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Juvenile Recidivism After Release from a Juvenile Detention Center in Atlanta, Georgia

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Jacquelyn Monique Nelson

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Juvenile Recidivism After Release from a Juvenile Detention Center in Atlanta, Georgia

by

Jacquelyn Monique Nelson

MS, Kaplan University, 2014

BS, Albany State University, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

May 2020

Abstract

After undergoing a form of rehabilitation (i.e., youth detention centers in Georgia), statistics show that juveniles have a 65% chance of reoffending within 3 years after being released. The Georgia Juvenile Justice System's \$300 million annual budget raises concerns about the acts of juvenile recidivism. The purpose of this research was to understand why juveniles reoffend after being in a juvenile detention center in Atlanta, Georgia. The conceptual framework for this study was centered on the alternative to youth detention centers. The research question addressed factors that led juvenile delinquents to reoffend after receiving an alternative treatment. This study had a phenomenological research design. The objective of this design was to understand the "lived" experiences from the participants, which included former juvenile delinquents and current juvenile probation officers. Data from both sets of participants were collected through individual interviews and analyzed for emergent themes, which was to help understand the reasons that juveniles reoffended after being in a juvenile detention center. The findings of this research indicated that more avenues and resources (finances, time, alternatives/options, staff, etc.) are needed to become more effective in the juveniles' lives. Interviewees indicated that the effort that has been put in place needs enhancements. This research could help to provide a deeper understanding of what is needed to address the issue of juvenile recidivism in Atlanta, Georgia.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Alternatives to Juvenile Delinquency

Topic of Study and Preview of Major Sections

This study was focused on understanding why juveniles reoffended upon release from a juvenile detention in Atlanta, Georgia. This study will help provide a deeper understanding of juvenile recidivism in Atlanta through a qualitative research design. The sections that I include in this chapter are the history of juvenile delinquency in the United States, the history of juvenile delinquency in Georgia, the use of alternatives in Georgia, the apparent failures of alternatives in Georgia, and potential reasons for its failures.

Scope

The scope of the study focused on former juvenile delinquents (who are now adults) from Atlanta, Georgia. The former juvenile delinquents were asked to reflect on their time in a youth detention center and subsequent reoffending upon release. This study also focused on the experiences and insights of juvenile probation officers, who have seen juveniles reoffend upon release from a juvenile detention center.

Gap in Knowledge

The current gap in knowledge is understanding what factors contribute to juvenile recidivism in Atlanta. I examined this issue through the perspective of adults who were once juvenile delinquents and reoffended, as well as juvenile probation officers who have experience with juveniles who have reoffended.

Why This Study Is Needed

This study can help to fill the void in knowledge on what factors contribute to juvenile recidivism in Atlanta. Understanding these factors could lead to program and/or policy changes aimed at addressing the factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency.

History of Juvenile Delinquency in the United States

A question often faced is how long have juveniles been engaging in criminal activity or bad behavior. According to the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (2017), this type of act has been ongoing well before the 18th century. Due to limited resources and finances of the 18th century, troubled youths were once placed in the same facilities with adult criminals who were considered violent or had mental illness. These juveniles were exposed to unhealthy living conditions, limited access to society, and more exposure to violence. Unfortunately in the late 18th century, there simply were not many options to handle juvenile delinquents. Regardless of the juvenile's age or their gender, they all were housed with adult offenders. U.S. cities then began to recognize that putting juveniles with adult offenders led to the high rates of child poverty and neglect. The leaders of the cities started to adhere to the concerns and decided to create another option for handling the juveniles (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2017).

In 1825, the New York House of Refugees was created from the work of two men, Thomas Eddy and John Griscom. Together, they produced the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism, which emphasized the need to house youths separately from adults. The success of the New York House of Refugee was the initial establishment for what later became the juvenile justice system (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2017). In 1827, facilities in Boston and Philadelphia also opened. As the 1840s

approached, approximately 25 more institutions were assembled around the country (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2017). According to Ellis (2012), the power to handle juvenile delinquency rested solely on the individual state. The states were subject to an enormous amount of criticism and opposition from those who felt strongly about the welfare and safety of the juveniles. Ellis explained that the various policies and procedures that were used to handle juvenile delinquency was a result of the amount of power the individual state had, which led to the success and failure of the matter. Juvenile delinquency was once viewed as an idea, discourse, or a label. Among those three things, juvenile delinquency was eventually seen as a disclosure. Historically, every country had different ways of handling delinquent behavior among the youth. Some countries would seek the power within the state to help cure the problem. Some countries would look for more community involvement (Ellis, 2012).

There could be many reasons to explain juvenile delinquency. Every juvenile has a story behind their behavior. Some of the reasons could include neglect, abuse (physical, emotional, and sexual), peer pressure, low self-esteem, or a lack of guidance and support. All of these reasons often lead to recidivism, which simply means that the offender (in this case the juvenile) would commit another crime after the first crime. Courtney et al. (2013) mentioned that those youths who were victims of child abuse and neglect were more susceptible to becoming a statistic in the correctional system. Not only was juvenile delinquency a problem, but recidivism became the next problem. Juveniles would commit a crime and consequences would ensue. It later came to the light that the juveniles who were reoffending were adding to the problem, rather than eliminating the problem.

In 2009, approximately 1.9 million juveniles younger than 18 years of age were arrested in the United States. Juveniles were accounted for approximately 15% of all violent crimes, and approximately 24% of all property crimes (Courtney et al., 2013). Courtney et al. (2013) conducted a study where recidivism rates were weighed against several factors: family, education, peers, alcohol and drugs, individual attitudes and beliefs, and neglect. Their study was broken into several groups: demographics, gender, and age. It was concluded that many of the juveniles who entered the juvenile justice system experienced some form of neglect and are currently associated with child welfare services (Courtney, Ryan, & Williams, 2013).

History of Juvenile Delinquency in Georgia

Definitions of Key Concepts

A child who is disobedient to the laws, rules, and regulations in Georgia is called a *juvenile delinquent*. In the late 1800s, the United States created a separate justice system for the purpose of dealing with juvenile delinquents (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2017). During this time, there were not many options for handling troubled youths. When a child would commit a crime, he or she would have to be admitted into the same facility as an adult. Thanks to the work and effort of two people, their concerns and actions did not go in vein. Thomas Eddy and John Griscom created the New York House of Refugees, which was later renamed as the juvenile justice system (Center on Juvenile Criminal Justice, 2017). The punishment was considered cruel and unusual for a juvenile offender to be treated the same as an adult. In Georgia, a *juvenile* is considered to be a person that is younger than 16 years of age. A child cannot be charged with a criminal act until the he or she is 13 years of age. Depending on what type of

crime is committed and how many times the juvenile has committed that same particular crime, he or she could be tried as an adult. A *delinquent child* (O.C.G.A. 15-11-2) is a juvenile who commits a criminal act deemed by Georgia laws. An *unruly child* (O.C.G.A. 15-11-2) is a child who intentionally avoids going to school, is disobedient to the rules of their parent and guardians, leaves home without the permission of the parents/guardians, is rebellious of the terms of official supervision by the courts, or is in need of treatment or rehabilitation (Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017). Terms that have multiple meanings in this study include *juvenile*. Depending on the severity of the crime, the individual could be charged as an adult. His/her age may signify that they are a child, but the nature of their criminal action(s) suggests they are adults. The word *alternative* also has multiple meanings, in that the juvenile justice uses the word in terms of rehabilitation purposes, but it could also simply mean another option. The word *juvenile delinquent* has various meaning when it pertains to certain states. Each state has their own idea of the age classification of a juvenile.

An issue arose regarding where youth offenders should be placed in the event that he/she commits a crime. These issues raised many concerns among members of society, which led them to start a social intervention. Members of society were highly concerned and eventually their cries were heard. In 1905, the Georgia State Reformatory was developed to help treat adult offenders different from juvenile offenders (Juvenile Justice, n.d.). In 1911, Atlanta, GA (Fulton County) was the first county in Georgia to have the first juvenile court. Every year after that, the other numerous counties in Georgia also opened a separate juvenile court (Vinson, 2017). In the 1930s, cities around Georgia began opening facilities that would house juvenile offenders. Atlanta, Georgia, opened its

first youth detention center in Adamsville, built strictly for females in the late 1930s, and during the same time all male juvenile offenders were to be placed in a facility located in Augusta, Georgia. For the next several decades, youth detention centers around Georgia began to open up to house male and female juvenile offenders (Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017). In 1963, institutions that were considered training schools for the juvenile delinquents were established in Atlanta, Augusta, and Milledgeville, Georgia.

In 1964, Macon, Georgia, opened its doors to females, and later for males. In 1967, the first establishments of Regional Youth Detention Centers (RYDCs) were created. These facilities were able to house approximately 18 males and 12 females. These facilities were located in Albany, Rome, Sandersville, and Waycross, Georgia, simply because of the proximity in distance that it offered to the cities around the state of Georgia. In 1968, RYDC's opened in Augusta and Gainesville, Georgia. Community Treatment Centers were created in 1971 to provide a place for children to go after school. The first Community Treatment Center was opened in Columbus, Georgia, but within the coming years, 23 more centers were created for the same purpose. In 1972, state laws allowed for the creation of YDC's (Youth Detention Centers). In 1976, for those youths who did not violate the law in a violent way, but yet could not be returned to the custody of their parents/guardians at home, were to be placed in a Contract Detention Home. It was not until the passing of Senate Bill 100 in 1977 that legislation could dictate how juvenile offenders were handled. It gave the allowance of law enforcers to be able to admit juvenile offenders into Youth Detention Centers (Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017).

After the development of detention centers were created, the question then came up as to how long a juvenile would remain in the center. Depending on what type of crime was committed, some crimes were considered more serious than others, causing the consequences to be more serious. In 1979, a process called Determinate Sentencing was used to decide how long the offender would stay (Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017). A determinate sentence is a type of sentence where the judge can use discretion within the time frame that is given. The judge can choose to make the offender serve the entire sentence behind bars, or he/she can serve part of the sentence behind bars and complete the remainder of the sentence on supervised probation. Another type of sentence is an indeterminate sentence. If a person is given this type of sentence, it means that the offender must serve the minimum amount of time inside a correctional facility. This part is non-negotiable. Once the offender has completed the minimum amount of time, he/she may be eligible to meet with the board of pardons and parole to seek an early release (Open Justice, 2016). In 1994, Senate Bill 440 was passed that would allow for juveniles who were 13 years of age or older to be tried as an adult if certain crimes were committed. These crimes included what Georgia labeled as: Murder, Voluntary Manslaughter, Rape, Aggravated Sodomy, Aggravated Child Molestation, Aggravated Sexual Battery, and Armed Robbery with a firearm (Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017). All around Georgia, nonviolent crimes to serious crimes have been committed by juveniles of all ages, race, and gender. For example, in November 2012 in DeKalb County, Atlanta, GA, a 14 year old female, Ty'asia Jackson was charged and convicted with the murder of stabbing her 2 year old sister, Sasha Ray to death. The juvenile was babysitting her sister while her parents were away from the home. The

juvenile told her parents that her sister went missing after they arrived back home. While searching the area for Sasha, their father found her lying on the ground with multiple stab wounds. It was later that Ty'asia admitted to stabbing her sister to death. The juvenile was sentence to 12 years of imprisonment (Jones, 2013).

Before policies and procedures began to change, the only option for juveniles who committed crimes was to place them in a detention center. After numerous complaints and failures of detention centers in regards to rehabilitation, other alternatives were sought. In 2013, a partnership between the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice and the National Council on Crime and Delinquency was created to help incorporate what was called "decision making support". The support was able to help decide on several things: whether or not the juveniles were considered high risk or low risk juveniles in terms of their behavior, what could potentially be the best result to handle their delinquent behavior, and help to recreate safe communities where the juveniles reside. When juveniles are being disciplined by the court, things such as detention centers, adjudications, and other dispositions such as out of home placements are considered (Manske & Russell, 2017). Other than detention centers, alternatives such as day program centers and home treatment centers have been put into consideration for handling juveniles (Juvenile Justice, 2017).

The Use of Alternatives in Georgia

In 2001, House Bill 201 was passed to allow juvenile court judges more available services to sentence juveniles. In terms of juvenile delinquency, the method for choosing the aftermath of the child's behavior is called alternatives. Alternatives means the judge has discretion with his choosing in how to handle the juvenile. Alternatives could be

counseling, therapy, home confinement, probation, or being admitted to a youth detention center. Rather than call the consequences punishment, “alternatives” is a better choice of word for the sake of giving a juvenile a second chance at life and rehabilitation. In 2006, House Bill 1145 was passed to allow for other healing methods and treatment of those juveniles who were deemed incompetent (Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017). In 2013, options such as home confinement, counseling and therapy sessions, probation, and community based programs were implemented to serve as a substitute for youth detention centers. The objective of these programs was to serve as a rehabilitation process to aide in the growth of the child’s development. The programs were eventually called “Alternatives”. Also in 2013, Governor Nathan Deal signed an executive order; HB 242 that would allow for the use of community based programs for juvenile delinquents that were proven to reduce recidivism at the time (Boggs & Worthy, 2015). Such community based programs include: leg monitors, community service, supervision from juvenile probation officers, or foster care with strict supervision (Necco, 2016). In 2013, Rockdale County was awarded approximately \$150,000 for an evidence based program. This program was called Functional Family Therapy. After Rockdale County received their financial revenue, approximately 16 more counties around Georgia received a total of \$4 million dollars of grant money for evidence based programs for juvenile delinquency (Swift, 2013). The issue with these programs along with detention centers arose when juvenile recidivism statistics began to come about. The effectiveness of the programs became questionable in the eyes of the policies and procedures, seeing as how juveniles would re-offend after being “deemed” rehabilitated. Juveniles who were released from a detention center for committing a felony, robbery in particular had accounted for 44% of

the juvenile recidivism rates in 2013. Another factor that may have contributed to juvenile recidivism rates was the juvenile's age. The older the juvenile got, the more likely he/she was to commit another crime. It has been stated that a detention center could not guarantee that rehabilitation inside of the facility would prove effectiveness if the juvenile was to be placed back in the same type of environment he/she was in before they were sent away (Wall, 2013). A meaningful gap among the most current research is that is that it shows juvenile recidivism rates. The literature does not explain the success rates of its effectiveness. By conducting this study, the outlook is to gather insight into what could eliminate or reduce juvenile recidivism after being released from a juvenile detention center.

The court process for a juvenile who has been charged with a crime goes as follows: an investigation is initiated after the matter has been brought to the attention of law enforcement. If there is enough evidence to support the allegation being made, charges are then filed against the juvenile. Depending on what type of crime was committed, the juvenile may or may not be placed in a detention center. The juvenile could be released to the custody and supervision of their parents after the investigation. As with an adult, the trial will take place in the county that the crime was committed. The next step is for the juvenile to attend an arraignment hearing in which he or she will plead guilty or not guilty to the charges brought before them. The juvenile will then have a pretrial hearing and it will lead to the trial. The juvenile will then either be proven guilty or proven not guilty. If the juvenile is found to have been guilty of the crime, a disposition hearing will then take place. Reprimands for the juvenile will be handed to him/her and restitution will be issued for the victim(s) of the crime. Several different

options could be issued to the child in terms of reprimands such as a strong verbal warning, a fine, service within the community, probation, a certain length of time in a youth detention center, or restitution (Kendall, 2017).

Located around Atlanta, GA are several youth detention centers. Inside these facilities are various programs that are offered to the juvenile offenders such as health services, behavioral health services, nutrition and food service, and constant supervision. Within the health services that are offered, it focuses on providing health education to enhance the ability of the juveniles to make better choices in life. Other services such as pharmaceutical needs, nursing attention, dental services, health care screenings, immunization shots, and also adherence to those who have certain conditions such as asthma, diabetes, or any other condition that require extra care (Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017).

Within the behavioral health section of the youth detention center, programs that address substance abuse, sex offender treatment, mental health, counseling and case management are offered to assist with improving the mentality of the juveniles. Upon entering a youth detention center, all juveniles are tested for mental health problems, any experiences that may have been traumatizing to them, and substance abuse. The policy of the Department of Juvenile Justice is to help the programs know in advance if the juveniles are at risk, require more care and attention than anyone else. Among the staff members are physicians, psychiatrists, and psychologists to help administer such services. Depending on what issues the juvenile may be experiencing, there are in depth programs that are set up to help the child overcome that particular dilemma. The projected outcomes of the programs are to instill techniques and abilities that will aid in

the successful re-entry of the juvenile back into society. The nutrition and food service main goal is to provide the juveniles with a balanced diet which includes three meals a day, three snacks a day which accounts for roughly 3,000 calories for one day. The meal plans are in accordance with Recommended daily Allowances and Dietary Reference Intake. The meal plans are created to help with the proper growth and development of the child (Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017).

The Apparent Failure of Alternatives in Georgia/ Research Problem Stated

The problem is the high level of recidivism within the juvenile population in Atlanta, despite being placed in detention centers, and the reasons that this occurs is unknown. Therefore, a study is needed to uncover the reason(s) to help explain such high percentages in juvenile delinquency and its recidivism rates. The proposed research question is, “What factors led juvenile delinquents to reoffend after receiving an alternative treatment?” With juvenile recidivism in mind, major issues have arisen with concerns for the negative statistics that are associated with this matter. Considering the juvenile justice system’s main purpose it to rehabilitate/reinvent the juvenile, an examination of the reasons that juvenile re-offend after being in a juvenile detention center could help to inform future policy changes.

This current study was built around the previous research findings that have existed within the last five years. Such statistics included crimes that have been committed by juveniles between the years of 2010-2014 which include: larceny, property damage, assaults, and financial crimes (Keenan, 2014). According to the 2014 Summary Report for the Uniform Crime Reporting Program (2014), approximately 1200 violent criminal incidents were committed by juveniles who were 16 years of age and younger

around Atlanta, GA. Approximately 6,300 property crimes were committed by juveniles who were 16 years of age and younger. Also during 2014, larceny was the type of crime with the most incidents, in which roughly 6,600 incidents were reported. The 2nd leading type of crime committed by juveniles in 2014 was other assaults, in which approximately 5,000 incidents were reported. Among the thousands of crimes committed by juveniles that were reported, all cases were handled differently. For example, in 2014, approximately 4,000 incidents were handled within the department, roughly 18,000 incidents were referred to juvenile court, and in 2014, there were a total of 29, 099 total dispositions (Keenan, 2014).

Meaningful gaps in current research literature

Meaningful gaps that was addressed included understanding the reasons that juveniles re-offended through both their lived experiences and the experiences of juvenile probation officers. That statistics presented earlier show that nearly 2/3 of juvenile offenders re-offend. The purpose of this research was to understand why and how that is occurring.

Among the alternatives that are offered by the courts, one of the main resources that is geared toward rehabilitation and securing juveniles from doing more harm to society includes youth detention centers (YDC), or better known as Regional Youth Detention Centers (RYDC). Although detention centers offer many programs for rehabilitation, they also have their share of ineffectiveness. It has been tried and tested through research that when a juvenile is admitted to a detention center at an early age, he/she stands a great chance of being affected in negative way. Negative outcomes for alternatives include: higher recidivism rates for the juvenile, a stronger possibility that the

juvenile will drop out of school and not graduate, and more involvement with criminal activity as he/she enters adulthood (Georgia Public Policy Foundation, 2016). Roughly half of the juvenile offenders that were convicted of a criminal act re-offended within three years of being released from the Juvenile Justice System. This rate hardly changed since 2003. Those juveniles who were released from a youth detention center had an alarming 65% recidivism rate (Bogg & Worthy, 2015).

Considering the annual budget for Georgia Juvenile Justice is approximately \$300 million, it raises concerns as to why juvenile recidivism rates are so high. With as much effort that is put toward juvenile delinquents while holding them in a youth detention center, why are they re-offending after being released? It brings to question the quality of the services that are implemented to help rehabilitate the juveniles. The question then becomes, if the juvenile completed their rehabilitation program “successfully”, what causes them to revert back to their old habits? Were the programs not successful? Did the child simply do what was necessary to complete their rehabilitation program, and get released back into society? Could there be other causes that would explain the reasons for why juvenile delinquents re-offend after being rehabilitated?

Theoretical Framework

With juvenile recidivism rates being so high, one can only speculate as to why. Social control theory and deterrence theory were the theoretical frameworks used to inform the approach to the research. More specifically, both the former juvenile delinquents and juvenile probation officers was asked about the impact of formal and informal controls on juvenile delinquents and how they related to recidivism upon release from a juvenile detention center.

Aspects That Cannot Be Demonstrated

The aspects of this study that are believed but cannot be demonstrated to be true included those contributing factors to their behavior. The following theories were related to the study as it was associated with juvenile delinquency. The contributing factors included fundamentals and necessities in life, i.e. love, discipline, and support.

Reasons for Necessary Assumptions

The assumptions of this study are necessary because they leave an opportunity to prove or disprove such theories to be true or false. Social control theory and deterrence theory are believed to play a significant role in juvenile delinquency. The assumptions will allow for the data to provide information based on the individual interviews that will provide rich and thorough information. Social control theory has four fundamentals: attachment, commitments, involvements, and beliefs. When these social controls are strong, the juvenile has a greater chance of not becoming a juvenile delinquent. When those basic fundamentals are weak or missing from a child's life, he/she is likely to find those elements in delinquent behavior. It's natural for humans to have delinquency behavior (Griswold, 1981). The *attachment* element of this theory means that when there is an attachment to something positive, he/she has motivation to do the right thing. When there is no attachment, he/she may feel the need to behave any kind of way. In regards to delinquency, juveniles are still children. Children need the love, support, and discipline from their parents. When there is an absence of an attachment to one's parents or guardians, there is no discipline towards their behavior. The second fundamental to the Social Control Theory is *commitment*. This element focuses on one's investment into something. Many juveniles are committed to sports, dance, and securing a promising

future. If the juvenile decides to engage in criminal behavior, they endanger the possibilities of their commitments. The risk that goes with criminal behavior puts the child's future goals in jeopardy. The third fundamental of this theory is *involvement*. Involvement refers to how much time a juvenile spends doing productive things. If a juvenile is constantly busy, it suggests that he/she does not have time to engage in criminal behavior. When a juvenile has too much free time on their hand, their curiosity heightens, and it could lead to a world of trouble. The final fundamental of the Social Control Theory is *belief*. Just as people have moral beliefs, it dictates how a person lives their life. It guides their mindset and shows their results in their behavior. When a juvenile has a strong belief in laws, rules, and regulations, it leads to decreased delinquent behavior. On the contrary, when the juvenile has no regard for rules and regulations, their behavior is increased to deviant acts (Gault-Sherman, 2012).

Deterrence theory is a process of weighing the pros and cons of committing crime. In this sense, deciding if one should commit a crime or not is the issue. The pros of a juvenile not committing a crime means that the juvenile does not have to enter the juvenile justice system, he or she get to keep their freedom, and he or she does not have to honor obligations to the court. The cons of juvenile committing a crime mean the exact opposite. Once the juvenile makes the decision to engage in criminal activity, he is she has become a product of the juvenile justice system. Seeing as how every child is taught right from wrong at an early age and throughout school, there are few reasons that could explain juvenile delinquency in terms of a deterrence theory. This theory suggests that a person thinks about the good and bad that could result from their acts. Acting on it, means that they have made a rationale choice to commit a crime regardless of what the

consequences may be (Tomlinson, 2016). There are two types of deterrence: specific and general deterrence. Specific deterrence is the notion that once a person decides to commit a crime, receive their punishment/final ruling, it will deter them from recidivating.

General deterrence is the idea that by simply viewing someone else who goes through the Criminal Justice system and actually see that individual get served punishment, it will deter themselves from wanting to commit crimes. In regards to juvenile delinquency, the deterrence theory could apply to juvenile recidivism (Tomlinson, 2016). A more thorough and logical connection of this framework is discussed more in chapter 2 as it relates to the contributing factors.

Scope, Limitations, and Delimitations/Specific Aspects of Research Problem/Why Specific Focus Was Chosen

The specific aspects that this study addressed are the reasons for re-offending after being released from a youth detention center. This focus was chosen due to the lack of current information for this subject matter, with the help of this study, it could add to the enlightenment of improving the policies and procedures that govern juvenile delinquency.

Boundaries of the Study

The boundaries that surrounded this study are the age range of the participants. Each participant who was a former juvenile delinquent must be at least 18 years of age and no older than 40 years of age. The juvenile probation officers will all be over 18 years of age.

Potential Transferability and Limitations

Some potential transferability within this study may include the generalizability to other areas of the country that are experiencing similar issues with high juvenile recidivism rates.

Some limitations within this study would include the lack of participants. This study was open to males and females. The ratio of genders could pose limitations and display bias in the findings. Should the gender ratio become an issue, it will be noted and discussed thoroughly in the results. To address such limitations, proper recruitment of participants was conducted. Another limitation that arose is the lack of receiving the full experiences from the participants. Based on the length of time that has passed since some of these experiences occurred, research participants may forget information.

How To Address Limitations of the Study

To address this limitation, encouragement and motivation was given to the participants. The reassurance of their contributions was to be given throughout the individual interview session, so that he/she will understand how much their participation is worth.

Significance/Potential Contributions

The potential contributions of this study will advance the knowledge that was noted approximately five years ago and provide qualitative data that will hopefully explain why juveniles are re-offending. The findings of this study can help to evaluate current procedures and alternatives that are currently in place within the juvenile justice system. The findings of this study can also help to advance policies and procedures by evaluating what is effective and what is not. If there are any methods that need enhancement or complete revision, this study can help to shed light on those areas.

Potential Implications for Positive Social Change

This study could have a positive impact on social change by providing insight into the reasons for which juvenile re-offend. Another positive impact is that this study could lead to preventive measures in the future. This study could help them to realize that there could be room for improvement in their interactions with the juvenile delinquents. A major impact for positive social change is that this study could help the participants (former juvenile delinquents) see the error of their ways. The impact for social change is bounded by the scope of this study in that the experiences that will be shared will be surrounded by various ages.

Current Study/Research Paradigm/Intent of Study/Phenomenon of Interest

This qualitative study explored the factors that contribute to juvenile recidivism. Specifically, this research focused on juveniles who received an “Alternative,” which means they spent time in a juvenile detention center for the purpose of rehabilitation. In order to provide further context and depth to this issue, current juvenile probation officers will be interviewed as well.

Research Question

By exploring the gaps, the question that this research followed is as stated, “What factors led juvenile delinquents to reoffend after receiving an alternative treatment?”

Concept That Grounds the Study

The concept that grounds this study are the statistical analysis that shows that over half of juvenile delinquents will re-offend after being released from a youth detention center. Rather than using the rehabilitation to make positive steps towards living a positive and honest life, the juvenile’s behavior goes in reverse instead of forward.

Description of Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was centered on the alternative of youth detention centers. Among the various other forms of alternatives that could be used, youth detention centers offer a wide variety of programs for everyone.

Logical Connections Among Key Elements

An examination into why juvenile offenders re-offend could be the key element in reducing juvenile delinquency and juvenile recidivating rates. Considering the amount of resources that are put into detention centers, a person can only speculate how effective they are. The juveniles are locked away from society, mandated to attend certain types of programs, and stay away from trouble while inside the facility. With the recidivism rates being so high after the juvenile has been released, what is it exactly that makes the juvenile want to revert back to old habits? This researcher's personal perspectives on this subject matter are geared toward wanting to save a child's life. Troubled juveniles can be reinvented in better ways. With the current statistics at a 65% chance of re-offending after being released from a detention center, it appears as if the system is failing the juveniles with the alternatives methods. This researcher's standpoint on this is to get a better understanding of what juvenile detention centers entail. Juvenile recidivism rates have remained nearly constant over the past decade with little to no change. My concerns are whether the designated justice programs (i.e. youth detention center) need to be re-evaluated or restructured. The transferability and social impact that this matter could have is a positive domino effect on parents and children as well as parts of the juvenile justice system. The potential contributions of the study in advancing knowledge and practice or policy could have a forceful impact on current laws in the state of Georgia. The study

could help to close the gap that separates effectiveness for ineffectiveness. The research findings could also bring policies and procedures up to speed and be implemented for future reasoning.

Framework relates to study approach/ rationale for selection/ phenomenon being investigated

Data was collected through individual interviews. The juvenile probation officers and former juvenile delinquents were interviewed via anonymous phone interviews. The rationale for this approach was to gain more honesty through both sets of participants in an individual and anonymous setting.

Summary of Methodology

The interviews consisted of various questions which required the interviewee to elaborate on their experience in the detention center, as well as events that occurred before and after their time in a juvenile detention center. The interview questions pertained to the type(s) of crime he/she committed, how many times they were admitted into a detention center, what was the length of their duration while in the detention center, what their thought process was during their juvenile years, and their perceptions of criminal activity and factors that led to it now that they are adults. None of the adult participants who were once juvenile delinquents was personally identified during the interviews. Each research participant was identified in this study as participant #1, participant #2, etc.. The interviews took place via phone. The researcher took notes during the interviews and asked additional questions to clarify certain responses. This information was used strictly for research on factors that contributed to juveniles re-offending after placement in a juvenile detention center. After all the interviews were

successfully completed, the data was analyzed for common themes. The overall objective of the interviews was to get a better understanding of why the juveniles re-offended after spending time in a juvenile detention center. The aim was to examine the factors that contributed to juvenile recidivism. As presented earlier, juveniles who were released from a youth detention center had a recidivism rate of 65%. Uncovering the why and how of this high recidivism rate is the focus of this research. This qualitative approach was chosen because the goal of the study was to provide deeper context on the factors that contribute to juvenile recidivism for those who spent time in a juvenile detention center. According to Maxwell (2013), a few things that the writer had to keep in mind are: what will the readers learn as the result of the study that is already not known. Secondly, why is this information worth knowing (Maxwell, 2013)? In regards to this study, what was gained from this study, was real insight into actual experiences from those individuals who were a once a part of the juvenile justice system and underwent rehabilitation through a youth detention center, as well as information from juvenile probation officers, who see the circumstances in which juveniles re-offend. Secondly, this information was worth knowing because it could potentially improve the lives of many juveniles before this issue gets worse than it already is.

Summary

The importance of studying juvenile recidivism was to allow society to become more synchronized to the needs of today's children. The interviews would help to gain more context with recidivism rates in Atlanta, GA. Interviews are more appropriate for this study because it allows the participant time to speak and elaborate, rather than simply agreeing with someone else. The interviews will also allow time for clarification on their

experiences. Although there is no current study for this matter for Atlanta, GA, the potential for the study could contribute to the discipline and impact of social change.

In the next chapter, the history of juvenile delinquency in the United States, the history of juvenile delinquency in Georgia, the use of Alternatives in Georgia, the apparent failures of Alternatives in Georgia, and potential reasons for failures all add up to the importance of this study. The corresponding literature on these topics will be reviewed and show the gap in the research on juvenile recidivism in Atlanta, GA. Further details pertaining to the literature review of this study is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Research Problem and purpose

As discussed earlier, the problem is the high level of recidivism within the juvenile population in Atlanta, GA, despite placement in detention centers and the reasons that this occurs is unknown. Therefore, a study was needed to find the reason(s) to help explain such high percentages in juvenile recidivism rates.

Synopsis/ preview of sections

Throughout this chapter, a deeper look into the following topics will be examined: global history of juvenile delinquency, the history of juvenile delinquency in the United States, current issues and state of juvenile delinquency in the United States, the importance of juvenile delinquency, juvenile delinquency in Georgia, a focus on rehabilitation, juvenile recidivism, potential causes of juvenile recidivism, the Social Control Theory, the Deterrence Theory, and also the current research.

Literature search strategy

During this research, the accessed library databases that were used were the Criminal Justice Database, Psychology Databases Combined Search, and ProQuest. The search terms that were used for this study consisted of juvenile delinquents, rehabilitation methods in Georgia, Georgia Juvenile Justice, criminal theories, juveniles and crimes, juvenile alternatives in Georgia, rehabilitation for juvenile offenders, and crime and juveniles. The iterative search process consisted of the search terms being entered into each database to determine what information could be located. Once a search term was entered into the search box, specifics such as peer reviewed journals were searched as

well as a time range that dated back within the last ten (10) years. In the instances where there was little information on the subject term, other sources, such as a peer review book was used, or a change of words to address the lack of findings.

Global History of Juvenile Delinquency

By far, juveniles have been committing crimes almost as long as adults all around the world. Their actions may not have been labeled as such, but once the behavior was given a specific definition, it can be noted that children have been engaging in such behavior for a long period of time. Regardless if the juvenile was apprehended or got away with their actions; it doesn't excuse the juvenile from being a part of what is now called "juvenile delinquency".

As it is noted, the ages of juvenile delinquents around the world range from 10-20 years of age. Every country has their own separate ruling for the classification of an adult and a juvenile. Countries such as India did not create separate laws for juveniles until 1950s. India's idea of handling juveniles was to protect them from futuristic self-destruction by placing them into what they called an apprenticed program. Within this program, the juvenile would be offered a chance to pick up vocational and trade skills that way they would have a greater chance at starting a productive life for themselves once they completed their rehabilitation. The Indian government believed in the notion that apprenticeship would better-quality for the juvenile than direct punishment. Unfortunately, the expectations that the India government had were succumbed to a rise in juvenile delinquency. This increase then created The Whipping Act of 1964 (Schlenker, 2017). After this Act was created, several more changes took place with juvenile delinquency in India. In 1960, The Children's Act was developed to allow for a

procedural process to be adhered to when dealing with juveniles. In 2000, the Care and Protection of Children Act was passed to allow for more modern-day apprenticeship type programs. In 2006, an amendment into the Care and Protection of Children Act was accepted. This revision created the entrance for more organizations to help with the rehabilitation of the juveniles with work opportunities, job experience, and education. In 2015, this same law was revised for a third time so that 16-18-year-olds could be tried as an adult depending on what type of crime was committed.

The United Nations created their separation of handling juveniles in 1948. At the beginning of this creation, its focus was on those juveniles who were victims to poverty and malnourishment. It was until the end of the 20th century that the focus of the United Nations was turned to those juveniles who had problems with violating the laws (Schlenker, 2017). In 1983, the General Assembly Resolution 40/33 was designed to have a minimum balance for handling juveniles. In 1990, the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency was developed to show a progressive approach toward juvenile delinquency that would focus on the juvenile's comprehension rather than punishment. In December 1990, The Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty was created to assist juveniles who were in the waiting process of the trials and the administration of the detention centers, vocational training, and work. The Manual for the Measurement of Juvenile Justice Indicators was established to set certain protocols and procedures that facilities would have to follow when dealing with juvenile delinquents. This document was passed in 2006. During this present year, the United Nations will conduct another study that will measure the tactics that have been

used. This study will determine if any changes need to be made. This will also be seen in on those juveniles who human rights were taken advantage of.

Among all the various countries, they all share a commonality of wanting to save the juveniles from their bad decision making. Another common trait shared among countries around the world is the classification of juvenile delinquent, which was a person who falls between a certain age ranges who violates the law. As time continues to progress, changes are being made among the countries to be parallel with the modern-day time. In the 18th century, treating juveniles the same as adults was the protocol for juvenile delinquents. In the 21st century, rehabilitating the juveniles to help better prepare them for the future is the measure that is being taken. Rather than simply “throwing the book” at the juveniles, the current laws are being designed to give the juveniles a second chance. According to Calleja et al. (2016), the Second Chance Act was added into law in 2008 which it provides a great amount of financial revenue to organizations to help with such re-entry programs for those offenders who will rejoin society one day.

Approximately \$250 million dollars has been granted to government and nonprofit organizations to support the cause of given offenders a second chance.

United States History of Juvenile Delinquency/Key Theorist/Philosophers/Key Statements and Definitions

Beginning in the early 1800s, any and all efforts for improving the advancements of the welfare of children had more success than failure. Rather than allowing children to be treated the same as adult offenders, the “Child Saver’s Movement” fought for better accommodations for juvenile offenders, despite their behavior. Such accommodations included the support of free education and laws pertaining specifically to children. Critics

felt as if those juveniles who were placed in correctional facilities with adults were more likely to return to society and commit more harm and criminal activity (Juvenile Justice, 2017). The reformers during this era felt as if supervision would benefit those youths who were living a life of crime. It was then placed upon the courts to find a way to alter the attitudes and morals of the juveniles (Juvenile Justice, 2017). For this movement to have taken effect, its financial revenue came from New York Children's Aid and Society in which the person in charge was Charles Loring Brace. In 1860, a movement called the charity organization sought to keep some victims from receiving treatment and help. This same action took place in the United States in the 1870s. Twenty years later, a change occurred that helped to professionalize the way things would be handled. Rather than allow volunteers to operate the organization, those persons who received a college degree fulfilled the duties of the group (Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society, 2008).

The idea that Brace had in mind for handling troubled youth were to place them in a farming family. This would allow the child to feel the exact opposite of such contributing factors to juvenile delinquency: love, discipline, no physical abuse, structure, and positive doings rather than spending time doing unlawful things. In some countries, there were no laws that legally stated an age limit for such person to begin working. With the help and advocacy of the Child Saver's Movement, it took a stance that children under 16 years of age were too young to work. Just before the year 1900 arrived, Child labor laws were passed in roughly 28 states that prohibited children from working in mining and manufacturing (Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society, 2008). Because children were accustomed to working at an early age, it took

away the focus of education. The Child Saver's Movement helped to reaffirm the importance of education and provided financial revenue for kindergarten classes in public and private schools. Through the help of money, it put the kids in a better position to become better workers (Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society, 2008).

Another dynamic movement during the 1800s was the creation of the Juvenile Justice System. In 1825, The New York House of Refugees was created to house such juvenile offenders that were associated with poverty and delinquency. Before this movement came about, all juvenile offenders were placed in the same facilities as adult offenders, regardless of the severity of their crime. In order to help with a child's social skills, Thomas Eddy and John Griscom sought to organize the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism which later became responsible for the separation of juvenile and adult offenders in different facilities. In the modern-day world, The New York House of Refugees is now known as the Juvenile Justice System (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2017).

The matters of juvenile delinquency in the United States revolve around a few things. Reducing or eliminating juvenile delinquency, reducing juvenile recidivism, and rehabilitating the juveniles through means of intervention plans. Intervention plans include getting children the help they are missing or lacking in their individual lives. Such things could be family therapy, strict discipline, mentorship, or guidance. Juveniles in various states have committed all types of crimes. Some of the worst crimes committed by juveniles ranged from killing one's family by means of fire, to getting a gun and

shooting a loved one. Approximately four years ago, the top ten crimes were ranked among children. Those crimes were listed as (Allison, 2013):

1. A 15-year-old boy shot and killed his parents and siblings with an AR-15. He felt as if he was being annoyed by his mother, so he decided to take matters into his own hands.
2. Two 10- and 11-year-old brothers caused serious bodily harm to two other kids at a playground with bricks, sticks, and cigarettes.
3. A 12-year-old girl wanted to kill her mother because she felt as if her mother was not nice to her. She was dating a 23-year-old adult at the time, in which she expressed her plans to him. Together, they both killed her parents and her siblings.
4. A 2-year-old boy fatally shot and killed his mother. Through the investigation, it was revealed that the shooting was an accident due to the toddler picking the gun up and believing it was a toy gun.
5. A 4-year-old boy shot and killed his father because he did not get his son a Play Station 3. That same day while the father was changing clothes, the child grabbed his father's gun and fatally shot his father from behind.
6. A 12-year-old boy shot and killed his mother because he did not want to do his chores. He was trained by his father on how to use the gun in case of an emergency but decided to use it for other purposes.
7. A 15-year-old boy fatally stabbed his 15 year old and 10-year-old adopted siblings.
8. A 15-year-old female shot her father in his chest with a bow and arrow because her cell phone was taken away as a result of her punishment. The horrible aspect of this crime was when she made him crawl to the next-door next door just to get help.
9. A 14-year-old boy shot his mother in the head while she was asleep because he wanted to hang out in the streets and lead a troubling life with bad teenagers. He shot his mother with a shotgun multiple times and then left the scene of the crime in a car.
10. Erin Caffey had her boyfriend kill her parents because she could not go out with him. Therefore, they both proceeded to stabbing them, shooting them in the heads, and then setting the house on fire.

All the crimes listed above were committed by juveniles and for various reasons. Due to their reasons of trying to explain their actions, such intervention plans are much needed. Policy makers and legislators collect data on the juveniles in whom it allowed them to understand what is needed to correct the behavior and thoughts of the juveniles. Rather than wasting time and money on things that are not as effective as they were sought to be, resources should be spend on determining what is effective. Juvenile interventions are a necessity to help rid the communities around the United States from juvenile demolition.

There has always been an issue of racial disparity in the world. Questions pertaining to the color of the skin of the offender, the punishments that are indifferent depending on the race of the offender, the neighborhood and atmosphere a child live in. Juveniles of multiple races have committed crimes. Criminal activity is not limited to a gender or race. It is limited to the mentality and decision making of the child.

Current Issues and Status of Juvenile Delinquency in the United States

As with anything, there will always be issues within any organization. The juvenile justice system is no different. This large organization deals strictly with those juveniles who have violated the law. Not only does the juvenile justice system have to handle the juvenile's criminal behavior, but it is also discovered that the juveniles are dealing with much more than just committing crimes. Three issues with the epidemic of juvenile delinquency are that it exists, the contributing factors and the matter of juvenile recidivism. Other issues surrounding juvenile delinquency include a lack of education, a lack of parenting, poverty, and peer pressure. According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2015), there are many different risks factors that could

contribute to the juvenile's delinquent behavior. The earlier a child is exposed to such behavior, the more likely that same juvenile is to engage in such behavior and continue that behavior later in life. Such risk factors include family, individuality, peer, school, and community. Regardless of the risk factors, they all are related to biological traits, environmental conditions, or developmental issues. Each factor has the potential to lead a juvenile to fall weak to criminal behavior. When the risk factor pertains to the juvenile's own *individuality*, it could be biological or a psychological issue, or behavioral problems. When the risk factor pertains to *family*, it could be the functionality, the bonds with parents/guardians, abuse or violence in the home. When the risk factor pertains to *peer*, it could be the lack of attachment to society. When it pertains to the risk factor of *school*, it could be the academic performance of the child, the peer pressure that is associated with the juvenile's classmates, and the feeling of not being accepted within the school's activities. When the risk factor pertains to the *community*, it could be the bad influences by other persons in the neighborhood, if the child is a victim of poverty, or if the child has no positive outlet to, he/she may turn to bad habits to lash out (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2015).

One of the main issues with juvenile delinquency is that the issue itself has existence. Never mind the fact that a child has committed multiple offenses. The major problem is that a child committed a crime! In the mind of one person, one can speculate that no child should be committing a crime. He/she should be involved in an extracurricular activity, making good grades in school, or being a positive element in the community. Instead, many juveniles have chosen to commit a crime for the first time, if not numerous times. According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency

Prevention (2017), approximately 920,000 persons under the age of 18 were arrested throughout the United States of America. Those crimes consisted of violent crimes, property crimes, and nonviolent crimes such as fraud of public offenses. The leading of these three categories were nonviolent crimes, which accounted for approximately 652,000 arrests. Property crimes accounted for approximately 208,800 arrests, and violent crimes accounted for approximately 59,000 arrest. These statistics were based on the years ranging from 2006-2015. From 2011-2015, the juvenile arrest rate throughout the United States was 27% less than the calculations from 2006. In one year alone 2014-2015, the arrest rate only decreased by 10% (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2017).

All the contributing factors mentioned above add up to the current issues of juvenile delinquency. Juveniles simply need structure, social outlets, discipline, love, and guidance to live a healthy and productive life. The current issues with juvenile delinquency are to eliminate those contributing factors and replace them with the exact opposite. The juvenile justice system's main focus is rehabilitation, rather than punishment. Depending on what state is being addressed, the methods for rehabilitation may vary. Based on the contributing factors, the methods/alternatives are founded on the needs of the children. In 2014, President Barrack Obama mentioned that we need to give all children a chance to maximize their full strength. President Obama focused on the males, due to their strength and character. Since boys grow into men, they tend to become the leaders of their families in which they set an example for their children. Their good deeds and fundamentally sound mentality can be passed on to the next generations of their families. The notion behind President Obama's "My Brother's Keeper" is having

someone to help the child to stay focused in life and reach success. The key factor in that principle is to stick with what works for each child. Rather than trying to continue with something that has no effectiveness, it is easier to work with something that makes an impact (Obama, 2014).

Another issue with the current state of juvenile delinquency is that juveniles are repeatedly committing crimes. This is called recidivism. There may be various reasons associated with this behavior, but one reason could be linked to a mental illness. According to reports, among the 2 million juveniles who are in the Juvenile Justice system, it is said that over half of those juveniles have a mental disorder. Roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the population of those who are in youth detention centers have a minimum of one mental disorder that has been diagnosed (Underwood and Washington, 2016). Disorders have been found to stimulate violent behavior within the juveniles. Some of these disorders include depression, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), psychotic disorders, anxiety disorders, or attention deficit hyperactivity (ADH). When a child has been diagnosed with a disorder, it helps to make stronger recommendations toward treatment. When it is unknown that a child has a disorder, it could be understood that the child is simply lashing out or just being bad. Is a mental illness the definite cause of juvenile delinquency, or is the child in their right mind and choosing to engage in criminal behavior?

Importance of Juvenile Delinquency

The importance of focusing on juvenile delinquency can be viewed in many ways. Two important reasons include that fact that male juveniles are committing a great deal of crime compared to female juveniles. It is not that females cannot commit crimes, but

when there is a comparison, it has been revealed that male juveniles are committing more crimes than female juveniles. Chandlee Johnson Kuhn is a Family Court Judge of the State of Delaware in which she mentioned that female juvenile offenders are handled differently than male juvenile offenders because males commit crimes at a higher rate and because females have different needs that need to be thoroughly addressed (Kuhn, 2013). Female juveniles have long endured more traumatic experiences than males at a 70% rate. Approximately 60% of female juveniles have filed reports of being sexually assaulted. Approximately 65% of female juveniles suffer from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) during their childhood, and 76% of female juveniles have been a witness to a criminal act of someone getting shot (Kuhn, 2013). The treatment programs that are given to juveniles vary according to gender. Females may need more therapy pertaining to being sexually abuse, while males may need a structured routine of discipline. Judge Kuhn pointed out that when intervention programs were designed, it was created with the focus of males in mind, not females. Gender specific programs are a necessity within the Criminal Justice System due to the specific needs of females and males (Kuhn, 2013). The elevating factors leading to juvenile delinquency have been found to cause a higher criminal rate among male juveniles than female juveniles (Herrenkol, 2011).

Another reason to focus on this issue is because those persons, who commit crimes as a juvenile, are more likely to continue their criminal behavior when he/she reaches their adulthood. According to Barrett and Katsiyannis (2016), there was a 20% chance that a juvenile would be arrested in their adulthood when there was a lack of parenting, mental health issues, or disabilities with education were present. A study was conducted using the South Carolina Department of juvenile justice's data. It was revealed

that those persons who had a criminal history as a juvenile were more likely to become an adult offender. Adult offending would begin at the conclusion of their school years in which a child is roughly 17-18 years of age. A child's mental health also contributed to the ongoing criminal activity during their adulthood years. When such powerful forces such as a loving home and strong social skills are missing early in the child's life, it affects the growth and development of the child in many ways. The child will not have any respect for rules and regulations, their ability to become a positive member in society is limited or taken away and leads to problems throughout their life (Barrett and Katsiyannis, 2016).

From a personal standpoint, focusing on juvenile delinquency not only means looking at the statistics, but it also means that a person must focus on the bigger picture. That picture consists on the contributing factors such as poverty, lack of education, lack of family support and unemployment rates. According to 2012 data results, approximately 23% of children who are 18 years of age and younger live in an atmosphere where poverty exists, 31% of these children have parents who have established jobs, and 35% of these children grow up with only one parent in the home (Randall, 2014). Addressing the bigger problem could eliminate many of the other problems that are associated with juvenile delinquency, such as criminal behavior crossing over into their adult hood. Focusing on juvenile delinquency also helps in early prevention. By bringing awareness to this matter early on will allow for policy makers and personnel members of such organizations to plan more strategically. Through prevention planning, it increases the chances of the juvenile becoming a positive contribution to society rather than a negative drawback. It reduces the odds of the

juvenile becoming an adult criminal later in their future. Finally, it helps the financial budget of taxpayer's money (Middle Earth, 2015). In Georgia, the results of an adult's criminal behavior are labeled as punishment. The result of a juvenile's criminal behavior is labeled as an alternative. Alternative, in terms of juvenile justice, simply means that various programs such as home confinement, probation, youth detention centers, counseling or therapy sessions are being sought to rehabilitate the juvenile, rather than punish the juveniles. The problem is that an examination into how useful the programs are in helping a juvenile to not re-offend would help to bring social change to society.

Juvenile Delinquency in Georgia

Juvenile delinquency in Georgia is no different from juvenile delinquency in any other state. The only thing that might differ is the age classification. Juveniles in Georgia are committing property crimes, violent crimes, and white-collar crimes, and thefts. In 2012, an 11-year-old boy was charged with the murder of a 13-year-old juvenile in Albany, GA. Along with the juvenile was his accomplice who was 15 years old (Crime Sider Staff, 2012).

In March 2016, a sentencing of life without parole was thrown out for a 17-year-old male who was convicted of murdering someone during a robbery in, Virginia Highland. He was also charged with raping a female during another robbery. Because he was a juvenile at the time of the incidents, sentencing a juvenile to life without parole was deemed unconstitutional in Georgia. However, contrary to early rulings, the state of Georgia has now said that a juvenile can be sentenced to life with parole only when the severity of a murder charge exceeds the worst of the worst kind of killing (Eloy, 2016).

In June 2016, a 16-year-old male in Moultrie, GA (Colquitt County) was indicted for the murder of an innocent woman who was at the park with her children. The juvenile got into an altercation earlier in the day with some other juveniles, and later did a drive by shooting at a park, in which the victim was struck in the stomach. The juvenile was charged with what Georgia considers a “Deadly Sin”, murder. He was also charged with aggravated assault and possession of a firearm while in the commission of a crime (Mauldin, 2016).

These crimes committed by juveniles are evidence that rehabilitation and treatment programs need to be effective. Regardless if the juvenile decided to shoot and kill someone, rob someone, or rape someone, they all share the classification of being a juvenile. Although the crimes are considered heinous and one of “Georgia Seven Deadly Sins”, it does not change the fact that a crime was committed by a person under the age of 18. Should the juvenile be treated the same as an adult with the consequences of their actions? Is there still time to rehabilitate the juvenile?

Focus on Rehabilitation

Every so often, state legislators develop a plan to attack certain issues. One major issue that continues to linger around the world is juvenile delinquency. Regardless if the juvenile is recidivating or starting to engage in such behavior, the issue needs to be addressed to ensure society that academic scholars are being developed rather than future criminals. The Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (2017) recently completed their update for the strategic goals towards the juvenile justice reform. Among the members on the board were Governor Nathan Deal, Commissioner Avery Niles, and Chairman of the Board of Juvenile Justice Elaine Snow. The mission of the strategic plan is to hold

juvenile accountable for their decisions and support their recovery to make good decisions through support services in appropriate settings (Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017).

Strategic planning is a type of planning that requires more intense thinking than average planning. Broomberg et al. (2015) stated that strategic planning is a disciplined effort to make essential decisions and measures that form what an organization is all about. Strategic planning has a way of allowing those involved to take a close look at things. Those things include the strengths and weaknesses rather than only seeing things in a certain way. The idea behind strategic planning is to design a well thought out plan to attain the goals that are desired. It explains the weaknesses, which enables one to learn about the strengths and it also details the actions that will be taken to correct such measures (Broomberg et al., 2015). In an effort to enhance rehabilitation measures for juvenile offenders, a major reconstruction will occur for regional youth detention centers. The education department of detention centers will turn their vision towards more vocational skills. The staff members who oversee the facilities will get enhanced training that will include better interpersonal skills which would result in better interactions with the juveniles. Among the six goals Governor Deal developed, four of the goals are supported by the state of Georgia: safety which includes protecting the public from harm, education which would result in creating college and work related students, a responsible and efficient government that is fundamentally and fiscally sound, and health that allows for available care and vigorous lifestyles (Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017). Previous research and its benefits/ studies related to construct of interest.

One of the main areas that are being focused on is the youth detention centers. Seeing as how these facilities have a high turnover rate, other measures are being taken to ensure quality staff members and their longevity in the profession. The objectives of this plan include: *Goal 1*: The functionality of the facilities which are safe and will provide educational advancements. The purpose of this goal includes: to decrease the juvenile recidivism rate of a three-year retention span recognized in 2015 from 49.4% to 43.2%. Another purpose of goal 1 is to incorporate the number of vocational programs offered in the facilities from 6 to 9. The programs that are currently offered are automotive repair, collision repair, horticulture, cosmetology, computer science, construction, and Microsoft Office Specialist. The additional programs will include culinary arts, barbering, medical coding, and medical billing. *Goal 2*: Juvenile justice reform. The objectives of this goal are to widen the number of youths that are placed in non-secure residential programming within 90 days. The percentage will increase from the records collected in 2013 from 56.64% to 73% by 2018. The second objective of this goal is to create more community supervision sites with approximately which would increase from 0 to 94. *Goal 3*: Get strategic, staffing, preservation and victorious planning. The objective of this goal is to diminish the turnover rate from 47.4% in 2015 to 42.9% in 2017. *Goal 4*: Create a logical placement of the youth in the facilities. The purpose of this goal is to increase the proportion of those juveniles who do not recidivate while in the care of the youth detention centers from 83.2% from 2013 to 84.9% in 2018. *Goal 5*: to provide those juveniles who will re-enter back into society with successful delivery services. The aim of this goal is to decrease the one-year recidivism rate from 34.3% from 2013 to 31.5% in 2016 (Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017).

All these goals aim toward the new and improved juvenile justice system in terms of detention centers. With certain changes in mind, it challenges the entire outlook on the facilities to help rehabilitate the juveniles in a more effective way. Rather than leaving the doubtfulness of effectiveness, legislators have taken it upon themselves to develop a strategic plan to help combat such an intense issue. The external issues of this plan are surrounded by the recidivism rates which a deduction in the percentages are sought. The internal issues of this plan incorporate what goes on inside the facilities starting with the workers and what the facilities can offer the juveniles to help with their rehabilitation.

Juvenile Recidivism

In order to understand the problems of juvenile recidivism, one must look at the entire picture from the root of the problem to the current state of the problem. The same as trying to understand how a house was built, one must look at the foundation of the house because that is where the house is built from. In terms of juvenile delinquency, what could be the start of this issue? The roots of the issue are the factors that contribute to the delinquency. Such factors include peer pressure, lack of parental guidance, lack of structure and discipline, home environments, and low intelligence levels. Due to these issues being a major role in a child's behavior, they all add to the problem of juvenile delinquency.

Phenomena under investigation

The current state of the problem is the statistics that are associated with juvenile recidivism. The repercussion of a juvenile's criminal behavior is rehabilitation. Those rehabilitation methods included youth detention centers, home confinement, group or individual therapy, probation, or community-based programs. After being rehabilitated,

the juvenile would commit any crime in which the reasons could vary from child to child. Statistics have shown that approximately 65% of juveniles would commit another crime within three years of being released from a youth detention center (Boggs & Worthy, 2015). For example, based on the statistic just mentioned, if 10 juveniles commit a crime, roughly 6-7 of the juveniles would do it again. To society, this could be viewed as disturbing. To legislators and policy makers, this type of information is troubling. It raises concerns for the policies and procedures and its effectiveness. Could those persons in charge of making the protocols be the blame? Could those personnel members who work directly with the juveniles be the blame? The finger could be pointed in many directions. Regardless of who may be at fault, the bigger issue is that children need to be saved from their own self-inflictions.

Other problems with juvenile recidivism are that part where an abundance of money is being spent to correct such behavior of the juveniles. If taxpayers could have say so in where their money was spent, it would possibly go towards fixing the highways, enhancing educational resources, building more communities centers in the neighborhoods, or building more libraries and after school programs for children. Instead, the state of Georgia has spent over \$300 million dollars within the juvenile justice system (Public Safety Performance Project, 2013).

Potential Causes of Juvenile Recidivism

Juvenile delinquency is not strictly geared toward a particular gender. Regardless if the offender is a male or female, there are distinguishing factors that separate the reasons for such behavior. The following comparisons are between male and females. Female juvenile delinquents have met more trauma incidents than males. Females have

been victims of sexual abuse more than males. More females than males have experienced the symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder, and more females have been in dangerous situations than males and have had more physical injuries than males (Kuhn, 2013).

Among every juvenile that has ever committed a crime, there is a different reason per child. Many children experience a lot of the same hardships growing up, but their testimony to their behavior may vary. According to Regis University College of Contemporary Liberal Studies (2017), some contributing factors that led juveniles to engage in criminal behavior are: lack of education, drug or alcohol abuse, peer pressure, and a lack of parental involvement in the child's life. The following chart lists the features of each factor which was provided by Regis University:

Chart 1

Lack of education	Drug/alcohol abuse	Peer pressure	Lack of parental involvement
--Overcrowded classrooms --Not enough teachers --Inadequate financial revenue --Poor attendance --Poor academic performance --Drop outs	--Excessive absence from school --Over use of prescription drugs	--Need for acceptance --gang initiation -- social groups --attitudes	--lack of discipline --not enough love --lack of rewards and congratulations --not enough empathy --lack of positive examples being displayed

Theoretical Foundation

Social Control Theory

The first theory this study was founded on was the Social Control Theory. The rationale for these this theory was that it applies to critical the elements of life, i.e.

discipline, support, decision making, and fulfillment. The four fundamentals of the Social Control Theory will be noted if it played a role in participant's decision to commit crimes. The four fundamentals are: attachment, involvement, commitment, and beliefs. Based on which fundamental of the Social Control Theory that applies to the participant, the type of rehabilitation could have been anchored on fulfilling that need.

According to Bouffard and Rice (2011), self-control is a part of the aspects of social control. They suggested that at the moment a person decides, it is weighed against their level of social bonding. When there are fewer fundamentals (bonds) present in the child's life, he/she is more likely to have less self-control. When there is a strong foundation of fundamentals, the individual is more than likely to have more self-control when deciding (Bouffard & Rice, 2011).

The major proposition of this theory as it relates to this study was the connection of a child re-offending and a child doing the right thing. The purpose of juvenile rehabilitation is to alter the mindset of the child, so their past decisions will not resurface in their future. When the social fundamentals are lacking from a child, it leaves a void in their life that he/she wishes to fulfill. Due to that need not being filled in their home, the "streets" or a life of bad decisions tends to find its way as a substitute. This theory will help to aim the focus of this research based on the significance of the fundamentals associated with this theory. A person grows from a baby to a toddler to a small child to a teenager then, to an adult. During the developmental stages, such factors are necessary to help a child grow into a productive and positive member of society, rather than an unproductive and negative member of society. Each interview question will be based solely on the fundamentals of this theory.

Deterrence Theory

The second theory this study was founded on is the Deterrence Theory. The Deterrence Theory was also explored through the interview questions. There are some people who “think before they act”, while there are others who act with no hesitation. The Deterrence Theory would seek to discover if each participant weighed the good and the bad of their decision making. Along with juvenile delinquency, there is what is considered as contributing factors which are also the dependent variables. These are things that cause a person to stray away from doing the right thing. Such contributing factors include domestic violence, exposure to poverty, drugs, violence or sexual abuse, developmental issues, learning disabilities, lack of discipline, love, or support.

According to Moore and Morris (2011), the deterrence theory would be more useful and have a stronger effect if the consequences of the crime were administered in a quicker manner, and if the severity of the crime were tougher to make a firm believer out of other criminals that they will actually receive consequences for their actions.

The major proposition of this theory was the correlation between weighing the good and bad versus the accountability of the crimes a child is held to inside a youth detention center. The aim of this theory along with the Social Control Theory was to analyze how they focus on the different parts of the Criminal Justice Process.

Desistance Theory

Along with criminal justice and the focus of this research, a deeper look into the Desistance Theory is needed. According to Farrall et al (2012), the desistance theory refers to criminals stopping the criminal behaviors. Desistance is one of the main focal points of the Criminal Justice policies. There is no definite point in a person’s life when

their criminal actions will stop, but the cessation of their actions is what is important. This cessation could be permanently, or it could only be temporary. Through the help of this research, the individual interviews would be able to shed some real-life experiences on this theory. Particularly since the participants will be adults. This theory could help to understand why juvenile delinquents re-offend. The rationale for this theory and along with the Social Control Theory and the Deterrence Theory is that they each have fundamentals that apply to criminal behavior. In this sense, after a child commits a crime, the time lapse that is in between him/her committing another crime is important. Was their cessation only temporary? This theory builds upon the research in a sense that it will help to explore why juvenile delinquents re-offending after a period of being inside a youth detention center.

Current Research/Rationale For Selection of Variables/Meaningfulness of Approach

This study focused on the qualitative measures of juvenile recidivism rates through an assessment of the youth detention centers. Those persons who are currently adults but were once placed in a youth detention center during their childhood years was the focus of the study. Through their years of growing from an adolescent to an adult, one would have their share of life experiences. Regardless if the participant was still engaging in criminal activity, a deep and rich look into the effectiveness of youth detention centers could potentially shed insight into changes that could be implemented into policies and practices. Each participant was asked a series of questions in which their experience(s) inside a youth detention center will be explored. The concerns of what did and did not work inside the facility for each participant will be categorized. Although a focus group

could be beneficial, anonymous phone interviews was administered to each participant for the adherence of their privacy and they would be more willing to discuss the reasons that they recidivated in an anonymous fashion. Each research participant was labeled as participant 1, participant 2, and so forth. The experiences of each participant were weighed against two theories: The social control theory and the deterrence theory. In addition, the interviews with the juvenile probation officers was conducted similarly (anonymous phone interviews). The interviews were based off the central tenets of social control theory and deterrence theory.

Concept/ phenomenon

The phenomenon of interest was to understand what were needed to for juvenile delinquency to get over the hump of its fluctuating recidivating rates after being rehabilitated. This study would help to bridge the gaps by helping to reclaim the future and build better expectations as well.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter provided an overview of current issues in juvenile delinquency and the current status of juvenile delinquency nationally, as well as in Georgia. This research aimed to understand why juveniles are re-offending after being released from detention centers in Atlanta. The findings of this research could be utilized to inform changes to policy and procedure for juveniles already in the juvenile justice system and hopefully reduce recidivism. The findings could also be used to inform preventative programming for juveniles who are at a higher risk to enter the juvenile justice system. In the next chapter, the methods for this research will be presented.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Purpose of study

The purpose of this research was to examine the factors that contribute to recidivism among juveniles in Atlanta (GA) who have spent time in a juvenile detention center, also known as an “Alternative.” An examination into the factors that contribute to juvenile recidivism could inform program(s) and policy(s) that are aimed at these contributing factors. The statistics presented earlier showed that juveniles are reoffending at high rates even after receiving an Alternative, or placement in a juvenile detention center (Public Safety Performance Project, 2013). This research focused on the factors that contributed to juvenile recidivism. In 2013, the budget for the Department of Juvenile Justice in Georgia exceeded \$300 million. Approximately 2/3 of that budget was associated with detention facilities. It was concluded that the cost for one bed in a Regional Youth Detention Center (RYDC) was estimated at \$88,000.00 per bed per year. In spite of the amount the state put forth for the cost of the facilities, the recidivism rates remained high (Public Safety Performance Project, 2013). Those juveniles that were released from youth detention centers had a 65% recidivism rate which increased by 6% in the last decade in the state of Georgia (Boggs & Worthy, 2016). As a person, a taxpayer, and a citizen in the community, it brought many questions when there was talk about juveniles undergoing a form of rehabilitation, and then upon release, well over half reoffend. Depending on the severity of the crime, a juvenile could be sent to a youth detention center. Youth detention centers offer a wide variety of programs to help the juvenile learn a better way of life. Among these programs are opportunities for the

juvenile to learn some vocational skills that could be used for the greater good of their time. A deeper look into the experiences of those who have been inside a youth detention center and their experiences afterward in re-offending would aid in understanding the factors that contribute to recidivism. Also, examining the experiences of juvenile probation officers and their perspective on why juveniles re-offend upon release from a juvenile detention center will provide additional context.

Research Question

The research question was “What factors led juvenile delinquents to reoffend after receiving an alternative treatment?” The importance of this research question was to seek a thorough explanation of such behavior during adolescent years from people who adults are now. In addition, current juvenile probation officers provided insight on their experiences with juveniles who reoffend. This study was seeking individual personal experiences from those persons who underwent the treatment, as well as juvenile probation officers, who have experience interacting with juvenile delinquents who have re-offended after being in detention. Based on the statistic that approximately 65% of juveniles who are released from a youth detention center will re-offend within three years after being released, more up to date research will help to justify reasons for change. During this 21st century, policies and procedures may not be enough to save the life of a juvenile based on what statistics are showing. However, current research is the evidence that will help prove or disprove that such modifications are needed.

All around the world, juveniles are committing all types of crimes. In Georgia, the Juvenile Justice System works tirelessly to find solutions to help juveniles stray away from crime. To help with those efforts, this study would shed valuable insight towards the

criminal justice system and all avenues to reduce or eliminate juvenile delinquency and juvenile recidivism.

Methods

Phenomenon of study

The phenomenon of this study was to understand why juveniles are reoffending after being released from a juvenile detention center. The research focused on former juvenile delinquents who re-offended upon release from a juvenile detention, as well the insights of current juvenile probation officers.

Research tradition

Research tradition for a qualitative phenomenological study is through real experience. Research tradition that has been found for juvenile recidivism rates were based on the arrest and crime records from counties, cities, and state-wide.

Rationale for Chosen Tradition/Identity of Participants

During this qualitative study, a group of approximately 10 or more adult male and/or female participants of various ethnic backgrounds who were once sentenced to a youth detention center and re-offended after release in Atlanta, GA during their adolescent years was individually interviewed about their recidivism. The age range for the former juvenile delinquents will be 18 to 40 years of age. The basis of this study was that the participants not only would have had to been in a youth detention center but must have re-offended at least once after being released. Regardless of the type of crime(s) he/she committed, all criminal experiences are welcomed for this study. The other group of research participants was current juvenile probation officers who have experience

supervising juveniles who spent time in a juvenile detention and then re-offended. The target number for juvenile probation officers for this research is five.

Data Collection Instrument

Individual interviews were used with all research participants. The purpose of interviews versus any other data collection method was that interviews allowed for rich and thorough experiences to be shared. Rather than creating answers that may be close to the truth, interviews allowed for the participants to elaborate on better understandings of reality. The former juvenile delinquents were asked a series of questions that are grounded in deterrence theory and social control theory regarding their recidivism upon release from a juvenile detention (See Appendix E). Similarly, the current juvenile probation officers would also be asked questions that are grounded in deterrence theory and social control theory regarding their experiences with juveniles who reoffended after being released from a juvenile detention center (See Appendix D). The qualitative approach allowed for detailed descriptions of the factors that contributed to delinquency and common themes would be examined.

Individual interviews are more appropriate for this study due to the first-hand knowledge that could be gained. Rather than seek information from those persons on the outside, seeking information from those persons who were directly involved and have internal perspectives will add to the credibility of the study. This study was focused on the former juvenile delinquent's personal experiences of being in a youth detention center and then reoffending after being released. To add additional context and depth, the current juvenile probation officers were interviewed to gain their perspective of why juveniles reoffend upon release from a juvenile detention center. All interviews were

conducted via telephone as noted on the flyers (See Appendices B and C). Individual interviews are a better method for collecting such data because it allows each participant as much time as he/she needs, there will be no influences, and there will not be any pressure to respond to the questions. Individual interviews can have advantages that can benefit this study pertaining to the re-offending of juvenile delinquency. Secondly, individual interviews can allow the time that is needed for the commitment to participate that has been made (Priority Metrics Group, 2015).

Preinterviews/Selection Based/Data Collection Instrument/Treatment of Participants

Justification of sampling strategy

The justification for the sampling strategy includes conducting pre-interviews. Before the interviews are conducted, a prescreening of the participants was conducted. In order to stay with the focus of this study, a pre-screening was necessary to make sure the participants met the criteria of the study and would also ensure the population was correct for this research. This phase of the study will consist of questions that will qualify or disqualify the participants for this research. Because of the nature of the questions, each participant was made aware of all the questions that was asked. If he/she does not feel comfortable answering a particular question, that question will be skipped. Each participant was made aware of the why this research was being conducted, their anonymity during and after the research were finalized, and the significance of their contributions to this study. No juveniles were used during this study. An adult population was able to make the decision for themselves to participate and were free to discuss the

matter of their own criminal records without violating any human rights or breaking any research policies.

Participant Recruitment

Flyers (See Appendix C) were placed in public and private (with permission) areas to recruit the former juvenile delinquents who are now adults. Some locations included homeless shelters, rehabilitation centers, civic/community centers, and places of worship. The flyers (See Appendix B) for the current juvenile probation officers were distributed via the Fulton County Juvenile Probation Office (See Appendix A) as they have agreed to assist in this study. As noted on the flyers, all interviews were conducted via telephone and the participants remained anonymous. The data from the interviews were recoded through notetaking.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher was to record the responses by the participants and search for common themes. The series of questions that were going to be asked focused on of the impact of the use of alternatives for juvenile delinquency and reasons why juvenile delinquents re-offended upon release. Although no response was considered right or wrong, these responses would help assess the factors that contributed to juvenile recidivism. The age of the participants during their delinquent years was vital because the focus of the study was centered on those crimes that were committed when the participants was 17 years of age and younger. Based on one's experience as a juvenile and their experience as an adult, recommendations or suggestions for improvement was asked. There are no personal relationships among me and the participants. The

relationships that were developed with the participants were strictly professional.

Participation in this study was completely voluntarily.

Data Collection

Data collection would last several weeks until the data of all participants was collected. The duration of the data collection events would last approximately 45 minutes per session/interview. Due to the elaboration and clarification a participant may give, the duration of the interviews would be extended. At the completion of each interview, each participant had a chance to ask questions pertaining to the study, its purpose and the clarifications that he/she may need before the end of the interview.

Analysis Plan

Once the data was collected during this study, the notes was analyzed through a thematic approach. The common themes and responses were grouped together for the sake of answering the research question. Common themes could include the any contributing factors, experiences, the type of crimes committed, the length of their stay at a youth detention center, and the experiences of their rehabilitation. The connection of all the data collected would be related to the specific research question of this study. The coding for the data collected would be based on the contributing factors that emerge from the data. The responses would be grouped in one of the categories/themes to help further assess the factors that contributed to juvenile recidivism after placement.

Validity

Two types of validity that were assessed throughout the study are researcher's bias and reactivity. According to Maxwell (2013), researcher's bias refers to the influences that the researcher has on the study based on his/her goals, theories,

expectations, and selections of the data collected. During researcher's bias, the validity in qualitative research is not the result of the influence, but of integrity. Reactivity refers to the influence the researcher has on the location or persons being studied. Through reactivity, some things cannot be eliminated such as the influence. The objective was to understand the influence and use it for a greater purpose during the study. During the research, being mindful of such validity threats had to be a top priority for the research to be a successful study. Thoroughly examining what was being studied, what/and who was being used for the study, and this researcher's own expectations would help to eliminate such threats.

Limitations within this study included the size of the sample and ability to generalize the findings to the larger or general population. For the purpose of this study, the experience of being released from a detention center as a juvenile, and later committing another crime would be examined in greater detail from an adult frame of mind compared to a child's frame of mind. The perspective of juvenile probation officers would also be considered. The limitations of this study would be surrounded by the hesitations during the interviews from the participants. The phenomenological design consists of individuals interviews from various participants and to congregate the responses.

Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, Confirmability

In order to establish credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability, the steady outlook of making sure the interview was in line with the research question for the study. During the pre-interviews, it would be acknowledged that this study was not

based on a particular group of people. Instead, it would be open and based on a wide range of ethnic groups, all races, and both genders.

Ethical issues

One ethical issue that may pose as a dilemma was the researcher's professional career as a law enforcement officer. As a law enforcement officer, this researcher took an oath to uphold the laws of the state of Georgia. If there is any incriminating evidence that a participant admits to, this researcher was not be able to report it because the research participants will remain anonymous. The identities of the participants will be unknown. The storage of the data would be kept in a safe in which it will have a passcode access only. No other person will have the ability to gain access to the safe. The data would be kept safe until the completion of the study.

Research Design

The research design that would be used in this study was a phenomenological research design. The objective of this design was to understand the "lived" experiences from the participants. Through the interview process, the questions that will be asked were to gather the essence of their encounters with the juvenile justice system, being inside a youth detention center, and undergoing the various forms of rehabilitations. The benefit of this approach was that the data that was going to be collected would be true instead of being suggested and close to the truth (Waters, 2017). According to Waters (2017), during the interview, strongly supporting and motivating the participants to be thorough on their lived experiences will help to get a full illustration of their feelings, memories, and perceptions as to what factors contributed to their re-offended after release from a juvenile detention center. Once all of the responses were collected, the common

themes can be associated or disassociated with one another. The distribution of the information will be clearer and more comprehensive (Waters, 2017).

Summary

Throughout this chapter, the purpose of this study was stated and explained in relation to the research question. More in depth procedures pertaining to the population, the sampling size and the saturation were discussed. This study will consist of a prescreening to determine if the participants meet the criteria for the study. While collecting the data, issues such as validity, ethics, and trustworthiness will all be accounted for in my role as the researcher. The results of the study would be further explained in chapter 4.

Chapter 4:

Data Collection and Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the effectiveness of youth detention centers in Atlanta, Georgia based on the lived experiences of adults who were once juvenile delinquents and individuals who are juvenile probation officers in Fulton County, Atlanta, Georgia. Initially, data collections were to include approximately 10-15 participants of adults who were once juvenile delinquents and approximately five or more juvenile probation officers. For the sake of the participants' safety and confidentiality, anonymous phone interviews were conducted. This would allow for the protection of each participants identity. The study population consisted of 6 juvenile probation officers who voluntarily participated. Their responses provided much insight in the juvenile justice system. The following is a detailed timeline of the data that was collected via phone interviews. This chapter will examine the data collections.

Data Collection and Attempts

In many attempts to recruits participants for the group of persons who are now an adult, but were once a former juvenile delinquent, flyers were posted on several locations. On September 5, 2019 flyers were posted at the Atlanta Public School Main Office Building and Fulton County State Court near the elevators. I was not allowed to post flyers at the Atlanta Municipal Courthouse, or a shelter named GATEWAY. Flyers were also posted in two public libraries in Dekalb County on September 19, 2019. On September 27, 2019, an announcement was posted on a social media site: Facebook

regarding recruitment. On December 9, 2019, a flyer was posted at the department of Community Supervision. On January 7, 2020, contact was made with a representative from the Atlanta Detention Center (jail) regarding posting a flyer to recruit participants. I was advised that due to legal reasons, I was not able to post flyers at their location.

The data collections were from interviews with juvenile probation officers. Six individual interviews were held at separate times. Among the participants, experience as a juvenile probation officer ranged from 2 years to 30 years of experience. The number of juvenile delinquents that have been overseen by the officers included approximately 60 to over 1,000 juveniles. Overall, similar feelings and concerns were shared among the participants. In contrast, several differences of opinion towards the effectiveness of the youth detention centers in Atlanta, Georgia were also disclosed.

The first participant expressed a concern that putting a child back in the same environment after time in the Regional Youth Detention Center (RYDC) is not long enough, which leads to recidivism. The participant also stated that factors such as (a) follow-up with long term care, (b) counseling, and (c) mentoring could have prevented the juveniles from re-offending. The participant stated, “The juveniles are not deterred from committing future crimes because they aren’t afraid of the laws and they have more privileges in the youth detention center than at home.” “Things such as life circumstances, home demographics, fatherless boys, economic status and the dynamics of the family” all contribute to juvenile delinquency. Factors like support, recharging their mindset, giving the juvenile something to look forward to such as hope, a job, and school opportunities could help with changing the juvenile’s behaviors and refraining from future delinquency. Changes that could be made to youth detention centers to help reduce

recidivism upon release include (a) making the restrictions of the facility tougher and less enjoyable, (b) incorporating positive rewards to immediate gratification, and (c) reinforcing, “This isn’t what you want.” Changes that this participant would make to the juvenile justice system are simply “bringing back the boot camp system,” “hold parents accountable,” and continue to rehabilitate, but have more consequences. In addition to the participant’s experience with the juvenile justice system, additional input from the participant included that everyone (e.g., schools, courts, department of family and children services, juvenile probation officers, and parents) should work together as a team.

The second participant also expressed concerns that “juveniles going back to the same environment as well as decision making” leads to juvenile recidivism after release from a youth detention center. The idea that the juvenile “have to want change, support, education, and counseling” are ways that could prevent the juvenile from re-offending. Participant two shared mixed concerns about whether juveniles are deterred from committing future crimes from the threat of punishment. “Some are afraid and stop, while others need a reality check.” “The need for approval and acceptance from friends and family” contributes to juvenile delinquency. “When criminal behavior is normal in the household, the child then becomes accustomed to engaging in the same behavior.” Having someone to believe in the juvenile, providing a different environment, and giving them high expectations could contribute to the juvenile’s changing their ways from committing future crimes. Changes that could be made to youth detention centers to help reduce recidivism upon release included “changing it from having so much fun to making it a deterrent instead of a fun place.” Also changing the child’s mind from wanting to be

in the youth detention center because of what it offers compared to the reality that the juvenile lives at home. Changes that this participant would make to the juvenile justice system are simply (a) making it consequential, (b) enforcing accountability, (c) having a balance between mental health programs and consequences, and (d) lastly show a balance between the consequences and working on the child as a whole. In addition to the participants' experience with the juvenile justice system, additional input included creating a balance of deterrent, restoration, and programs and making sure the child is whole before they leave the facility. This includes looking at all aspects of the child because it could lead to better results. The child should also learn the difference between right and wrong and what the expectations and consequences are which could lead to kids not re-offending.

The third participant showed concerns that juveniles do not stay long enough in a youth detention center as it relates to the juvenile re-offending. Juveniles also re-offend while on probation. In order to help prevent the epidemic of re-offending such things as resources which are to include (a) adequate food, (b) clothes, and (c) caretaking, and not putting the child back in the same environment they came from. When asked if juveniles are deterred from the committing future crimes by the threat of punishment/sanction, participant three replied no. She stated that the purpose of a youth detention center is not to detain, therefore the kids take advantage of the amount of punishment that can be imposed on them. Contributions to juvenile delinquency is surrounded with (a) low income, (b) lack of parental guidance/engagement, (c) learning disabilities, (d) lack of education, and (e) poor peer groups which leads to peer pressure. To help change the juvenile's mind from refraining from future crimes, continued services and other

resources after probationary period has been completed and giving the juveniles something different than what they had could be possibilities. Changes to the juvenile detention centers to reduce recidivism upon release included: making the centers less like after school care which would not make the kids take the centers as a joke. “The centers need to be aimed at deterring kids, and there will be less juveniles doing wrong”. “Getting rid of the point system which decides the child’s fate and having stricter laws” are recommendations for the juvenile justice system. “The current laws make it difficult to handle situations better”. Participant’s three additional input for helping to understand this issue contained interest in not having enough programs for positive reinforcement and the kids need a “Safe Haven”.

The fourth interview was quite interesting with numerous different responses. Such factors that lead to juvenile recidivism after being released from a juvenile detention center focused on having no change in circumstances and lack of intervention. If there were interventions for the youth and their families to help address the concerns, it could help with the prevention of juveniles re-offending. When asked if juveniles are deterred from committing future crimes by the threat of punishment/sanction, participant four replied yes and no. He explained, “It isn’t a deterrent because the threat of punishment is not enough unless you make it long term. On the contrary, it is a deterrent to lower level kids who doesn’t know right from wrong”. Factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency included (a) peer pressure, (b) the need for recognition, (c) emphasis to be regular or normal, and (d) poverty. “Maturity, support, home life, and having another outlet” are things that may help the juvenile to change their ways from committing future crimes. Changes that could be made with youth detention centers

included: “as it pertains to a regional youth detention center, in which the kids are held for a short period of time: conducting follow-up in after care and having more resources could help with the changes in juvenile detention centers”. “As it pertains to youth detention centers: more counseling, mentors, keeping the structure and more individual time” could also help with the changes in juvenile detention centers. Based on participant’s four experience, he advised that having more outlets and more money on the front end to be able to give more resources and support would be his recommendations for the juvenile justice system. Participant’s four additional input regarding helping to understand this matter was stated as, “Having more employment opportunities, give more attention to the younger kids because they are still developing, and change the social normal because too much stuff is normalized.”

The fifth interview’s responses focused a lot on the parental involvement with the child. The contributing factors that lead to recidivism after release from a youth detention center, was stated as “No structure in the home” and “No active parents”. With no active parents in the home, he also felt as if the lack of parental guidance and structure in the home could have prevented them from re-offending. When asked if juveniles are deterred from the committing future crimes by the threat of punishment/sanction, participant five replied, “No, because the threats are not effective, the kids know the laws, and it’s not a big deal to them”. Factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency often included (a) one’s peer association, (b) no values or morals instilled in the child, and (c) the lack of parental guidance. Participant five felt strongly towards the need for the child to internalize the importance of staying out of trouble as a way of the juvenile changing their ways and refraining from future delinquency. The child should internalize the importance of

wanting to change and not return to those habits. Not having a high turnover rate with the employees, having consistent staff, and having everyone on the same/understanding are such changes that could be made to the youth detention centers. “My recommendation for the juvenile justice system is to hold the parents accountable. Family dynamics are out of control, and there should be more gang prevention classes in school”. Participant’s five additional input regarding helping to understand this matter was stated as, “Hold parents accountable, give parenting classes, and have counselors help families and the child to make good choices. The child should also have a mental diagnosis”. Simply put, “The child has not learned their lesson the first time”.

The final participant also showed concern for mental health issues among the juveniles. “Untreated mental health diagnosis, lack of investment, involvement, and guidance from parents, lack of job opportunities, and sustained despair of hopelessness with regards to their future are factors that lead to recidivism after release from a youth detention center”. Things that could have prevented the child from re-offending included addressing the circumstances that led to offend in the beginning, and access to drug and alcohol services and counseling. When asked if juveniles are deterred from the committing future crimes by the threat of punishment/sanction, participant six replied, “No, low level (poverty) offending kids come back less. Detention centers are more structured than their own home, therefore, they are unmoved because youth detention centers are better”! Factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency are untreated mental health diagnosis, economic status, lack of effective parents, bad environments as far as seeing negativity rather than positivity, the child’s maturity level, and not identifying the reasons for the behavior. This participant suggested that (a) the juvenile’s maturity level,

(b) addressing mental health issues, (c) having a positive social environment, and (d) mentorship are ways that could help change the mindset of the child from committing future crimes. Recommendations for the juvenile detention centers included: (a) greater compassion of services such as increasing the staff and financial funding, (b) providing long term care, (c) life skills, (d) coping mechanisms, and (e) receiving a mental health assessment prior to entering the facility. The changes that participant six would make to the juvenile justice system were focused on having more probation officers to keep the caseloads low which could lead to more involvement with the juveniles, substance abuse counseling, more job opportunities, and that the conditions of the probation should include support and expectations of the parents. Participant's six additional input about helping to understand this matter was stated as, "Youth detention centers are not a treatment or therapy facility. It does not address why the child offended. It is minimally effective; therefore, the facilities need something to address the child's needs".

Data Analysis

The first round of coding utilized the elemental methods of descriptive and NVivo coding. There were no unusual circumstances encountered while collecting the data. These methods were appropriate for initially summarizing the data using the participant's own words and to describe their experience as a juvenile probation officer. These coding methods were also appropriate to record the researcher's own reflections of experience pertaining to the effectiveness of the youth detention centers in Atlanta, Ga.

Members of the Fulton County Juvenile Probation Office were very fluent with their responses. During the interviews, compassion and fatigue were recognized among all the participants. They all want to be able to do more to thoroughly help save the

juveniles from their own self-destruction and life's challenges. The fatigue of the officers pertaining to their case load, lack of funding, and limitations of the laws and policies also hinders them from doing more for the juveniles.

Description of Emergent Codes and Themes

NVivo was also used in this study to further breakdown the participants' perspectives into categories and themes for a better understanding of the juvenile probation officers experience. There were numerous codes that were found among the results of the interviews. These codes were placed under the researcher's chosen categories, their meanings, and evidence of those meanings are displayed in Chart 1. The eight categories chosen to describe the data were (a) Factors contributing to juvenile recidivism, (b) Prevention from re-offending, (c) Deterrence of punishments, (d) Contributions to juvenile delinquency, (e) Factors leading to better ways (f) Changes to detention facilities, (g) Recommendation for juvenile justice system, and (h) Extra input. These categories were created to explain the various codes that emerged from the data and to breakdown those codes to find emerging themes. Some for the running themes throughout the data was the need for more parental involvement, more available resources (finances, job opportunities, counseling, drug/alcohol substance class), youth detention centers are too playful and enjoyable, the threat of punishment is not a deterrence, and enforce accountability. The final chapter of this study continues the discussion of those needs. The following chart breaks down the results of the data by categorizing, providing its meaning and showing evidence presented from the data.

Chart 2

Category	Meaning	Evidence from The Data
Factors contributing to juvenile recidivism after being released	What causes the child to commit crimes after re-entry into society	Returning to same environment, lack of intervention and resources, kids not staying long enough at facility, untreated mental health diagnosis

Prevention from re-offending	Reasons to stop being delinquent	Mentoring, counseling, parental guidance/involvement, available resources,
Deterrence of punishments	Is punishment causing a cessation	No, kids know the law, kids are not afraid
Contributions to juvenile delinquency	What causes the child to start committing crimes	Home demographics, financial status, peer pressure, need for recognition/approval, lack of effective parents, emphasis on bad things that are normal, and lack thereof
Factors leading to better ways	Influences for a better life	Hope, support, expectations, continued resources, better environment, positive outlets, better opportunities
Changes to detention facilities	Increasing more effectiveness in the facilities	Make tougher, less enjoyable, mental health assessments, all involved personnel working together, more resources, long-term care, cooling mechanisms
Recommendation for juvenile justice system	How to enhance the system	Hold parents accountable, more financial resources, make it consequential, create balances, stricter laws, more outlets, more probation officers and job opportunities
Extra input	Work experience equals room for growth	All parties work together, "safe haven" needed, implement balance, enough programs for positive reinforcement, change social norms, hold parents accountable, address child's needs

How Qualities of Discrepant Cases Followed

As can be evidenced by the codes and the researcher's summary of the data, there were some differences and similarities in the data. The following chart demonstrates some of the differences and similarities among the participants.

Chart 3

	Similarities	Differences
Factors contributing to juvenile recidivism after being released	Putting a child back in the same environment, lack of parental accountability	Not enough time spent inside facility, no structure inside home, untreated mental health diagnosis, lack of job opportunities
Prevention from re-offending	Mentoring/counseling, adequate resources (finances, food/shelter, support)	Addressing initial circumstances, provide interventions for families
Deterrence of punishments	Juveniles are not threatened by the sanction of punishment	None
Contributions to juvenile delinquency	Economic status, environment, peer pressure, need for recognition/approval, lack of parental involvement	Maturity, no values/morals, life circumstances, fatherless boys,
Factors leading to better ways	Support, continued aftercare services, job opportunities, mentorship	Change mindset, address mental health issues, positive social environment
Changes to detention facilities	Make tougher, less enjoyable	Not have high turnover rate among employees, expansion of services (life skills, coping mechanisms, increase staffing)

Recommendation for juvenile justice system	Enforce accountability (parents/child), enforce consequences, stricter laws	Bridge family members together, substance abuse counseling, job opportunities, more finances
Extra input	Everyone working together, hold parents accountable, get to the root of the child's reasons for behavior.	"safe haven" needed

Given the amount of years of experience (2yrs to 30yrs) among the participants, many of them were in favor of parent accountability, having more resources (staff, finances, and outlets/programs) for the juveniles. The differences ranged from including mental health assessments to options for ensuring that the child learned their lesson the first go around. These experience within the data foretell the point that the juvenile justice system is not as effective as it could be. The positive experience from the juvenile probation officers suggested that with more help from state laws and policies, they would be able to reach higher grounds with the juveniles. Also, with the help of included parties (courts, parents, mentors, and the juvenile themselves), better results could be produced as it pertains to the juveniles not re-offending. The researcher expects that even if the sample size were larger than the six participants interviewed, the differences and similarities would still exist because of varying perspectives.

Evidence and Trustworthiness Implementation of Credible Strategies. Careful transcription of the interviews was conducted and afterwards they were compared with the recorded interviews to ensure their translations were thorough. Additionally, continuous review of the recorded interviews against the transcripts, in no less than three instances confirmed the findings. A comparison of the primary and secondary data collected reinforced the findings, with the secondary data strengthening the notion of the

effectiveness of the youth detention centers is not as effective as it could be. Statistics have shown that juveniles who were released from a youth detention center had a 65% recidivism rate which increased by 6% within the last decade (Boggs & Worthy, 2016). The data collected from the interviews further let the researcher know that with the juvenile justice system and the criminal justice system, there is still work to be done to help save juveniles from their own self-destruction.

Implementation/adjustment to transferability. The interviews conducted for this study were anonymous. However, there was no holding back regarding the feelings and experience expressed by the participants. Most of the participants gave responses of exhaustion and fatigue due to lack of resources which makes their job a lot harder than it should be. Generally, all the juvenile probation officers spoke on parent accountability or lack of parent presence. During their experience with the juveniles, it was easy for them to see that a lot of the problems could be eliminated if the child's home environment was better than its current state. It has been proven from statistics and from the juvenile probation officers that many juvenile delinquents lack love and discipline from their parents, adequate food in the home, a safe environment, and simply a responsible person to teach them right from wrong. As the result of the deficiencies, they turn to other outlets and get caught by the juvenile justice system. Those shortcomings are then provided by the state of Georgia inside a youth detention center. Per the juvenile probation officers, many of the juveniles would rather be inside the facility than at their own home.

Among all the juvenile probation officers, they all shared the feeling of wanting to see better laws that were tougher and that will deter crime. As the interviews went on, the researcher was able to tell the compassion in their voices, but lack of different things is

what bothers them the most. Many participants spoke on having a need for more resources to help change the juvenile's mind from re-offending. Resources included: (a) counseling, (b) mentoring, (c) long-term after care, (d) parenting classes, (e) job and (f) school opportunities for the juveniles.

Implementation/Adjustment to Dependability. Data collection began in early November 2019 and immediately the researcher was impressed with their responses. Based on the research that was previously conducted years ago and the responses that were given during the interviews, it was exciting to hear the reality of connecting and interacting with juvenile delinquents. The phone calls were anonymous and were provided through a partnership with the Fulton County Juvenile Probation Office. The phone calls were recorded on a digital recording device and were played back for the purpose of transcription.

The intended study population recruitment process began in October 2019 and only juvenile probation officers responded. In many attempts to recruit participants for the group of persons who are now an adult, but were once a former juvenile delinquent, flyers were posted on several locations. On September 5, 2019 flyers were posted at the Atlanta Public School Main Office Building and Fulton County State Court near the elevators. I was not allowed to post flyers at the Atlanta Municipal Courthouse, or a shelter named GATEWAY. Flyers were also posted in two public libraries in Dekalb County on September 19, 2019. On September 27, 2019, an announcement was posted on a social media site: Facebook regarding recruitment. On December 9, 2019, a flyer was posted at the department of Community Supervision. On January 7, 2020, contact was made with a representative from the Atlanta Detention Center (jail) regarding posting a

flyer to recruit participants. I was advised that due to legal reasons, I was not able to post flyers at their location. I was unable to find any participants for this particular group of the study. During this time, there was frustration and exhaustion due to no participants for those persons who were once former juvenile delinquents and are now adults. The researcher understood that there would be hesitation from such participants because there was no compensation or gift for their time. Interviews began with the juvenile probation officers in early November 2019. The flyers were sent out in early October 2019. Responses were received from the Fulton County Juvenile Probation Office and the interviews began right away.

Implementation/Adjustment to Consistency/Confirmability. The narratives and lived experiences of the juvenile probation officers help to bridge the gap of the previous literature and the current reality of the criminal justice system. The conclusions are made by the researcher which centered on a few things. The compassion that juvenile probation officers have towards their duties and responsibilities showed that saving juveniles from their own immature thoughts is not going unnoticed. Their experience of involvement has led the researcher to credible findings. With this study, similar or exact studies can be replicated for the purpose of possibly adjusting policies and procedures to meet the current state of matter. The policies and procedures of 20 years ago do not fit the needs and criteria of today's youth. This topic was chosen for this research study based on the researcher's background and professional experiences related to juveniles in the criminal justice system. Since joining law enforcement in 2010, it has been an ongoing interest to understand why so many juveniles do what they do. In turn, it is the researchers hope that one day, their voices can be heard and put to good use for the sake of saving a child's

life. This study could also be made evident to all parties for whom this research is directed.

Summary

Following careful analysis of the data, it could be concluded that the effectiveness of the youth detention centers in Atlanta, GA are not as effective. Based on the responses from the group of juvenile probation officers, the youth detention centers could be a lot more aggressive and more direct in terms of trying to reach successful rates of rehabilitation than they are instead of appearing to be “a playhouse”. The positive effects of the youth detention centers are that not all juveniles are re-offending. Their efforts and tactics have shown to save lives, but not as many. The negative effects include the juveniles not taking the laws and consequences serious. The following research question was addressed in the study.

RQ1: What factors led juvenile delinquents to reoffend after receiving an alternative treatment?

Answer: Based on the responses from the juvenile probation officers, juveniles reoffend because of the lack of resources in the after care; they also return to the same environment they left from; there is a lack of hope and expectation for the juvenile to do well; there is a lack of parental guidance and advisement in the home. One of the biggest reasons included the youth detention centers giving the child what he/she may not get at home (e.g. adequate food, a bed to sleep in, clean bathrooms, and various outlets and games to play). According to the juvenile probation officers, youth detention centers are “enjoyable.”

Conclusion

Just as the old saying going, “spare the rod, spoil the child” as it pertains to giving discipline to juveniles. When children tend to have a lack of discipline, mischievous behaviors are secondhandly encouraged. In relation to juvenile delinquency, when rehabilitation services are limited, or ineffective, recidivating actions will persist. As the above-mentioned statistics suggested, the youth detention centers in Atlanta, Georgia need revision. While these studies are conclusive to one location, this can be implied for all other facilities throughout the state of Georgia that do not reflect beneficial results. It is long overdue for policy makers in the criminal justice system and the juvenile justice system to incorporate more resources (programs, finances, and other outlets) towards more positive outcomes. There is more work to be done with saving the future of tomorrow. This research study is a big step in helping to create more effective policies and procedures. Further discussion and conclusions will follow in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

When the researcher first started this research, I intended to gather first-hand knowledge on the efficacy of rehabilitation for juvenile offenders. Once the information was gathered, the goal was to analyze the similarities and difference of its effectiveness. However, I was unable to recruit an adequate sample of adults who were former juvenile offenders. I was, however, able to interview current juvenile probation officers and so my study shifted slightly. These officers work very closely with juveniles and had knowledge of the juvenile justice system. They expressed the need for more resources and other avenues for the justice system to be more effective than its current state. Overall, the juvenile justice system could use some enhancements to become more effective rather than being ineffective. Considering that the cost for one bed in a regional youth detention centers is estimated at \$88,000 per bed per year, tougher rehabilitation alternatives such as more strict and disciplined routines, more follow-up aftercare, and more assertive teachings could be implemented to make better use of taxpayer money (Public Safety Performance Project, 2013). The above-mentioned rehabilitation alternatives that could be implemented could also save a lot of time in the future.

Purpose and Nature of Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and analyze the effectiveness of youth detention centers in Atlanta, Georgia by collecting data from those persons who are currently adults but were once former juvenile delinquents and current Fulton County Juvenile Probation Officers. The perspectives from the juvenile probation

officers provided numerous years of experience with the juvenile justice system. Prior research consisted of identifying statistics pertaining to the crimes committed by the juveniles, statistics showing the recidivism rates among juvenile offenders, and various rehabilitation methods used in the state of Georgia. These sections were studied with the focus on what type of crimes the juveniles were committing, how often they were committing the crimes and an overall data analysis of yearly reports for criminal activity. I also studied the statistics that showed that a large percentage of juveniles would re-offend within a certain amount of time after being released from a youth detention center. In 2016, it was concluded that juveniles who were released from a youth detention center had a 65% recidivism rate (Boggs & Worthy, 2016). Based on the responses from the juvenile probation officers, things that contributed to the juvenile re-offending were: (a) little/no parental guidance, (b) no opportunities, (c) lack of resources, (d) peer association, and (e) no motivation to do better. The failures of the juvenile detention centers revolved around financial budgets that put restraints on the necessary resources, understaff personnel, lack of commitment from the personnel, exhaustion from personnel members, and lack of vision for the common objectives of the youth detention centers. In prior research, there was an absence of how well the rehabilitation methods worked regarding its effectiveness and statistics. The input of juvenile probation officers was also absent from prior research which was not found in any articles, data summaries and reports and statistics. The approach for this study consisted of anonymous phone interviews, as well as my experience in law enforcement for the past 10 years.

Why and How the Study Was Done

With this study, I sought to gain a better understanding of the rehabilitative needs of juvenile offenders. During my professional career in law enforcement, I encountered numerous juveniles who were influenced by peer pressure, poverty, gang affiliations, and lack of parental guidance or discipline. I saw how youth were victimized by these environmental influences. Today, my passion remains seeking ways to help juvenile offenders.

I chose Atlanta, Georgia for this study because it is the largest city in the state of Georgia, and there are many programs to help juveniles. I posted recruitment flyers in various locations and conducted anonymous phone interviews with the juvenile probation officers. Those interviews were transcribed and analyzed through hand coding to find codes, categories, and themes that would be used to establish their meanings compared to the effectiveness of youth detention centers and the juvenile justice system.

Summary of Findings/Interpretations of Findings

This study revolved around one research question which aimed to explore the effectiveness of youth detention centers in Atlanta, Georgia. The answer is based on the perspective of the participants who are Juvenile Probation Officers. The knowledge obtained during this study extended the knowledge in the discipline by comparing them with what has already been found in peer-re-reviewed literature described in chapter 2.

Conclusion to RQ1

What factors lead juvenile offender to reoffend after receiving an alternative treatment?

The data was limited in this area due to not being able to get participants who are adults but were once former juvenile delinquents. Based on the years of experience, which ranged from 2 years to 30 years of experience with the juvenile justice system, their familiarity showed that more resources (finances, additional staff, alcohol/drug programs, counseling, mentorship, educational and job opportunities) are heavily needed. It was learned that juveniles do not mind being sent to a youth detention center simply because he/she receives support and resources in the facility that they would not otherwise receive at home. Such things include food, clean beds, structure and discipline, and fun time. The juveniles also receive medical care while inside the facility.

In all essence, if more resources or tough rehabilitative measures were provided outside of the youth detention centers, the alternative treatments could be more effective and could potentially lead to a decrease in juveniles going to youth detention centers. Juvenile probation officers do a lot of speaking for the juveniles simply because of their involvement with working for the juvenile justice system. When it pertains to speaking for the juveniles, it simply means that the officers can vocalize situations involving juveniles to the right departments and seek help. During my experience as a law enforcement officer, there were plenty of times where juveniles did not know where to turn for help. Despite their criminal activity, speaking with probation officers is a start to rehabilitating the problem. Juvenile probation officers are workers of the state of Georgia in which they have access to resources.

Limitations

The biggest limitation during this study was the lack of participants from the group of persons who are now adults but were once former juvenile delinquents. Again,

the purpose of this study was to analyze the effectiveness of the youth detention centers. Initially, the goal was to have between 10-15 participants of those person who are now adults but were once former juvenile delinquents. I believe I was unable to get willing participants from this group because there was no compensation for their time. For the sake of this study, there was no reward given in exchange for their time and participation. The goal for the second group of participants was approximately five participants, and six participants volunteered.

Recommendations

From the results of this study, the recommendations are minimal and uncomplicated: policymakers need to create laws that show tougher rehabilitation methods such as stricter discipline, more assertive teachings, and tougher consequences for accountability. Although many would suggest not treating juveniles like adults, juveniles are continuing to become repeat offenders because they have not learned their lesson. Tougher policies could be the answer. As current and past times have shown, juvenile offenders are committing all types of crimes regardless of the severity of the crime. Crimes ranging from assault to robbery to theft and murder, juveniles are not afraid of the laws, as many of the juvenile probation officers suggested. Based on their experience with the juveniles, fear is not among the juvenile's mindset. The current laws and statistics that show a 65% chance of recidivism rate that are related to this topic suggest that it may be time for a change. Rather than letting time pass hoping that juveniles will change their ways, Georgia's current Criminal laws could be made stricter and more consequential to help fast track this adjustment.

Implications for Social Change

The issue of juvenile delinquency has been going on far too long, and the world could be a much better place when juveniles can be more beneficial to society, rather than be treated as liabilities. Regarding social change, reducing or eliminating juvenile delinquency as well as the recidivism rates will take time to change. The impact of such a change could mean the difference between progression and regression within the entire criminal justice system and the quality of life for everyone. The potential impact from this study can affect positive social change in which it will show that there will be a decrease in recidivism rates, better attendance records at schools which could produce higher graduation rates, and society will become a better place because there will be less crimes occurring. This study will also bring more awareness to the issue of juvenile delinquency. Society and the juvenile justice system can be better prepared for it via finances, personnel, objectives and goals. This impact of this study could potentially have long-term benefits throughout society. The moment that changes are made; it will immediately have a positive impact of social change. Although there is no particular way to start making changes, recognizing the need for change and bringing awareness to the issue is a good start to head towards social change. More work will need to be done in order to put this act in motion. It will require a group effort (e.g courts, juvenile justice system personnel, parents, and the juvenile themselves) to change the world. If juvenile could see the need for change, then the foundation for eliminating recidivism could enhance. The implications for social change did not exceed the boundaries of this study.

Reflections of the Researcher

I grew up in a respectable neighborhood in Augusta, Georgia where juvenile delinquency did not exist. The other children who grew up with me were just as ambitious and involved in many positive extra-curricular activities. Having spent 10 years in law enforcement, I have encountered many juvenile offenders. I have mentored juveniles as well as made arrest on juveniles. The thing that concerned me the most factored around the same juveniles that kept doing the same thing as far as criminal activity. I found that when the juveniles would freely speak to me, a lot of the same reasons for offending would be voiced. This study was important to me because although children are not guaranteed a fortunate lifestyle or upbringing, it burdens the core values to see children suffer from ill-advised decisions. Ultimately, the juveniles did not like their upbringings. Some of the juveniles became a product of their own environment, while others found more love and comfort in the streets, instead of at home. I became interested in helping juveniles and providing opportunities that juvenile offenders may never have had. Being able to give youth a chance at having a decent life is an ideal goal of mine. If it means saving the life of one juvenile at a time, it will mean that this work was not in vain. Many juveniles need to understand that there are people who care for their well-being. Being able to help “behind the scenes” is a good place to start, considering many artful practices with juveniles are dictated by policy and procedures. Social change can be reached.

Conclusion

Although there was limited participation throughout this study from former juvenile delinquents, consistency will absolutely be the key to proving that policymakers in the state of Georgia hold a key part of a juvenile’s life in their decision making. There

is much more discussion about what may or may not work towards juvenile delinquency, effective rehabilitation alternatives, and reducing or eliminating juvenile recidivism rates. One thing that is for sure is that juveniles need a lifesaving alternative action today. What is put in place today, can grow and blossom into a life altering era that would help mold them into suitable adults for society. Simply put, juveniles do not respect the laws, nor do they adhere to them. The recidivism rates show just how much laws also undermined. It is a strong belief that that when the laws get tougher and stricter on juveniles, many of the actions from them will cease. The laws are protecting juveniles from having to accept responsibility for their poor choices, therefore leading to recidivism. In all essence, despite the multiple attempts at policy changes, financial support, and all contributing factors of juvenile delinquency, none of this will matter if the juvenile justice system continues to support their behaviors through lackadaisical reprimands.

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Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation

Community Research Partner Name: Fulton County Juvenile Probation Office

Contact Information: Chief Adolphus Graves Email: Adolphus.Graves@fultoncountyga.gov

Date: April 17, 2019

Dear Jacquelyn M. Nelson,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled "An Assessment of the Effectiveness of Alternatives for Juvenile Delinquency in Atlanta, GA" within the Fulton County Juvenile Probation Office. As part of this study, I authorize you to collect data pertaining to the experience of the Juvenile Probation Officers. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: expanding on the officer's experience with juvenile delinquency and the Juvenile Justice System. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in Proquest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,



Email: Adolphus.graves@fultoncountyga.gov

Phone: 404-613-4589

Appendix B: Flyer for Juvenile Probation Officers

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED:
JUVENILE PROBATION OFFICERS

Are you interested in participating in a research study that is focused on understanding why juveniles re-offend after being released from- a juvenile detention? Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and anonymous. The research will be conducted via telephone interviews and could last approximately 45 minutes. If you are interested in participating or have questions about participating, please contact Jacquelyn Nelson at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Appendix C: Flyer for Former Juvenile Delinquents

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED:
FORMER JUVENILE DELINQUENTS WHO
ARE NOW AGES 18-40

Are you a former juvenile delinquent who spent time in a juvenile detention center in Fulton County, Georgia and re-offended upon release? Are you interested in participating in a research study that is focused on understanding why juveniles re-offend after being released from a juvenile detention center? Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and anonymous. The research will be conducted via telephone interviews and could last approximately 45 minutes. If you are interested in participating or have questions about participating, please contact Jacquelyn Nelson at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Appendix D: Interview Questions for Juvenile Probation Officers

Prescreening questions

- 1.) Are you currently employed as a juvenile probation officer in Fulton County, GA?

Interview questions

- 1.) Approximately how many juveniles have you worked with during your career as a juvenile probation officer?
- 2.) In your experience, what factors lead to juvenile recidivism after release from a juvenile detention center?
- 3.) In your experience with the juveniles that re-offended, what could have prevented them from re-offending?
- 4.) In your experience, do you think that juveniles are deterred from committing future crimes by the threat of punishment/sanctions? Why or why not?
- 5.) In your experience, what factors most often contribute to juvenile delinquency? Why? How?
- 6.) In your experience, what factors most often contribute to juvenile delinquents changing their ways and refraining from future delinquency? Why? How?
- 7.) In your experience, what changes could be made to the juvenile detention centers to reduce recidivism upon release?
- 8.) In your experience, what changes would you recommend for the juvenile justice system?
- 9.) Is there anything else that you would like to add with regard to understanding why juveniles re-offend after being released from a juvenile detention center?

Appendix E: Interview Questions for Former Juvenile Delinquents

Prescreening Questions

- 1.) Are you between the ages of 18 and 40 years? Yes or No
- 1.) Were you sentenced to a juvenile detention in Fulton County Georgia? Yes or No
- 2.) As a juvenile, were you arrested for a crime(s) after release from a juvenile detention center? Yes or No

Part II Main Interview Questions

- 1.) Reflecting back on your time as a juvenile, and specifically when you were released from the juvenile detention center, what factor(s) and/or influence(s) do you think led to you committing another crime?
- 2.) What attachments/bonds/relationships may have helped you to stay away from committing additional criminal offenses when you were released?
- 3.) What were the positive involvements (if any) you had upon release from the juvenile detention center?
- 4.) What were the negative involvements (if any) you had upon release from the juvenile detention center?
- 5.) How would you describe your attitude when you were released from the juvenile detention center?
- 6.) Do you recall weighing/considering the rewards vs. punishment before you re-offended? Why or why not?
- 7.) Were you concerned about being arrested again after getting out of detention? Why or why not? What was going on in your life at this time?
- 8.) What suggestions/recommendations would you give for improving a juvenile delinquent's release from a juvenile detention so that they do not re-offend?
- 9.) Is there anything else that you would like to add with regard to understanding why juveniles re-offend after being released from a juvenile detention center?