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## Use of a Community-based Mentoring Program to Reduce Juvenile Delinquency and Crime in Adolescents

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# Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

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Andida Prince

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Walden University  
2024

Abstract

Use of a Community-Based Mentoring Program to Reduce Juvenile Delinquency

and Crime in Adolescents

by

Andida Prince

MA, St. John's University, 2013

BS, Dowling College, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

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August 2024

## Abstract

The risk factors of juvenile delinquency and crime fail to acknowledge the systemic injustices, environmental stressors, and challenges youths bring to mentoring programs. Community-based mentoring programs are in place to assist with deterrence and reduction of juvenile delinquency and crime. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand delinquency and crime in adolescents through the theoretical lens of social control theory. The goal was to explore the theories and understand what can be done to counteract the risk factors from the perspective of mentoring professionals. The research questions focused on community-based mentoring programs' role in an adolescent's life and perceptions of mentoring youths. Interviews with 12 mentoring professionals from the Long Island area of New York were conducted via Zoom. Data were collected through virtual interviews and analyzed by coding and identifying themes in the data. The key findings that the prevention strategies assisted adolescents in making better choices and thinking about the consequences of their actions before making decisions and that having a positive outlook and an open mind help an individual to build a relationship with those whom they mentor. The study can assist stakeholders in understanding the effectiveness of community-based programs. These data support the need for positive social change through the implementation and evaluation of mentoring programs geared toward counteracting the risk factors.

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## Dedication

All praise & thanks goes to God! I thank God for giving me the words to write this proposal. Thank you with helping me with every task and granting unto me knowledge and wisdom. Thank you to my family, for their encouragement and guidance. To my friend Monica, thank you for accompanying me to every residency. It was an adventure. To my friend Shawni, thank you for always asking about my proposal and for your encouraging words. To my Antioch Seventh Day Adventist church family, your prayers and words of encouragement have provided me with more than I could have ever imagined. Thank you, God, for everything!

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

Mentoring is an intervention and is defined as a “relationship between an older, more experienced adult and an unrelated protégé” (Weiler et al., 2019, p. 3). A mentoring relationship is a relationship in which an adult provides guidance, instruction, and encouragement aimed at developing the competency and character of a youth. Mentoring is a common intervention strategy, and MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership estimates that over the last 20 years, the number of mentoring relationships for at-risk youths in the United States has increased from 300,000 to 4.5 million (Weiler et al., 2019). The Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is the largest federal fund for mentoring programs and awards nearly \$1 billion in grants to mentoring organizations (DuBois, 2021). In 2017 and the first half of fiscal year 2019, OJJDP-funded programs recruited 95,000 new mentors and served more than 600,000 youths nationwide. Despite the extensive use of mentoring, evidence of the academic benefits is mixed. Studies show that participating in community-based mentoring programs has been associated with better attendance in school, academics, and grades.

Juvenile delinquency and academic underachievement are intertwined. Delinquent youths tend to have low grades, poor school attendance, and poorer grades than their nondelinquent peers. Without successful intervention, at-risk youths may engage in a negative life path that often begins with dropping out of high school, followed by increased criminal behavior, low socioeconomic status, and poor health (Weiler et al., 2019). There are several risk factors, including individual, familial, and environmental

factors associated with these outcomes. Community-based preventative interventions may impact such risk factors while promoting social support.

### **Background**

An estimated 2.5 million children and adolescents in the United States are paired with a nonparental adult through mentoring programs each year, making mentoring one of the most common interventions for at-risk youths in the United States (Poon et al., 2022). These programs serve underserved youths from marginalized backgrounds, who face a variety of environmental, emotional, and behavioral challenges. In a recent national evaluation of 30 mentoring programs across the United States, the majority (85%) of mentees' parents reported that their children had been exposed to family stress, such as a family member struggling with substance use, family arguments, and homelessness (Poon et al., 2022). More than three quarters (76%) reported that their child faced economic adversity, housing insecurity, gangs, or drugs in the neighborhood or parent job instability, reflecting the fact that the median annual income for participating families was below the poverty threshold (Poon et al., 2022).

A model of youth mentoring positions the mentoring relationship as the ingredient that elicits positive change among youths (Weiler et al., 2019). An exploration of the school-based Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) mentoring program found that a close mentoring relationship is key to better academic outcomes (Weiler et al., 2019). Mentors can recognize needs and build materials to facilitate academic success. The success of a mentoring relationship relies on a mentor's behavior; a productive mentor establishes

clear guidelines, discusses goals, accepts, and validates a youth's choices without judgement, and promotes feelings of acceptance.

A mentoring program pairs an adult with an at-risk youth with the aim of developing a trusting and supporting relationship. Different types of mentoring programs have been developed targeting different age groups, such as high-school mentors paired with elementary or middle school mentees and college students paired with children or adolescents living in public housing (Marino et al., 2020). There are various meeting times for mentoring programs, such as afterschool or in-school times. Afterschool programs are based on the main location of mentoring activities in community-based and school-based mentoring. Community-based programs are flexible in activities and are linked to longer and more frequent mentor-mentee relationships (Marino et al., 2020). Community-based programs are promising in terms of skill development and have a wider range of activities and settings that youth can experience. In these programs, mentors and mentees engage in academic and leisure activities and meet with other mentor-mentee pairs to spend time with peers in a safe environment. Mentors and mentees have flexibility in deciding how to spend their time, in the school environment or in the community, and integrate activities from both contexts, establishing a stronger link between the school and the community. Finding the right balance between school-based and community-based, structured, and unstructured time, allows a person-centered approach to program planning and implementing activities based on the characteristics of the specific mentor-mentee pairing.

### **Problem Statement**

In mentoring research, the risks are characterized as environmental risk factors (e.g., neighborhood challenges such as safety concerns, gangs, and family difficulties [e.g., single-parent household, parental incarceration, homelessness, and individual risk factors [e.g., temperament, genetic vulnerabilities] (Poon et al., 2022). These risk factors encompass emotional, psychosocial, and behavioral issues, as well as other challenges such as youth demographic indicators. Although behavioral issues elevate the probability of detrimental outcomes, the individual challenges are manifestations of marginalized demographic status and environmental risk factors. The marginalized demographic status is “risk-factors,” failing to acknowledge systemic injustices, including racism, classism, and sexism that place an individual in a disadvantaged position (Poon et al., 2022). The term “at-risk” fails to distinguish environmental stressors and individual sociodemographic challenges that mentees bring to mentoring programs. Identifying the environmental factors that form the actions that lead to depression or behavioral problems can help deflect victim blaming by acknowledging the challenges that youths bring into the mentoring program. This is important because families and youths who are marginalized are at a disadvantage and have less access to care and resources due to structural inequalities and are likely to use mentoring programs as an alternative approach to juvenile delinquency and criminal behavior.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to explore and understand the perceptions of community-based mentors regarding strategies to reduce



juvenile delinquency and crime. The goal was to explore the theories in depth to better understand the perspectives of the individuals who have a connection to this issue.

Grounded theory is an approach to qualitative research that develops theory from data or the field (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Travis Hirschi's social control theory states that individuals have the freedom to commit delinquent acts due to the breakdown with their societal bonds. This grounded theory was best suited for this study because it could be used to describe how the mentors can have an impact on delinquency and crime.

The theoretical framework for this research study was social control theory. The phenomenon in question was a youth's experiences of community-based mentoring and perceptions of community-based mentoring on delinquency. A virtual Zoom interview with open-ended questions was conducted, and participants were able to express their thoughts and experiences in an efficient manner. Participants were provided with a copy of the transcript to review for the accuracy of their responses. All the interviews were recorded using Zoom and took place at a preferred location the participant chose, such as a quiet room, their home, or any quiet or private location. NVivo software program was used to collect data. The study findings can assist stakeholders in identifying effective programs and those that need to be changed or eliminated. Qualitative research involves systematic and contextualized research processes to interpret the ways that- humans view, approach, and make meaning of their experiences, contexts, and the world (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

### **Research Questions**

The research questions guiding this study were the following:

1. How does the experience of a mentoring program play a role in an adolescent's delinquent and criminal behavior?
2. What perceptions do mentors have about mentoring programs?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Travis Hirschi's social control theory describes four elements of the social bond, each related to delinquent behavior. The first element, attachment, involves people's concern with the opinions of others (Gault-Sherman, 2012). For example, adolescents tailor their behavior in ways to gain approval from those who care the most, such as a teacher. A person is attached to someone if they are concerned about the expectation of the other person (Gault-Sherman, 2012). The second element, commitment, prohibits people from engaging in delinquency because of the dangers of the behavior (Gault-Sherman, 2012). Commitment to future goals will prevent delinquent behavior because of the risks associated with delinquency. The third element, involvement, is demonstrated by an adolescent who is busy with extracurricular activity being less likely to be involved in delinquent behavior (Gault-Sherman, 2012). Their time will be spent on other responsibilities and activities. Others who are inclined toward deviant activities will have more time to engage in delinquent behavior. The fourth element, belief, is the value system in the law, people are aware of their behavior within the boundaries of the law (Gault-Sherman, 2012). It is when people do not have beliefs that they engage in delinquent behavior. If the person believes that the law is weak, the risk of delinquency is increased.

Social control theory is popular and widely used to test theories of crime and deviance. The current social control theory is limited by several gaps in the literature. There is a gap in American sociology literature as well as social control theory, which Hirschi argued can be applied across ethnic and racial groups. Control theory has focused on Caucasian participants residing in the United States and rarely on other ethnic and racial groups, except for African Americans (Cabrera, 2019). A second gap involves the idea that parental attachment should shield individuals from delinquency. Is the parent psychologically present when temptation to commit crime occurs? This idea has not been fully explored or investigated.

### **Nature of the Study**

A qualitative grounded theory approach was used to collect data from mentoring professionals who were currently working with juvenile delinquents. I sought approximately 12 volunteer participants for the study to ensure saturation. Saturation is the point in data collection and analysis when new incoming data produce little to no new information to address the research question (Guest et al., 2020). I collected data using a virtual interview process. During the open-ended interviews, study participants were asked to share their experiences of working with juvenile delinquents, their thoughts on how the risk factors affect adolescents, and effective community-based programs to counteract the risk factors.

In qualitative research, codes are tags or labels used by researchers to organize data into manageable units (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I analyzed the data from this study using NVivo software. This process allowed common words or phrases the study

participants mentioned during the interview to be identified. Themes were identified to reflect the similar experiences that the participants shared in their responses. All the interviews were transcribed and coded to reveal relevant excerpts by sorting statements by themes or events. In qualitative data collection, interviews are at the center of qualitative studies because they provide individualized and contextualized data. Qualitative interviews focus on individuals' lived experience-how participants make sense of and construct reality, events, or engagements, and individuals' experiences and perspective (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

### **Definitions**

Key definitions for this study include the following:

*Mentor*: An adult paired with an at-risk youth with the aim of developing a trusting and supportive relationship (Weiler, 2019).

*Mentoring*: An intervention and a relationship between an older, more experienced adult and an unrelated protégé (Weiler, 2019).

*Community-based mentoring*: Mentors and mentees engaging in academic and leisure activities and meeting with other mentor-mentees to spend time with peers in a safe environment (Martino et al., 2020).

*Juvenile delinquency*: Serious and chronic offending over the life course, including violent offending in adulthood (Kim et al., 2023).

### **Assumptions**

The assumptions for this study were that mentoring professionals' perspectives would provide important insight into juveniles' lives, that the open-ended interview

questions would help the mentoring professionals to share their thoughts and experiences addressing the risk factors of juvenile delinquency and crime, and that the open-ended interview question would produce themes and categories. I assumed that each participant in this study would be honest and provide credible answers to the interview questions.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of this study was exploring the perceptions of community-based mentors regarding strategies to reduce juvenile delinquency and crime. I sought to identify the factors and patterns of community-based mentoring and juvenile delinquency and remain neutral when gathering the descriptive accounts. The study may have lacked generalizability as only mentoring professionals from Long Island were recruited and random purposeful sampling was used to collect data.

### **Limitations**

This study was limited to mentors from Long Island, New York. The mentors may or may not have provided an accurate assessment of experiences and perceptions of community-based mentoring. The participants answered the questions according to what they believe the correct answer to be. Another limitation for this study was that the mentees were not interviewed about their experiences with juvenile delinquency and crime. Another limitation for this study involved selection bias and reporting bias. Selectively reporting incomplete data outcomes and not randomly assigning participants could account for the study's findings, rather than the intervention. Being open and honest with participants minimized the bias in the study and my personal feelings from the data.

### **Significance**

Community-based mentoring programs are essential because they aid in the deterrence of juvenile delinquency and crime. The significance of this research is that it provides knowledge and understanding of the mentors' perspectives regarding the effectiveness of community-based programs to reduce and deter juvenile delinquency. This study may promote positive social change because the findings may assist the community in becoming more aware of the programs within the community that provide services for youths.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 1, I provided detailed information addressing community-based mentoring and juvenile delinquency and crime. An estimated 2.5 million children and adolescents in the United States are paired with an adult through mentoring programs each year, making mentoring the most common intervention for at-risk youth (Poon et al., 2022). Community-based mentoring programs are flexible in activities and are linked to longer mentor mentee relationships. In these programs, mentors and mentees engage in academic and leisure activities with peers in a safe environment. In Chapter 2, I expand on the literature review and theoretical framework used to guide this study. Chapter 2 includes the risk factors of family criminal history, early puberty, emotions, peer relationship, peer rejection, life, and school.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Mentoring programs are a strategy in the United States for preventing negative outcomes and promoting resilience among at-risk youths (DuBois, 2021). Mentoring programs have a common goal of preventing problems for youth with structured support from an older experienced volunteer or a student at a higher grade level. Mentoring program initiatives began in the early 20th century and sought men from local communities to be positive role models for boys from disadvantaged circumstances and steer them away from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. Today, mentoring programs serve a wide range of age groups from children to adolescents with diverse needs and risk factors (DuBois, 2021). The programs serve poverty and neighborhood disadvantaged adolescents with specific needs such as mental health challenges, disabilities, and sexual exploitation.

Mentoring is a popular intervention for supporting the development of young people. Youth mentoring is a relationship between nonparental adults and their mentees that promotes youths' personal and professional development. This relationship evolves from the youth's social network and includes family members and informal social networks (Goldner & Ben-Eliyahu, 2021). Approximately 50% to 80% of American children and adolescents report having a meaningful relationship with a nonparental adult, which is associated with a variety of positive short- and long-term outcomes in behavior, academics, peer and family relationships, and self-esteem, along with a reduction in risk-taking behavior.

To provide youths with resources for development and social integration that are lacking in their social environment, organized mentoring programs have promoted mentoring relationships either in the community or in the school. In a community-based mentoring program, an adult volunteer is matched with a child or teen referred to the program. They spend one-on-one time in a community setting regularly over a period to facilitate the adolescent's goal in society with a variety of relational, recreational, and goal-oriented activities (Golder & Ben-Eliyahu, 2021). A close interpersonal relationship between a mentor and mentee is critical to ensure the success of a mentoring relationship.

The success of community-based mentoring relationships is dependent on the involvement of the parent. A supportive parent has the potential to facilitate a positive mentoring relationship in a variety of ways, such as ensuring that the child meets with the mentor, sharing information about the child with the mentor, and encouraging and appreciating the mentor (Keller et al., 2018). Mentoring programs that incorporate parent involvement were found to be more effective than those that did not have parental involvement, and there is no evidence that the effects of mentoring may partially be attributed to improvements in the parent child relationship.

Community-based programs that utilize a family-oriented approach are successful in reducing juvenile offending (Kethineni & Grubb, 2020). Almost 1 million youths are processed through the juvenile justice system, and sending youths to juvenile institutions has placed a financial burden on states. About 200,000 youths yearly enter the adult criminal justice system for nonviolent offenses, and the reports of youths being abused in correctional facilities have caused states to rethink their priorities and reallocate funds



from state-funded youth prisons to treatment and services with the local community. Family- and community-based alternatives show success in reducing recidivism for adolescents who commit serious and violent crimes (Aazami, 2023). The intervention model that addresses the issue of juvenile delinquency is community-based mentoring programs.

Mentoring programs rely on mentors to provide supportive relationships for at-risk youths. Mentors play an important role in creating opportunities for positive youth development, and understanding the different approaches mentors take and provide to support youths is crucial. The mentor's approach is the style that the mentor uses to build and sustain the mentoring relationship, including communication and interactions with the youth, interactions with the parent, accepting feedback from the mentoring program, and responding to challenges. Evidence shows that mentors take an active role in building a relationship with youth by how they plan activities, engage in conversations, and respond to obstacles, and all these things help to build a strong relationship between mentors and mentees (Drew & Spencer, 2021).

### **Literature Review Strategy**

The review of literature consists of articles retrieved from various online search databases such as the Walden University Library, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, Criminal Justice Databases, and SAGE Journals. These databases were the main source for gathering full-text peer reviewed scholarly journal articles. Keywords used to conduct research included *juvenile delinquents*, *juvenile delinquency*, *mentoring*, *school-based*

*mentoring, afterschool programs, juvenile crime, crime, self-control, family, school, school interventions, delinquent peers, adolescents, and youths.*

## **Theoretical Foundation**

### **Introduction**

Social control theory founded by Travis Hirschi (1969) addresses the causes behind delinquent behavior (Aslan et al., 2019). Seeking to answer the question of how to eliminate delinquent behavior, Hirschi proposed social control theory and suggested that societal control has an impact in redeeming or diminishing misconducted behavior. Social control theory has four main elements: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Hirschi focused on delinquent behavior and its relation with the social lives of different groups or organizations. He suggested that from early childhood, individuals either develop healthy bonds to the society in which they live and avoid delinquent behavior or fail to form a healthy bond to the society in which they live. Hirschi's theory was strongly supported by research he conducted, which showed that "delinquency involvement was inversely related to the strength of an individual's relationship to society" (Wiatrowski et al., 1981, pp. 2-3). Adolescents achieve levels of socializing with various experiences that have an impact on individuals' involvement or noninvolvement in delinquent behaviors (Aslan et al., 2019).

Hirschi's social control theory proposes that individuals form social bonds with society to prevent them from engaging in criminal or deviant behavior (Wu et al., 2021). Hirschi applied the concept of social bonds in explaining why people conform to societal rules and norms and avoid committing crimes. The strength of a person's bonds to social

institutions determines whether that person will behave pro-socially or anti-socially. People who can develop stronger connections with society restrain themselves from violating laws because of the risk of losing their investment in society (Wu et al., 2021). Hirschi described four elements of social bonds: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. Each of these elements explain antisocial behavior. Attachment refers to the level of psychological affection and respect that one has for conventional institutions (Wu et al., 2021). This suggests that if an individual is emotionally invested in institutions such as family and school, they will be less likely to engage in deviant behavior because of fear of losing the respect of others. Strong attachment increases the force of these institutions in dissuading individuals from engaging in deviant behavior. Commitment is a person's willingness to pursue conventional goals such as education or occupational goals (Wu et al., 2021). The extent to which individuals are committed to the goals of society and to abiding by these rules and regulations in achieving these goals determines whether they will unleash their criminal capabilities. An individuals' likelihood of engaging in criminal or deviant behaviors is reduced when they know that such behaviors would nullify investments and jeopardize their goals. People will refrain from committing criminal or deviant acts that may ruin their reputation or well-paying job. Involvement refers to time and energy used in conventional activities. If individuals spend more time on prosocial activities (e.g., work, school, volunteering), they will have less time for delinquency. Their focus on these activities will reduce the likelihood of being exposed to opportunities for delinquency or subjected to the influence of antisocial peers (Wu et al., 2021). Belief refers to the extent to which an individual believes in the validity of laws,

rules, and regulations. If an individual has a strong belief that the rules of society are morally valid and should be obeyed, they are less likely to engage in criminal and deviant behavior. People's perceptions of societal laws and norms translate into their law-abiding and prosocial behavior. These four elements of social bond attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief are interrelated but analytically separable. An individual's strong attachment to conventional others may influence their commitment to long-term prosocial goals and promote their belief in the validity of the law.

### **Juvenile Delinquency**

Juvenile delinquency is an ongoing issue that plagues many communities in the United States. An estimated 424,300 arrests involved adolescents younger than age 18 years in 2020 (Aazami, 2023). Common crimes that juveniles are incarcerated for involve theft, assault, vandalism, drug abuse violations, and violence. The United States has a higher incarceration rate than any other developed nation. Racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system distinguish the United States from other countries; youths of color make up 68% of detained adolescents. Incarcerated youths face higher rates of violence and are likely to return to prison as adults. Long-term incarceration results in recidivism and criminal behavior from juvenile arrests at the cost of approximately \$214,000 per person per year plus the potential cost of future recidivism and lost earnings (Aazami, 2023).

Delinquent behaviors vary across countries, and this global problem has a substantial cost. In the United States, 70,000 juveniles are held in custody, costing more than \$6 billion per year (Chiang et al., 2020). Studies show that issues continue over time

because adolescents who commit delinquent acts are likely to be incarcerated in early adulthood. Juvenile delinquency is associated with poor outcomes such as high school dropout, unemployment, and mental health problems.

Social control theory may be used to examine the forces that restrain individuals from involvement in crime and deviance (Becker, 2019). The control perspective emphasizes how institutions and individuals constrain behavior by providing sanctions in response to antisocial or nonnormative behavior. Hirschi focused on bonds that are formed between individuals, conventional society, and social norms. Hirschi outlined four key bonds: attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief. If an individual has a weak bond, they are less likely to restrain themselves from deviance or crime, whereas stronger bonds indicate stronger attachment to social norms.

The social control perspective postulates that delinquency or crime occurs when social bonds are weak. Individuals who have stronger bonds to conventional society are less likely to involve themselves in delinquent or criminal behavior. According to the theory, the four key elements - attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief - explain why adolescents become involved in delinquent behavior (Chan, 2019). Attachment involves emotional ties with parents, peers, and school. Commitment is an individual's investment in conventional behavior. Involvement is actively participating in prosocial activities. Belief refers to respect for the moral validity of societal norms and regulations. Hirschi (1969) argued that these elements strongly correlate and that the combined effect is stronger than the individual effect (Chan, 2019). The social bond elements are

connected; attachment and commitment to prosocial individuals are likely to increase an adolescent's belief and may reduce delinquency.

### **Family and Delinquency**

In criminological literature, when family dysfunction occurs in childhood and early adolescence, ineffective parenting is seen as an antecedent to delinquent behavior. Children are criminally responsible for delinquent acts when they reach 12 years of age or older. Child-rearing practices and the parent-child relationship is critical for the development of self-control that inhibits delinquent involvement later in life (Liu et al., 2019). A longitudinal study of delinquents and nondelinquents found that family process variables including parental supervision, parental rejection, and attachment to parent strongly predicted delinquency (Liu et al., 2019). Many theorized pathways between family structure and delinquency are indirect and consider family processes and dynamics. The two important and measured explanations include levels of attachment between a parent and their child and parental supervision practices. Low levels of attachment between a parent and their child are associated with high levels of delinquency (Freemon et al., 2023). High levels of supervision, where parents monitor their children's behavior and know where their children are and what they are doing, predict low levels of adolescent delinquency. This is relevant in discussions of family structure given that single parents are unable to devote as much time to monitor their child's behavior with work and other expectations.

Children growing up among family difficulties, including marital conflict and parental inconsistency, are likely to have weak parental attachment a high probability to

commit delinquent acts as an adolescent (Liu et al., 2019). Prior research has shown that marital conflict and parental inconsistency may lead to an increase in adolescent mental health problems and decrease in parental attachment. Poor mental health problems and weak parental attachment are among the strongest correlations of delinquency in the criminology literature. There is a continuous pattern of familial risk factors being connected to juvenile delinquency. The lack of parental supervision, parental conflict, neglect, and abuse all pose risk factors to the family dynamics. Adolescents whose parents show little or no regard for authority are likely to grow up to share that view (Singh & Gupta, 2022). Delinquent behavior is common among adolescents who have a poor relationship with their parents and families. Family is the first setting where individuals take in behaviors, values, and beliefs and carry them over to other social systems. Adolescents growing up with negative coparenting or marital problems may have limited opportunities to learn conflict resolution through communication and compromise. Parental conflicts and parental inconsistency drive adolescents away from their parents and into delinquent peer groups.

### **Peer Influence and Delinquency**

Peer groups are adolescents who spend time with their peers and less time with adult supervision. Peer pressure is the influence of a peer on an individual to alter the individual's belief, value, or conduct to adhere to group standards (Seema et al., 2022). A person subjected to peer pressure may or may not want to associate with the group and act negatively toward group activities. Peer pressure can occur in elementary school when students get together for recess or lunch and reaches a peak throughout the preteen

and teenage years. Peers influence an adolescent by molding assumptions and perceptions of facts surrounding antisocial behavior.

Criminologists have noted a strong relationship between peers and self-reported delinquency. Scholars have spent years trying to understand how peers facilitate the onset and continuation of criminal behavior. The consistent peer effect has led researchers to speculate why peers matter by specifying mechanisms of influence, such as attitudinal transference, behavioral reinforcement, and group pressure (McCuddy, 2021). Those who are exposed to an excess of delinquent definitions are likely to adopt such behavior themselves, and communication plays a significant role in this process. Factors that hinder or facilitate communications directly influence the contact with others and thus the criminal definitions that are made available to an individual. As associations become more abundant, this affects exposure to norms and values supporting or disapproving of crime. Peers do not have to be delinquent to affect an individual's behavioral tendencies; rather, spending time socializing in unstructured settings is intrinsically criminogenic. Greater emphasis is placed on offline contexts if opportunity is a more proximate cause of offending. The relationship between peers and delinquency is described as "tenuous," and adolescents may not invoke personal attitudes approving delinquency when engaging in crime or deviant acts (McCuddy, 2021). Peer attitudes affect personal behavior, but this relationship is mediated through personal attitudes. Scholars have highlighted the need to focus on short - term peer processes contingent on specific situations.

The strongest criticism of peer delinquency association is rooted in the concept of selection. Control theorists assume those with a propensity toward crime select



delinquent friends, explaining the association between peers and crime. Other work attributes the selective process to factors beyond delinquency such as weak attachments to conventional society, low self-control, and experiencing peer rejection (McCuddy, 2021). A recent meta-analysis finds support for both peer influence and selection, underscoring the need to control both processes when examining the link between peers and offending. Despite decades of research explaining this issue the peer selection debate continues within the field of criminology. There is evidence which suggests that peer influence may be an offense specific process. Under learning approach, one must be exposed to specific definitions to violate specific laws and norms (McCuddy, 2021). This suggests that substance use differs from other crimes due to its moral distinctiveness. Using drugs is perceived as victimless, whereas there is no direct harm to others through crimes such as assault and theft. Definitions favorable toward crime that involves exploitation is part of a different domain requiring exposure to specific behavioral patterns that support harming others. Prior research found within individual variation the susceptibility of influence, where youths who anticipate high levels of guilt for a crime are less likely to be influenced by peers. Situational factors could influence how one's status is affected by participating in a group activity such as drug use. It is important to consider multiple types of delinquency when examining delinquent peer influence.

### **School and Delinquency**

Many life transitions occur during adolescence and one change is the normative structural move from middle to high schools. These school changes are studied extensively outside of criminology with research finding detrimental effects in various

outcomes of interest. Explaining the normative school shift tends to lower academic achievement after the transition occurs (McMillan & Freelin, 2023). School transitions are associated with unfavorable social consequences, such as changes in who youth perceive as their best friends. Students who transitioned up with small friendship networks, particularly after multiple schools' merge into a single high school.

When life transitions represent redirection in one's behavioral trajectory changes can be conceptualized turning points. These turning points lead to harmful outcomes and others afford opportunities to start anew and adjust one's involvement in crime and delinquency (McMillian & Freelin, 2023). Criminological research is beginning to recognize normative school transitions conceptualized as positive turning points that reduce delinquent behavior by restructuring youths' routines and introducing them to new classes, extracurricular activities, and school personnel. According to McMillian and Freelin (2023), students who transition to high school in nonmetropolitan areas are less likely to participate in violence and property crime when compared to students of the same age who do not move school. Evidence show that contextual changes associated with school transition led to decreases gang involvement for at-risk youths in urban settings. However, other research finds that school transitions are not significantly associated with one's participation in property crime.

Conceptualizing normative school transitions as a turning point represents a line of inquiry in criminology because school moves occur at a life stage when levels of delinquency change for most individuals (McMillan & Freelin, 2023). Population level delinquency increases in early adolescence and peaks at age 15 and then decreases by the

mid to late 20s. transitions to middle and high school occur at key stages that affect delinquency. Normative school transitions are less prone to issues of selection bias than other life transitions such securing paid employment in high school. The timing of transitions from middle to high is compulsory and imposed upon all students regardless of prior delinquency or risk factors. Understanding whether normative school transitions affect criminal behavior can provide insight into ways to disrupt criminal trajectories when levels of delinquent involvement change quickly for many youths.

Previous works consider the impact of normative school transitions on patterns of delinquency, it remains unclear how these changes shape the social network mechanisms that inform crime and other antisocial behaviors. Linked lives embed individuals in an interdependent network of relational ties that shape their experiences throughout their life span. Linked lives can be conceptualized as a convoy that provides access to tangible and intangible resources and varies in membership (McMillian & Freelin, 2023). Previous studies show adolescents connections to school peers are consequential because it shapes and is shaped by their participant in deviant behavior. Problem behavior participation impacts where youths are positioned in their social networks. Delinquent youths tend to select one another as friends and deviant behavior is associated with popularity and sociability (McMillian & Freelin, 2023).

The relation between school and delinquency measured academic ability and performance, students liking school, teacher's opinions, and acceptance of school's authority to set rules for behavior. Hirschi argued that students with high academic achievement find school rewarding and like school more than those who have low

academic achievement (Costello & Laub, 2020). Students who like school and care about their teacher's opinion have a greater respect for the school's authority and are less likely to be delinquent.

Social Control posits that social bonds restrain deviant behavior. Hirschi suggests that attachment to school or work leads to involvement in activities that adhere to prosocial norms. These patterns of behavior increase commitment to prosocial institutions that support the internalization of beliefs that reduces the likelihood of breaking the law. Criticisms centered around the lack of attention to specific types of prosocial engagement or differences in youth socialization (Chiang et al., 2020). Critics also suggested specific offender types may or may not adhere to Social Control Theory.

### **Mentoring Programs**

With the staggering dropout rate of 1.2 million students a year, as well as the increase in juvenile delinquency in the United States, there is a need for interventions that will help youths stay in school and out of the juvenile justice system (Stutey et al., 2022). Researchers found that the absence of education, including students who did not graduate from high school, leads to an increase of youths experiencing health complications, and substance abuse.

One way to help youths reach their full potential and engaged at school is connecting youths with an adult who understands their struggle. Youths benefit from being connected to an adult outside of their immediate family to help them navigate through difficult times (Stutey, 2022). Adults working with youths has seen positive changes in youths who participate in mentoring programs.

Mentoring is a psychosocial intervention which a nonparental adult and youth develop a supportive relationship (Stutey et al., 2022). During the mentoring program, mentees experience a healthy environment which leads to them seeking out and learning to cultivate a healthy environment. This environment allowed researchers to observe improvement in self-perception, social acceptance, parent-child interaction, and academic performance of adolescents participating in the mentoring program. Researchers found that mentoring programs buffer against the impacts of youths exposed to adverse childhood experiences and improve behavioral, emotional, social, and academic outcomes. The mentor and mentee relationship credited to the success of youth mentoring signifying the importance of the mentee picking a mentor who shares a similar experience to them.

Researchers discover that the mentor and mentee benefit from the relationship when there is trust and the mentors is consistent, supportive, and encouraging, instead of controlling. A mentor who is supportive and encouraging helps the youth to be open to a new perspective. Youths who participated in a positive mentoring relationship had increased feelings of connectedness with the mentor and higher rates of pursuing a purpose. Many mentees achieve self-worth, communication, and trust because of the relationship they build with their mentors (Stutey, 2022).

The goal of mentoring programs includes eliminating the growing population within the juvenile justice system, helping at-risk youths, and preventing them from re-offending, and providing guidance from an experienced mentor who they can learn from and build trust (Franqui, 2023).

## **Mentoring Effectiveness**

There is evidence that shows mentoring programs have the potential to contribute to positive outcomes for at-risk youths across a variety of demographic groups (DuBois, 2021). Studies find that connecting youths to a mentoring program is a viable strategy for preventing and reducing delinquent behavior. Crime Solutions, an initiative of the National Institute of Justice that reviews justice related practices and programs for their effectiveness, rated “mentoring” effective for reducing delinquency (DuBois, 2021, p.2). crime Solutions has rated several mentoring programs as effective in preventing delinquency or reducing recidivism for youths involved in the justice system. Reading for Life is a mentoring program that uses literature to facilitate moral development and character education as an alternative to court prosecution for first- and second-time juvenile offenders.

Research shows the effectiveness of mentoring tend to be enhanced by practices that are directed toward training and supporting mentors. A strong emotional bond with one’s mentor and related experiences are important mechanisms which mentoring relationships can promote positive outcomes including prevention of delinquent behavior. The findings indicate a potential for program participants can be harmful under various conditions such as mentoring relationship ending prematurely or mentors failing to follow through with the expectations for maintaining contact with youths. One study found that participation in a mentoring program was associated with increase involvement in criminal behavior among youths who have no significant prior arrest history and were exposed to youths who had been arrested. Big Brothers Big Sisters

mentoring program have been recommended to minimize opportunities for peer contact and deviancy training.

### **Mentors and Mentees**

A mentoring program begins with the selection of mentors, which leads to the decision of matching with a juvenile. When the program is developing, a clear and focused plan of obtaining, training, and connecting mentors with at-risk youth outlines the overall success of the youth (Franqui, 2023). Mentoring at-risk youths and juvenile delinquents takes place through community outreach and a paid government program within the community. Community centers are connected through the local school system and juvenile detention center. Mentoring centers are for those who considered at-risk and not entered the juvenile justice system and need help getting back into society.

Mentoring programs describe mentees as individuals who are at-risk in the juvenile justice system or are in danger of offending or re-offending because of academic failure, substance use, aggressive behavior, absences, or family stressors. More than 60% of youths who participate in a mentoring program had acquired a single charge with the juvenile justice system (Stutey et al., 2022). Numerous researchers discuss the role of a mentor in a mentee's life helped improve self-esteem, enhanced health, instilled a future, and reduced re-offending behaviors.

Training is required before being paired with a mentee to ensure the competency of the adult who will be mentoring youths facing hardships. The importance of training and ongoing training for mentors, gives them the necessary tools to mentor an adolescent successfully. In training, mentors learn about maintaining safety, program rules, child-

focused problem-solving skills, and the activities used throughout the program. Mentors can feel overwhelmed when mentees exhibit mental health issues, behavioral issues, racial, or socioeconomic differences that surpass their basic training and expertise. Many adolescents facing difficulties seems daunting for a mentor to provide adequate mentoring. Therefore, ongoing training is important and meant to help the mentor increase their effectiveness with their mentee (Stutey et al., 2022). Allowing mentors to seek guidance when they start feeling overwhelmed with their mentee's behavior and actions through ongoing training positively supports both mentor and mentee.

### **Benefits of a Mentor**

The benefit of a mentor in an adolescence life leads to positive outcomes for youths. Youths with a mentor are likely to have increased performance in elementary, middle, and high school (Samuels, Davis, & McQuillin, 2022). These benefits can extend into adulthood with the mentor offering college and career selection. Educational expectation and attainment of future success suggests the presence of a mentor can have a lasting impact beyond academics. Mentors promote long-term financial, physical, and mental well-being by promoting degree attainment. The presence of a mentor is associated with increased social success, decreased psychological distress, and increased self-worth through adulthood (Samuels, Davis, & McQuillin, 2022). Research found that youths who are mentored during adolescence are more likely to spend time volunteering in the community compared to their nonmentored peers.

A one-on-one mentoring relationship helps to ease a few of the challenges adolescents are facing. A mentor is an experienced adult who supports an adolescent in



areas of development such as psychological and educational (Gowdy et al., 2023). Youths involved in the criminal justice system and foster care benefit from a mentor impacting their lives. The presence of a mentor in an adolescent's life leads to positive outcomes in education, self-worth, and social success. Research suggests that beneficial outcomes are associated with mentoring only when the mentor and adolescent can build a connection based on trust and empathy within a long-lasting relationship (Quimbly et al., 2022). A mentoring relationship with strong bonds generates positive outcomes in social-emotional, cognitive, and identity development. The dynamics related to mentee or mentor can provide a comprehensive understanding of the mentoring relationship.

A successful relationship is built in trust and empathy. Mentees need time to a strong connection with a mentor and when youths have certain adults consistently and frequently in their lives a strong mentor relationship occurs (Samuels, Davis, & McQuillin, 2023). A strong mentor relationship begins to support the adolescent through role-modeling, teaching, advocating, and emotional support. A mentor can persuade a mentee to pursue a career in higher education, shifting the mentee's educational path. Mentors play a key role in this process by introducing mentees to new viewpoints and experiences.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature related to juvenile delinquency and crime and addresses the risk factors that contribute to delinquency in adolescents. These risk factors of delinquency show how an adolescent's life, family, school, and peers influence their behavioral outcome. Grounded theory methodology is used to develop the

theoretical concepts of juvenile delinquency and crime. Qualitative method is the best approach to better understand the participants perspective. The current study provides an in-depth understanding and filled the gap on the extent to which risk factors affect juvenile delinquency and crime from the perspective of the mentors. In chapter 3, I will discuss the research design and methodology of the study. Included in chapter 3 is a discussion of the role of the researcher, a description of how the participants is recruited, the ethical protection of participants, and the data collection and methodology of the study.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I discuss the research design and rationale, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. I present measures for ensuring validity and trustworthiness, as well as the ethical considerations that helped in finalizing the qualitative research design. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the risk factors that cause juvenile delinquency and crime. The research involved an in-depth investigation into family history, peer influences, puberty, emotions, and peer rejection from the perspective of current and past mentors who were working with adolescents. In New York, juvenile delinquents are minors between the ages of 10 and 18, who have committed acts that violate the law. The results from this study address the factors that cause delinquency and crime and a prevention program to reduce delinquent behavior.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The theoretical foundation questions of this study were the following:

1. How does the experience of community-based mentoring programs play a role in an adolescent's delinquent and criminal behavior?
2. What perceptions do mentors have about community-based mentoring programs?

In qualitative research, data collection methods can help in answering the research questions. Qualitative research uses methods including individual interviews that can delve into people's independent thinking on a topic (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Using social control theory in a qualitative study can shape the understanding of the relationship

between juvenile delinquency and crime. Using the theoretical framework, I explored relevant meanings and ideas of delinquency and crime. The framework helped to reveal the strengths and challenges of the study, and helped in understanding the role that theories play in prevention programs. Grounded theory is a qualitative research approach that develops theories that come from the data or the field.

Qualitative research uses interpretive research methods as tools to understand individuals, groups, and phenomena in contextualized ways that reflect how people make meaning of and interpret their own experiences. Qualitative researchers use inductive methods and acknowledge the role of the researcher in shaping all aspects of a study. Grounded theory is an approach to research that involves developing theory that comes from data. The process of developing ideas from data is an inductive analytical approach (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The grounded theory approach was used, which employs inductive processes that stay close to the data through a constant comparison method.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative research. Virtual interviews were conducted using open-ended interview questions to learn the study participants' perceptions about community-based mentoring programs and the role that community mentoring plays in adolescent criminal and delinquent behavior. The interviews probed opinions, ideas, and thoughts that participants shared about deterring juvenile delinquency and crime in the Long Island area. The data from the interviews were recorded via Zoom. Through the interviews, participants shared perceptions and opinions on juvenile delinquency and crime. The data obtained helped identify the

participants' perceptions about working with juvenile delinquents, their thoughts on how the risk factors affect adolescents, and what can be done to counteract the risk factors. The data helped identify the effectiveness of the community-based programs that aid in the deterrence and prevention of crimes committed by adolescents.

## **Methodology**

### **Population**

An adequate number of participants from the population was needed in the random purposeful sample to address the research questions. The population for this study consisted of community-based mentors working with adolescents. The participants were recruited from Long Island, New York. All the participants had experience with and knowledge about mentoring and were working with adolescents.

Qualitative research uses purposeful sampling, which provides context-rich and detailed accounts of specific populations and locations. Qualitative researchers deliberately select individuals because of their unique ability to answer a study's research questions. Purposeful sampling allows researchers to select individuals and research settings that can help them get the information needed to answer the research questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

In qualitative research, sample size depends on what the researcher wants to know, the purpose of the inquiry, and answering the research questions to achieve complex and multi- perspective understandings that are valid and contextualized (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Data saturation is described as the point in data collection and analysis when new data produce little or no new information to address the research questions

(Guest et al., 2020). Interviewing until saturation means that little new information was gained as the sample size approached 12 interviews. The study participants resided or worked in Long Island, New York and had knowledge about the community, and were familiar with community programs, crime, the school system, and law enforcement activity. The population for this study was mentoring professionals who had experience working with juvenile delinquents. Twelve mentors who were working or had worked mentoring adolescents were recruited from Long Island, New York. With the use of random purposeful sampling, everyone had an equal probability of being selected. Once participants were interested in participating in the study, the email invite and informed consent was emailed to them.

EAC Network is a not-for-profit social service agency that responds to human needs with programs and services that protect children, promote healthy families and communities, help seniors, and empower individuals to take control of their lives. Chance to Advance reduces risk factors for youth in foster care by promoting life skills and enrichment through one-on-one mentoring and group activities. Committed volunteer mentors are matched with adolescents ages 8 - 21 and serve as positive role models who introduce them to constructive opportunities. Positive youth development and self-esteem blossom through educational and recreational activities, as well as college and vocational coaching and independent living skills workshops. Scholarships are awarded to exceptional students to help them achieve their higher education goals. Chance to Advance offers a New York State licensed summer camp, which opens youth to unique experiences they might not otherwise have access to. Participants learn valuable skills

such as cooking, getting along with others, taking risks, overcoming fears, working together in a team, and trusting people.

### **Instrumentation**

Virtual interviews were conducted via Zoom using interview questions that I developed (Appendix B). The interview questions were constructed based on critical points related to the research questions that I wanted participants to address. Open-ended questions from the research questions were used to obtain participants' perceptions, allowing me to gain in-depth meaning. The goal of each interview question was to capture the participant's experience and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of community-based programs in the community geared towards deterring juvenile delinquency and crime. From participant responses, I was able to identify the effectiveness of community-based programs. Interviews were conducted via Zoom at a preferred location that study participants chose, such as a quiet room, at home, or any quiet or private location. Twelve mentoring professionals were interested in participating in the study. Study participants participated in virtual interviews. Open-ended interview questions guided the interview process. Open-ended interviews allow for interviews to be completely inductive and tailored to each participant's experience (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The interviews lasted approximately 10 to 40 minutes and were recorded via Zoom. Each interview was transcribed using the NVivo software program. NVivo is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) that assists qualitative researchers in collecting, organizing, analyzing, visualizing, and reporting their data

(Dhakal, 2022). This program assists researchers by offering tools and features to organize and structure the data collected.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The data collected were analyzed using the NVivo software program. NVivo assists the researcher by offering tools and features to structure the data collected. Using NVivo, the researcher can code data sets. Coding means labeling and creating categories for data (Dhakal, 2022). Organizing coded data through nodes, classification, and mapping tools helps the researcher to create categories and allows the researcher to map the data. The coding, classification, and mapping tools help to organize the data so that researchers can analyze them, draw conclusions, and verify findings.

Participants provided their experiences about community-based mentoring and perceptions about mentoring programs to reduce juvenile delinquency and crime in adolescents. Data collected from the interviews were sorted and categorized. Each transcript was read line by line. The interviews were transcribed using NVivo transcription software. The NVivo transcription program transcribed each interview verbatim. All the transcribed interviews were saved into a Microsoft Word document. Each transcription formed an understanding of the interview. NVivo can import and support multiple types of format and data types and is a helpful tool for sorting, organizing, and analyzing qualitative data. Researchers can import data into NVivo from other data analysis software programs such as SPSS or Microsoft Word.

Notes were taken during the interviews. Each individual participant file was analyzed by coding the data. The data were coded into similar phrases or keywords. I



labeled the phrases, and key words, and recorded them in NVivo. Coding categories common to all participants were identified, and themes emerged. A total of 13 coding categories from the interview data were identified. Each description was added to a node. Nodes allow a researcher to see the relationship between participant responses. Charts were developed to represent the data. The phrases from the interviews formed the themes. The most significant themes were family/life, environment, peer pressure/school, prevention, and community mentoring.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Credibility is the researcher's ability to consider the complexities of the research and patterns that are not explained (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Internal validity is related to the research design, instrumentation, and data. Establishing credibility is achieved by structuring a study to seek and understand the complexities throughout a recursive research design process. Credibility is an important part of the research design; it is a checklist that can be applied to achieve validity. Researchers establish credibility by implementing the validity strategies of triangulation, presenting description, and having an external auditor. An emailed copy of the transcribed data was sent to each participant for member checking. Member checking allowed the participants to review the interview transcripts for accuracy and make corrections. None of the participants provided any clarifications.

Transferability is the extent that qualitative studies can be transferable to broader contexts while maintaining their context-specific findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Methods for achieving transferability include having a detailed description of the data so

that readers can make comparisons to other contexts. This allows the audiences of the research, readers, participants, stakeholders, and other researchers to transfer aspects of a study design and findings by taking into consideration different contextual factors instead of attempting to replicate the design and findings. It provides a description of the context, culture, selection, and characteristics of the participants. Random purposeful sampling of the individuals from the organization was used to decrease systemic bias.

Dependability is the stability of the data. It involves using the appropriate methods and making an argument for why the methods are appropriate to answer the concepts of a study. It involves how a researcher collects data and whether the data are consistent with the researcher's argument. Achieving dependability relies on the triangulation and sequencing of methods for the choices to confirm that a researcher has created the appropriate data collection plan given the research questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). To ensure accuracy, each transcript was reviewed. The data were compared using codes and themes. The NVivo software program was used to check and query codes for consistency.

Confirmability is exploring the ways that biases and prejudices map a researcher's interpretations of the data and mediate those through structured reflexivity processes (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Methods to achieve conformability include implementing triangulation strategies, researcher reflexivity processes, and external audits. Researchers must challenge themselves and be challenged by others in systematic and ongoing ways throughout all stages of research. Confirmability is establishing that the data from the notes through audio - recordings and transcripts commonalities using descriptive data.

NVivo coding made sure that findings and interpretations were based on the participants' words, perspectives, and viewpoints.

### **Ethical Procedures**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) points out possible issues in proposed and ongoing research, helping researchers to focus their thinking about how to safeguard against anything that might harm participants. Walden University's IRB guidelines were followed to ensure the ethical protection of the study participants. I obtained and signed all mandated forms. Before the interviews began, I explained the study details to the study participants. Each participant received written documentation, a consent form, and an email invite approved by the IRB. Verbal and written methods were used to inform study participants about the details and purpose of the study, how the study would be conducted, and possible risks and benefits. The participants had the opportunity to express any concerns they had regarding the study and ask questions. Each participant was allowed to voluntarily agree to participate in the study as well as opt out via the consent form. When participants agreed to sign the consent form and participate in the study, a date and time were scheduled. Participants had the ability to withdraw consent anytime during the study. To maintain confidentiality, any data collected from the interviews that showed concerns, misconduct, or criminal behavior by participants will not be disclosed. A letter of cooperation was used to obtain permission for me to recruit research participants.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 3, I have presented an overview of the research design, and the overall approach to how the theoretical framework bridged the theory with the development of the research questions, data collection methods, and analysis of procedures. Grounded theory was the qualitative research method and Hirschi's social control theory formed the theoretical framework for the study. The data collected were analyzed using the NVivo software program, which allowed for organizing and categorizing the data for analysis.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to explore and understand the perceptions of community-based mentors regarding strategies to reduce juvenile delinquency and crime. In this study, I examined whether an effective community-based mentoring program reduced juvenile delinquency and crime in adolescents and what can be done to counteract the factors. In Chapter 4, I provide the findings from the interview-based research study of 12 mentoring professionals from within the Long Island, NY area.

The theoretical research questions that guided this study were the following:

1. How does the experience of a community-based mentoring program play a role in an adolescent delinquent and criminal behavior?
2. What perceptions do mentors have about community-based mentoring programs?

Upon receiving approval from the Walden IRB (07-19-22-0585547), I used qualitative research methods to focus on the experiences of mentoring professionals who understood the risk factors that cause juvenile delinquency and crime in adolescents. In this study, I examined the perceptions of mentoring professionals about their experiences working with juvenile delinquents, how the risk factors affect adolescents, and what can be done to counteract these risk factors.

Chapter 4 includes sections addressing the following: a description of the setting, demographics of the 12 participants, data collection method, and evidence of

trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

This chapter concludes with detailed results of the study and a summary of the findings.

### **Settings**

All participants of this study were mentoring professionals who had experience working with juvenile delinquents. Participants were required to be working with juvenile delinquents. This study was conducted using face-to-face interviews via Zoom. Once approval was received from the Walden University IRB, I submitted a letter of cooperation to the program director of the EAC Network --- Chance to Advance. The program director emailed 14 potential volunteer participants for the study. Of the 14 potential participants, eight replied via telephone call that they were interested in the study, and four replied via email. Once the participants indicated their interest in participating in the study, the email invite and informed consent was emailed to them. Upon receiving their response of "I consent," I scheduled the interviews.

I conducted face-to-face interviews via Zoom. I reminded the participants about the email invite and consent form and their ability to ask questions about the study. All the interviews were recorded using Zoom, and after each interview, participants were reminded that a copy of the interview would be emailed once transcribed.

### **Demographics**

Twelve participants were included in the study. To recruit participants, I used random purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling selects individuals because of their ability to answer a study's research question (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Each participant was selected based on their experience and knowledge of working with juvenile

delinquents. To maintain confidentiality and to identify the participants, I used pseudonyms to identify each participant.

### **Table 1**

#### *Program Participants*

Job title	# of years working with juveniles	Gender	Ethnicity
P1. Peer mentor	2 years	Female	African American
P2. Case manager	2 years	Female	African American
P3. Case manager	1 year	Female	African America
P4. Mentor	2 years	Male	Indian
P5. Peer specialist	1 year	Male	Hispanic
P6. Peer specialist	1 year	Female	Hispanic
P7. Case manager	5 years	Male	Hispanic
P8. Mentor	3 years	Female	Hispanic
P9. Case manager	8 months	Male	African American
P10. Case manager	3 years	Female	Caucasian
P11. Program director	15 years	Female	African American
P12. Case manager	2 years	Female	Caucasian

### **Data Collection**

Participant recruitment occurred over 7 months from August 2022 to February 2023. I collected data for this study over 7 months using virtual interviews via Zoom. All the participants worked with and provided services to adolescent juveniles with the goal to reduce juvenile delinquency and crime. All participants were asked the same set of interview questions in the same order. The interview questions are found in Appendix C and allowed participants to share as much information as they desired.

All 12 interviews were conducted via the Zoom platform. The interviews lasted approximately 20 to 40 minutes. Each interview was recorded using the Zoom platform. Each interview was transcribed using NVivo transcription software. The NVivo transcription software transcribed each interview verbatim. All the transcribed interviews were saved into a Microsoft Word document. After the interviews were transcribed, I performed member checking to ensure the accuracy of each participant's response. To

maintain the identity of each participant, each participant was identified using a pseudonym such as P1, P2, or P3. I coded the data based on the patterns, themes, and categories in the NVivo software. All files were exported, downloaded, and secured on my personal computer. All the data were saved in a Microsoft Word folder. In compliance with Walden's IRB policy, I will secure the files on my personal computer until 5 years after data collection, at which time I will delete all paper transcriptions. All audio recordings will remain on the Zoom platform and NVivo software program, and I will delete them 5 years after the completion of the study.

### **Data Analysis**

The research questions guided the study to stay focused on the data that were important. I created codes and themes for analysis in NVivo. Zoom was used to store data from the interviews. The Zoom audio files were uploaded to NVivo. I listened and read through each several times to obtain a thorough understanding of significant words, phrases, and terms. Themes were created based on each question. Significant words and phrases were highlighted, and themes were established (Table 2).

#### **Table 2**

##### *Themes From Data Analysis*

Themes	1	2	3	4
	Community mentoring	Family Life Environment Foster care	Peer pressure School Delinquency	Positive goals Prevention Trust Perceptions

Themes were created from codes that were compared for frequency and commonalities (Table 3). Themes are important concepts in the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). This section contains the participant interview summary (Table 3). The chart is



numbered 1 through 12, representing each study participant. Narratives from the interviews are included in this section:

**Table 3**

*Participant Interview Summary*

Participant	Family life	Environment	Peer pressure School	Prevention	Community mentoring
1	Behavior is learned from parents/guardians.  Sexual exploitation or molestation from family members leads to behavior.	Individuals do not choose delinquency-but are reacting to their environment.	Peers are likely within the same environment.	Therapy to deal with trauma.  Workshops about self-love, respect, & self-worth.  Financial workshops  College & career readiness.	Community involvement or a positive environment.  Positive influences will cultivate an adolescent to try other things.
2	Learn delinquency from experience, peers, social media, & the environment.	The environment is where it begins, parents are affiliated with gangs or sex trafficking.	No support system in school.  Peers engage in bad behavior and truancy, & cover for each other.	Diversion program, which prevents youth from probation.  Case manager works with family/parents, providing home visits, referrals, & resources to prevent delinquency.	
3			Social media & peers influence delinquency.  Smoking, substance abuse, & music on social media influence delinquency.  Peers partake in delinquency & gravitate towards them.		Positive role model who guides them in the right path.  Providing a case manager, at-home intervention for family/parents.
4	Family life impacts an adolescent's behavior, no relationship with their family.		Peers are bad influence, encouraging them to skip school or try certain substances.	Weekly group therapy	Actively listening & acknowledging. Communicating, understanding, & not judging them. Giving them advice helps them to trust mentor.
5	Family life impacts behavior because it starts at home.	Communicating with parents, having parents	Adolescents learn from peers.	Educational program within schools brings the	

Participant	Family life	Environment	Peer pressure School	Prevention	Community mentoring
	Financial issues, parents arguing, parent is not present play a role in behavior outside of the home.	who are understanding, optimistic, & positive influences an adolescent's behavior.	Delinquent behavior by peers in group influences those around them.	community inside the school.  Group activities with other youths, engaging & interacting with each other.  More resources & programs needed in school.	
6	Parents with drug & alcohol addiction impact delinquency.	Environment & parents influence delinquency.		Monthly group activities & community involvement.	
7	A lot of mentees come from single-parent household.	They do not have the economic means and chose the wrong people.	Peers play a significant role.	Teen enrichment programs & life skills workshops.  Engaging in the community, empower them to see and experience new things.	
8	Adolescents have lived through delinquency.	Exposed to environmental trauma, different mental health, & learning disabilities.		A team of people-- guidance counselors, school social worker, counseling programs, & extracurricular activities.	Consistent support, stability, & ensuring programs are met.  Positive support system at home & school.
9			Social media, school environment, family life, & peers influence delinquency.	Listening & understanding is best way to earn trust.  Personal conversations about life experiences help mentee to trust mentor.  Motivational interviewing, talking, & helping with life decisions.	Leadership from mentor is important.
10	Parents have their own delinquency & it hinders adolescents.  Having a bond with mom or dad, brother or sister has a positive impact.		Learn from family, peers, & school.  Being bullied at school leads to truancy.	Case managers who work directly with parents/guardians & adolescents.  A team working with school advocates, having group activities, & helping with medication management.	

Participant	Family life	Environment	Peer pressure School	Prevention	Community mentoring
11		Foster care, not having a home, financial instability causes them to be sex trafficked & into prostitution.		Federal County provides case management, school advocacy, & counseling services.	Positive decision-making skills, positive development, self-worth, self-esteem, & constructive activities.  Parenting programs
12	Trauma in life  Family history of crime & mental health issues from family.	Environment leads them down wrong path.	Learn delinquency from peers, school, family, environment, & social media. Peer influence at school & exposure to behaviors.	Mentor programs, recreation activities, afterschool programs & sports.  Recreational centers in communities.	

## **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

The four criteria to evaluate trustworthiness in qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To enhance trustworthiness in this study, I used the four criteria outlined in Chapter 3.

### **Credibility**

Credibility was established through member checking. During the interviews, notes were taken and asked for clarification on audio recordings. After the interviews were completed, I reviewed the audio recordings and compared them to my notes. The audio recordings were transcribed with the NVivo transcription software. After each interview was transcribed verbatim, I read each transcript word for word and listened to the audio recordings for accuracy. An emailed a copy of the transcribed data was emailed to each participant for member checking. Member checking enabled each participant to acknowledge and respond to their own words. None of the participants provided any clarifications.

### **Transferability**

Transferability was established through providing a description of the context, culture, selection, and characteristics of the participants. A random purposeful sampling of individuals from the organization was used to decrease systemic bias and increase trustworthiness. Participants of the study were mentoring professionals who had experience working with juvenile delinquents. I used descriptions to report the results, findings, and interpretation of this study.

**Dependability**

Dependability was established by obtaining detailed notes. To ensure accuracy, all transcripts were reviewed. I compared the data using codes and themes during the coding process. The NVivo software program was used to check and query codes for consistency.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability was established through audio recordings and transcripts. I discovered the commonalities by using descriptive data from the notes. The NVivo coding system was used to make certain that the findings and interpretation were based in the participants words, perspective, and viewpoints.

**Results**

The participants were asked a total of 15 questions about juvenile delinquency and crime. The results are presented in themes from the research questions.

**Research Question 1**

How does the experience of a community-based mentoring program play a role in an adolescent delinquent and criminal behavior?

**Prevention Strategies**

I asked the participants to share their perspective and knowledge on the programs and strategies to counteract the risk factors on juvenile delinquency and crime. When asked what programs and strategies are in place, P1, P7 stated the Alternatives for Youth (AFY) and Teen Enrichment programs, help adolescents to see and experience a different environment and educate youths about self-love, self-worth, and respect. Having more

community involvement or surrounding an adolescent with a positive environment or a positive influence will cultivate an adolescent to try other things.

According to P2, P3, mentoring gives them a positive role model who guides them down the right path. Preventing youths from probation by providing a case manager, at-home intervention for the family/parents helps to counteract the risk factors of delinquency.

P4, P5 stated, group activities allow youths to interact with each other, get comfortable with each other, learn from each other, and bring more community inside of the school.

Giving mentee advice helps them to trust the mentors and gives them a new perspective.

When asked what programs and strategies are in place to address the risk factors, P6 said more resources and programs are needed in schools and community involvement helps youths to make healthier connections they might not have in their community. P8

explained, putting together a team with the guidance counselor at school or school social worker, a counseling program, consistent support, stability and ensuring programs are met help to counteract the risk factors that lead to delinquency. P9 explains, talking to

them and helping them to make better decisions, taking little steps to make them a better

person. P10 explains, the programs for adolescents such as case managers who work with parents or caregivers, mentors working directly with adolescents. It is a team working to

help with career management help for adolescents, working with school advocates,

having group activities, help with medication management and getting them placed in a

better environment helps them to learn from making mistakes. P11 stated the Federal

County provides programs. The programs provided are case management, school

advocacy, mentoring, and counseling services to reduce recidivism. Prevention programs

and parenting programs for parents to learn techniques and tips, teaching them coping skills, so when they see the warning signs, they can get the services as soon as possible. P12 stated, it is important to have positive activities and people, having recreational centers in communities that are high in crime can counteract the risk factors that lead to delinquency.

### **Research Question 2**

What perceptions do mentors have about community-based mentoring programs?

#### **Perceptions**

The participants were asked to share their perceptions about mentoring programs. P1 stated being able to share your experience and your education with someone they can relate to is important, because you are a great influence and invested in their growth. P2, P5 stated a mentoring program is a needed, because it provides social cues, self-esteem, recreational and college activities and help you to see the world differently. P3 stated when you get to know these youths, you realize many are hurting or need help and that you can provide them with guidance. P4 stated helping others and working with adolescents to walk a different path. P6 stated it is amazing to see programs on Long Island, kids coming together in a group that might not have a person in their life. P7, P8 stated mentoring provides a positive outlook and open mind. Building a relationship, visiting colleges, take a cooking class together it can help to improve the mentor-mentee relationship. P9 stated mentoring skills help to deal with adolescents and see things from a youth perspective. P10, P11 started getting youths engaged in the community, while many are dealing with anxiety. Any amount of progress will help them to see the

positivity that comes with engaging in the community and how effective it is. P12 stated youths' benefit from mentoring programs, having a positive role model in your life, building a bond would help them make more friends and have a positive outlook on their life.

## **Interview Themes**

### ***Environment***

Six of the twelve participants reported that the environmental factors can contribute to juvenile delinquency and crime. According to P6, the environment and parents influence delinquency. P1 stated that individuals do not chose delinquency, it is not a learned behavior, but individuals reacting to an environment around them and not having the proper resources or coping mechanisms to deal with trauma. P1 also stated that the household environment is crucial in how adolescents are raised and where the behavior is learned. P2; "Adolescents learn delinquency from experience, peers, social media, and the environment. The environment is where it begins, because parents are affiliated with gangs or involved in sex trafficking." P7: "Many of the youth come from single-parent homes. They do not have the economic resources and chose the wrong people to hang around and the wrong influences." P8: "Adolescents have lived through delinquency because they are exposed to environmental trauma, mental health and learning disabilities. The environment impacts how you learn and you learn from your environment." P12: "Adolescents learn from peers, family, environment, school, and social media. Youths dealing with trauma in their life and not using coping mechanisms get involved in juvenile delinquency. Their environment leads them down the wrong



path, such as a family history of crime, mental health issues passed down from family, peer influence at school, and exposure to behaviors.”

### ***Family Life***

P4 stated that family life has an impact on adolescents because they do not have a good relationship with their family. P5 explained “that family life impacts behavior because it starts in the home. If something is happening at home, whether it be financial issues, spousal issues, parents arguing, or an absent parent impacts an adolescent’s behavior outside or inside of the home.” P6 noted that the environment and parents influence delinquency. According to P6, “parents with drug and alcohol addiction have an impact in delinquency. A support system is needed to help them, lacking bonds, and not having a healthy supportive bond in their life will get them involved in gangs.” P7 explained “mentees come from single-parent homes. They do not have the economic means and choose the wrong people and the wrong influences.” P10 explained that “if the parents have their own delinquency, it hinders the adolescents from growing up and causes them to go down the wrong path.”

### ***Peers/School***

The participants were asked to share their perspective on how peers’ influences adolescents becoming involved in delinquent behaviors. Seven of the twelve participants shared that peer involvement/school significantly contributes to juvenile delinquency and crime. The participants responses were: P1 explained that “it is an important relationship that can make or break a child. Friends are likely from the same environment and that friendship can fuel delinquency are they find new delinquent behavior because they are

from the same environment.” P2 explained “peers influence each other, cover for each other, and some are not strong enough to say no. They engage in the bad behavior.” P3 explained “that person will introduce them to delinquent behavior.” P4 explained “peers pressuring them to do things that are not comfortable, encouraging them to skip school or try certain substances.” P5 explained “peer influence plays a significant role in the delinquency. Adolescents misbehave in groups, because they feel most confident and they would never do it by themselves.” P9 explained “peer influence is a key influence. It depends in the child; every child is different. They look to see what their friends are doing rather than evaluating it.” P12 explained “peer influence is one of the reasons adolescents get involved in juvenile delinquency and crime.”

### ***Summary of Initial Interview Themes***

There were five themes derived from the interviews. They were (1) environment, (2) family, (3) life, (4) peers/school, and (5) prevention strategies. Key responses and themes are in Table 4.

### **Table 4**

#### ***Themes and Responses***

Themes	Responses	# of participants
Environment	The environment and their parents influence delinquency.	6
Family/Life	Family life impacts behavior, it starts in the home.	5
Peers/School	Peer influence is one reason an adolescent gets involved in juvenile delinquency and crime.	7
Prevention strategies	It is important to have positive activities and people, recreational centers in communities that are high in crime can counteract the risk factors that lead to delinquency.	12

**Additional Themes**

Based on the interview question's additional themes emerged: bonds, lack of parental bonds and parental bonds.

***Parental Bonds***

P1 stated adolescents have bonds with their families and their parents, but it is not a healthy bond. The strong bond between parent and child can be manipulative and tools of isolation, emotional and verbal abuse are used to have an emotional hold on the child. P2 stated they have a bond with their family and friends, they are times when they clash with their parents when they are trying to reprimand them or set consequences in place. The bond becomes strong and they turn to friends who influence them to do the wrong thing. P7 stated mentors only males and from experience most kids come from single-parent homes. Having a father figure or a male that can relate to the helps, which many of these youths are missing. Over 80% of my mentors come from single-parent households. P8 stated mentor is well bonded with her parent. Mentor is disconnected from foster parent, but it is to be expected, given that mentor does not want to be there.

***Lack of Parental Bonds***

P3 explained they do not have a family bond. They usually have a friend bond. They have a very strained relationship with their parents. P4 explained they do not have much of a family life and this has a huge impact on the adolescent. They have supportive friends. P5 explained some do not have bonds outside of the home. Bonds with a father makes an impact because many do not have a father figure or an older sibling to guide them. Bonds are important for young boys because it is an impact in their behavior.

someone to guide them, give them advice, or show them right from wrong. P6 explained they are lacking bonds, mostly supportive bonds. A healthy, reliable, supportive person like a parent providing for them. P9 explained trust bond is important in having a personal conversation and opening about certain life experiences help the mentees to trust you. P10 explained that many do not have bonds. Many adolescents do not even speak to their parents and it goes back to their home life, which caused delinquent behavior or being bullied in school. P11 explained they are in foster care and have a toxic family bond. P12 explained some adolescents do not have a bond with their family or friends. They hang out with negative influences.

### **Summary**

This qualitative study was conducted to obtain the perspective of twelve mentoring professionals about their experiences of mentoring juvenile delinquents and the risk factors of juvenile delinquency and crime. I conducted virtual interviews via Zoom to obtain their perspectives and experience in working with juvenile delinquents. The research questions that guided this study were (1) How does the experience of a community-based mentoring play a significant role in an adolescent's delinquent and criminal behavior? and (2) What perceptions do mentors have about community-based mentoring programs? To analyze the data collected, audio recordings and transcription was used. NVivo transcription software program was used to code the data. Through data analysis four themes were discovered (1) environment, (2) family life, (3) peers/school, and (4) prevention strategies. The results of the data analysis based on the responses from the interviews was discussed. In this chapter, a detailed explanation of the setting,

demographics, data collection, data analysis, and results were provided. In Chapter 5, the outcomes as well as the purpose and the significance of the study were reviewed. An in-depth interpretation of the themes is given along with the results and how they relate to the theoretical framework.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to explore and understand the perceptions of community-based mentors regarding strategies to reduce juvenile delinquency and crime. My goal was to gain an in-depth understanding of the risk factors of family history, life, peers, school, and environment. To understand what can be done to counteract the risk factors from the perspective of professionals, I interviewed those who had experience working with juvenile delinquents.

The theoretical research questions that guided this research were the following:

1. How does the experience of community-based mentoring play a role in an adolescent's delinquent and criminal behavior?
2. What perceptions do mentors have about community-based mentoring programs?

In this chapter, I present the interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications. Themes were created based on the interview questions and answers. Significant words and phrases were highlighted, and themes were established through the analysis of data. Table 2 in Chapter 4 includes the themes that emerged from data analysis.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

#### **Research Question 1**

Community-based programs provide a wide range of activities and settings that youths can experience. In these programs, mentors and mentees engage in academic and

leisure activities and meet with other mentor mentees to spend time with peers in a safe environment. Mentors and mentees have flexibility in deciding how to spend their time, in the school environment or in the community, and integrate activities from both contexts, establishing a link between the school and the community (Martino et al., 2020). All 12 of the study participants were familiar with prevention strategies to deter delinquency and criminal behavior. The participants reported that juveniles learn delinquent and criminal behavior from their family life, environment, school, and peers but are also influenced by peers to engage in delinquent and criminal behaviors. Participants believed that having a positive role model and a support system have a positive influence on an adolescent's life. According to Hirschi's theory, attachment is an individual's emotional ties to others, including parents, teachers, or peers. Individuals attached to others are less likely to commit delinquent acts because of fear that doing so will harm their relationships. According to Hirschi (2018), an individual is deterred from delinquency by considering how these behaviors will have a negative impact on their current or future achievements.

The participants' knowledge and experience about the prevention strategies available to adolescents provide guidance, and encouragement, and develop youth character. Participants stated that the prevention programs assisted adolescents in making better choices and thinking about the consequences of their actions before making decisions. Study participants believed that the programs were effective in teaching and developing life skills and vocational skills. Adolescents learned about self-worth, self-love, and respect. Financial literacy planning, investing, and budgeting; college and

career readiness; education programs; recreational programs; group activities; and counseling services were provided to reduce recidivism.

### **Research Question 2**

The study participants were asked to share their perceptions about community-based mentoring programs. The participants gave several reasons that it is very challenging to change someone's life and that it requires time. Another reason was that the skills learned from mentoring help in relating to and understanding students. It is hard to get adolescents to engage in their community, but any progress helps them in a positive way, and one realizes that they need guidance. Another reason was thinking that it would be difficult to build a bond but realizing that many are lost or misguided and need a mentor to show them the right path. Having a positive outlook and an open mind will help in building a relationship with those whom one mentors. Sharing experiences about the value of education, supporting students by visiting colleges, or even taking a cooking class helps adolescents to see life differently. Mentors can recognize needs and build materials to facilitate academic success. The success of a mentoring relationship relies on mentor behavior; a productive mentor establishes clear guidelines, discusses goals, accepts, and validates youth choices without judgement, and promotes feelings of acceptance (Weiler et al., 2019). Mentoring builds confidence, character, competence, and connection.

### **Limitations of the Study**

A limitation of this study was the sample size. This study was limited to only 12 participants from the Long Island, New York area. The sample size of 12 may not



accurately reflect the experiences and perceptions of community-based mentoring. Participants may have agreed to participate in this study because of an inherent bias. This bias could have affected the results of this study because participants may not have been truthful in their answers to the interview questions. Another limitation was that this study did not include mentees sharing their experiences with delinquency.

### **Recommendations**

This was a qualitative theoretical study; I would recommend replicating it for future research in other areas of New York. Another recommendation for research is to examine the perceptions of adolescents who have experiences with juvenile delinquency and crime and who became involved with the community-based mentoring program. Focusing on prevention strategies is important for adolescents because counteracting the risk factors could reduce juvenile delinquency and crime. Finally, another recommendation is to explore the perception of juvenile probation officers working closely with juveniles and observing the juveniles' family dynamics. The findings from this study support that community-based mentoring programs reduce juvenile delinquency and crime in adolescents. This study supports the idea that having a mentor working with adolescents, showing them a positive environment and being a positive role model, influences the outcome of the adolescents' lives. Several participants identified the strategies from the mentoring program, within the community, and at the federal county level that are available to adolescents.

### **Implications**

The need for positive social change is supported by advising researchers on the phenomenon of the effect of risk factors on juvenile delinquency and crime. The findings of this study emphasized the experience and perspective of community-based mentoring professionals on the effect of the risk factors on juvenile delinquency and crime. The research findings may benefit the field and the juvenile justice system by identifying the influences of delinquency and crime among adolescents from the community-based mentoring professionals' perspective.

Social change can be obtained through the implementation and evaluation of mentoring programs that are geared toward counteracting the risk factors and their influence on juvenile delinquency and crime. This study could benefit juvenile delinquents and their families by educating them on the risk factors and the importance of participating in required treatment services with the goal of becoming productive citizens. Families could benefit by better understanding and utilizing positive strategies when working with their juvenile delinquents.

Participants in this study shared their experiences working with juvenile delinquents and the risk factors that impact delinquency and crime. The participants provided their insights on strategies implemented with the goal to reduce juvenile delinquency. The findings from this study can assist policymakers in implementing prevention strategies to provide services based on an individual's need that address risk factors and their influence on delinquency and crime.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine and understand the risk factors that cause juvenile delinquency and crime. My goal was to gain an in-depth understanding of the risk factors of family history, life, peers, school, and environment. Twelve participants were interviewed, and the findings revealed that a community-based mentoring program is effective in reducing juvenile delinquency and crime. The participants spoke about counteracting these risk factors with community-based programs. These programs are geared towards the deterrence of juvenile delinquency and crime through parental and family involvement. This research may assist the field of juvenile justice to implement intervention strategies that are geared towards counteracting the risk factors and their influence on recidivism.

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Appendix A: Email Invite

**Invitation to Participate in Study**

**Title: “Use of a Community-Based Mentoring Program to Reduce Juvenile Delinquency & Crime in Adolescents”**

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Andida Prince. I am a doctoral student in the Criminal Justice PhD program at Walden University. You are being invited to participate in an interview-based research study on an adolescent’s perception and behavior of community-based mentoring programs. I am conducting interviews as part of my research study to understand how an effective community-based mentoring program reduces juvenile delinquency and crime in adolescent’s. As a mentor you are in an ideal position to give valuable information from your own perspective. The goal is that in you voluntarily sharing your experiences with the researcher, improvements can be made in these experiences of working with children and families.

The interview will take approximately 60 minutes and will be audio-recorded for data analysis purposes. The interview will be conducted, when possible, on Zoom. The interview will be conducted at your preferred location, this can be a quiet room, your home, or any other private and quiet location. I am trying to understand from a mentor’s perspective the risk factors that causes juvenile delinquency and crime and what can be done to counteract these factors. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential and each interview will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identities are not revealed during analysis and findings.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be valuable to my research and findings could lead to greater understanding of juvenile delinquency and crime.

If you are willing to participate, please suggest a date and time that you are available and I will make myself available. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

Thanks!

## Appendix B: Interview Questions

### Opening Statement:

Thanks for participating in my research study. This interview will be videorecorded and transcribed and you can make any changes or additional comments to the interview. Do you have any questions? If you need to take a break or stop the interview, please let me know. May I begin the interview?

### Research Questions:

1. How does the experience of community-based mentoring programs play a significant role in an adolescent's behavior?
2. What perceptions do mentors have about community-based mentoring programs?

### Interview Questions

1. How long have you worked mentoring adolescents?
2. What does your job description entail?
3. Based on your mentoring experience with working with adolescents, how do you think adolescents learn about delinquency?
4. Have any of the adolescent's whom you mentor been arrested?
5. What impact does an adolescent's life, family history, environment, and school have on juvenile delinquency and crime?
6. From your experience mentoring students, can you describe a specific issue that influences delinquency?
7. Describe the school experience of the adolescent's you mentor?
8. What impact does mentoring have on adolescents?
9. What bonds are important in reducing juvenile delinquency and crime?

10. What bonds do the adolescents have or do not have whom you mentor?
11. What role does peer influence have on increased risk of juvenile delinquency and crime?
12. What programs and strategies are in place for adolescent's who are likely to commit delinquency and crime?
13. What can be done to counteract the risk factors that lead to delinquency and crime?

#### Closing Statement

Thank you for participating and for the opportunity to document your perspective. I will provide you with a copy of your written interview for your review and feedback.