mostly likely the same I might help her to like 'dude what are you doing? Why don't you try this? Maybe it'll help because it helped me so you might as well try this' and it might help her. (LEATC)

Motivate you by giving you advice by...motivate you by never letting you go, by never letting you give up on yourself. Not letting things get to you like phase you or stuff you know. Like making you feel like more, letting you see that you have someone believes in you like you can do it..just believe in you and make you feel like you can move forward. (WHFGR)

Theme 2: At-risk program. The second theme that came from the data was coded *at-risk program* and this came from the participants' overall thoughts of the at-risk youth program they are enrolled.

Just like when you go through programs like this you really find out like who is by your side and stuff, even in jail too, you really find out who is by your side and loves you. So like lookout for those people and keep them in mind. (FTCSA)

Honestly it's, it's just it's up to them it's not up to anyone else. It's like if you like, I didn't have the right mindset when I first came here. This place sucked. I wanted to go home. I tried to leave a couple of times and they wouldn't let me leave and one point I was just done. I hated this place, but it's not really up to like other people to make that decision it's up to them. If they don't want to do this 100%, they're not going to do it... (ESCAP)

[at-risk program- Identifiable Information Removed]. Well I mean...before I came here...my lifestyle before I thought it was amazing...I used to be so damn cocky like I hate myself how I was before, like I was cocky as hell and then like when I think about it I just don't like it, but like I'm in here and everyone wears the same stuff and I'm just like well he's still human, I'm still human, we're all the same. Like it doesn't matter what you're wearing...This place it's good and bad. It's not for everyone I guess you could say. (DBAOF)

I think mentoring is like a big part of it just like having someone to talk to as well like me growing up I never had someone to talk to, I would just keep everything inside and I didn't realize how much it was building up you know? Until I finally reached that place where I just couldn't get out of where I was and I was like damn like if I would have had someone to push me you know would

have had someone to kind of layout like layout certain things I had to do in order to achieve my goals and then just let me do it on my own like I would have been so much better but then like obviously you shouldn't depend on someone all the time but you do need a certain amount of dependence on someone especially if you don't really know or don't have the resources to find out about the things you want. Yea definitely this program. I never really communicated [sic] with adults before because just like my whole home life was very judgmental I guess and so like you were scared of even telling someone you were doing something wrong...but actually telling someone what you're doing wrong and just them knowing how to help you out of where you are, that was huge for me and just having someone tell they didn't have it all together once and all of sudden now they do...Just having a very judgmental family you kinda want to prove them wrong...when they see you succeed they'll be like I wish I'd been apart of that. I think that since I was really quiet as a kid i try to look for those who are like outcasts like even just being here like I try to look the person who doesn't have like a friend right there and invite them into my little group...I think just looking for those people who just don't seem to talk about anything as much as they should....sometimes those are the ones that need the most help. (BWYAP)

Theme 3: Environment. The third theme that came from the data was coded as *environment* and came from the participant's understanding of how socializing with the wrong group of other adolescents could negatively affect his or her overall quality of life.

Um, don't separate yourselves from the ones who really look out for you and your loved ones like your parents 'cause it may not seem like it at first but they really do want the best for you even like though they might punish you and even like get on your case for things. Especially like if you've been through it you should listen to those most because they really know what they're talking about.

(FTCSA)

If they don't want to do this 100%, they're not going to do it and like you would have to have positive people in your life and if you don't have those people you're just going to stay there in the same spot and you're never going to go nowhere at all. You'll stay there and it also depends on the people you hang out with too 'cause you pursue them as a friend 'oh they're going to go do something cool so I'm gonna do it' and you'll go and some crap happens and you'll get caught up for stupid crap. You're really not gonna go nowhere you hang out with those type of people no more. you have to get rid of them even though they're your homies and all that...you just can't 'cause you'll just... Simple. Blank. You won't go nowhere, you'll just end up in jail. (ESCAP)

Journals

Within each question, the frequency of ideas documented across his or her written responses in their journals was broken down into themes as well as the unique responses provided by each participant (See Appendix C). Participant responses provided full support for all three hypotheses in which the most frequently reported themes were: family, personal expectations for themselves after graduating the program, utilizing the

tools the at-risk program has provided him or her, serving others in the community through volunteer work and becoming a better role model for future generations, and some of the participants were still in search for what he or she believes is their purpose in the world. Again, the same participant codes were referenced.

Question 1: What kind of treatment do you believe was most effective in healing and becoming a stronger individual?

This question was designed to find the most efficient level of support or strategies used for each participant to become motivated to make a significant change in his or her life. There were three common themes mentioned across all participants.

Theme 1: Family. The first theme that was commonly mentioned among participants was coded *family*. This came from the participants' realization of how their actions have affected their families and what they planned to do to improve their relationships with them.

The treatment that I believe that was most effective was coming to [at-risk program- identifiable information removed] and realizing what I had and never disrespect my family members. Always having respect for them no matter what, because you can't get the time you were rude to back. (K9AMH)

The support from my family and my loved ones. Also not having them here helps me be a better individual by not having there to fall back. I would always go to my family when I needed some one [sic] but being in here it showed me I can do everything on my own. It also showed me that I can push myself even

though I wanna [sic] quit, I guess you can say I'm trying to train myself to keep pushing and not quite [sic]. (DBAOF)

“The treatment of family love and knowing they will always help you and be around and being open to them” (WHFGR).

Theme 2: Personal expectations. The second theme that emerged from the data was coded: *personal expectations* and arose from the participants' main desires to give themselves a better future by constantly work on improving their behaviors.

The kind of treatment that has helped me heal and become stronger would be, going threw the obstacles that I've gone threw and talking about them. Even tho [sic] I am not one to talk much about my personal events, I recommend it to other people. (FTCSA)

“I believe that for me is working out and always focus on the future” (ESCAP).

I think having to be sober and learning about responsibilities. As I grow older I realized that not everything was going to be given to me. I just wanted a better future for myself to be able to sustain myself in the future. (AOWIT)

“Another treatment is the treatment of self-focus realizing that the way my life was going wasn't the right one and being strong enough to have self will and family love to better myself” (WHFGR).

Theme 3: At-risk program. The third theme that came from the data was coded *at-risk program* and came from the participants' acknowledgment of how the program had impacted their confidence and shown the participants how the mentors were genuinely there to help them become stronger mentally and physically.

I believe that finally having someone tell me that they were proud of me for once in a long time was very life changing. After hearing nothing but judgement for so long to have someone push you to your breaking point and watch you still keep pushing yourself and actually acknowledge you for it is very important. The sargeants [sic] have also make sure they give us sometimes small sometimes long motivational speeches and those impact a lot as well. In my home if you did something wrong you got yelled at and that was it. You were never told why or talked to after about how you should or why you should not do what you did wrong. So having someone explain why we do everything we do here is huge too. (BWYAP)

Everyday I wake up and think that it's just another day, that my count down [sic] for days and weeks will finally be my last and that I am going to go home soon and enjoy my weekends with friends and go places, it's that one thing that keeps me going my count downs [sic] and weeks (not even looking at a time). (LEATC)

The treatment I believe was most effective in becoming a stronger individual is the treatment of counseling, going to my anger managment [sic] classes. The treatment to know and be aware that you need change, I think those treatments are most effective in becoming a stronger individual. (WHFGR)

Question 2: What do you think you did differently than other kids who have not healed and/or have made worse life choices?

This question was created to give participants the opportunity to reflect on their positive changes and improvements within themselves.

Theme 1: Realization. The only theme that came from the data was coded *realization* and came from the participants' acknowledgment of their actions, the steps that needed to be made in the positive direction, and acknowledgment of knowing where they were currently at mentally.

I came to [at-risk program-identifiable information removed] to change. Just making the choice. Never doing bad things in front of there [sic] younger siblings. Never causing trouble when its [sic] not needed. I respect everyones [sic] house. Trying to get a better life and moving out the hood. (K9AMH)

"I probably haven't done much different, because I still have not healed. The only choices that I have made differently would be, I really cared for my my loved ones and wanted to show them that I can change" (FTCSA).

"Honestly think before I Act [sic] Because [sic] you gotta take a step back and see the outcome" (ESCAP).

I think I've seperated [sic] myself not only that but I set my self goals to work towards something. Instead of waking up to do nothing, wake up to do something to start taking steps forward into life. Be a productive citizen to [sic] and for your family as a mom thats your job. (AOWIT)

Well what I did was I started off by accepting the challenge. Being away from my phone, my family, my girlfriend, and the outside world in general is hard but being in here is even harder because your in a bay with 39 others. So that means 39 attitude and 39 different emotions and not all the time we all get along but by adapting to this, I can take what I learned here and use it for the outside world. Because if I can do it anybody can do it. I'm a regular [identifiable information removed] from the hood, but I'm focus [sic] now because I have been sober for so long and it's not easy but I did it and so can anybody else. (DBAOF)

What I think I did differently is that I had a wake up call. Someone I knew had had enough of me complaining about how horrible my life was and how stuck I was and told me all they were hearing was excuses. That made me realize that yes maybe everything that has happend [sic] to me was because of certain people but its [sic] up to me to take matters into my own hands and change it from here on out. Not everyone is going to hold your hand and guide you to the right path, and I finally realized that. I realized that sooner or later I need to move on and im [sic] not going to if I don't change things now. (BWYAP)

"I personally think that no mattre [sic] what I do I will always be different from all other kids" (LEATC).

What I did differently than other kids who have not healed and made worse life choices is I recognized I needed help, I realized that I needed to change, I needed to be a good role model for my baby sister, I made bad choices that kept making my family and I drift apart each and every day. My mom

stopped talking to me, my dad stopped loving me, my sister started to act more like me and seeing my reflection in her made me realize that I needed change, and I needed to be someone better. Also, having my older brother be a drug addict and not really having that positive older role model, made me want to be better. So my sister CAN [sic] have a positive role model in her life. What I did differently was be responsible for my mistakes and own up to them something other people dont [sic] have, I also had a strong self will to leave it all behind. (WHFGR)

Question 3: What do you believe made you make the choices you have?

This question was designed to help participants practice taking accountability for the actions they made in their past and the current actions they believed was moving in the right direction. There were no common themes found across journal entries for this particular question. Each participant provided a unique response which was likely due to the fact that these young adults had all had their own personal and unique experiences that had affected them in a variety of ways that were not comparable to others.

“I believe god [sic] had a plan for me and he wanted me to come to show my siblings its [sic] possible to change and be better people, brother, sister, cousin, dad, son, daughter, mom, etc.” (K9AMH).

For the choices that I have made in my past, I would say they started when my parents got divorced. I was nine years old and my little brother was three. I really helped my Dad [sic] threw the hard times, he really didn't have anyone by his side, except for me and my little brother. Then after that, about a few months later my grandfather from my Dad's [sic] side died. From that point on,

everything that I did was just a snowball effect. Now for the good choices that I have made, the ones that got me to this program, I could say would be my parents and other loved ones were always by my side. They never stopped caring and I wanted to show them I cared for myself as well. That's why I entered this program and really for once started to work on my change. (FTCSA)

"My mistakes you will make mistakes always I believe without a couple mistakes you honestly have no choices you usually have choices forced on you so you have to honestly wait for choices to come by" (ESCAP).

I believe being higher than the influence and also 'not ranking it' which means not backing out in good terms made me do it. I wanted to prove my braveness but all this time I was doing it for people that didn't matter and weren't ever gonna be anything but the Big Homies-drug dealers and gang bangers.

(AOWIT)

I made my past choices because I hated to see my mother struggle so it started with me selling candy and that progressed to selling drugs because it was fast and easy money but now I wanna change that and be a better person so I can help myself and my family. (DBAOF)

"I believe the wrong choices were made to make everyone who affected me negatively to feel bad. Then the positive ones were to make me feel like I have a purpose again" (BWYAP).

"The choice I made is to try every thing [sic] that life puts in my way from amazing to something that I couldn't never expect" (LEATC).

I believe the choices I've made were cause of my background. I dont [sic] blame my family but they're the people that I trusted the most but they're also the people that have hurt me the most, all the fighting and all the verbal/physical abuse. I just always wanted to prove to others that I wasn't weak when deep down I knew I couldn't take it no more. Growing up seeing my cousins gang bang made me idolize the life style and made me want to be like them since my brother was never there and never showed me love, I would hang out with my cousins that showed me love, and they taught me how to make money. I believe that I got sucked into the street world that I couldn't find myself out. (WHFGR)

Question 4: Do you feel your life has meaning or purpose? If so, how do you plan to live up to that purpose throughout the remainder of your life?

This question was implemented into the journal prompt in order to find what motivated and pushed them to continue striving for the best version of themselves and how they planned to share that with the people they will encounter in the future.

Theme 1: Serving others. The first theme that came from the data was coded *servng others* and came from the participants' hopes to assist others who have had similar struggles as they.

I feel like my purpose in life is to take care of others. I plan on always being there for my family And [sic] always having an open-mindset. Going out and volunteering to give homeless people food or money. I try my best to make it out the hood. (K9AMH)

At a point I felt that my life didn't have a purpose, that I was just another human being out in the world. Now tho [sic], my perspective has changed on that. This program really opened up my eyes and showed me I can accomplish so much. I plan to live to expectations that I hold myself to, by looking to the future. I would want to be an aviation mechanic and go to college, I plan to work to that by seeing that I can do whatever I want if I really do try. That I am different, because I have people who love and care for me enough to sacrifice their needs to help me succeed in life. (FTCSA)

Yes I feel my life has meaning because I wanna change the way my friends are and show them we can do things without being high. I also feel like I'm the CHOSEN ONE [sic] to help my family get out of this struggle. (DBAOF)

I do feel like I have a purpose. I believe that my purpose it to be there for people since no one was there for me. I plan to live up to it by making sure im involved in my community and once I become a teacher I'll make sure I am that person I needed. (BWYAP)

I feel like my life does have a meaning I feel like my purpose is to help the people in need to help people with their struggles, help my mom and dad financially so they wont [sic] have to struggle on rent day. Help my baby sister emotionally so she can be the best she can be. By working hard and giving it my all, being the best therapist and counselor. (WHFGR)

Theme 2: Still searching. The second theme that came from the data was coded *still searching* and came from the participant's still struggling to figure out what his or her purpose was among society but he or she still expressed hope to find it someday.

"I mean I believe so why else am I here. I dont [sic] known [sic] my purpose I feel like im [sic] just a normal body with a lossed [sic] mind. Trying to recover and find my purpose" (ESCAP).

I feel I do have a purpose in life I just haven't found out what yet. I plan to keep myself around successful positive peers. As well as keeping a positive attitude for myself, surround with people who want good for me and for themselves-with similar goals. (AOWIT)

"Everything has it's [sic] own meaning in life, my meaning is to face my fears my happiness [sic] my all so that when I am gone I wouldn't have to worry about anything" (LEATC).

Summary

Participant feedback within the survey provided support for all three hypotheses in peer/social environment, self-esteem and motivation/drive. The participants' interview responses were highly agreeable on topics such as: pursuing an education, employment, mental and physical health, becoming role models, valuing the role of a mentor, improving his or her family and social environments, and appreciation for the at-risk program in which they were currently enrolled. Written answers in the participants' journals supported each hypothesis in which the most commonly reported themes were: family, personal expectations for themselves after graduating the program, utilizing the

tools the at-risk program had provided him or her, serving others in the community through volunteer work and becoming a better role model for future generations, and some of the participants were still in search for what he or she believed is their purpose in the world. The primary themes addressed by participants throughout the surveys, interviews and journal prompts were: the value and lessons learned from within the family, impact of the at-risk program on his or her mentality for the future, and mental/physical growth.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The main focus of the current study was to find common resiliency traits among adolescents when facing adversity once or multiple times throughout his or her childhood. The first hypothesis evaluated proposed that psychological treatment for a child after he or she experiences an adverse life event would be beneficial to his or her future success in becoming resilient was partially supported across all three sources of data by three out of the eight participants. Additionally, the hypothesis that parental involvement and significant amount of support would determine how far an adolescent would test the foundation of beliefs, opinions, and morals instilled by their parent/guardian(s) was fully supported across all three sources of data by six out of the eight participants. The last hypothesis that proposed the more financially available and conveniently located resources were in reach of adolescents, the more likely he or she would gain the tools for healthy adaptive coping skills and be able to build resilience in response to adversity was also fully supported by seven out of the eight participants. Without resources such as counseling, parental guidance, positive peer support (Glassner, 2016), and healthy physical activity, adolescents are exposing themselves to dangerous substances including alcohol and drugs (Liu et al., 2016) and engaging in criminal lifestyles (gangs, violence, theft) which dramatically decreases their chances of creating a successful and healthy life into adulthood (Orbke & Smith, 2013). Across all three sources of information the most common themes reported by participants were family, the at-risk program, and mental/physical well-being.

Participant responses to the survey provided support for all three hypotheses in peer/social environment, self-esteem, and motivation/drive. Many youths encounter severe adverse life events without sufficient resources to appropriately address and cope with the psychological and physical aftermath of such events. Many of these adolescents find themselves exhibiting disruptive behaviors at school and within their homes that can lead to incarceration and high recidivism rates if not addressed immediately. Research also shows that many young boys and girls who become involved in criminal activity are often mimicking behaviors observed within their home and social groups (Novak, 1999), and sometimes the same behaviors of those who committed a crime against them as children (Milaniak & Widom, 2015). This is another concern that must be addressed in the lives of youth.

Although many adolescents adopt maladaptive coping mechanisms after enduring adverse life events, there is still a small percentage of those who achieve a healthy state of resilience (Milaniak & Widom, 2015). Adolescents who are able to combine the physical and mental aspects of resilience in their lives - optimism, self-confidence, positive peer and parental relationships, participation in sports and academics - tend to drive themselves toward a psychologically and physically healthier lifestyle after adversity (Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001). In the interview phase of the study, participants were in agreement with the ideas of pursuing an education, employment, mental and physical health, becoming role models, valuing the role of a mentor, improving his or her family and social environments, and appreciation for the at-risk program in which they were currently enrolled. In doing so, most individuals have the

potential to develop more genuine relationships with others and will be mentally prepared to practice resilience after any unfavorable event (Helgeson, Reynold, & Tomich, 2006; Sawyers, Ayers, & Field, 2010).

Participant responses in the journal prompts provided support for all three hypotheses in which the most frequently reported themes were: family, personal expectations for themselves after graduating the program, utilizing the tools the at-risk program has provided him or her, serving others in the community through volunteer work, and becoming better role models for future generations. While some of the participants reported they were still in search for what he or she believed is their purpose in the world, the discovery of these specific traits will be crucial to the enhancement of current programs that focus on the at-risk youth population.

Recidivism rates are significantly high among the juvenile populations, which will eventually increase the jail and prison populations altogether. In order to decrease the populations of these facilities and implement effective rehabilitation methods to the youth, more in-depth studies such as the current one need to be conducted. Only then will we begin to notice a change in the way our youth are rehabilitated and reintegrated back into society.

When all three sources of information were analyzed together, significant differences in the quality of responses were noted. Initially, participants responded to several questions in the survey with a high degree of ambivalence. However, when similar types of statements were addressed throughout the interviews and journal prompts, participants were more expressive and confident with his or her own feelings

and opinions. The order in which this study was conducted may have impacted the type of responses participants provided within the survey. If the survey was administered last and the journal prompts, and interviews were conducted first, participant feedback could have had a lesser degree of variability and uncertainty in whether he or she disagreed or agreed with a particular statement. Additionally, participants may have felt more comfortable expressing themselves in journals and interviews because they are being given the opportunity to explain their answers in a way that best describes his or her current attitudes towards specific topics. The surveys do not permit the participants to be expressive other than ranking agreeableness or disagreeableness on a scale. This is why journal prompts and interviews were administered in addition to the surveys; to be able to compare and contrast the rates of frequency in survey answers with the unique narratives of each participant.

It is important to note that the most common themes that emerged from all sources of data were: family, the at-risk program, and mental/physical well-being. To these participants, family played a major role in his or her decision to change their mentality and behaviors. All participants acknowledged that attending this program had assisted him or her in making mentally and physically healthier lifestyle changes. Each participant expressed a personal desire to continue these practices after graduating the program in order to become successful and prove others wrong. Each participant was able to acknowledge the areas in which he or she was aware needed work such as anger management and drug abuse. However, the only way for these characteristics to be improved on will come from the participant's willingness to engage in therapy for long

periods of time and to practice the act of being more open and resourceful within his or her environment.

Conclusions

The responses towards the traits of optimism and self-competence in the survey indicated that there was not a high level of agreement among participants; four out of the five questions indicated that only three participants shared similar perceptions of themselves while the rest varied. Additionally, the responses pertaining to emotional regulation indicated a common deficiency in impulse control, emotional regulation, and critical thinking skills in the management of challenging and emotionally triggering situations. In the questions concerning adaptability, level of comfort reaching out to others for help, willingness to challenge their own beliefs, trusting oneself to make difficult decisions, and not letting one's emotions control his or her actions, it was found that most of the participants felt uncertain whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements. This may indicate the participants' transition from their destructive mentality to considering a healthier or more open mindset towards making a positive change in the way he or she chooses to live their life. Most participants did express that he or she displayed violent behaviors before entering the program within their home, school, and among his or her peers. In addition, most of these participants are currently enrolled in anger management courses and some expressed the desire to continue once he/she leaves the program. They all expressed awareness and shame to their inability to control their emotions, especially anger and sadness. This is particularly interesting because the survey would have been expected to produce higher percentages of agreement in their ability to

recognize their anger and emotions if they were capable of explaining it verbally later on in the interview phase.

In regard to the influence of one's peers and social environment, each response is indicative of how that participant may currently feel towards the group of friends they used to associate themselves with or perhaps still do. They may have felt torn between wanting to let go of the negative influences their friends had on them and wanting to remain friends with them in fear of being alone. Questions 20 and 21 determined that there was no mutual agreement among participants in regard to being surrounded by driven individuals who help them make positive and safe decisions. This could pinpoint the individuals who are aware of the negative influence their peers had in their life and may be more readily prepared to move forward and engage in positive social groups. Question 22 indicated a high level of agreement among participants who felt that he/she did not fall under peer pressure. This response relates back to how the participants demonstrated a sense of pride during the interviews where they portrayed themselves as different and only did things they wanted to do on their own terms. In addition, the majority of participants did not feel that they could stay away from substances that inhibited their ability to make safe decisions. Although these participants have been sober for about two months now, this strongly suggests that they may still feel unsure of their ability to remain sober after completing the program and recognize their weaknesses towards drugs and alcohol still resides within them.

In regard to the participants' drive and motivation, half of the participants felt ambivalent in their level of comfort towards asking others for assistance. Less than half

felt ambivalent about pursuing a task even when it became more difficult while the other participants' responses varied. These two particular questions are strongly connected in the idea that if the individual is unsure of reaching out for help when aware it is needed, he/she will not feel confident in being able to complete the task, no matter how difficult it may become. This is highly reflective of the reason he/she may have not been able to successfully complete high school or reach out for help whenever it was needed in understanding how to handle their emotions.

Additionally, more than half of the participants agreed that they felt proud of their achievements, did not let small failures discourage them from pursuing their goals, and were capable of staying focused under pressure. What is interesting about comparing the first two questions of this category to the last two mentioned is that each one of them need to learn how to be comfortable and confident with reaching out to others for resources in regard to finding schools, getting extra help in classes by teachers or tutors, making professional connections with people who are in his or her career field of interest, etc. Perhaps this is a skill that needs to be addressed more in depth within the program. Projects such as in-class presentations, learning how to host and plan a small event, or practicing other basic skills such as calling organizations for resources may encourage participants and other cadets enrolled in the program to become more outgoing and willing to reach out for assistance.

Even though participants were informed of the personal benefits in counseling, some of them still did not feel comfortable having a stranger tell them what they need to do in order to improve on certain behaviors and develop critical thinking skills. In regard

to the second question of the interview, the inability to define the word resilience can be indicative of the participants' level of vocabulary as well as the importance of taking one's education seriously. Furthermore, it is excellent that these young adults are taking the steps towards finishing their education and even aiming to achieve an education beyond high school. There were no common themes found across journal entries for the third question. Each participant provided a unique response which is likely due to the fact that these young adults have all had their own personal and unique experiences that have affected them in a variety of ways that are not comparable to others.

Recommendations

The rates of delinquency and recidivism are significantly high among the youth population. There needs to be a higher emphasis on effective rehabilitative strategies for the at-risk youth in order to prevent the populations of jails and prisons from constantly increasing. By doing so, prisons and jails will not have to let more serious offenders loose among the community and will be able to provide these adolescents with the opportunity to make a significant change in his or her behaviors before they have the chance to become incarcerated for extensive periods of time.

Psychologists. It would be valuable for psychologists to further analyze current rehabilitative methods in order to implement the methods of these successful at-risk programs into juvenile halls. If this were done, it is possible that the recidivism rates among juvenile offenders could significantly decrease.

Group affected by outcome. The adolescents of our nation who are struggling to make more positive and healthier decisions could be directly affected by the outcome of

this study. With the genuine responses provided by each participant, adolescents outside of the program may be better able to relate and feel as though their population is being given a voice to make a difference in his or her unfortunate circumstances. Not only does this affect the juveniles but also their families, classmates, and friends they may choose to associate with.

Limitations

There were several limitations of this study in utilizing the narratives and survey responses from only eight teenage boys and girls from an at-risk youth program. First, the sample size was limited in an attempt to maintain as much confidentiality as possible. It is also acknowledged that these individuals may not be representative of all youths who have had negative life events. Further, it is understood that most adolescents exhibiting delinquent behaviors are not always in favor of changing their habits. At-risk programs such as the one recruited for this study are not ideal for adolescents who are not mentally prepared to volunteer him or herself to trade in their past behaviors, friends, mindset, and lifestyle for discipline, commitment, and a healthier way of living-mentally and physically. While this might hold true for some of these young men and women, it may also provide a source of motivation for those who may want to improve themselves mentally, physically, and socially. This study was also limited in its lack of ethnic diversity which may impact the generalization to other ethnic groups. Another limitation of this study was based upon lack of time and resources. Given the strict timeline for completion, those younger than 18 in the program were excluded, as more time is needed to gather consent from parents in addition to the assent.

Self-Report and Interpretation. The responses provided by the participants on the surveys, interviews, and journal prompts are only as valid as reported results and not truths.

Future Research

The comparison between the adolescents' mentality before enrolling in the at-risk program, their time during their enrollment, and a year or two post-graduation needs to be assessed in order to analyze the differences or similarities found in certain resiliency traits, such as the ones utilized in this study. Furthermore, these traits could be analyzed across a larger population of diverse ethnicities and cultures to produce a more generalizable product for current at-risk programs to implement into their methods. This could be done by addressing the parents of these adolescents prior to enrollment what will be done in advance in order to obtain consent and assent forms as soon as possible. In doing so, researches would be able to schedule dates and times for each participant to make the process more efficient. This will also expand the age range of potential participants and researchers would be able to assess resiliency traits across different phases of development among youth at-risk.

To enhance the study even further, researchers could divide the participants into two groups - one group would be administered the survey first and then participate in the interviews and journal prompts, while the other group with complete the survey after the journal prompts and interview. This would be done to determine whether there is a significant difference in the way participants respond to the items on the survey.

One of the questions that still remains is how well these adolescents will be able to successfully adapt and resist the temptations they are likely to face upon their return back to their families and neighborhoods. How will these youths be able to abandon his or her previous friends for the sake of their own well-being? What type of resources are offered to these youths and their families to make it more possible for them continue with their progress and not return to their destructive habits? The government should increase funding to make it possible for programs, like the one used in this study, to become more widely spread across the nation. With such a high success rate, these programs have the great potential to dramatically decrease the rates of delinquency among the youth population. In doing so, researchers may see a significant decrease in the populations of jails and prisons across America.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SURVEY

Demographic Information

1. How old are you?
2. Are you Male Female
3. What is the highest grade you completed?

4. Your Ethnicity (Select the best answer):
 - White/Caucasian
 - Black/African American
 - Hispanic/Latino
 - Asian/Pacific Islander
 - American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - Other Specify:
5. What is your current marital or relationship status? (Select the best answer.)
 - Single
 - Married
 - Separated
 - Living together/Cohabiting
 - Divorced
 - Widowed
6. What is your current employment status? (Select the best answer.)
 - Full time employed
 - Part time employed
 - Unemployed
 - Internship/Volunteering
 - Student
 - Other Specify:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I become stronger when I overcome hardships.	1	2	3	4	5
2. If I fall, I get back up.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am able to adapt to change well.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I understand that I do not have control over everything.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am able to find one positive thing in every negative situation.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Communication is important in solving problems.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I believe I am capable of achieving my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I never give up, even if the task seems difficult.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I feel like I have a purpose in the world.	1	2	3	4	5

10. I am comfortable with asking others for help.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I try to challenge my beliefs to be more open to others'.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I am able to recognize when I am angry.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I surround myself with people I can trust.	1	2	3	4	5
14. When I have to make a difficult decision, I go with my gut feeling.	1	2	3	4	5
15. If someone upsets me, I can communicate my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
16. When I am upset or angry, I avoid making drastic decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I am proud of my achievements.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I do not allow small failures discourage me from pursuing my goals.	1	2	3	4	5

19. I stay focused under pressure.	1	2	3	4	5
20. My peers always encourage me to make safe and positive decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I surround myself with driven individuals.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I do not fall under peer pressure.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I stay away from substances that can inhibit my ability to make safe decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I do not let my emotions control my actions.	1	2	3	4	5
25. When I am anxious, I take a deep breath to think more clearly.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B**INTERVIEW****Interview Questions**

- 1) Where do you see yourself three years from now?
- 2) What does resilience mean to you?
- 3) What do you think contributed to your success so far?
- 4) Do you have a plan to maintain a stable and healthy lifestyle after you have successfully completed this program? If so, what does that plan entail?
- 5) What could others do to help those who have had similar experiences like yours achieve resilience?

APPENDIX C

JOURNAL

Journal Prompt Questions

- 1) What kind of treatment do you believe was most effective in healing and becoming a stronger individual?
- 2) What do you think you did differently than other kids who have not healed and/or have made worse life choices?
- 3) What do you believe made you make the choices you have?
- 4) Do you feel your life has meaning or purpose? If so, how do you plan to live up to that purpose throughout the remainder of your life?

APPENDIX D
RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Recruitment Script

Hello, my name is Lindsey Reyes and I am a 2nd year graduate student at California Baptist University conducting a course project under the supervision of my faculty advisor, Dr. Anne-Marie Larsen, of the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences. This research study is being done to learn more about the characteristics that contribute to an adolescent's ability to bounce back from adverse life event(s).

If you volunteer as a participant in this study, you will be asked to complete a 25-question survey, an audiotape-recorded interview in which a set of 5 open-ended questions will be asked of you, and hand-written journal responses to a few prompted questions. A total of six participants will be chosen for this study and, if you choose to participate, appointments for each section of the study will be scheduled during your leisure time so it will not conflict with your daily courses.

Interviews typically last between 30 minutes to one hour. Before the interviews come to a close, the interviewer will make sure that everything she recorded was accurate by showing you the written notes and replaying the audiotape recorder back to you. I would like to assure you that this study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at California Baptist University.

If you are interested in participating please have your parent or legal guardian read and sign a consent form. Then, any minors under the age of 18 will need to read and sign an assent form. Any participants who are 18 years or older will be given their own

consent form to read and sign. Once that is completed, minors will be asked to please submit his/her signed consent and assent form to the designated counselor for this study, and participants of legal age will only need to submit their signed consent form. Thank you.

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Form
Lindsey M. Reyes
Resiliency Factors Among Adolescents

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Lindsey Reyes at California Baptist University within the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences. I am a graduate student within the Master of Arts in Forensic Psychology graduate program. I hope to learn more about the characteristics that contribute to an individual's ability to bounce back from adverse life event(s). You must be at least 18 years old to participate. You may be selected as one of the possible participants out of six in this study.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a 25-question survey, an audiotape-recorded interview in which a set of 5 open-ended questions will be asked of you, and hand-written journal responses to a few prompted questions. Interviews typically last between 30 minutes to one hour. Before the interviews come to a close, the interviewer will make sure that everything she recorded was accurate by showing you the written notes and replaying the audiotape recorder back to him or her. If you choose to participate, appointments for each section of the study will be scheduled during times that will not conflict with your daily courses.

You may feel uncomfortable, emotional, or stressed out during the interview, which includes questions about future goals, the ability to bounce back from difficult situations and how one plans on maintaining a healthy and stable lifestyle after successfully completing the program. A one-page list of community resources will be provided to you upon completion of the survey. The Sunburst Youth Academy will also provide their own counseling services that are conveniently accessible to you. The research is intended to benefit the fields of forensic psychology, higher education and current youth programs by examining your personal characteristics that have helped you make more positive choices. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research. No rewards will be given for your participation in this study.

Any information obtained in this study that can be identified with you remains confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. All information obtained in this study will be coded to protect your privacy and confidentiality. No identifiable information will be connected to the survey questions. Additionally, all data will be stored in a safe and secure location.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with California Baptist University, the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, or the Master of Arts in Forensic Psychology graduate program. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent, and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Anne-Marie Larsen (951-343-4761, alarsen@calbaptist.edu). If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the IRB (IRB@calbaptist.edu). The Institutional Review Board reviews all proposals for research with human participants before the research takes place; IRB exists to ensure that the rights of human participants will be protected if the project is completed as proposed by a researcher. You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue your participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal rights or future claims.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX F

DEBRIEFING FORM

Debriefing Form
Lindsey M. Reyes
Resiliency Factors Among Adolescents

Thank you for participating in this study! We hope you enjoyed the experience. This form provides background about our research to help you learn more about why we are doing this study. Please feel free to ask any questions or to comment on any aspect of the study.

You have just participated in a research study conducted by Lindsey Reyes (619-929-2397, lindseymarie.reyes@calbaptist.edu) and Dr. Anne-Marie Larsen (951-343-4761, alarsen@calbaptist.edu).

You were told that the purpose of this study was to learn more about the characteristics that contribute to an adolescent's ability to bounce back from adverse life events. In addition to that, we were interested in which ones appear across diverse people and circumstances. To protect the integrity of this research, we could not fully disclose all the details of this study at the start of the procedure.

As you know, your participation in this study is voluntary. If you so wish, you may withdraw after reading this debriefing form, at which point all records of your participation will be destroyed. You will not be penalized if you withdraw.

It is important that you do NOT talk (or write or email, etc.) about this project. The main reason for this is that YOUR COMMENTS could influence the expectations, and therefore, performance of other participants, which could be misleading. Failure to comply with this request may have severe repercussions with regards to the accuracy of the data. YOUR COMMENTS could compromise months of hard work preparing this research. We hope you will support our research by keeping your knowledge of this study confidential.

You may keep a copy of this debriefing for your records OR please return this debriefing form to the researchers. Contact information for the researchers and the IRB is on your copy of the consent form which you may keep for your records.

If you have questions now about the research, please ask. If you have questions or experience any adverse reaction, please e-mail Lindsey Reyes (619-929-2397, lindseymarie.reyes@calbaptist.edu) and Dr. Anne-Marie Larsen (951-343-4761, alarsen@calbaptist.edu). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the IRB (IRB@calbaptist.edu). The Institutional Review Board reviews all proposals for research with human participants before the research takes place; IRB exists to ensure that the rights of human participants will be protected if the project is completed as proposed by a researcher.