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“So, I Am Back”: Adjudicated Youths’ School Reentry Experiences

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by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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DEDICATION

I dedicated this body of work to all my family, friends, and mentors. Without your unwavering love, encouragement, guidance, and support I would not be here today. When the road got tough, and light began to deem you helped me to find my way. Thank you for being the listening ears, voices of reason, motivators, problem-solvers, comforters, and the beacons of light I needed to ensure that I made it to the finish line.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate my research to all my participants. Thank you for being vulnerable with me and sharing your thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Your resilience speaks volumes, and your sense of accountability will take you far. Our conversations were enlightening and confirmed that there is much to be done within the juvenile justice system.

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"I am so glad I made it; I made it through." —Marvin Sapp

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

Adjudicated youth face a multitude of barriers when reentering school following incarceration. School administrators and educational personnel know very little about how these students perceive their reentry experiences and what the students identify as needed supports, resources, and barriers throughout the process. This qualitative study used in-depth, semi-structured interviews with photo-elicitation to explore and describe how formerly incarcerated youth perceive their high school reentry experiences. Participants were male adolescents ages 16 to 18 years old. who provided rich and in-depth descriptions of their reentry experiences. Recommendations for policy, practice and future research are provided.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Reentry into school for formerly incarcerated youth is a multifaceted process that requires collaboration between multiple agencies to assist youth in successfully returning to their communities and schools. A continuum of reentry supports inclusive of academic opportunities and resources is essential for curtailing recidivism and ensuring long-term success. In 2014, over 75,000 adjudicated youth received residential placement orders in the United States (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2017). The decision to incarcerate youthful offenders is dependent upon several factors: the types of crimes committed (Sickmund, 2008), criminal history (Evangelist et al., 2017), probation violations (Sickmund, 2008), the best interest of the youth (Platt & Chávez-García, 2009), and age (Platt & Chávez-García, 2009). Sentencing options include community-based diversion programs, probation, and commitment to a juvenile detention or residential facility (Ryan et al., 2014). The expectation upon release is that the youth will return to their communities and schools and assimilate accordingly. Youthful offenders must overcome the stigma of their criminal status while facing bureaucratic hurdles with inadequate support systems.

Founded at the turn of the 19th century, the juvenile justice system is a social welfare model serving as a means of intervention, accountability, and rehabilitation (Mears et al., 2011; National Center for Juvenile Justice, 2014). In the intervening years, however, the juvenile system's founding principles have been subsumed by the priority of crime control. The structure and purpose of the juvenile justice system have received considerable criticism from the media,

the public, legislators, and criminal justice professionals (Allard & Young, 2002; Ryon et al., 2013). Further, school districts' zero-tolerance disciplinary policies have led to more juvenile arrests (Mazzotti & Higgins, 2006; McNeal, 2016; Skiba & Losen, 2016). These same policies and practices create further barriers and challenges for adjudicated youth during their reentry process into public school.

Federal legislation governs the operational and fundamental aspects of the juvenile justice system, with facilities mandated to provide access to educational and post incarceration transition services. However, interpreting the legislation varies from state to state. Although some facilities offer courses, vocational training, and transition services, others provide only limited educational programs and no transition services (Gagnon et al., 2009; Geib et al., 2011; Platt et al., 2015). Given these discrepancies, the public education system has struggled to adequately address the needs of juveniles as they reintegrate into school and pursue educational opportunities.

Evidence indicates that America's educational system could contribute to the rising rates of incarcerated youth (Carey et al., 2018). School suspension, expulsion, and dropout rates for students involved in the juvenile justice system are among the highest of any student population (Carey et al., 2018; Cavendish, 2014; Sullivan, 2011). Additionally, low high school completion rates follow youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice system.

Ongoing debate over the role of and access to education often lacks discussion of incarcerated youth. Research has shown that access to quality education for youth under the confines of the juvenile justice system is inconsistent (Geib et al., 2011; Macomber et al., 2010; Morrison & Epps, 2002). The enforcement of legislation on behalf of students attending school in nontraditional settings is limited. Some laws exclude incarcerated youth, making it difficult

for such juveniles to receive educational and transition services contributing to their future success. Adjudicated youth not served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 2004) sometimes reenter public schools without the proper transition planning and other documentation needed for post-confinement success, creating concern of whether or not to count these students. Subsequently, juveniles' past crimes continue to determine their access to education, despite provisions for academic engagement and attainment of academic success (Abrams & Snyder, 2010; Hirschfield, 2014; Pace, 2018).

Equal access to education and the acquisition of knowledge is not a dilemma solely affecting adjudicated youths. Many students have struggled to obtain equal access to education, as documented throughout American history. The absence of sufficient educational opportunities for adjudicated youth necessitates inquiry into the environments most conducive to the youth's success. The transition process for youthful offenders is complex, indicating the need to determine the most effective approach. Preparing youth to transition from incarceration and back into the community, especially into schools, requires the collaboration of all stakeholders, including the State Department of Juvenile Justice, school districts, and community agencies.

Figure 1 shows the four stages of the entry and reentry process for youth transitioning from residential juvenile justice facilities, including their exits and aftercare once back in their communities. As illustrated, the intersections in Stage 4: Aftercare, critically impact an individual's secondary school outcome: high school diploma, General Equivalency Degree (GED), Career Technical Education (CTE) certificate, dropout, expulsion, parole or probation violation, or juvenile justice system reentry. Given the significance of transition planning and resources to adjudicated youths' successful reentry and access to education, research is necessary

specific to this population and the inconsistencies in the application of the laws enacted for their protection and well-being.

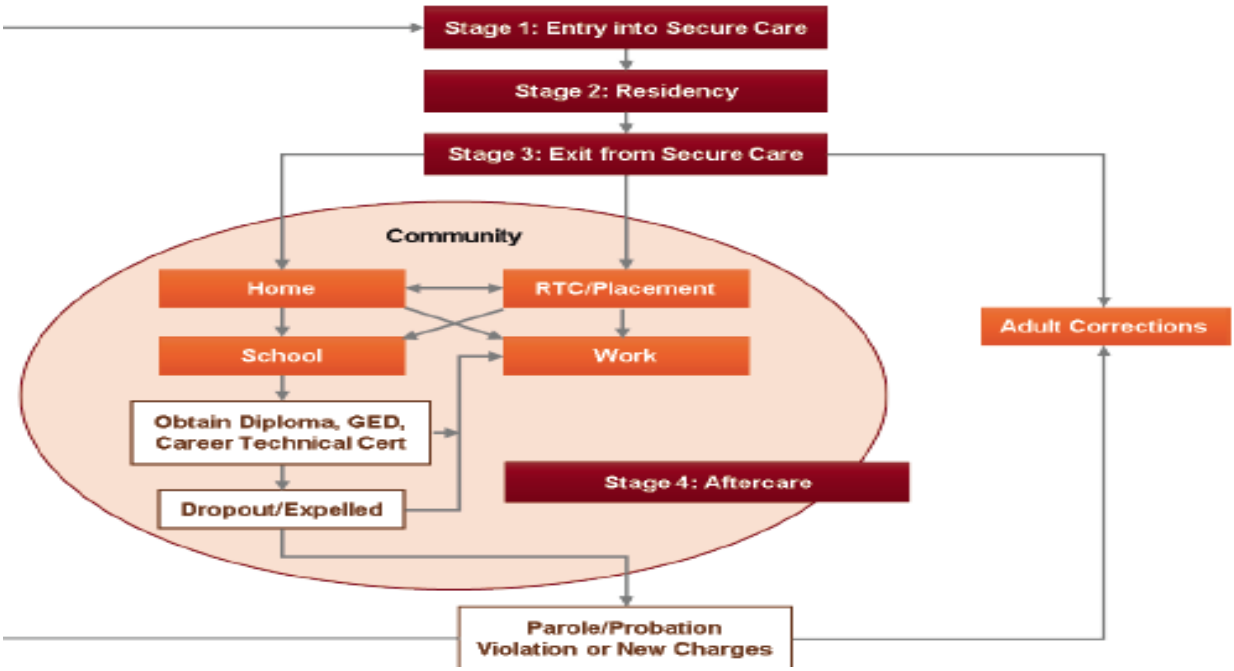

Figure 1. Transition Pathway for Incarcerated Youth. From Adapted from "Transition Toolkit 3.0: Meeting the Educational Needs of Youth Exposed to the Juvenile Justice System," by H. Griller Clark, S. R. Mather, L. Brock, M. O'Cummings, and D. Milligan, 2016. Copyright 2016 by the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk. Used with permission (see Appendix A).

Statement of the Problem

Formerly incarcerated youth experience multiple barriers throughout their transition from a juvenile justice facility back to school. These obstacles adversely affect their educational and long-term life outcomes, contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline. More specifically, despite the wealth of research indicating the importance of education for reentry and the correlations between education and incarceration (e.g., Geib et al., 2011; Gonsoulin & Read, 2011; Mathur & Griller Clark, 2014), transition/reentry programming is not often available within juvenile justice

facilities. In a study on programming for incarcerated youth, Koyama (2012) found that fewer than half of juvenile justice programs offered transitional services for exiting youth. The lack of programming in juvenile justice facilities negatively impacts the reentry process for young offenders, with the lack of transition and reentry support contributing to recidivism and high dropout rates among adjudicated youth.

According to Kirk and Sampson (2013), youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system become educationally disadvantaged. The cultural climate of the school related to the return of adjudicated youth greatly impacts their ability to succeed. Schools are often unprepared to receive students returning from a juvenile justice program. Often, these students experience bias that directly affects their treatment by administrators, teachers, and classmates; also impacted are which classes they can take and what supports and services are available in the schools (Cole & Cohen, 2013; Dancy, 2014; Kirk & Sampson, 2011; Rios, 2011). School administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers must understand how they can best support these students and what resources are needed to provide a reentry process that will help the youth succeed.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of adjudicated youth who have reentered school. Despite the challenges related to school reentry, adjudicated youth still managed to return. Understanding the students' perspectives of their transition process can help juvenile justice and school districts identify successful practices already in place and gaps to address. In response to the lack of research inclusive of all students' voices, the goal of this study was to examine how adjudicated youth make meaning of their reentry experiences and identify supports, programming, and barriers within the schools that influence their re-

engagement in academics and social activities. With an examination of this phenomenon, this study provided students a platform to share their insights and to offer recommendations for strategies and programming to address school reentry for adjudicated youth in hopes of strengthening the educational outcomes for this population.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study:

1. How do adjudicated youth describe their experiences of transitioning from incarceration to reentering school?
2. What are adjudicated youths' perspectives on the types of supports, programming, and barriers that exist during school reentry?
3. What, if any, recommendations do adjudicated youth have for juvenile justice and educational personnel regarding school reentry?

Theoretical Rationales

Ecological systems theory and attribution theory provide a framework for understanding the interactions between the systems that directly and indirectly impact adjudicated youth upon reentry as well as the factors youth attribute to whether or not the youth have successfully navigated their reentry process.

Study Rationale

The holistic transition needs of adjudicated individuals have received significant study. Many researchers have focused on wraparound social services through community agencies, community engagement, special education evaluation, transfer of records, and re-enrollment as a means to understand the complex reintegration process of this particular population (Cole & Cohen, 2013; Goldkind, 2011; Mathur & Griller Clark, 2014). Researchers have explored the

educational services, confinement, reentry needs, transitions, and recidivism of young offenders during and after their incarceration (Arditti & Parkman, 2011; Clinkinbeard & Zohra, 2012; Fields & Abrams, 2010; Mincey et al., 2008; Reed & Wexler, 2014; Walker, 2012); however, few scholars have focused on adjudicated youths' lived experiences during the reentry process. Accordingly, exploring how adjudicated youth make meaning of their current reentry experiences can provide information for developing reentry programs in schools.

Improving long-term outcomes for adjudicated youth requires connecting the gaps in information between individuals rendering services and the youths' consumption of services rendered. More specifically, gaining a comprehensive understanding of the practices and resources provided to returning students and the impact on the attainment of a high school diploma is critical for both juvenile justice officials and school personnel. Juvenile justice and school personnel often face challenges when developing effective transition and reentry programs for incarcerated youth. Yet, rarely do the recipients of the programming have an opportunity to share their perceptions and experiences. The literature lacks studies in which students provide an authentic voice or personal narrative; rather, the evaluation of existing programs often occurs by the very personnel tasked with implementation. A more comprehensive understanding of how adjudicated youth perceive their transition and reentry experiences can aid in the revision and enhancement of policies and programming that focus on practices proven to encourage successful transition and degree attainment.

Schools are a vital part of the transition process for adjudicated youth, as evidenced by the correlation between school attendance and recidivism rates. Given this connection, understanding the effectiveness of programming designed to assist students transitioning back into school and achieving graduation is imperative. Studies show that success for formerly

incarcerated youth depends heavily on the implementation of unconventional, innovative, and engaging strategies to produce positive educational outcomes (Hirschfield, 2014; Mazzotti & Higgins, 2006; Pace, 2018). More notably, the lived experiences of adjudicated youth can indicate alternatives to programming and highlight methods that were beneficial during the transition process. Essentially, the integration of student voices into the conversation contributes to narrowing the existing juvenile justice system and education research gap. Lastly, in addition to implications for research and policy, this study has practical implications for the youth themselves.

The data gathered from this study will be shared with juvenile justice and educational professionals. School administrators, teachers, and staff might at present have little knowledge about how adjudicated youth internalize their school interactions. Findings from this study will also be presented at conferences and seminars. The findings are intended to be used to facilitate professional development training for principals, teachers, guidance counselors, school psychologists, and social workers. Thus, this study has the potential for positive social change specific to the school culture, relationships, and academic achievement of formerly adjudicated youth.

Significance of the Study

The goal of this qualitative study was to investigate the juvenile post-incarceration transition and ability to reintegrate into a traditional educational setting by exploring participants' lived experiences. Given the dearth of existing research, study findings will likely make juvenile justice and school personnel aware of how formerly incarcerated youth view the transition and reentry process. With this knowledge, such personnel could consider reorganizing current programs, implementing critical educational supports, and mandating a universal

transition program that addresses key transition components before students leave a juvenile justice facility. An understanding of how adjudicated youth navigate the transition and reentry process can provide vital information prior researchers might not have considered. Illuminating the lived experiences of the individuals involved in the process could contribute to effective improvement. More notably, the findings might lead to reflection on the part of school administrators, teachers, and guidance counselors about their roles in assisting students reentering school. Finally, the information and insight shared by formerly incarcerated youth specific to education could contribute to creating reentry programming at schools, developing after-school programs to assist students with the identified needs, and influencing school-based practices and policies.

Background and Role of the Researcher

For the past 10 years, I have worked to understand the structure, policies, and procedures that govern education in the juvenile justice system and the collaboration between the juvenile justice and traditional school systems. My focus has always been on reentry. Could these students be academically successful after leaving a long-term juvenile justice residential facility? If yes, how? If no, why not?

My interest in the topic began when I was an undergraduate. I met a woman who worked as a transition coordinator for the state's department of juvenile justice and asked if I could shadow her when she visited one of the juvenile justice residential facilities. My first visit would set the foundation for my academic inquiry. I entered the education building of the facility and immediately encountered a young man angry at being unable to retake a section of the GED before he departed the facility. I began to inquire about what the department of juvenile justice

was doing to ensure academic success for these students, as well as what reentry for formerly incarcerated students looked like at a traditional public school.

Since that time, I have taught in a juvenile justice detention center and at a county jail facility in the juvenile wing. I begin to more closely experience what transition looked like. The conversations I had with my students about the past, present, and future was even more eye-opening. I appreciated their honesty in response to my continuing questions as I sought to cultivate the best learning environment I could for them. The students had dreams, goals, and aspirations, and I wanted to do everything that I could to support them. I soon discovered the disconnect youthful offenders felt when returning to school. I listened to what they expected from their teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators. Although some of my students were looking forward to reentering their old schools, others dreaded the thought.

I acknowledge that I bring my background and experiences along with me through the research process. Although I have a personal connection with the topic, I have been committed to listening to the participants' own personal experiences, and describing the experiences, perceptions, and realities of formerly incarcerated youth. My role is also to interpret the information and experiences shared to construct participants' stories in a way that highlights discoveries specific to the research questions.

Definition of Terms

The following are definitions of terms as they relate to this study.

Adjudicated youth: Within the juvenile justice system, *adjudicated* means that a judicial judgment has occurred. An adjudicated youth is convicted of the crime, charged, and sentenced to a juvenile justice facility or placed under community supervision (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2019).

Recidivism: Criminal acts that result in rearrest, reconviction, or return to prison with or without a new sentence following the prisoner's release (National Institute of Justice, 2008).

Reentry: The process of reintegrating from placement or incarceration in a juvenile or criminal justice facility into the community and home school.

School-to-prison pipeline: The educational and criminal justice policies and practices that make young people more likely to be incarcerated than to obtain a quality education (Taylor et al., 2012).

Transition: The process of preparing to reenter the community and home school while incarcerated at a juvenile or criminal justice facility (Burrell, 2014).

Conclusion

Chapter One provided context for how policies and procedures govern youth offenders' incarceration, education, and pathways for transition. Few researchers have included students' voices, instead conducting studies while the students were incarcerated. There is limited research available on the transition and reentry process once students return to school. The results from this study can benefit juvenile justice officials, legislators, policymakers, court officials, and education personnel in identifying gaps in juvenile transition and reentry processes to create an effective protocol for transition and reentry and to reduce juvenile recidivism rates.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

More than 320 million juveniles have been arrested and processed by the U.S. juvenile justice system (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2015). Upon release from incarceration, many of these youth struggle to reenter high school and their communities successfully, leading to high recidivism and dropout rates (Cole & Cohen, 2013; Nellis & Hooks Wayman, 2009). There are many facets to understanding the nature of transition and secondary school reentry for adjudicated youth, the most common of which are the school-to-prison pipeline and the disproportionate number of minority students and students with disabilities who are incarcerated. Federal, state, and local policies related to educational and disciplinary practices and inadequate educational support structures continue to adversely affect the reengagement of this marginalized population of students.

The process of transition and reentry for formerly incarcerated youth is rife with systematic barriers, requiring collaboration between multiple agencies to ensure specific supports at each step of the process (Gonsoulin & Read, 2011; Mathur & Griller Clark, 2014). Such collaboration requires integrating the distinctive missions of the juvenile justice system with secondary education. Currently, the mission of the U.S. Department of Education (2011) is "to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access" . In contrast, the current mission of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention focuses on

> Provid[ing] national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization. …Supports the efforts of states, tribes, and communities to develop and implement effective and equitable juvenile justice systems that enhance public safety, ensure youth are held appropriately accountable to both crime victims and communities, and empower youth to live productive, law-abiding lives. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2019)

The mission of the juvenile justice system overshadows that of the U.S. Department of Education, the latter of which has delayed goals. For example, although the states are responsible for educating youthful offenders in the custody of the department of juvenile justice, accessibility to a quality education with valuable resources presents challenges. More specifically, a better understanding of the functionality of both the juvenile justice and educational systems requires an examination of the policies and practices of each system and its components responsible for assisting in the transition and reentry processes.

A focused literature search returned information on the structures and policies directly affecting youth incarceration and defining the responsibilities of schools and the juvenile justice system in providing transition and reentry support for students. The existing literature focuses on ways in which such policies—or the absence thereof—have affected youth. Prior research is specific to the constructs of the juvenile justice system and transition protocols for students reentering public high schools following incarceration (Cole & Cohen, 2013; Feierman et al., 2009; Hirschfield, 2014; Platt et al., 2015). Also included in the literature review are the demographics and characteristics of youth involved in the juvenile justice system, as well as factors contributing to recidivism among juveniles. Conducting an extensive literature review

allowed me to holistically explore how the U.S. juvenile justice system and school districts can work together more efficiently to address juvenile incarceration and school reentry.

Theoretical Frameworks

Two theoretical frameworks provided a foundation for this qualitative study to explore the reentry of adjudicated youth: ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986) and attribution theory (Heider, 1958). Both theories have a history of use within both the judicial system and education context (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Weiner, 1985; Winter & Butzon, 2009). Drawing on these theories contributed to a critical examination of the systems for educating adjudicated youth, as well as youth's ability to internalization of their interactions with the juvenile justice system and reentering school. Ecological systems theory provided a lens for understanding a system's structures, practices, and policies of a system and their impact on an individual. It also encompassed a set of guidelines to help identify who and what they need throughout their reentry process. Further, the personal responsibilities and external factors that impact each outcome along the way merit evaluation. Attribution theory, in turn, helped to explain the intersection between the internal and external factors that impact students' behaviors, choices, and decisions. Within the framework of attribution theory, the findings showed how external influences such as policies, procedures, and practices contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline, incarceration, and school reentry.

Ecological System Theory

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1977, 1986) accounts for various factors that contribute to youth development, either by enhancement or obstruction. According to the theory, interactions between systems are vital for youths' development. Understanding how adjudicated youth view the five interacting systems of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem,

macrosystem, and chronosystem is critical to analyzing the systems' influence on students' reentry. For this study, the framework of the ecological systems theory serves as the basis for exploring systems and how the characteristics of the environment impact an individual's behaviors and life outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Ecological systems theory helps explain that individuals receive influence not only from their biological and psychological characteristics, but also from the family, school, community, and larger social systems that surround them (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Ecological systems theory begins with the individual at the center of the microsystem, which incorporates caregivers, teachers and schools, and peers. The higher level of the mesosystem indicates the interrelationships between societal structures (microsystems) and their impact on the student inclusive of school policies and procedures and federal legislation. The juvenile justice system, school districts, and community organizations all directly influence the services and support students receive upon their release. How these institutions and organizations work together and the nature, frequency, and delivery of these services and supports impact the transition and reentry process for adjudicated youth, and their academic experiences and quality of life overall. The third level of the ecological systems is the exosystem, which pertains to the link between two or more systems that affect youth development indirectly. According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), the macrosystem describes the broader setting, which includes the beliefs, values, and patterns that impact youth. The chronosystem refers to the influence of changes that occur throughout all systems over a set period. This system addresses the legislative and institutional changes and historical patterns associated with the school-to-prison pipeline and school reentry for adjudicated youth.

Attribution Theory

Heider (1958) developed attribution theory to explain how an individual perceives, analyzes, and responds to the behaviors of others. In expanding attribution theory, Weiner (1985) identified many factors that contribute to why individuals behave as they do. Weiner proposed a three-dimensional structure to explain the factors of attribution, which include locus (internal or external), stability (stable or unstable), and controllability (controllable or uncontrollable causes). The connections made create a pathway that allows scholars to assess intersections within structures and systems, as well as identifying the motivating factors reshaped to accomplish self-identified goals.

Attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1985) is relevant to this study as I sought to understand factors that contribute to adjudicated youth's success or failure. How students internalize their reentry process as it is occurring and what they attribute to their success or failure can lead to conversations related to the various perspectives on reentry and the lived experiences of students. Attribution provided a lens through which to explore expectations of self and future behaviors. Identifying the best supports and practices for reentry from students' perspectives provided critical insight into areas needing improvement. For instance, systems can develop reentry supports that focus on school expectations, campus resources, and key teachers and administrators available to assist youth throughout the process. There is a need for juvenile justice personnel and school administrators to understand what transition programs and school support services help adjudicated youth reintegrate successfully. A fuller awareness of judicial, educational, and youth's personal attributes can better facilitate communication between juvenile justice personnel, school administrators, teachers, and students.

I explored educational policies that impact juvenile incarceration and hinder the reentry process for adjudicated youth, the disproportionality of minority students and students with disabilities moving through the school-to-prison pipeline, and the educational structure for incarcerated youth, transition and reentry, and juvenile recidivism. To this end, the literature review incorporates seven sections: (a) educational policies and juvenile incarceration, (b) school-to-prison pipeline, (c) education in juvenile justice facilities, (d) barrier to successful school reentry for adjudicated youth, and (e) juvenile recidivism. Each of these sections represents factors that shape reentry for transitioning adjudicated youth.

Educational Policies and Juvenile Incarceration

Since the 1990s, public schools have shifted their views on juvenile crime, including which agencies are responsible for determining what constitutes a disciplinary infraction and what defines a crime. A system founded on rehabilitation has given way to "tough on crime" policies and stricter sanctions (Jordan & Myers, 2011). Unfortunately, educational policies and legislation enacted to enhance student success have had the opposite effect, leading to a widespread increase in suspensions and expulsions (Cregor & Hewitt, 2011; Gregory et al., 2010). Further, a multitude of unintended consequences has emerged from the adoption of policies and legislation, such as zero tolerance and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), with adverse outcomes especially true for students of color (Skiba et al., 2009). Policy changes have also shifted accountability for students' discipline, with spectrum schools responsible for school disciplinary infractions and the criminal justice system addressing criminal matters.

Recently, the juvenile justice system has gotten more actively involved in school disciplinary infractions, elevating violations of school conduct policies and misbehavior to the

status of criminal acts (Ruiz, 2017). During the 2015–2016 academic year, more than 291,100 students received juvenile system referrals or faced school-related arrests (Hirschfield, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2018). The school-to-prison pipeline serves as a catalyst for increasing the number of students who become involved in or return to the juvenile justice system. Stricter laws and policies funnel a higher number of students, particularly those of minority status or with disabilities, into a cycle of incarceration.

Zero Tolerance Policy

The idea of zero tolerance emerged in the 1980s with the Reagan Administration's War on Drugs (McNeal, 2016). The U.S. Congress passed the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act in 1986 in response to the fight against drugs in urban communities, legislation that made its way into inner-city public schools (Fuentes, 2012; McNeal & Dunbar, 2010). The Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act addressed alcohol and drugs on school campuses, mandating a 1-year expulsion as a form of punishment (Fuentes, 2012). The premise of zero tolerance was to deter crime, especially in urban communities, and to create judicial consequences for those who chose to break the law. Although rooted in the adult criminal justice system, judicial consequences entered school disciplinary practices as a form of enforcement.

Congress enacted the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 in response to increased school violence, legislation that also found its way into school discipline. Federal policies were attempts to decrease and eliminate disruptive and fatal incidents on school campuses following the 1999 Columbine High School shooting (Howell, 2009; Welch & Payne, 2010). The Gun-Free Schools Act requires a mandatory 1-year expulsion for possession of a firearm and the immediate referral of a student who violates that law to the police (Hatt, 2011). The expansion of zero-tolerance policies into school discipline policies (e.g., fighting, drugs, and other serious acts of

misbehavior) followed the passage of the Gun-Free Schools Act (Hall & Karanxha, 2012; Smith, 2009).

Schools adopted more security measures and strengthened disciplinary policies to improve campus safety, such as adding police officers, metal detectors, and security cameras (Brady et al., 2007; Lyons & Drew, 2006). Applied to the school setting, the Gun-Free Schools Act and zero tolerance included stricter schoolwide disciplinary consequences for gun possession and other code of conduct and rule violations. However, school districts enforce zero-tolerance policies differently regarding verbal threats, fighting, insubordination, and drug possession (Gregory et al., 2010; Hirschfield, 2008; Wallace et al., 2008).

Sullivan (2011) reported that zero tolerance directly resulted in more school suspensions, expulsions, and arrests in school districts across the nation. Expulsion contributes significantly to the likelihood that students will drop out of high school and enter the school-to-prison pipeline (Ruiz, 2017; Walker, 2012). School absences due to zero-tolerance infractions can lead to students' participation in the juvenile justice system. When students receive a suspension and lack supervision, they are more susceptible to criminal arrest (Kim et al., 2010; Rios, 2011; Wallace et al., 2008). High suspension rates and punitive discipline also contribute to a higher frequency of school dropouts (Gregory et al., 2010).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

The U.S. Congress implemented the NCLB of 2002 to diminish the achievement gaps of disadvantaged students. NCLB (2001) requires that U.S. states meet specific criteria to receive federal funds. Schools must provide standard education to all students, including those with disabilities and youth committed to secure juvenile facilities. NCLB mandates that all youth in public schools, including juvenile justice facilities, participate in statewide assessments (Gagnon

et al., 2009). In the annual yearly progress report (AYP), NCLB states that schools must make publicly available all scores on proficiency tests in reading, math, and science from Grades 3 through 8. NCLB also mandates that traditional and juvenile justice schools employ only highly qualified teachers who have passed state licensing examinations and displayed competency in their subject matter.

Despite being explicitly stated, NCLB (2001) requirements leave room for wide variation across states, thus proving insufficient to change the culture of education within the juvenile justice system. The pressure of meeting all the conditions outlined in the NCLB led some schools to expel students who do positively contribute to the school's proficiency and progress grades (Yell, 2012). Without monitoring and accountability, states continue to provide incarcerated youth in secure juvenile facilities with educational services that do not meet the requirements of federal policies and legislation.

School-to-Prison Pipeline

The school-to-prison pipeline does not have a simple definition; however, the concept refers to the pathway or process created with students removed from school, which often serves as an introduction to the juvenile justice system (Gonsoulin et al., 2012; Monahan et al., 2014). The foundation for the school-to-prison pipeline is public school practices and policies used to address behavioral infractions and violations of school conduct codes. Some argue that policies like zero tolerance and NCLB push students out of public schools (Tuck, 2012).

In response to school shootings in the 1990s and rising juvenile crime rates during the 1980s and early 1990s, secondary schools have opted for a visible police presence (school resource officers; SROs) as a safety measure not commonly practiced before that time (Na & Gottfredson, 2013). In 1999, the U.S. Department of Justice Officer of Community Policing

Services (COPS) initiated the COPS in Schools grant, which provides federal funding for the hiring of SROs. SROs are able to respond to safety concerns deemed fundamental to the teaching and learning process in schools. In the 2013–2014 academic year, 43% of public schools reported having SROs (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017).

Although federal, state, and local school safety policies were not supposed to foster the school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon, they have inadvertently created a correlation between school-based offenses and involvement in the juvenile justice system. Urban schools have adopted and enforced enhanced security measures implemented in response to school shootings in suburban schools (Na & Gottfredson, 2013). The presence of officers in schools has done little for school safety; instead, school arrest rates have increased, indicating the transfer of responsibility between law enforcement and school administration (Counts et al., 2018; Fedders et al., 2013; Hirschfield, 2008). The emphasis placed on school safety subsequently led more youth out of school and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems (Fabelo et al., 2011; McNeal, 2016).

The presence of SROs on campus means students come in contact with law enforcement at a younger age (Evangelist et al., 2017; Hirschfield, 2008; Owens, 2017). SROs learn about all crimes occurring on campus, increasing the likelihood of student arrests for minor disciplinary infractions (Owens, 2017). The decision to arrest a student follows from the need to maintain social order and promote conformity within schools. The criminalization of students' behavior within urban schools promotes involvement with the juvenile justice system; in turn, students who attend suburban schools might receive only school discipline for the same infractions (Hirschfield, 2008).

Disparities within school discipline practices have received significant research. The literature shows that minority students receive harsher disciplinary sanctions than their majority race counterparts (Hirschfield, 2008). Desai and Abeita (2017) found that schools often believe in the honest intentions of White students who engage in negative behaviors and activities, while at the same time criminalizing Black students' actions. Instead of utilizing resources within the school or finding effective ways to address students' misbehavior, school administrators might prematurely decide to involve law enforcement, charging urban students with crimes (Evangelist et al., 2017; Hirschfield, 2008; Owens, 2017).

Teachers' implicit biases and experiences influence how they think, teach, and interact with minority students. Negative perceptions of minority students, implicit biases, and discrimination affects the practices of teachers and administrators when responding to misbehavior. Many teachers have adapted "colorblindness" when interacting with Black male students (Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Carey et al., 2018). The teacher-student relationship is critical for Black students; the relationship cultivated can influence discipline referrals (Shirley & Cornell, 2011). An intersection between race, gender, and teachers' social and cultural positions emerges when considering factors that influence educational outcomes for Black students, especially males. Studies indicate that bias at the teacher level, not the administrative level, significantly impacts the disproportionality of school discipline referrals (Skiba et al., 2002, 2011). However, school administrators determine the appropriate consequences for school misbehavior. Notably, administrators refer minor school-based offenses they used to handle (e.g., fighting, disorderly conduct, destruction of property, insubordination) to the juvenile justice system with increasing frequency (Desai & Abeita, 2017; Evangelist et al., 2017; Henning, 2013).

Aspects of a school's climate can perpetuate the school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon. According to Carey et al. (2018), a power struggle emerges between educators who belong to the dominant group and students who belong to the nondominant group. Teachers view educational instruction through their dominant lens. For example, the lack of cultural diversity in lesson plans contributes to disengagement by minority students in the classroom (Osher et al., 2012). More specifically, the perception of Black boys as more defiant and disruptive than other student groups influences disciplinary practices (Dancy, 2014; Newcomb et al., 2002). White female teachers can view Black male students as threatening, thus justifying the criminalization of these students' behaviors (Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Carey et al., 2018). The cultural conflict between teachers and students can cause teachers to misinterpret minority students' communication styles and forms of engagement as threatening to their authority and classroom control (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Gregory et al., 2010).

The pipeline begins when teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors behave in ways that exclude minority students rather than include them. The student's offense might be minor and more subjectively viewed, granting teachers and school administrators the freedom to use discretion (Fedders et al., 2013; Hirschfield, 2008; Skiba et al., 2014). Instead, school personnel deem students' actions as so malicious that school disciplinary actions are no longer appropriate, thus determining the best form of discipline to be suspension or expulsion from the academic learning environment.

An understanding of the tools needed to build healthy, trustworthy, and consistent relationships is necessary due to minority students being at greater risk for suspensions and expulsions, a key component of the school-to-prison pipeline (Fabelo et al., 2011; Gregory & Weinstein, 2007). According to the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2014),

2.7 million public school students received one or more out-of-school suspensions between 2015 and 2016. Ultimately, no universal application of the rules and regulations, policies, and procedures is available. There is a variation between how different groups of students perceive school rules and enforcement. Kupchik and Ellis (2008), for example, found that students in schools without SROs have higher perceptions of fairness regarding school rules than do those in schools with SROs. Some studies have also shown that more Black and Hispanic students than White perceive their schools' rules, and the enforcement of those rules, as less fair (Bracy, 2011; Kupchik & Ellis, 2008).

Perpetuating the school-to-prison pipeline are four factors: racial disparities, poor learning conditions, family-school disparities, and failure to build the social and emotional capacity of youth (Osher et al., 2012). To lessen the impact of these factors, Osher et al. (2012) suggested establishing effective programs that enhance the professional capacity of educators. Schools should identify key facets of teachers' morale, skills, and experiences to develop positive teacher-student relationships, providing high-quality professional development, utilizing educators' specialized skills, and creating a supportive environment. Too often, school administrators and instructors fail to recognize, accept, and act on the roles they play in the school-to-prison pipeline (Osher et al., 2012). The dismantling of the school-to-prison pipeline requires the commitment of positive support and accountability of all parties involved. Implementing alternatives to suspension would provide students with opportunities to develop transferable skills and change the trajectory of their futures. Since the mid-2000s, stakeholders have begun to implement school-based restorative justice practices as a way to influence the educational climate and reshape the way school administrators and rule-makers view policy and practices (González et al., 2019).

Disproportionality and Juvenile Justice Involvement

Ways of enforcing school policies have varied effects on different student populations (Carter et al., 2014; Cavendish, 2014; Latimore et al., 2018; Skiba & Losen, 2016). Schools' adoption of zero-tolerance policies has contributed to the increase in juvenile incarceration (Mazzotti & Higgins, 2006; Skiba & Losen, 2016). A disproportionate number of minority students and students with disabilities are involved in the juvenile justice system (Carter et al., 2014; Cavendish, 2014; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Although the routes to incarceration vary, the relationship between school discipline and juvenile incarceration is clear.

Minority Students

Researchers suggest that racial disparities exist within the judicial and educational system (Bishop & Leiber, 2011; Bishop, Leiber, & Johnson, 2010). Racial disparities increase as school disciplinary sanctions become more punitive, primarily affecting Black and Hispanic students (Carter et al., 2014; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; Rios, 2011; Wallace et al., 2008; Welch & Payne, 2010). Latimore et al. (2018) explored the relationship between school-based extracurricular activities, misbehavior, and school discipline. Findings showed that male students were more likely to misbehave than female students, (b) Black and Asian students were less likely to misbehave than their White counterparts, and (c) multicultural students misbehaved at school more than White students. Despite this discovery, the application of school-based disciplinary enforcement for misbehavior is inconsistent. Black students were up to two times more likely to receive school-based discipline than their White and Asian peers (Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Carter et al., 2014). Finn and Servoss (2014) conducted a national survey of 10th graders to examine security measures, suspension rates, and student misbehavior in U.S. high schools,

finding Black and Hispanic students suspended at higher rates than non-Hispanic White students for the same misconduct. Finn and Servoss also found that schools with higher levels of campus security had increased suspension rates, especially in urban areas.

The current structure of the education system contributes to funneling a disproportionate number of Black male students through the school-to-prison pipeline, negatively impacting their academic success and overall quality of life. The constant policing of Black male students and the criminalization of their behaviors often find them mistreated, inadequately educated, and disproportionately referred to the juvenile justice system (Dancy, 2014; Desai & Abeita, 2017). Evangelist et al. (2017) connected the preconceived notions surrounding Black masculinity and Black male students' involvement in the school-to-prison pipeline with the criminalization of Black men during Reconstruction in the South. Distorted and criminalized, Black masculinity is often associated with negative labels, stereotypes, and marginalization (Allen & White-Smith, 2014), specifically Black male students attending public schools. The misunderstanding and misrepresentation of Black masculinity and the behaviors and mannerisms of Black male students continue to place youth at an academic disadvantage.

The disproportionate number of suspended and expelled Black boys coincides with the passage of zero-tolerance policies in the early 1990s (Petras et al., 2011). Schools often suspended students for violating school policies or rules and expelled them for major rule infractions (Fedders, 2018). The stigmatization of young minority boys can account for the disparity in suspension and expulsion rates, leading to involvement in the criminal justice system (Dancy, 2014; Rios, 2011; Wallace et al., 2008). As Skiba et al. (2014) noted, gender was a significant predictor of the likelihood of out-of-school suspension or expulsion, which deemed

boys more frequent offenders than girls. The type of play, modes of expression, and cultural interactions that Black boys have with one another might seem threatening (Dancy, 2014).

In a study conducted by Wallace et al. (2008), descriptive statistics showed approximately 56% of Black boys having been suspended or expelled compared to 19% to 43% of boys in other racial groups. Carey et al. (2018) put into perspective the reality of the school-to-prison pipeline for Black males, stating that "students adopting intersecting traits from non-dominant groups often receive disapproval if they resist upholding the behaviors valued and reinforced in schools" (p. 113). Failure to adopt and conform frequently results in the categorization of defiance, creating a pathway to suspension, expulsion, and involvement in the school-to-prison pipeline. Ultimately, Black boys found themselves pushed out of the education system and into the criminal justice system (Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Dancy, 2014).

The school-to-prison pipeline was a result of the tough-on-crime movement. Interpreting and modifying policies implemented to minimize school violence and guns on campus was crucial to meet the needs of the schools when addressing behaviors that did not endanger the school or students (Skiba, 2013; Wallace et al., 2008). For example, insubordination and tardiness, as well as other low-impact offenses, became violations of school safety (Wallace et al., 2008).

Judicial Involvement and Legislation

In response to the overrepresentation of minority youth in the juvenile justice system, the U.S. Department of Justice created the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1974); in 1988, Congress passed an amendment to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974. Despite longstanding federal legislation, young Black males remain overrepresented in juvenile judicial proceedings (Donnelly, 2017). Teachers, counselors, and

school administrators cite federal law to justify limiting access to equal educational opportunities for male students of color, committing them to a perpetual cycle of incarceration and extended educational achievement gaps. Furthermore, public schools across the nation are transferring the responsibility of disciplining and educating "at-risk" and "misbehaving" children, especially Black male students, to the juvenile justice system. Despite numerous pieces of legislation put in place to reduce inequality, young Black boys continue to tell narratives that entail forms of oppression (Desai & Abeita, 2017).

Another essential consideration is the bias that permeates the juvenile justice system and process. Studies have confirmed that Black youth are disadvantaged when it comes to formal adjudication (Evangelist et al., 2017; Fite et al., 2009). More specifically, Fite et al. (2009) concluded that Black boys were significantly more likely to be arrested as were juveniles than White youths regardless of the charge. Conduct problems emerged as a consistent predictor of future arrests. The overrepresentation of Black students who enter the adult criminal justice system has its roots in the school-to-prison pipeline (Rocque, 2010; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Welch & Payne, 2010).

In considering the type of placement for youthful offenders, Fader et al. (2014) found disparities in the types of residential facilities to which youth received referrals. According to focal theory, judges balance three key concepts in making sentencing decisions (Bishop et al., 2010). The first is the assessment of the defendant's blameworthiness to ensure the punishment fits the crime. A second concern is community protection, which requires judges to determine the likelihood of the individual reoffending. The third concept addresses the practical concerns of the sentencing decision. Under these guidelines, judges can view juveniles in terms of their maturity, subsequently recommending therapeutic or educational settings or juvenile justice correctional

facilities (Fader et al., 2014). Examining commitment facilities, Fader et al. found 57% of White youth placed in therapeutic facilities and 45% and 38% of Black and Hispanic youth, respectively, referred to residential facilities. Fader et al. also showed 47% of female youth offenders committed to therapeutic facilities compared to 25% of male youth offenders. Criminal histories of juvenile offenders were also a factor when determining placement facilities. Youth who have extensive criminal histories, are under the supervision of the juvenile probation office, and have prior out-of-home placement often receive sentences of longer confinement.

Students With Learning Disabilities

In addition to minority students, students with disabilities are disproportionately represented in the school-to-prison pipeline. It is not uncommon for students classified with a learning disability or emotional disturbance to be under the confinement of a juvenile justice correctional facility (Gagnon et al., 2009; Quinn et al., 2005). Congressional legislation in the form of the IDEA and the NCLB were means to prevent school districts from discriminating against students and decreasing the exclusion of students with behavioral and learning disabilities from public schools (Twomey, 2008; Yell, 2012). However, school disciplinary practices continue to override these crucial pieces of educational legislation to protect students' rights (Carter et al., 2014; Mallett, 2017).

Mallett (2014) identified an intersection between school failure, susceptibility, and differential treatment for students with learning disabilities. In a case study to investigate the "learning disability to detention" pipeline, Mallett found that students of color have often received harsher punishments for misbehavior than their White counterparts. Students with disabilities find themselves adjudicated at a younger age than their nondisabled peers, approximately 10 months earlier, which has led to higher rates of recidivism and longer periods

of detention (Mallett, 2014). Practices to move these students out of supportive and equipped learning environments disrupt academic instructional attainment and decrease academic performance (Finn & Servoss, 2014; Geib et al., 2011; Hogan et al., 2010). In addition, fewer students classified with learning and emotional disabilities obtain a high school diploma (Hjalmarsson, 2008).

Education in Juvenile Justice Facilities

The equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects incarcerated youths' educational rights. Section 504 of the Rehabilitative Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794) also provides incarcerated juveniles the right to free and appropriate public education (Langelett & Zenz, 2004). However, despite legislation to ensure that students receive a quality education, many of these policies have failed.

Federal legislation grants equal access to education to all students no matter their residence, yet youthful offenders receiving educational services within the juvenile justice system often experience inadequate instructional and educational opportunities (Geib et al., 2011; Macomber et al., 2010). Once young offenders enter the system, there is often little emphasis on providing an adequate education (Morrison & Epps, 2002). Juvenile detention centers and long-term residential facilities are responsible for teaching the most at-risk student population with fewer resources than many of the traditional schools (Gagnon et al., 2009; Geib et al., 2011). The quality of educational services provided (e.g., course offerings, vocational training opportunities, and post release transition learning) directly links to whether the juvenile facility is public or private.

A debate exists between public school and juvenile justice officials regarding which organization is responsible for educating incarcerated students. Common practice calls for public

school districts to assume responsibility for providing educational services to incarcerated youth. Regardless, Morrison and Epps (2002) found the quality of education provided to youth offenders is below "fair and equal," and educational gains while in the custody of the courts are minimal or often nonexistent.

Youth in the juvenile justice system have limited access to educational resources and technology (Leone & Wruble, 2015; Macomber et al., 2010). Textbooks are outdated, teachers are not adequately qualified to teach in those environments, and the delay in record-sharing makes it difficult to establish students' educational needs. Geib et al. (2011) documented that juvenile justice correctional facilities lack the instrumental necessities to run an effective education department. These deficiencies include:

> (1) juvenile justice systems are characterized by frequent transitions of youth between facilities; (2) a lack of professional expertise, training, and experience in the employees of the juvenile justice system needed to meet the needs of youth with disabilities; (3) inappropriate or semiappropriate facilities for educational purposes that need to be renovated and modernized technologically; (4) the lack of a system for tracking and transferring school credit within and between juvenile justice institutions and school districts; (5) a lack of remedial services designed to close gaps in the youth's education; (6) a lack of understanding concerning the role and importance of educational remediation for subsequent lowering of recidivism; (7) a lack of collaborative and cooperative relationships between educational and correctional staff (8) a lack of tradition to correlate operation (e.g., maintenance) and program (e.g., educational programs) costs; (9) limited, if any, links between school districts and juvenile facilities and/or programs; (10) a lack of providing opportunities for transition back into communities and aftercare;

and (11) a lack of definitions and standards for compliance with educational stipulations of federal regulation.. (Geib et al., 2011, p. 5)

Arnette (2000) asserted that "educational services provided to juvenile offenders, both within juvenile correctional facilities and outside community schools, must reflect current educational philosophy, curriculum content development and instructional techniques" (p. 15). The long-term consequences of inappropriate teaching practices include students' disengagement in learning, poor regulation skills, inadequate cognitive processing abilities, and decreased motivation (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011; Pekrun et al., 2002; Yair, 2000). Incarceration during adolescence is associated with lower educational attainment and decreased future earnings (Hjalmarsson, 2008).

Another factor to examine is the relationship between the school and the juvenile justice correctional facility. The school's objective is to provide educational services for incarcerated youth, despite the documented challenges. Safety and security are priorities in juvenile justice facilities, necessitating that schools housed within the facilities follow the same guidelines. Missing from juvenile justice educational programs is the component of accountability. Ongoing evaluation for the services provided to students in the care of juvenile justice correctional facilities is critical to ensuring students receive a quality education (Mathur & Schoenfeld, 2010). In the 1980s, the U.S. Justice Department began to take legal action against state and local governments for failing to ensure incarcerated juveniles received adequate and appropriate medical, mental health, transition, and educational services (Houchins et al., 2009). In Florida from 1998 to 2010, the Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program monitored juvenile justice facilities offering educational services. The primary goal of the program was to ensure that students in juvenile justice educational programs received high-quality educational services

that would prepare them to transition and return to school, work, and home. A review team examined program documents and conducted interviews with staff and youth to determine if the program adhered to the requirements set forth by the Florida Department of Education, as well as state and federal legislative policies, rules, and regulations. Each juvenile justice program evaluated received a quality assurance rating.

Students with learning disabilities are at a disadvantage when they receive instruction in juvenile justice facilities. Under the IDEA (2004), all eligible students who have not received a high school diploma are entitled to continuous special educational services until 22 years of age, including both detained and incarcerated youth in alternative placement and juvenile justice programs (Geib et al., 2011). The purpose of the IDEA is to provide educational services and protect the rights of students with intellectual, emotional, and language disabilities. However, students with individual education plans (IEPs) are more frequently referred to the criminal justice system than are students without a documented disability. There is also a disproportionate number of youth with disabilities in juvenile correctional facilities (Tulman & Weck, 2010; Young et al., 2010), and 20% to 90% of incarcerated juveniles have emotional, learning, or behavioral disabilities (Cavendish, 2014). Two out of three students who enter a correctional facility are those identified with disabilities who received special education services prior to incarceration (Soliz & Cutter, 2001).

Black boys comprise 50% of the special education population (Moore et al., 2008). However, Black males' presence in special education classrooms is often due to cultural differences, academic misidentifications, and labeling (Moore et al., 2008). Accordingly, providing mandatory special education accommodations for these youth has proven to be a difficult task. Rarely are services directed by federal educational laws offered to students while

incarcerated (Morrison & Epps, 2002; Twomey, 2008). Historically, juvenile justice correctional facilities fail to provide incarcerated youth with the accommodations, modifications, and services as outlined in the IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Twomey, 2008). In 2009, the National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice saw 44 documented class-action lawsuits against correctional facilities (juvenile and adult) for failing to provide adequate special education services (as cited in Gagnon et al., 2009).

The structure of educational services within juvenile justice facilities presents obstacles to providing services to all students, especially those with IEPs. Proper educational assessments are rare once youth enter the juvenile justice system; compounding the problem is that the facilities' access to these students' IEPs might be delayed or absent (Koyama, 2012; Macomber et al., 2010; Sheridan & Steele-Dadzie, 2005; Tulman & Weck, 2010). School officials within juvenile justice facilities might neglect to provide students with individualized instruction from qualified teachers. In some states, juvenile justice facilities are not part of the public school system, which inevitably makes sharing information difficult. The delay in record-sharing between a student's home school and educational staff within the juvenile justice facility leaves these students unserved (Ochoa & Eckes, 2005). In a study based in Connecticut, a large number of teachers who worked in state juvenile justice facilities reported that documents did not arrive on time, "prohibiting the efficient use of the information during a detainee's stay" (Macomber et al., 2010). The delay in record-sharing creates challenges for teachers, especially when attempting to determine the best type of instruction for a student with special needs.

Despite national efforts (e.g., NCLB [2001] and other federal legislation), many students in juvenile detention centers and residential facilities fall behind academically. States are making only minimal progress toward the full implementation of NCLB (2001) requirements in the

juvenile detention context. According to Cavendish (2014), juvenile justice-involved youth (a disproportionate number of them with disabilities) are at high risk for adverse school and postschool outcomes. Special education services for incarcerated students with disabilities are lacking. Perhaps not surprisingly, students with disabilities are twice as likely to drop out of school (Hogan et al., 2010). Providing effective services and supports to students with disabilities has proven beneficial in reentry success (Clark et al., 2011). Without the opportunity for quality education, students with disabilities remain outside of the margin and inside of a cycle that perpetuates the school-to-prison pipeline (Caldwell & Curtis, 2013).

Instructional Staff and the Learning Environment

The learning environment for students in any academic institution depends upon the knowledge, experiences, and approach of the teacher. Teachers who work in juvenile justice facilities are responsible for educating some of the most complex and challenging students in any academic setting (Houchins et al., 2004). Recent findings indicate that teachers are not always prepared to teach in a confined alternative learning environment (Houchins et al., 2009, 2012; Wright, 2005). Higher education programs prepare teachers to work in traditional learning environments, often with no training in alternative learning environments. As Price et al. (2010) noted, “There are no programs nationwide that train leaders to lead in correctional education or alternative schools” (p. 300). Future educational professionals can benefit from participating in an internship experience that exposes them to alternative academic settings. Possessing a holistic understanding of education, to include traditional and nontraditional learning environments, could influence future instructional practices.

As many of the teachers responsible for educating such a disfranchised group of students are not experienced special educators, they possess insufficient knowledge about special

education processes and requirements (Houchins et al., 2012). Also, teachers often have inadequate knowledge of IDEA and NCLB Act requirements (Gagnon et al., 2009). Professional development opportunities are available for educators to adhere to federal regulations; however, a majority of teachers in Grossman and Hirsch's (2009) study reported that the information presented was neither beneficial nor relevant to their teaching assignment. In Connecticut, teachers said that much of their training in special education and working with children with disabilities came from a combination of university credits and attendance at teacher workshops (Macomber et al., 2010). Of the 48 teachers interviewed, 54% worked in alternative educational settings, including juvenile justice alternative programs (Macomber et al., 2010).

In a national survey that examined educational practices of detained youth, teachers identified a lack of resources, classes with students of different grade levels, and low student engagement as challenges in providing students with the best education possible (Koyama, 2012). Some educators view teaching youth in juvenile corrections as "just another program," which accounts for low morale and decreased engagement (Macomber et al., 2010). Job satisfaction among teachers within the juvenile justice system is imperative to their retention. Additionally, educators within these settings have expressed concerns regarding the lack of support from school administrations (Houchins et al., 2009, 2010). Due to the unique nature of these nontraditional learning environments, a different set of skills, training, competencies, and mindsets is necessary to produce the most successful learning environment for students (Price et al., 2010).

Juvenile Recidivism

Youthful offenders who enter the juvenile justice system have a high probability of reoffending and advancing to the adult criminal justice system, with approximately 70% to 80%

of juvenile offenders reoffending within 3 years (Feierman et al., 2009; Kirk & Sampson, 2013; Rodríguez, 2017). Youth who exit juvenile justice correctional facilities encounter significant social, emotional, and educational challenges. A series of individual and environmental risk factors correlate with the prediction of continued engagement in criminal behavior for adjudicated youth to include age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, academic enrollment and achievement, disability, social interactions, and criminal history (Barnert et al., 2015; Becker et al., 2012; Mulder et al., 2011). Understanding the impact of these risk factors can be influential on future change in programming and policies to disrupt further involvement in the juvenile justice system. Risk identification will also allow the juvenile justice and school systems to remain informed and proactive in identifying risk factors, reevaluating them and offering strategies and resources to lessen their impact.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention created the Intensive Aftercare Program as a nationwide endeavor; regrettably, the varying application of the program has done little to reduce recidivism (Abrams & Snyder, 2010). The model emphasized individualized treatment during the incarceration phase, a structured transition phase, and supportive community resources in aftercare (Abrams & Snyder, 2010; Justice Policy Institute, 2009). Through the process of evaluation, the Intensive Aftercare Program positively impacted program completion rates but did not have a significant impact on youth recidivism (Abrams et al., 2008).

Continued enforcement of zero tolerance, NCLB, and strict school safety and discipline policies produced higher rates of disciplinary infractions and involvement in criminal behavior among youth. Rios (2011) noted that the overpolicing and monitoring of adjudicated youth's activities and behaviors led to an increase in more serious offenses; often, the behaviors are a

response to an unjust society and emulation of those around them. Outside of school, youth make poor decisions and continue to engage in criminal activities, despite knowing that their decisions, relationships, and neighborhoods are barriers to successful community reintegration and paths back to the juvenile justice system (Unruh et al., 2009). Many youth live in neighborhoods that promote crime. Out-of-school suspensions and expulsions give them more time in those neighborhoods, where they act on the social pressures of their peers to fight, steal, engage in gang activity, and carry and sell drugs (Hirschfield, 2018; Unruh et al., 2009). The continued path of criminality jeopardizes stable employment, career, education, and living attainment as adults (Abrams & Snyder, 2010; Unruh et al., 2009). Individuals who entered the juvenile justice system as adolescents often find exiting as adults to be stressful.

Transition Services

The return to the community and public school can be overwhelming for incarcerated youth. On a national level, there is no standard transition curriculum; rather, the development of transition programming is at the discretion of juvenile justice facilities. To ease the transition process, U.S. courts set requirements for students as they begin the reentry process. Effective planning is likely the first level of protection against recidivism (McCamey, 2010); therefore, it is imperative for juvenile justice transition personnel to help students address their needs and prepare to pursue greater opportunities. Transitional programming for incarcerated youth is an essential component to readying them for the return to their schools and communities, as well as for reducing recidivism rates. With planning, these students can envision themselves back in their communities and begin to identify possible challenges and services available to them.

Systematic problems significantly affect the development of effective juvenile justice transition programming. Platt et al. (2015) conducted a study to examine program and

professional development challenges to provide effective juvenile justice transition services. The researchers grouped challenges into three categories: issues in juvenile justice transition, challenges to teacher training and professional development, and challenges to the creation of preservice and professional development programs for juvenile justice educators. Based on their research, Platt et al. determined the complexity in meeting the needs of all students requires a collaborative effort between juvenile justice personnel and community services partnerships.

Clinkinbeard and Zohra (2012) found that youth grapple with expectations and fears of returning to society. More specifically, youth often wrestle with the labels placed on them, unhealthy living environments, relationships with friends, reoffending, and fulfilling the conditions of their probation. Cuevas et al. (2017) examined whether juvenile offenders' beliefs in their abilities to live a prosocial life predict conventional aspirations for the future. They also assessed the joint effects of self-efficacy and prosocial aspirations on the length of stay in residential placements and recidivism among a sample of delinquent youth. Cuevas et al. found that youth with higher prosocial self-efficacy reported having greater prosocial aspirations for their futures. Self-efficacy and goals are also adversely related to lengths of stay in residential placement and subsequent delinquent behavior. Thus, helping students to acquire these skills could be beneficial to the youth's transition. Future juvenile justice interventions should target youths' attitudes and beliefs related to prosocial identity (Cuevas et al., 2017).

The barriers facing previously incarcerated youth do not always receive consideration; therefore, equipping these individuals with strategies for effective reentry is imperative to success within their communities and schools (Clinkinbeard & Zohra, 2012). Risler and O'Rourke (2009) suggested that students begin the transition process 60 days before release. In general, this amount of time allows for the finalization of school placement and community

resources. All transition personnel should meet to discuss an individualized plan for success, which encompasses activities in which the student can engage to prepare for a smooth transition. Among these activities, juvenile justice transition professionals should schedule a school visit before a student makes the final transition (Sheldon-Sherman, 2010). Taking this approach could help to decrease students' apprehension, thus cultivating a positive relationship. Ochoa (2016) suggested developing student portfolios throughout the individual's stay in a juvenile justice facility, starting with the first day of confinement. Once complete, students should have copies of educational and vocational certificates, examples of work, a resume, and a directory of community service providers. Ultimately, the portfolio serves as a tool to communicate relevant information about what the student has accomplished during confinement.

Barriers to School Reentry for Adjudicated Youth

The reentry process for adjudicated youth is complex and multidimensional. Tran (2017) noted that reentry can be overwhelming due to youthful offenders' long periods of school absence, academic readiness, mental health management, and social competence. There is no federal policy that addresses school reentry for youthful offenders involved in the juvenile justice system (Pace, 2018). The same educational policies that may have introduced youth to the juvenile justice system through the school-to-prison pipeline are the same policies that impede students' reentry process. Zero tolerance and the NCLB (2001) have created an unsettled cycle of disenfranchisement in the attainment of access and equitable education for youth involved in the juvenile justice system. School administrators and teachers still adhere to the mandates set by these policies, even in the face of ramifications.

States have the autonomy to address school reentry. In 2012, the U.S. Department of Education issued a reentry model, providing voluntary guidelines to help states decrease the

school dropout rate and improve reentry transitions (Pace, 2018; Tolbert & Foster, 2016). In line with these guidelines, Texas has worked to ensure that students seeking to reentry a traditional public school have access to the appropriate resources and supports (Texas Juvenile Justice Department, 2018). Studies show that adjudicated youth face significant social and academic barriers to successful reintegration into a traditional academic environment (Abrams & Snyder, 2010; Nellis & Hooks Wayman, 2009). Disciplinary practices and policies and the federal legislation that pushes students out of school have received extensive research in the fields of juvenile justice and education. The school is not so much a route to avoid incarceration, but a path that could lead directly to it. Upon release from juvenile justice facilities, adjudicated youth struggle to reenter their schools (Hirschfield, 2014). Little is known about the intersection created by the challenges adjudicated youth face within the school after reentry, the support systems put in place by the school administration, and how closely the student is on track to graduate with a traditional high school diploma.

Continued educational engagement is a core aspect of rehabilitation for incarcerated youth, a means to decreased recidivism rates and juvenile reintegration as productive members of society (Houchins et al., 2012; Katsiyannis et al., 2008). Additionally, the development of a customized, individualized plan for reentry services is necessary for each returning youth offender with a disability (Unruh et al., 2009); however, there are no policies mandating the creation of a reentry plan for students without disabilities. Thus, barriers continue to hinder the successful reintegration of youthful offenders into traditional academic settings.

Effects of Confinement on Student Development

The effects of incarceration can be overwhelming for juveniles. Many youth offenders entered juvenile justice facilities with an assortment of emotional, behavioral, and academic

challenges (Harder et al., 2014). Some students may have been open to the treatments and supports, whereas others did not have access (Abrams & Aguilar, 2005; Anthony et al., 2010; Koyama, 2012). Youth offenders return to their schools with academic difficulties that have often worsened, and the lack of effective communication and processes between juvenile correctional facilities and schools can create trouble with reenrollment and the procurement of educational records, behavioral assessments, transitional plans, and other necessary information (Gagnon et al., 2009; Hirschfield, 2014). While in the custody of the juvenile justice system, youthful offenders often receive inadequate educational services, which expands the academic achievement gap for these students (Morrison & Epps, 2002).

Rehabilitation and social services should assist students in addressing the behaviors that led to their incarceration, providing tools and strategies to respond to social and emotional problems. However, juvenile justice facilities might not always offer these resources and supports (Abrams & Aguilar, 2005). Incarceration impedes young offenders' social and emotional development. The academic and social needs of students in the juvenile justice system differ from their peers in public schools, with the former requiring consistent structure and reinforcement to perform well and meet their goals.

For some students, confinement was a time of rediscovery and opportunity to self-reflect. Abrams and Hyun (2009) found that confined youth who participated in treatment often analyzed who they were or practiced "selective acceptance"; others practiced manipulation and did not change at all. Additionally, Harder et al. (2014) noted that students possessing an "average intelligence level, good academic motivation, and/or relatively few externalizing behavioral problems" (p. 263) had better academic achievement than students lacking those traits. Still,

youth are better equipped to navigate reentry when personnel from all agencies work cohesively to improve overall outcomes for students.

Interagency Collaboration

Continuous collaboration among child welfare, juvenile justice, and education systems is imperative. However, misinterpretation of legislation has interfered with agencies' ability to share information. The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 mandates the confidentiality of juvenile educational records to protect children from unauthorized disclosure. Delays in the transfer of school records create a gap in administering the critical assessment of students' needs upon enrollment. Much of the youths' reentry success is dependent upon the effectiveness of the services provided by these agencies. Due to a lack of timely and adequate services, students struggle with reentering their communities and public schools. Sharing the responsibility to improve the educational success and overall well-being of the system-involved youth increases positive outcomes (Gonsoulin & Read, 2011). Essentially, each agency provides a unique selection of services that improves a students' productivity, aids with emotional issues and anger management, provides educational and career advising, assists in obtaining employment, and meets the requirements set by the court. Unfortunately, there is a breakdown in communication that alters the number and extent of the services provided. As agencies begin to address gaps in these services, youthful offenders and juvenile justice advocates should see an increase in productivity and a decrease in recidivism. Collaboration has the potential to stop the cycle of crime and to create an avenue for redirection and achievement.

The School Environment

The academic environment that adjudicated youth enter upon their release is fraught with judgment and labeling (Barnert et al., 2015; Rios, 2011). Simply being involved in the juvenile

justice system can keep this marginalized population of students in a cycle that disrupts their academic and personal growth. The culture of punishment and climate fostered on campus impacts how those returning students perceive their welcome (Rios, 2011). Scholars have not examined the importance of school culture and climate through the perspectives of adjudicated youth reentering public schools. Literature is unavailable on school climate and practices related to issues of misbehavior, suspension, and school disciplinary actions (Bottiani et al., 2017; Triplett et al., 2014). Academic success, or the lack thereof, has a connection to the aforementioned factors and, subsequently, juvenile justice involvement (Christle et al., 2005; Skiba et al., 2014)

In *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the Supreme Court stated, "It is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity to an education" (p. 2). Accordingly, reintegration into public schools for youth in the juvenile justice system is essential for them to become productive, contributing members of society. However, these students consistently face resistance when seeking reentry into educational institutions. The dynamics of the reentry process for adjudicated youth in the current scholarship stem from the adult perspective, yet the published accounts of youth amid their reentry process are few. School officials, juvenile justice personnel, and social workers have shared their perspectives on the barriers and challenges to reentry for adjudicated youth for decades; however, overwhelmingly, students' stories are missing.

Sinclair et al. (2017) conducted a mixed-methods study to assess the perceptions of school personnel across the United States on available transition services, school climate, self-efficacy, barriers faced during reentry, and supportive strategies. One purpose of the study was to understand school personnel's perceptions of youth with disabilities returning from the juvenile

justice system. Additionally, Sinclair et al. sought to discover the level of implementation of transition services for youth with disabilities returning from the juvenile justice system, and to determine the school environment's support for school personnel helping youth returning to high school from the juvenile justice system. In addition, the authors wanted to examine the barriers to supporting youth returning from the juvenile justice system, as well as available strategies to overcome those barriers. Two hundred and eighty-three study participants responded to 124 survey items on students achieving a specified outcome using a 4-point, Likert-type scale ranging from 1= *highly likely* to 4 = *not likely* and a 4-point, Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *has no impact* to 4 = *has major impact.* Upon analysis of the data, Sinclair et al. found diverse perceptions related to juvenile offenders' skills, behaviors, academic performance, and future achievements. Whereas 6.1 % of the responses indicated youth were *highly likely* to stay out of trouble with the law, 97.9% of the respondents perceived "consistent housing" to be a moderate to major contributing factor to future student success. In response to open-ended questions, study participants listed lack of family involvement, lack of family support, communication between agencies, information sharing, and transition services as barriers for successful reentry.

In all of the literature examined, only one study focused on school culture and reentry. Cole and Cohen (2013) discussed aspects of school culture that influenced juveniles' reentry process and provided insight into the ways schools might be able to reorganize and help these students be successful. Cole and Cohen administered a survey to 31 individuals employed at a southern U.S. state's county juvenile justice detention center holding various levels of responsibility and involvement with students at the center. The authors sought to discover what juvenile justice personnel perceive as the barriers to school reentry for students in detention centers. More importantly, understanding how those barriers affect the students was significant

in offering sound recommendations to schools. Cole and Cohen also examined how juvenile justice personnel perceived their roles and responsibilities for facilitating school reentry.

Analysis of the data indicated three main themes: school leadership concerns, regressive labeling and stigmatization, and access to information (Cole & Cohen, 2013). The findings not only provided specific answers to the research questions but also gave insight into how personnel viewed their role. The authors concluded that one of the most significant barriers to successful reentry into a traditional school is the lack of communication and information-sharing between schools and the juvenile justice system. Cole and Cohen also discovered that juvenile justice personnel were quick to emphasize the procedural and policy shortcomings of the reentry process; however, many neglected to discuss their roles and responsibilities in combating the barriers. Further research investigating structural issues, internal barriers, and school and juvenile justice policies and practices that impede successful reentry is needed to address the significant long-term effects of these barriers.

Cole and Cohen (2013) cited the attitudes of school officials regarding adjudicated youth as the most important factor impacting successful school reentry. School administrators are reluctant to admit formerly incarcerated youth back into schools. Much of their apprehension originates from perceptions regarding students' previous behaviors and reputations. The students' self-esteem, self-efficacy, social skills, and motivation to achieve academic success are diminished by the labels placed on them and their past behaviors (Hamilton et al., 2007). Students often deliver on others' prejudices and expectations, which can ultimately affect academic and life outcomes (Dancy, 2014; Gregory et al., 2010). Students sometimes receive encouragement to drop out of school or enroll in an alternative school due to the stereotyping and

discrimination that accompany labeling (Kirk & Sampson, 2011; Rios, 2011). Navigating school bias and culture insensitivity is essential to achieve effective school reentry.

Inferior Alternative School Settings

Creating an academic learning environment that allows students to thrive and succeed despite stifling situations is critical to closing the achievement gap between adjudicated youth and students not involved in the juvenile justice system. Instead of cultivating an environment where policies and structures support these students, school administrators refer formerly incarcerated youth to alternative learning environments (Pace, 2018). These institutions reinforce the critical message that misbehavior is not tolerated and second chances are not equally distributed. Despite their primary purpose, alternative schools are merely warehouses segregating students from their peers (Morrison & Epps, 2002); accordingly, alternative schools continue to perpetuate the stereotypes and labels closely associated with students involved in the juvenile justice system. These schools represent a directed path to education for students expelled from traditional school due to school disciplinary infractions or adjudication of a crime. The quality of education for these students should be the same as they would receive at a traditional school; however, alternative schools face a lack of qualified teachers, high teacher turnover rates, and insufficient resources (McGregor et al., 2015).

The verbiage “separate, but equal” reappears in the structure of alternative education programs. Some schools have proven that a student’s past association with the juvenile justice system makes them undesirable in a public school. Feierman et al. (2009) stated that “often school districts are quick to deny reentry to the home school or suggest that the student withdraws from school, or suggest alternative placement when their incarceration is over” (p. 1124). Hirschfield (2014) found reentry into a traditional school may not be the best option for

some adjudicated youth. In turn, alternative education programs annually provide services for over a half-million students who struggle with academic and behavioral issues (Fedders, 2018). The population comprises a disproportionate number of Black males and students with disabilities (Fedders, 2018; Walker, 2014).

Numerous students in alternative programs have been victims of the school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon. For many, the structure of alternative schools resembles that of the juvenile justice correctional system. These two educational institutions have similar foundations of inadequate, restrictive, ineffective teaching offered to students. Alternative schools operate as last resorts for students whom traditional schools are not committed to educating (Free, 2017). Students deemed troublesome, disruptive, insubordinate, unruly, and/or violent receive quick referrals to seek education at an alternative school.

Conclusion

This literature review presented an examination of the circumstances and experiences that frame adjudicated youth reentry. The first section included educational policies and their impact on students. Educational policies intended to ensure school safety instead led to stricter school disciplinary punishments for students. The restructuring of school discipline policies and practices increased police presence in schools and laid the foundation for the school-to-prison pipeline phenomenon. The literature review indicated that the get-tough policies of the judicial system have contributed to the increased incarceration rates of youthful offenders by funneling them through the school-to-prison pipeline.

The second section focused on components of the school-to-prison pipeline. This phenomenon comprises the decision-making process of teachers, school administrators, the juvenile justice judicial system, and youth that lead to involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Disparities in school discipline practice, the enforcement of zero-tolerance policies, and school codes of conduct significantly contribute to suspension and expulsion rates, especially for minority students and those with disabilities.

The third section of the literature review provided an overview of facets of education in the juvenile justice system. Youth who find themselves in the custody of the juvenile justice system receive an inadequate education. Juvenile justice correctional facilities fail to abide by the mandates of federal legislation (e.g., NCLB, IDEA) and educational decisions rendered through the judicial system. Studies have shown that successful participation in educational programs while incarcerated offers youthful offenders opportunities to change the trajectory of their lives. However, juvenile justice facilities are ill-equipped to prepare these students for life outside of the program due to the lack of resources and qualified teachers.

The fourth section of the review included results from studies showing a relationship between juvenile incarceration, transition, school climate, pedagogy, teacher-student relationships, and recidivism. Confinement for juvenile offenders is neither a benefit nor a deterrent for reducing future offending behaviors, and the nonexistent transition process does little to reduce recidivism rates. Additionally, challenges that students had before entering their confinement remain. There are, however, institutions and supports available to aid students in their reentry process. Schools serve not only as institutions for learning, but for social and emotional development, as well. How administrators and teachers perceive students upon their return to a traditional public school impacts the youth's academic success. The absence of school reentry policies means that students face resistance when seeking to reengage in traditional school settings.

Due to the absence of reentry policies and other internal and external factors, students could continue to participate in criminal activities and face the enforcement of stricter school rules. Thus, the fifth section of the literature review presented factors that contribute to juvenile recidivism. Although external factors have some effect on students' decision making, ultimately, personal choices could keep the youth engaged in the juvenile justice system, which has adverse long-term effects.

The literature review indicates the complexity of entrance into the juvenile justice system and reentry into traditional schools. No single reason, policy, person, or system can predict the experiences of youth. The intersection of environment, school, choice, and transition does not provide a road map for actions needed to help adjudicated youth successfully reenter traditional schools. Failure to provide adequate transition and reentry programming from both the juvenile justice department and the schools continues to affect educational opportunities and outcomes for adjudicated youth. Ignoring the educational and developmental needs of formerly incarcerated youth could result in their continued involvement in the justice system. Implications from this literature review are that further reentry research is needed to include those who experience the challenges of transitioning back to school following juvenile justice confinement.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Introduction

How do previously adjudicated youth, following their incarceration and settlement of their judicial sanctions, adjust to reentry into a mainstream, education environment? This question serves as the inspiration for this study and is a problem of practice that primarily affects formerly incarcerated youth returning to school.

Some schools, at present, are ill-equipped to provide necessary services and reentry programming for students transitioning away from judicial confinement and returning to (or in some cases, beginning) school (Abrams, 2012; Cole & Cohen, 2013; Marshall et al., 2012; Nellis & Hooks Wayman, 2009). Institutional barriers such as school administration's perception of adjudicated youth and lack of coordination and collaboration across agencies exacerbate the issue (Cole & Cohen, 2013; Gonsoulin & Read, 2011). The lack of readiness to accept and assist these students, and underlying institutional barriers hamper students' transition and progression toward attainment of their high school diploma (Advancement Project, 2005). In fact, 66% of students under the care of a juvenile justice facility do not return to school after being released (Federal Interagency Reentry Council, 2012).

As mentioned in Chapter Two, a missing key ingredient is the consideration of student choice and agency when attempting to assess what students need at the point of student reentry and beyond (Cole & Cohen, 2013; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Students are by far the greatest stakeholders in their academic success; however, they are not offered the opportunity to weigh in

on their educational experience. Historically, the use of students' voices and their perspectives has been limited, especially for adjudicated youth (Cole & Cohen, 2013; Goldkind, 2011; Graham, 2012). Seldom have they been asked what they need or how they managed reentry with only limited guidance and support.

Purpose of the Study

To study this problem, a phenomenological qualitative strategy of inquiry was used. This study explored the school reentry stories of adjudicated youth in hopes of gaining a better understanding of how they have navigated their reentry path. Further, challenges faced by these transitioning youth were identified. The purpose, more specifically, was to examine how adjudicated youth make meaning of their reentry experiences and to identify from their perspective the supports, programming, and barriers that exist within schools that influence students' re-engagement in academics and social activities.

Research Questions

Accordingly, three research questions were addressed:

1. How do adjudicated youth describe their experiences of transitioning from incarceration to reentering school?
2. What are adjudicated youths' perspectives on the types of supports, programming, and barriers that exist during school reentry?
3. What, if any, recommendations do adjudicated youth have for juvenile justice and educational personnel regarding school reentry?

Research Design

For this study, phenomenological and narrative methods of inquiry were utilized to gather data from adjudicated youth who have transitioned directly from a state's department of juvenile justice long-term residential facility and have reentered to school.

Qualitative Inquiry

The stories of transition and reentry have been told from the perceptive of juvenile justice personnel, social workers, therapists, teachers, and school administrators. I have been increasingly interested in the level of importance of the student voice, and how it can be used to shed light on their experiences. Based on the study's research questions it was necessary to use a qualitative method to describe and understand the lived experiences of adjudicated youth regarding the reentry process from their perspective. A qualitative design for this study was selected due to the desire to understand multiple students' experiences and to uncover what the reentry process looks like for them. Specifically, the goal of the study was to examine the shared experiences among formerly incarcerated youth. The term "shared experiences" is best described as "essence" in phenomenological research. According to Stake (1995) "The more qualitative is a study, the more emphasis will be placed on the experiences of people . . . with the phenomenon." (p. 27).

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is used to chronicle the essence of a person's story. The stories shared by each participant through a guided dialogue are unique and the information shared through their experiences is not intended to be generalized. According to Clandinin (2013), narrative inquiry can be seen as "…an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honoring lived experiences as a source of important knowledge and understanding." (p.17). The

purpose of narrative inquiry is to capture one's story through a first-hand approach and construct what his/her story means in their eyes. Uncovering the stories of a sample of formerly incarcerated youth could assist juvenile justice and education professionals in providing the most effective transition and reentry programming for similarly situated youth who have been incarcerated in a long-term juvenile justice facility.

Participant Recruitment

Flyers describing the study and an invitation to participate were emailed to individuals and organizations that work with adjudicated youth. In addition, information about the study and the invitation to participate was shared on social media sites including Facebook™, Twitter™, and Instagram™ through which I asked my network of established "friends" to disseminate the information through formal and informal means. I posted flyers on announcement boards provided for the public at parks, convenience stores, recreation centers, and public libraries. A recruitment survey was developed and administered using an online Qualtrics® survey application, made available free of charge by the University for student use and accessible on a web site developed to house the study. Based on their responses, eligible participants were contacted about fully participating in the research study.

Study Participants

In order to participate in this study, an inclusion criterion was developed to identify students who share the experience of having been confined to a juvenile judicial facility and reentered to school following their release (Merriam, 2009). A combination of purposeful and snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit participants who met the selection criteria. Purposeful sampling is a type of qualitative research sampling used to recruit the most information rich people to understand the central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2013).

Snowball sampling allowed for participants to assist in the process of recruiting additional participants for this study. The snowballing technique utilizes participants within the study who know others that may be interested in contributing to the research (Creswell, 2013). For this study, already recruited participants shared the flyer with potential additional participants who they believed would be interested in sharing their experiences.

For this study, eligible participants met the following criterion: (1) had been committed to a long-term juvenile justice residential facility or an adult correctional facility with a juvenile section; (2) had reentered school from the long-term juvenile justice or an adult correctional facility with a juvenile section; and (3) were currently enrolled in school, and (4) were between the ages of 16-18. Conversely, students who were younger than 14 or older than 19, who were not incarcerated but merely detained at a detention center, and those who were serving their sentences under house arrest were excluded from participation. The recommended number of participants in a qualitative study is between five and 25 (Creswell, 2013).

Five formerly adjudicated youth participated in this study. Eligibility to participate in was determined based on the recruitment survey completed through Qualtrics®. I reviewed the information to determine if the participant met the criteria. Once eligibility was determined, I contacted parents to confirm their child's interest in participating in the study, provided detailed information about how the interviews would be conducted, answered questions, and emailed the Qualtrics® link to obtain parental consent (see Appendices B). I then contacted the participant to confirm interest in participating in the study. Each participant signed the participant assent form (see Appendices C) prior to their participation in the study, if they were under the age of 18. Participants over the age of 18 signed informed consent and the participant assent form. Within

the assent form, participants granted permission for the photographs selected as a part of the research study to be utilized for educational and professional purposes.

Limiting the participation to only those who had been involuntarily confined in a juvenile residential facility (or in a juvenile section within an adult residential facility) was determined as a way of keeping with the common-experience principle. This population is sometimes hard to identify given that they are a vulnerable and stigmatized population. Snowball sampling allowed for participants to share the opportunity for their stories to be heard with those who have similar experiences. Formerly incarcerated youth, transitioning from residential confinement to school share unique educational experiences that are decidedly different from their classmates. Students who attend school while incarcerated experience a break in educational services, spend less time in class, may attend non-credit earning courses, have less access to credit recovery opportunities, and have limited access to educational resources and technology (Juvenile Law Center, 2013; Leone & Wruble, 2015; Macomber et al., 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2016) compared to their classmates who have maintained enrollment at a traditional school setting. Chronicling their personal stories is critical if we are to find ways to better support students at the point of transition and reentry into the public schools.

Data Collection and Method

As the ultimate goal was to capture a holistic picture of the phenomenon (the students' lived and shared experiences post-incarceration and during and post-transition), I gathered data from multiple sources. The primary sources include a demographic questionnaire, a photo-elicitation, and in-depth semi-structured interviews.

Photographs

Before participants begin collecting photos, guidelines were provided. The guidelines for selecting photographs included focusing on facets of their incarceration and school reentry that may have had an impact on their experience and captured how they internalized the process. The images selected could be something they drew, words, places, things, or images found on the internet. If people were included in the pictures, students knew not to take photos of people's faces, of people who did not give permission, and pictures that put people in compromising positions. By assigning students this task, during the interview I was able to discuss each photograph and its meaning.

Participants selected were instructed to find three images and photographs using Google for this study. All photos were shared via email on a word document and saved on a password-protected computer. The images and photographs were utilized during the first interview as a part of photo-elicitation.

Photo-Elicitation

Photo-elicitation is a visual research method that uses photographs as part of a research interview (Harper, 2002) and was chosen for this study due to its reflexive, story-telling nature. Rose (2012) identifies three strengths for the usage of photographs using the interview process: (1) a more in-depth interview, which may provide greater insight about the phenomenon being studied, (2) participants are able to vocalize thoughts and feelings that usually remain silent, and (3) this method empowers the participant. The reflexive process allows participants to engage in meaningful dialogue that may yield different information than a typical interview about what they know, think, feel, experience, and remember (Tinkler, 2015). As Harper (2002) suggests,

"images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness…" (p. 13), especially when the photo possesses a great deal of significance.

Prior to the start of second semi-structured interview, each participant was asked to gather visual images that were representative of their reentry into school, including any transition preparation they may have received and/or participated in while still residing in the juvenile justice facility. The hope in asking participants to select visual images was to serve as a base to help to chronicle (Copes, Tchoula, Brookman, & Ragland, 2018) their experiences and to tell their own internalized story and assessment of their transition and reentry process to the point of the interview. According to Thomas (2016), the usage of photo-elicitation can help to engage participants during the interview process. Harper (2002) states that images can "mine deeper shafts into a different part of human consciousness than do words-alone interviews" (p. 23).

Adjudicated youth have firsthand knowledge about their experiences in the judicial and school systems, one that is likely unknown to researchers and professionals who may work with them. It was my intent that this compilation of participant-generated and found images would generate a richly detailed picture of participants' lived experiences that make connections to their emotions, memories, and how they have made meaning of the transition process (Prosser & Loxley, 2008). By asking the students to contribute to the interview process, my desire was that they feel a sense of pride and agency in the process by ensuring that their stories were told with their voices and through their eyes.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to engage participants in deep and meaningful dialogue. Broad questions related to their reentry experience will guide the conversation to explore the specific research questions. The semi-structured interview process was chosen for its

exploratory nature. The use of open-ended questions seeks to invoke conversation and stimulate dialogue of the participants' meaning and feeling surround what they have experienced (Creswell, 2013; Seidman, 2013). This provided students with an opportunity to share meaningful insight that may have the potential to influence decisions related to legislation, policy, and practices with the juvenile justice and school systems. In-depths interviews also provided students with a platform to counteract the narratives constructed by others and address issues they perceive as important. I prepared questions that outline issues that I sought to address but was still flexible in order to engage in follow-up questions without restriction (Thomas, 2016).

The constructed questions touched upon multiple areas of the reentry process, including any transition programming provided by the juvenile justice facility, reentry services provided by the school, relationships with teachers and peers, sources of motivation, and factors that contributed to success or challenges. The structure of the questions allowed me to understand the lived experiences of these youth in-depth, and to shed light on the realities of those experiences (Lincoln et al., 2011).

After the selection of participants, I scheduled a date and time to conduct the interview virtually where the participants felt they could speak freely about their perceptions and their experiences. During this study, three 30-minute interviews were conducted through Zoom for a total approximately one hour and thirty minutes with each participant. During the individual interview session, each participant was asked to respond to a series of open-ended questions to describe their transition experiences and what they attributed to their success or failure (see Appendix D). Each interview was audio recorded on Zoom and transcribed using a transcription service to facilitate data analysis. Transcriptions averaged eighhteen pages per participant. At the

conclusion of the study, each participant was provided a gift card as a thank you for participating in the study.

First Interview

The purpose of the first interview was to build rapport, provide background information about the study, and share my own interest regarding the topic. During the first interview, participants browsed the internet using Google to gather photographs that aided in describing their reentry experiences and utilized photo-elicitation to gain an understanding of why the photographs were selected. Utilizing photo-elicitation encouraged participants to share thoughts about their reentry experience in a less invasive way. The photo-elicitation method allowed for the participants to lead the conversation and describe the essence of the specific images in a matter in which he/she deems fit. I began by inviting each participant to tell me about the photographs selected and proceed by asking what each photo represented or meant. At the end of the interview, the second interview was scheduled at this time.

Second Interview

The second interview concentrated on the details of the participants lived experienced. The design of the second interview is centered on students sharing their interpretations of their experiences as reentering adjudicated youth. The initial prompts noted above elicited focused and detailed descriptions with little guidance from me (Croghan, Griffin, Hunter, & Phoenix, 2008). The second half of this interview focused on school reentry and reclamation to a traditional school setting. The questions addressed academic support, relationships, and connection. I asked clarifying questions when necessary.

Third Interview

The third interview offered participants the opportunity to reflect (Seidman, 2013) and provide recommendations. The third interview focused on how participants made meaning of their experience. This final interview allowed for a wrap-up of thoughts and ideas, and for follow-up questions to be asked by myself and each participant.

Researcher Reflective Journal

Journaling during the interview process served as a tool to assist me in describing my feelings, reactions, and biases associated with conducting this research study (Janesick, 2011). Observing each study participant during the interview was just as important as the interview itself. I recorded non-verbal cues, body language, and questions left unanswered in a researcher journal during each interview section as a "blend of detailed field notes…interwoven with journal reflections" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Immediately after the interview, I made notes in my journal of emerging themes and observations about the interview itself. Capturing my thoughts during the interview process also helped me develop follow-up questions throughout the interview process to construct in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

Data Analysis

Narrative Analysis

Bruner (1990) shares that "meaning is generated by the linkages the participant makes between aspects of the life he or she is living and by the explicit linkages the researcher makes between this understanding and interpretation" (as cited in Josselson, 2011, p. 225). Narratives detail how people make sense of events. As mentioned earlier, a transcription service was employed to transcribe each interview. Upon receiving each transcription, I listened to the audio

file while reading trough the transcription to ensure accuracy. I also took this time to exam the stories shared to become familiar with the data and identify emerging themes.

As the interviewer and researcher, I am responsible for reconstructing the stories that possess different experiences and tone. As suggested by Brickman and Kvale (2015), I analyzed each interview in "digestible chucks" that are easier to tease out meaning and interpretation. Representative responses were selected to capture the essence of the emergent themes.

Thematic Analysis

As stated earlier, each semi-structured interview were digitally recorded, and each audio recording was transcribed by a professional transcription service. Using the transcriptions, I began the analysis and coding process in order to identify significant themes; thematic analysis allows for patterns to be uncovered and categorized (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Several cycles of coding took place to identify common threads amongst each transcription. I paid close attention to words and phrases during this process.

Given the purpose of this study, I sought to identify themes that are both unique to each individual story and for those that are present within all participants' stories. Themes capture the essence of the data and help to structure the relationships that exist among the data (Thomas, 2016). I selected quotes that captures that further explained the theme and relied on the participants own description of the images and photographs selected. I used the categories, titles, and captions developed by the participants to preserve their voices and views.

Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent

This research addressed all ethical concerns and considerations and followed in accordance those ethical standards established by the university and its Institutional Review

Board. Prior to conducting this study, all Institutional Review Board requirements were fulfilled**.** This included providing consent forms for guardians and adult participants and assent forms. Participants also granted permission to use the selected images and photographs for educational and professional purposes.

Confidentiality

In an effort to protect confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms were used in place of name. The participants chose their pseudonyms at the beginning of the first interview. I also reminded them that participation in the study was voluntary and they did not have to share information that they did not desire to be known. Participants were routinely reminded that they could answer "no" and ask to skip any question(s) that made them feel uncomfortable and withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions.

Interview

As a researcher, I understand that I am a co-constructor of the stories that will be shared during the interviewing process. I reiterated to participants that each interview would be recorded and saved to ensure I documented the stories in their entirety. All audio-recorded data were deleted after transcriptions by a transcription company and digital transcriptions and analyses were stored on a flash drive, laptop, and Google drive, but always password-protected. Each participant was encouraged to participate in the member checking process, a review of the transcript by the interviewee and a recommended procedure to increase the validity of the data collected (Creswell, 2013). Throughout the interview process, I verified the information shared by restating the responses to the questions and inquiring if I understood what was stated correctly. I also shared quotes and developing themes with participants at the beginning of interviews two and three to ensure I interpreted their narratives correctly and to seek clarification

where needed. Once all three interviews were completed and transcribed, I shared the final themes and highlighted quotes with each participant via email. Not all participants elected to participate in this process once the interviews were completed, however, during the interviews they did participate in the member checking process.

As I sought to understand the lived experiences of adjudicated youth, I understood that the stories shared may trigger emotions, bad memories, and issues related to his/her incarceration and educational journey. In the event that this occurred, counseling information was available.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, I reiterated the purpose of this study and the associated research questions. I discussed the phenomenological and narrative design of the study, and methods used to collect data to include three 30-minute interviews and my use of a background questionnaire, semi-structured interview questions, and the use of photo-elicitation. Also provided in this chapter are the multiple analysis methods that were utilized narrative and thematic.

In Chapter Four, I reveal the findings following data collection, coding and analysis and I conclude my study with discussion and suggestions for further study in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Presentation of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of adjudicated youth who have reentered the school system. This study offered the participants a platform to voice perspectives of the supports, resources, barriers and systems that exist when transitioning from a juvenile justice residential program or adult correctional facility with a juvenile division back to school. Through the use of photo elicitation with semi-structured interviews, youth expressed their reentry experiences and reflected on the critical role of social and systemic interactions that contributed to their reentry experiences. Participants discussed several facets of the education and juvenile justice systems as well as procedural practices that impacted their school placement. Additionally, they revealed the intrinsic drive to reach the reentry school and achieve their goals. Qualitative themes emerged from participants' responses in relation to the research questions that sought to explore the following:

1. How do adjudicated youth describe their experiences of transitioning from incarceration to reentering school?
2. What are adjudicated youths' perspectives on the types of supports, programming and barriers that exist during school reentry?
3. What, if any, recommendations do adjudicated youth have for juvenile justice and educational personnel regarding school reentry?

Participant Profiles

The participants of the study found reentering school to be an overwhelming process. Their motivation to succeed was driven by defying statistics and stereotypes about adjudicated youth, thus receiving a high school diploma. All five participants were male and attended the same school. Due to the nature of their criminal charges, the participants were assigned to an alternative school. To them, their school was a regular high school, but it is in fact classified as an alternative school by the school district. At the beginning of the first interview each participant selected a pseudonym for this study. The participants shared similarities associated with being incarcerated and navigating through both the juvenile justice system and the school system.

Jack

Jack is an 18-year-old White male. He became involved in the juvenile justice system at the age of 14. As we began to discuss the interview protocol, he shared excitement about getting ready to graduate. A big smile appeared cross his face and you could see the sense of relief and joy. Jack lost his father at the age of 13. His father was an entrepreneur and taught him about computer software, coding, and being an independent thinker. He described himself as someone who liked to be alone, play video games, and fix computers.

He was the first participant I interviewed. Throughout the interview he kept stating *"I got the pink paper."* The pink paper, as he described it, was a part of the check-out process for all graduating seniors. He was required to collect signatures from all his teachers before he could pick up his cap and gown. His passing test scores were also on the pink paper.

He shared that he attended three different high schools before enrolling into his current school. The reason for attending so many schools revolved around getting in trouble both in and

out of school. After being incarcerated, he was not allowed to return to the school he was attending prior to his arrest. Jack was able to see the positive in enrolling in his current school. When asked if he thought if he would have been able to go back to his old school, would it have been better, he responded *"oh nah, nah I would not be graduating right now."* He followed up by saying *"look I am graduating. I am done. I am done with school."* Graduation was quickly approaching, and I could feel the sense of accomplishment he had about making it this far.

Nick

Nick is a 16-year-old Black male and the youngest participant. He described himself as a calm and patient person, who is a thrill seeker and lover of adventures. He became involved in the juvenile justice system at the age of 15. He attended three other high schools before enrolling in his current school. School attendance was a struggle for him, which led to being kicked out for the first high school. When asked about his reason for leaving the second high school he shared *"because of my cases they said they don't want me there no more."* He took responsibility for being kicked out of the third high school due to his behavior. I asked him *"why did you choose to come back to school?" and he responded "I just wanted to get out. I say it's better that I leave with my diploma than leave with nothing. I did all of that for what? I did all those tests for what? I might as well make it out of something".*

For him, being on probation helped him to stay focused. As a condition of his probation he is required to attend school. Being under the microscope brought on a lot of anxiety. When discussing his reentry he shared *" ...I got people watching me to see if I go to school and all that information can affect my life in the future so I was like yeah I got to go to school. I got to start doing something. I cannot be doing the stuff I use to be doing."* During his incarceration he started to view school through a different lens. He realized that school was one of those of those

things that greatly impacted his future. Although it is a requirement of his probation to attend school, he shared *"I also wanted to at the same time because it would make it better for myself." "It's either drop out or graduate…I am going to go ahead and get it done now, why stop now? Why not just keep going?"*

He is passionate about not seeing other youth go down the same path as he did and have the same experiences. He expressed a great deal of emotional intelligence and understanding of the impact of each ecological system on an individual's development, specifically the microsystem and the mesosystem. In the future, he would like to own a recreation center, similar to the Boys and Girls Club, that focuses on providing therapeutic services and resources.

Keontae

Keontae is a 17-year-old Black male with a big personality that resonated throughout each interview. At the beginning of our first interview, he shared his excitement about participating in the study and being able to share his story. He became involved in the juvenile justice system at the age of 14.

Keontae views his current school as a *"regular school"* although it is classified as an alternative school. He described the culture of the previous alternative school *"feeling like [he] was still incarcerated."* He painted a vivid picture of entering the school.

> *"Like we use to have to get searched from head to toe. We use to have to walk the metal detectors, all that. Our phone get took. We cannot even bring no bookbag, no pencil, no nothing. The only thing we had to bring was us and our clothes. Everything as far as our property that junk was getting put away. Couldn't bring your phone, no nothing. Like that was crazy".*

He was excited about enrolling in his current school and shared *"I felt supported."* Being able to do *"regular stuff at a regular school"* helped to make his reentry experience a pleasant one. At the present time, he is unsure about where he sees himself upon graduation, but he has talked to people about attending college. Ultimately, he shared *"I just have to sit there and think to myself."*

Royal

Royal is a 18 year-old Black male. At the beginning of our interview, he was a bit nervous but opened throughout the interview. He described himself as *"kind of anti-social."* In his free time he likes to play basketball, video games, and write free-style raps. He also enjoys spending time outside and being *"one with nature."* Being in nature is a "stress reliever" when he is in the house too long and needs some fresh air.

Royal got emotional when sharing that he became involved with the juvenile justice system at the age of 12 after a domestic violence incident with his mother.

> *"My mom tried to hit me and stuff like that, me and my little sister. It is crazy. It is a lot because back then I don't care like around 2016 and up like. Yes, just know like if most of the kids got arrested for domestic it was because their moms were just, you know, going crazy. I am not going to lie, we probably said like some slick stuff, and they just want to come and put their hands on us. We kind of push them back to defend ourselves, but you know man it is always going to be like that."*

Royal views reentering school as a way to continue the accomplishments he made while incarcerated. He shared *"I got a story to tell…My story gone come to a good end."* The good end for him is preparing for graduation and walking across the stage to defy all odds.

John

John is a17-year-old Black male with a spirit of resilience. When asked how would he describe himself he replied, *"John been through the worse shit ever. He came back like nothing never happened."* He enjoys watching basketball and football games on television and working his part-time job after school.

He became involved in the juvenile justice system at the age of 15. John's last encounter with the juvenile justice system left him very angry, and he felt he lost a lot that he can never get back. John explained that his case as one of mistaken identity, which caused him to spend four months incarcerated before his case was thrown out due to video evidence. He missed time in school around his peers and being able to do normal teenage things.

The charge he had made it difficult to reenroll at his previous high school. He revealed that despite his case being dropped, with a charge like his *"you would be lucky if you got into a public school."* He described his reentry back to his current school as good. His current school is the only school that would let him enroll after his charges were dropped and the case was closed. John is more focused on graduating than before. When asked why he replied, *"because they doubting me."* He shared that he has one goal and that is obtaining a high school diploma.

Thematic Analysis

An in-depth analysis was completed by reviewing the transcriptions of the interviews as well as the photographs selected by participants. The data from this analysis revealed how previously adjudicated youth have made meaning of their school reentry experiences and highlights their isolation in academics and social activities as well as the means by which they re-engaged in the environment. The following four themes emerged: (a) eyes on the prize, (b) man in the mirror, (c) they got my back, and (d) care and compassion.

Eyes on the Prize

Participants acknowledged that preparing for reentering school came with an overwhelming feeling of anxiety. Knowing that they could and would be released brought them a sense of peace but not knowing when the release date would be caused their emotions to fluctuate. Their release dates would depend on various factors including the availability of mandatory courses they were required to complete, the number of disciplinary infractions received during incarceration, and/or to whom they would be released.

Educational services, programing, and additional opportunities for rehabilitation and preparation to reenter home communities and schools varied among participants. Although all of the participants were incarcerated under the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, no standard reentry curriculum existed. For these youth, their transition and reentry planning was internal to the particular facility in which they were incarcerated. Regardless, they all identified an unwavering need to overcome their current circumstances and achieve their full academic potential to success. How they would accomplish their goals often involved reminiscing about their lives prior to incarceration and developing ways to stay focused.

Figure 2. Royal's Photograph (see Appendix E for permission to use participants' photographs)

Royal selected a calendar (see Figure 4) as one of the photographs that describes his reentry experience. I asked him to share why he selected this photograph and he stated:

"Well, I am just going to say now that the stuff that we are going through it is a lot of time wasted on stuff that you know we could be doing productive wise instead of wasting time and just not getting back the stuff we want to get back. Sometimes it hurts, but at the same time like in a way…how it affected me transitioning out like…I guess it just made me look at getting out there on the outside world and thinking is there even hope of still learning and stuff like that."

Participants expressed the amount of time they had to reflect on the past and prepare for the future during their incarceration. School reentry means "freedom" eventually for the participants. For all of them, the priority is graduation from high school. Graduation means access to more opportunities, independence, and the ability to make decisions for themselves. Jack selected a picture of the word "freedom" over a sunset. For him, this is what he is looking forward to after graduation. With graduation comes less restriction and governance, as he shared,

"It is way better… I get to choose what I eat. I get to wear the clothes that I want. I get to take a shower with real soap. What else? What else do I get to do? I don't have to wear…I don't have to walk in a line. I don't have to do a lot of things. I don't have to be behind, what is it? Barbed wire. Should I keep going on?"

Figure 3. Jack's Photograph

For many of the participants, the juvenile justice facilities were places to regroup. Nick discussed having the opportunity to focus his attention more on school and preparing to graduate early. When Nick was asked to tell me about the first photograph he selected (Figure 4.2) he responded, *"It all started in the jailhouse, that's when I really started taking school serious 'cause they do schoolwork in there as well, but every time I think about doing good in school I think about just being behind bars."* Nick went on to explain that he really *"started to focus"* while being incarcerated and his peers encouraged him to evaluate what success can be upon his release. He shared in conversation with his peers they would tell him, *"If you really want to be successful in life finish school, instead of coming in here."*

Figure 4. Nick's Photograph

Keontae, a 17-year-old Black male, expressed similar sentiments of utilizing the time to make a plan and be intentional about not being rearrested. He talked about the reasons for

including the word "free" (Figure 4.3) in the study. *"It's all about being back free. When I came home, I loved that fresh air. I was back like I never left. I felt open."* When thinking about the impact that incarceration has had on his academics, John recalled the feeling of dark clouds around him. Once released he shared that he knew he had one thing to do and that was to graduate, even though *"people still think [he] ain't [going] to graduate."* Having the right support system and resources makes graduating seem far more attainable.

Success in school means being aware of self and not deviating from your goals. John, reflected on success and said it means *"keep my head on a swivel. Don't lose track and debate yourself."* School reentry for the youth in this study means dispelling stereotypes and taking advantage of the resources available to them.

Man in the Mirror

The transition from being incarcerated to attending school outside of the detention facility required participants to be reflective in their actions. While incarcerated, their focus was getting released, going back to school, graduating and getting a job that would make them a lot of money. The change they see in themselves is fluid and they are actively working to achieve success and never face incarceration again. What is important to note is that participants identified social relationships with their peers as distractions and ways to get in trouble. Instead of hanging out with friends, they limited social interactions and focused on their grades and not getting in trouble.

Preparing to return home can present some challenges. Youth find themselves juggling the facets of two worlds, while attempting to meet the requirements of both the juvenile justice and education systems. On one hand, they have analyzed the series of events that led to their incarceration, and on the other, the fear of the unknown often consumes them. For each

participant, a sense of urgency exists. Identifying ways to balance the conditions of their release while engaging in things that truly interested them presented a struggle for participants. One misstep would land them back in the confines of the juvenile justice system, or worse the criminal justice system.

Keontae shared his feelings about being incarcerated and stated *"…when you are incarcerated you don't want to be in there. You want to be home with your people, with your family. When you are in there you got a lot to think about and a lot to do when you get out. It just ain't the place to be. Like being incarcerated, it ain't right. I didn't mean to put myself in that position, but I mean things happen."* Having his freedom taken away made him more reflective about his choices and more strategic about how he would reach his goals. In preparing to reenter school Keontae described his mindset:

> *"I already had that mindset like…ok I know how I am going to do this, I know how I am going to do that. I know I haven't been out here in some time, so like I cannot just like come out here how I was before. So, I am like yeah, I came out calm and collected. I came out slow, catching back up on everything, moving right."*

Figure 5. Keontae's Photograph

The classes that were offered to Nick while he was incarcerated helped him to put life into perspective. He was able to make the connections of why education was important and how making poor decisions can impact you later in life, he commented,

> *"It was more like a wow I got to actually go to school now. Normally, I ain't never really go to school like, I always skip or something. I always find a way to not go to school, but it's like me being on probation. It's like I got people watching me to see if I go to school and all that information can affect my life in the future, so I was like yeah, I got to go to school. I got to start doing something. I cannot be doing the stuff I used to be doing."*

The reentry process can sometimes feel like you are losing yourself according to Royal. Creating a routine aided him on getting and staying on track. Self-confidence was identified as a tool he used to be able to commit to continuing to get good grades. In discussing his return to school, he declared *"I want to make a living for myself, in other words I still got a story to tell. I don't know about most people, but my beginning was then, my middle is somewhat I guess not the best, but I made the most of it. But it just depends on how you end your story. My story gonna come to a good ending."*

John shared that he was excited about being able to return to school. However, he was also aware that his criminal charges may prevent him from being able to enroll. I asked if he had participated in a transition program before reentering school and he replied,

> *"No, to be real, if they didn't let me back in school, it would of just been, forget it. I am not doing it. I am not coming then. I am just going to get a GED, but they me let in and now I have to show them."*

The mere chance of enrolling in school made John more conscious of how he shows up to school. He is committed to doing his part and even was recognized for achieving Honor Roll.

Jack recalls deciding to be more intentional about his grades. He had the support of some of his teachers, but ultimately, he had to do the work. At one point in his academic career he had all F's, and this could be attributed to missing school. Now, he is receiving A's and B's and on track to graduate. He admits he regained his focus to not *"go back to jail*."

They Got My Back

The social environment of the school impacts how adjudicated youth feel they are received. The participants were cognizant of the circumstances that surrounded their incarceration and are actively taking steps to defy the odds. Enrolling in a school that fosters an environment of acceptance, course relevancy, and opportunity to succeed is important to their reentry experience. With their desire to prove those who did not believe in them wrong, their commitment to academic success is heightened.

Despite feeling like they are often labeled and targeted because of the criminal past, each participant was able to identify at least one teacher, administrator, guidance counselor, or staff member that created a space for them to feel supported. The relationships that have been built have, in some way, motivated them to continue to push towards doing well in school and

graduating. When I asked participants how they would describe their relationship with teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, and staff each one shared the following:

Nick: "*Good. I get along with all my teachers well. I mean sometimes, only a few of my teachers see my bad side, but really, I get all with all my teachers."*

Jack: *"It is helpful."*

John: *"They straight. They cool people. They for me."*

Royal: *"Neutral."*

Keontae: *"I am good with all of teachers, my teachers straight."*

According to the participants, teachers, more than administrators, guidance counselors, and other staff, had the greatest impact on their reentry experiences. Jack, in particular, recalled enrolling back into school and finding out that his grade for the history class he completed at the juvenile justice program did not transfer into the system at his reentry school. This was one of the last classes he was required to pass to be eligible for graduation. His history teacher at the reentry school advocated for Jack and coordinated with his guidance counselor to have the grades shared, which put Jack on track to graduate. I asked him how that made him feel and with excitement he shared *"I was happy, I was happy as hell. I was like thank you bro, what. He always looks out for me. Every time he looks out."*

The school all five of the participants attended created a place where they were accepted and supported. John shared that *"in this school, they are going to make sure you get up out of here. I am not saying get kicked out and I am saying as in graduate or at least help you. They cannot help you if you don't help yourself."* The students reported that the school provided extra-curricular activities and academic support services to help them succeed.

Care and Compassion

The participants in this study identified policies, processes, and systemic issues as barriers to reentering school. In particular, the communication and transfer of information between the juvenile justice system and the schools delayed their school enrollment. The disconnect between the two systems impacted the adjudicated youths' understanding of what to anticipate when enrolling in school. Each of the participants reported that they did not participate in a specified transition program while incarcerated and were not required to participate in any specified reentry program when they enrolled in school, however for two of the participants who were on probation, school attendance was a condition of their probation.

An analysis of the transitional process of reentering school for the youth in this study centered around care and compassion. When asked if there were any recommendations for juvenile justice and school personnel regarding this area, participants voiced a great concern around the enforcement of rules and regulations, and adults' ability to be empathetic. The responses of the participants related to care and compassion for juvenile justice and education personnel from the perspective of adjudicated youth are presented below.

Juvenile Justice Personnel

Adjudicated youths' experiences within the juvenile justice system shape how they make sense of the U.S. legal system. Their experiences of confinement altered how they viewed police officers, probation officers, judges, and service providers. The recommendations provided by John came from a place of disappointment, frustration, and loneliness. As we concluded his interview and dialogue around recommendations, he stopped me and said, *"Oh yeah, and they need to start looking over their cases."*

Figure 6. John's Photograph

For John this was personal. During our first interview, one of the photos he selected said *"not guilty"* (see Figure 6). When I asked him to tell me about this choice, his facial expression changed, his voice raised, and he *said "I was not guilty. I was innocent…"*. He went on to share that he spent months in jail for a crime he did not commit. As mentioned above, the charges were eventually dropped after a video was shared with his legal team.

While incarcerated John's academics were severely impacted as he thought about where he could be versus where he was at the time. I asked him if he thought he would be further along in school if he was not incarcerated and he answered, *"I probably would only had two classes."* Prior to his incarceration, John had good grades. During his time of *"just sitting in there"* he attended school, but *"ain't really learn nothing."* He remembers spending a lot of time trying to prove his innocence and how he would *"get up out of there."*

John describes being released from jail and attempting to enroll in school. Having the charges he had, although they were dropped, made it difficult for him to enroll in a *"public school*." I waited for him to share the barriers he experienced as his voice elevated and he proceeded to say,

"You lucky if you got into a public school with a charge… You cannot go to a public school, so that is the hard part about it. Aint nothing easy about it. You not getting it easy. Even when the charge gone, it is still going to show up, so it is still going to be hard it, is not going to be easy. It is easy for them to stay right there, that is the only thing it is easy for."

Nick looked at opportunities for improvement related to care from a different perspective. The overall health and welfare of youth while incarcerated was something he addressed during his interview. At the conclusion of the last interview, Nick shared the following recommendation for juvenile justice personnel.

"They got to follow their own rules. Like they got certain rules set that they don't follow. Such as like dental care and stuff. Like when it comes to health they need to be more like…how do I explain it? They need to be more on top of that. Say someone got a backache and they don't know what to do or someone got a bad tooth, so when it comes to health."

The opportunities available for youth to participate in programming to aid in their transition and reentry were limited. As we explored the opportunities that were available, Jack shared he participated in required therapy sessions before he was released. His tone dramatically changed when *asked "do you think those sessions helped you in any way?" and without hesitation, he responded "fuck no."* He followed by sharing that the sessions were not productive, and the therapist often discussed herself and repeated the same information. Jack did not find the therapeutic sessions beneficial. However, he did participate in classes focused on his rehabilitation plan and found them to be much more engaging and informative.

Identifying ways to decrease recidivism amongst adjudicated youth is essential during incarceration. The types of programming offered has an impact on youth mindset and readiness to successful transition back to their community.

Keontae would encourage juvenile justice personnel to find ways to *"encourage kids more."* He went on to share that some kids do not have family or a safe space to go back home to, so they become comfortable in the program. If the programming within the juvenile justice were designed to aid youth in learning how to overcome barriers, navigate relationships, and prepare for life outside of incarceration they would not be as comfortable or feel like are ill-prepared to return to their communities and schools.

Navigating social relationships can present a challenge for adjudicated youth. Royal expressed the desire for the juvenile justice system to concentrate on developing strategies to find middle ground for youth on probation. He shared sentiments regarding transitioning back to the same environment and being surrounded by the same group of friends and family. He expressed that while some youth may have the desire to do well, they do not always have the support system to help them thrive. Being more *"lenient"* about curfew times, so that they can be more involved in school sponsored activities may *"prevent them from having conflict again."*

One of the participants, Jack, did not have any recommendations for juvenile justice personal. Jack shared thoughts of the system continuing to stay the same and the last thing juvenile justice personnel wanted is to hear from adjudicated youth.

Education Personnel

The participants felt that the school system should consider amending its policies and procedures related to adjudicated youth. When asked about the types of supports, programming, and barriers posed by the school system, Keontae elaborated on this by sharing that he believes

his charges should not influence his academic path. Keontae expressed the feeling of double jeopardy. He shared that he did his time while being incarcerated and when seeking to enroll in *"regular"* school he felt like he was being punished again by being forced to enroll at an alternative school. He stated that he was angry and said,

> I feel like what I had going on outside of school…I could see if it…if something like this happened on school grounds or something like that and I did something…caught a charge on school grounds. This ain't got nothing to do with that. This my whole other life outside of school. This ain't got nothing to do with that. I don't know it's just crazy how they told me I had to go there though. I ain't trippin' because I went there before, but I was planning on going to a high school though not no alternative school, but I still end up going. I couldn't get out.

Being able to reassimilate at a "regular" school means a lot for formerly incarcerated youth. It has the potential to provide structure, resources, and opportunities for this population of youth to regain social skills and find a sense of belonging. For these participants, it is critical that teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, and staff understand the emotional and psychological welfare of kids who have been incarcerated. As we discussed information that should be considered when youth who have been incarcerated are reentering, John shared the feeling of not wanting to be judged. He *shared "I don't think you can judge a book off the cover because they are coming from the detention center"* and followed up with *"at least go over with the child, ask about their story and what happened."* The feeling of wanting to be seen for who they are and not what they did, resonated throughout each interview with the participants.

The image of adjudicated youth can be overshadowed by their charges and involvement in the juvenile justice system. Jack expressed frustration with being labeled by school

administrators, school police, and staff. He recalled an incident that involved being accused of smoking in the school restroom. He shared that because he was in the vicinity of the boy's restroom, he was associated with the activities that occurred. The staff even removed him from class to question him. About this type of situation, he went on to say, *"It depends, like I told you about the label. They would just read some shit and assume."*

Often adjudicated youth who are transitioning are navigating between familiarity and uncertainty. Nick expressed that schools could provide *"troubled kids"* with a support system. I asked what that means, and when we delved deeper, he was vulnerable about what that looks like for youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice system. *"Most kids that been in the juvenile justice system, kids that went through a lot at home, who went through poverty…abuse."* Participants relayed that while they are incarcerated, they feel like they have no one and when they reenter their communities and schools, they also feel like they have no one. He said when returning to school people should ask *"how do you feel?"* He also said they should be asked further questions about their emotions like whether they had a hard time, if they had a good day at home and whether everything is good at home because normally they are the ones having problems at home.

Royal also expressed the following: *"It's like I lost a lot and all of my faith in there so…It's like nobody care because we are outlaws and stuff like that. That is what they list us as. That is how I see it."* It was important to cultivate healthy relationships and to not feel excluded because of past decisions.

John recommended that schools consider offering a mentorship program for adjudicated youth who are interested. He shared that some youth may not have someone at home that can help them navigate through what they may be experiencing at school. Having someone else

outside of the home who specifically focuses on helping them become reacclimated with school could help.

Conclusion

Each participant's lived experience showcases what reentry looks like from various perspectives. Overall, despite the barriers they faced with reentering school, the participants expressed that they are optimistic again in their academic journeys. They are committed to change and understand the systems that influence what "freedom" looks like for each of them. They have fought their way through the juvenile justice and education systems with a desire to be seen, heard, and valued. Their paths are still taking shape as they work diligently to graduate. The intrinsic motivation each participant possesses is to defy the odds against them and walk across the stage as a high school graduate. The route to get there requires support, resources, and an academic environment that is accepting. Identifying ways to make preparation to reenter public school within the juvenile justice system more relevant and relatable has the potential to increase success and decrease recidivism for these youth and others in similar circumstances.

CHAPTER FIVE

DICUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of adjudicated youth who have reentered school post incarceration. The study sought to integrate student voices to address the gap in research regarding how school reentry is experienced by adjudicated youth. Participants in the study were males, ages 16-18, who had been incarcerated and reentered school following their release. Through in-depth interviews using photo elicitation, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How do adjudicated youth describe their experiences of transitioning from incarceration to school reentry?
2. What are adjudicated youths' perspectives on the types of supports, programming, and barriers that exist during their school reentry?
3. What, if any, recommendations do adjudicated youth have for juvenile justice and educational personnel regarding school reentry?

This chapter provides a discussion of the study's major findings and implications including recommendations for further research. Additionally, recommendations for juvenile justice and education personnel as well as the systems in which these individuals work are provided to promote improvements in practice to support adjudicated youth and their reentry to school.

Significant Findings of the Study

There are several factors that impact recidivism rates for adjudicated youth, the most influential is education (Abrams & Snyder, 2010; Hirschfield, 2014; Pace, 2018). Understanding the lived experience of adjudicated youth involved in the juvenile justice system and their reentry to school provides insight on supports, programming, and barriers that exist and how improvements can be made to increase school engagement post incarceration. To this end, cooperation among stakeholders is essential. The efficacy of interagency communication and collaboration related to youth transition and reentry is the responsibility of all agencies involved and increases positive outcomes (Gonsoulin & Read, 2011).

Based on the theoretical frameworks utilized for this study, which are the ecological systems theory and attribution theory, participants shared an understanding for how each component of the ecological system impacted their reentry experience and how their own attributions related to their experiences are connected to their success. Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory explains that there are various factors that contribute to youth development, either by enhancement or obstruction (1977, 196). Throughout this study, adjudicated youth were able to identify the systems that have impacted their development and those that have hindered their progress. Participants were able to understand the connections between the five systems of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and articulate how each system influenced their reentry experience. They emphasized the importance of the interdependence of the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem. The interactions between these three systems and the participants influenced their development and how they reengaged post-incarceration. It is imperative for the individuals, agencies, organizations and institutions within each system to be cognizant of the role it plays and equipped with the skills and resources

to influence how adjudicated youth navigate their transition and school reentry process. Participants shared photographs of images that captured their reentry experience and described the reason for selecting each photo. The photographs selected painted a vivid picture of the internal thought process of the participants and their emotions. The participants experienced a variety of emotions preparing to return to school and internalized feelings upon reentry. More importantly, the participants were able to convey how the three-dimensional structure, locus, stability, and controllability (Weiner, 1985) of the Heider (1958) Attribution Theory, impacted their ability to refocus and accomplish self-identified goals. In this study, participants intrinsic motivation to succeed post-incarceration outweighed the need to build relationships with school personnel. For each of them they were in control of their reentry experience and success. The participants recognized that relying on juvenile justice and school personnel for assistance if they were not willing to do the work first is counterproductive.

This study clarified supports, programming, and barriers that have impacted school reentry for adjudicated youth and provided first-hand knowledge on the impact of incarceration on academics and schooling. Formerly incarcerated youth display a high awareness of self, and practices and policies that influence how, when, and where they return to school. Their overarching goal is to successfully graduate with a high school diploma and become a contributing citizen to society. The failure to be open to giving this marginalized population of youth another opportunity to reenter school without prejudice not only impacts the recidivism rate, but also continues to perpetuate a cycle of instability for vulnerable youth.

Research Question 1. How do adjudicated youth describe their experiences of transitioning from incarceration to reentering school?

To address this question, the researcher used photo-elicitation to provoke participants to provide more in-depth responses to describe their reentry experiences. Selecting the photographs was a reflective process and each participant was able to describe why the photograph was selected and how it was representative of their transition and reentry experience. The photographs selected captured spirits of anger, hopefulness, resilience, ownership, mental fortitude, and preparation.

During their incarceration, youth found themselves jiggling with the excitement of returning home and the fear of being prepared to return to society (Clinkinbeard & Zohra, 2012). Although a formal transition program was not provided during their incarceration, required courses and group meetings helped them to become more self-aware and gain self-efficacy (Cuevas et al., 2017). Being confined made them more conscious of the reason(s) why they were incarcerated and what they needed to do upon release. The reality was being successful was associated with reentering school and graduating with a high school diploma.

Each participant shared that they experienced barriers with reentering school due to their criminal charges. The nature of the participant's criminal charge was a predetermining factor for the schools they were able to enter following their release with some charges disqualifying them from attending typical high schools. Instead, participants were only given the option to attend an alternative school.

Being judged and labeled despite showing their commitment to education was discouraging (Barnert et al., 2015; Rios, 2011). For example, one participant described his social experiences with teachers, administrators, and staff as sometimes uneasy because he was being

accused of engaging in activities, he knew he had not engaged in while other participants shared his feelings of being perceived as *"outlaws"* with no one caring about them. Consistent with findings from Rios, 2011, despite some negative experiences, overall, participants felt that the positive environment the alternative school fosters have played a major part in their reentry process and their success thus far.

Participants who have been incarcerated in a juvenile justice residential facility or a juvenile section of an adult correctional facility described their experience as requiring determination, flexibility, self-advocacy, and an unwavering focus on accomplishing their goals. Reentering school meant "freedom" for the participants in this study. Jack provides context of what "freedom" means, sharing,

> It is way better… I get to choose what I eat. I get to wear the clothes that I want. I get to take a shower with real soap. What else? What else do I get to do? I don't have to wear…I don't have to walk in a line. I don't have to do a lot of things. I don't have to be behind, what is it? Barred wire. Should I keep going on?

The will to construct a new path that decreases the chances of recidivism requires access to positive alternatives. Transitioning from being incarcerated to being free is a mental adjustment for which some youth are not always prepared. Societal stressors are wound throughout school, family, friends, and the juvenile justice system. The pressure to succeed academically and re-engage in school, while mending relationships, resisting peer pressure and meeting the conditions of juvenile probation or simply staying out of trouble, can be exhausting and discouraging.

Research Question 2. What are adjudicated youths' perspectives on the types of supports, programming, and barriers that exist during school reentry?

The primary focus of this research question was to identify the type of supports, programming, and barriers that adjudicated youth have encountered during reentry. Research indicates that school enrollment is an important component of the reentry process (Geib et al., 2011; Gonsoulin & Read, 2011; Mathur & Griller Clark, 2014). However, participant responses indicated that the lack of interagency communication made it difficult to enroll in school and the time delay was frustrating.

The policies, procedures, and practices school districts implement in determining when to allow formerly incarcerated youth to reenter a traditional school versus an alternative school is a barrier that was shared. Due to their criminal records, some youth feel like they are outcasts and forced to attend alternative schools, which often resemble incarceration. Their criminal past does not define them, but for public school officials they often are seen as a threat to others. Consistent with findings from Barnert et al. 2015 and Rios, 2011, judgement and labeling characterized the experiences of the participants as they reentered school despite their efforts to remain focused on their academics and avoid trouble.

School culture is a critical environmental factor in making youth feel welcomed. Administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, and staff set the tone for how youth will be treated throughout their enrollment. The relationships that are built between teachers and students and attitudes of school leadership can greatly influence success (Cole & Cohen, 2013; Reed & Wexler, 2014). Participants reported that having at least one teacher, administrator, guidance counselor, or staff member in their corner was helpful in their reentry process. Building meaningful, consistent relationships has helped the participants stay on track with achieving their

goals and has made them feel cared for and understood (Fabelo et al., 2011; Gregory & Weinstein, 2007). This study confirms that although there are some supports available, structured programming for the transition from incarceration and school reentry does not exist (Koyama, 2012). Youth shared that programming may be beneficial for youth who did not attend school prior to their incarceration and do not have a plan of how to navigate the expectations of the school.

The change of pace from being incarcerated and having a correctional officer dictate every move to having the freedom to socialize and be a "normal" kid can be overwhelming. The academic opportunities and extracurricular activities offered at school can provide a sense of belonging and help adjudicated youth reengage in school. Findings from this study are consistent with McCamey (2010) who found that effective planning during the transition phase of incarceration can help students connect with academic and extracurricular opportunities. Effective planning is likely the first level of protection against recidivism. The participants in this study planned to be successful once they reentered school, however schools did not always have effective plans in place to receive them.

Research Question 3. What, if any, recommendations do adjudicated youth have for juvenile justice and educational personnel regarding school reentry?

In conceptualizing this study, it was assumed that adjudicated youth would have numerous recommendations for the juvenile justice and education systems. The participants in this study were reflective about their actions that led them to be involved in the juvenile justice system but refused to allow their past to overshadow their futures. These youth made a commitment to defy the odds and reenter school and were eager to share their thoughts about how to improve the experience. The participants shared recommendations that addressed the

systemic policies and procedures that create barriers to school reentry and how the culture of the school greatly impacts the reentry process. At the forefront of the recommendations was the advice that the education system does not penalize adjudicated youth for past mistakes and allow them to enroll in regular public schools in their communities. For some of them, regular schools have more extra-curricular activities and magnet programs that cater to their interest, unlike alternative schools. Unfortunately, these options were not open to the participants in this study because of their past involvement in the criminal justice system.

Sanctioning adjudicated youth to alternative schools following incarceration seems punitive for these participants. The inability to return to a traditional school prohibited them from having access to educational opportunities and extra-curricular activities that would aid in their growth and development while providing opportunities to explore pathways post-graduation. Despite the circumstances, these participants were able to identify the benefits of being referred to an alternative school. All of the participants are determined to graduate from high school; however, the school environment must be one that is conducive to offering support, understanding, care, and compassion for youth that have been involved in the juvenile justice system. The nurturing environment that alternative schools provide a space to thrive and be supported by school personnel who understand the juvenile justice system and are committed to serving this marginalized population of students. The commitment to equitable educational opportunities and an individualized approach can reduce the funneling of youth through the school-to-prison pipeline. The participants in this study felt both seen and heard in their quest to navigate their school reentry process and establish a plan to successfully graduate. Constantly labeling or over policing these students can impact their view on school and lead to them exhibiting behaviors that disrupt their learning (Rios, 2011). The feeling that someone cares and

is advocating on their behalf built confidence and reestablished their belief that they can learn and they are valued. Traditional high schools may consider analyzing the policies and practices that determine how adjudicated youth can be successful upon reentry and what additional supports are needed to propel them forward in their endeavor to graduate. School personnel attitudes, behaviors, and actions impact youth perceptions of self, school, and academic success. Disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline starts with school personnel. Being open to a differentiated approach when assessing barriers that exist for adjudicated youth school reentry and developing ways to address these barriers can change the trajectory of the lives of formerly adjudicated youth.

Implications and Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The findings of this research study have implications for policy and practice within and between the juvenile justice and education systems as well as for the metasystems in which these systems operate. Implications of this study along with associated recommendations for providing adequate transition services and equitable access to education for incarcerated youth are provided below.

Collaboration Between Juvenile Justice and Education Systems on Transition Plan

Collaboration between the juvenile justice system and education system can lead to reduced recidivism and increased graduation rates for youthful offenders. There are key components that the juvenile justice and education systems together should develop to incorporate within the transition and reentry curriculum to aid youth in feeling prepared to return to school upon their release. This includes jointly assisting youth in understanding how continuing their education will help them fulfill the conditions of their probation and identifying goals students need to accomplish along with a step-by-step plan. The curriculum should also

include a review of school expectations and graduation requirements to include needed test scores, grade point averages, community service hours, and credits. Special attention should also be given to discussion of family and peer relationships as these relationships may be important to the youth, who may not understand how to differentiate the impact of the relationships. Identification of mentors as part of the transition plan is also critical, as mentors can provide varying insight on life after graduation and help to cultivate relationships that will lend themselves to youth accomplishing their goals. The curriculum's design should focus on creating a positive reentry experience and providing adjudicated youth with skills, strategies, and resources to find balance. Below are specific recommendations for policy and practice within the juvenile justice and education systems.

Juvenile Justice System

Although the incarceration rate for youthful offenders has decreased, exploring alternative sentencing options to incarceration could aid youth returning to school promptly. Enrollment into school post-incarceration is sometimes delayed due to the lack of communication or miscommunication between juvenile justice personnel and the school district to which the youth is returning. This delay impacts motivation for this marginalized population of youth. Their mental health is severely affected as well (Tran, 2017). Ultimately, their educational future is left in the hands of two systems whose failure to properly prepare for their transition and reentry in school can change their view on education.

Incarceration negatively impacts learning and social development. Often, the correctional education system does not have technological resources, adequate teachers, or access to resources to provide equitable education. Participants reported that the curriculum offered to them while incarcerated did not meet their needs and they felt ill-prepared to reenter school.

They shared that the instruction provided seemed minimal and the attitude of teachers impacted how students engaged in school. The services rendered within a state's department of juvenile justice should focus on the rehabilitation of youth in its care and providing knowledge related to returning to the community and school. The one size fits all approach is counterproductive to the rehabilitative services that are offered during incarceration. Offering services and programming to youth that address school reentry and educational opportunities during their incarceration would better equip youth to transition and reenter school.

Creating a policy that governs transition planning for juvenile justice residential facilities and jails that house juvenile offenders would lend itself to successful outcomes for adjudicated youth. This research showed that although the residential facilities the participants were incarcerated at did not have a transition program, there is a need for one. As it stands, residential facilities and jails have the autonomy to implement programs they deem necessary. A standardized transition program would ensure that all youth under the care of juvenile justice receive the same information, knowledge, and resources on how to transition and reenter school. Transition planning may be beneficial to assess self-identified fears and apprehensions about returning to school. This type of planning can include meetings with parents, wrap-around service providers, and education liaisons to support the youth. Establishing meaningful partnerships with school districts is critical to incorporating processes and procedures that can positively impact the recidivism rates for youthful offenders.

Although youth may not have any input in determining what school they reenter, they are the ultimate deciding factor in how they show up to school each day and how successful they want to be. The data from this research show that help is needed for formerly adjudicated youth to prepare for the unknown and navigate the system. Youth in this study identified intrinsic

motivation and accountability as essential characteristics needed during the reentry process. How these youth make meaning of their experiences highlights how proper planning and relevant and engaging conversations can shift their mindsets and open their eyes to new pathways.

At a minimum, the practices listed below should be implemented by the juvenile justice system:

1. Enhance communication through interagency collaboration with relevant service providers.
2. Distribute student's academic and health records to schools in a timely manner.
3. Implement an evidence-based, standardized transition program that focuses on preparing students for school reentry.
4. Develop an individual transition plan in collaboration with the youth, parent/guardian, school personnel, wrap-around service providers, and probation officer.
5. Provide youth with therapeutic services to assess emotional and mental health and identify strategies to navigate family and peer relationships.

Education System

Education has the potential to change the trajectory of youth lives. The types of support offered to adjudicated youth upon their school reentry has a great impact of their feeling of belonging, academics, and social well-being. Adjudicated youth wrestle with a variety of issues as they prepare for their school reentry. They may be processing trauma, requirements of probation, and family circumstances that impact how they show up to school. The pressure to not get in trouble weighs heavily on their shoulders. Having teachers and administrators who value their experiences rather than demean them is important in building teacher-student relationships.

Their academic outcomes are dependent on feeling supported and being able to create a space to be themselves without having a a bullseye placed on their back.

Providing school personnel with training regarding implicit bias is important. Administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, and staff need to understand their own biases and how these preconceptions impact the school policies, classroom practices, and procedures that negatively impact academic outcomes for adjudicated youth disproportionately. This type of training is meant to be informative, reflective, and action driven.

Implementing school-based training for school personnel about the juvenile justice system may also be beneficial. Often, school personnel do not know much about youth incarceration, correctional education, or how to support formerly adjudicated youth when they return to school. One of the trainings provided should focus on how to cultivate positive teacher-student relationships. According to the literature, relationships with teachers act as additional barrier to school reentry (Cole & Cohen, 2013). Creating positive interactions with students can foster a since of belonging and increase engagement (Reed & Wexler, 2014) to aid students in achieving academic success. Additional training should focus on building teachers' knowledge about the juvenile justice system and correctional education. There is a lack of understanding processes, procedures, and educational and community services for both teachers who teach inside and out of the juvenile justice system (Geib et al., 2011; Houchins et al., 2012; Platt et al., 2015; Price et al, 2010). Enhancing teachers' knowledge about the intersection between the juvenile justice system and the education system can potentially aid them in refining the approach and assess how they can impact long-term outcomes for this marginalized population of students from a different viewpoint. This type of training can also help teachers understand their role in the juvenile justice system and school-to-prison pipeline. These types of training

may also help them to see incarceration from a different perspective and aid in creating a more inclusive environment to establish better academic outcomes.

Often, schools assume criminal charges are determinants of a student's behavior in school. Their past does not define who they are or where they should be able to attend school. As stated previously, allowing formerly incarcerated youths' criminal past to be a key determinant of what school they are eligible to attend is doing them a disservice. An alternative school is not always the best learning environment because often, these settings function similarly to juvenile residential programs or even jail. Being placed in these types of environments can cause regression, anger, disassociation from school, and poor academic performance. Providing these youth with options when they are seeking to reenter school can change their perspectives on their futures and increase school engagement.

The research suggests creating space for adjudicated youth to plan for the future (Clinkinbeard & Zohra, 2012; Cuevas et al., 2017; Sinclair et al., 2017). Sometimes these youth are unsure what their lives will look like post-graduation. They lack the knowledge about the opportunities available or how plan for the future. School districts should consider designing programming to assist formerly incarcerated youth with addressing their fears and developing strategies for achieving their goals. This could be beneficial at the beginning of the school reentry process. Connecting youth with teachers, mentors, or community resources to help develop a plan, decrease delinquency, and explore career or college opportunities could create a sense of greater readiness to redefine who they are and what they seek to accomplish. In summary, the following practices are recommended to help transform the education system to one that better accommodates formerly incarcerated youth:

1. Provide school personnel with training to enhance their knowledge of education programming in the juvenile justice system and aid in them cultivating a welcoming and inclusive environment.
2. Evaluate current policies, procedures, and practices related to adjudicated youth and school reentry to identify barriers and discriminatory practices based on involvement with the juvenile justice system.
3. Design specific, individualized programs to assist youth at the beginning of the reentry process.
4. Identify and provide mentors who are committed to providing support to youth.
5. Collaborate with colleges and employers to aid students in identifying career opportunities and preparing for life post-graduation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice system have shown resilience when transitioning from incarceration and reentering school. The collaboration of multiple agencies is vital to aid in connecting resources and providing support to reduce recidivism and increase graduation rates among this marginalized population of students (Cole & Cohen, 2013; Gagnon et al., 2009; Gonsoulin & Read, 2011; Hirschfield, 2014) whose academic experience is vastly different from their peers. Understanding the processes and procedures associated with school reentry for students who have been previously confined to nontraditional educational placements is an area that needs further research to determine best practices. Future studies should include a greater representation of youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system and reenter school upon their release. While this research study focused solely on male adjudicated youth's school reentry experiences, future studies could focus on females who have navigated through the

juvenile justice and education systems. Their perspectives could provide valuable insights which may vary from their male counterparts.

Additionally, including parents and guardians in future research may lend itself to providing a holistic view on supports, programming, and barriers to school reentry. Results from this study suggest that inviting parents to participate in a future research study may be beneficial. As one of the participants highlighted during his interview, parents are sometimes unsure of how to navigate through the transition and reentry process and are sometimes unavailable or unwilling to provide support through the process. In his experience, he often found himself reminding his guardian to follow up with juvenile justice and school personnel so that he could enroll in school. Advocating for adjudicated youth may be difficult if one lacks the understanding of legal terminology, requirements, and processes put in place for formerly incarcerated youth to reenter school and meet the conditions of their release. Parents and guardians may not be familiar with the steps that need to be taken to assist their child with reentering school. Including parents in the transition and reentry planning process can help to ensure that youth feel supported throughout the process and help to establish an open line of communication. Parents may be unaware of the supports they need or resources available to the child, and understanding what they need can enhance the reentry experience for all those involved. The information gathered from multiple perspectives can help to determine the appropriate resources are needed and how to make them accessible.

Given the number of youth who are involved in a state's juvenile justice system, it would be beneficial to review national databases include information about adjudicated youth and their school reentry. A future study could include follow up into adulthood for these students. Examining the relationships between transition services, school reentry, and academic success on

a national scale would be important. This could be accomplished through wide-scale surveys distributed to youth via social media or other means to obtain information about their experiences with the transition process and their feelings of preparedness and mindset around reentering school. Mixed-methods such as surveys with follow-up interviews or focus groups conducted virtually could be utilized.

Study Limitations

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, several recruitment challenges arose because of the health risks involved with conducting in-person interviews. Modifications to how interviews would be conducted and a technological platform that could be utilized required in-depth research to identify a product that would keep the confidentiality of participants. Several revisions to the IRB application were made to ensure that standards were upheld, delaying recruitment of participants. (See Appendix F for IRB approval.) Despite changes to the protocol, recruitment continued to be a challenge. Many organizations that worked directly with formerly incarcerated youth shared concerns of engagement due to being burnt out from being required to use online conference technology for school and services.

Perhaps, this study would have been strengthened if there were additional participants. The current study was all males between the ages of 16-18. Additionally, the lack of diversity of participants can be viewed as sampling bias, although a combination of purposeful and snowball sampling was used to recruit participants. The study called for a diverse group of participants to capture broader perspectives, which was not achieved in the current study. Recruiting female adjudicated youth to share their experiences in the future could add to the richness of studies. Although the information collected in this study is not meant to be generalized, female perspective would have provided an additional lens to understand the overall school reentry

experiences. In addition, having female participants may have provided further insight on supports, programming, and barriers that could impact this population specifically. Male and female formerly incarcerated youth most likely do not have the same experiences.

Conducting semi-structured interviews has also been identified as a limitation for this study. Semi-structured interviews for this topic can be viewed be isolating and a limited approach to allowing adjudicated youth to be fully comfortable and expressing themselves. Conducting focus group of adjudicated youth in future research studies could provide more details about transition programs offered by the juvenile justice system and reentry practices at schools. Being in a group could allow participants to share more thoughts, ideas, and experiences while feeling supported by their peers who share similar experiences. Focus groups may also allow for other participants to expand on a concept or topic collaboratively rather than feeling alone in his/her thoughts and feelings. Conducting focus groups by age, duration of incarceration, and number of times the youth has been incarcerated are factors that should be considered.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of adjudicated youth who have reentered school post incarceration. Throughout the course of the study barriers, programming, and supports associated with this experience were examined. Results from the study indicate the importance of both the juvenile justice system and school districts working together to provide equitable access to education for these youth and policies, procedures, and practices that can aid in their school reentry process. Collaborative partnerships between these two systems allow for preparation to reenter school to begin during incarceration and the reduction of barriers.

The findings contributed to the understanding of how formerly incarcerated youth internalized their school reentry experiences and identified policies and practices that should be sustained and improved. The themes from this study included adjudicated youth perspectives surrounding preparing from release, taking ownership for personal actions and behaviors, education personnel support, and care and compassion from those responsible for establishing processes, procedures, and services for transition and reentry. The data from this study indicated the importance of understanding adjudicated youth transition and school reentry from an ecological approach. Bringing awareness to the reentry process of youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice system means creating better outcomes and identifying more effective and impactful solutions.

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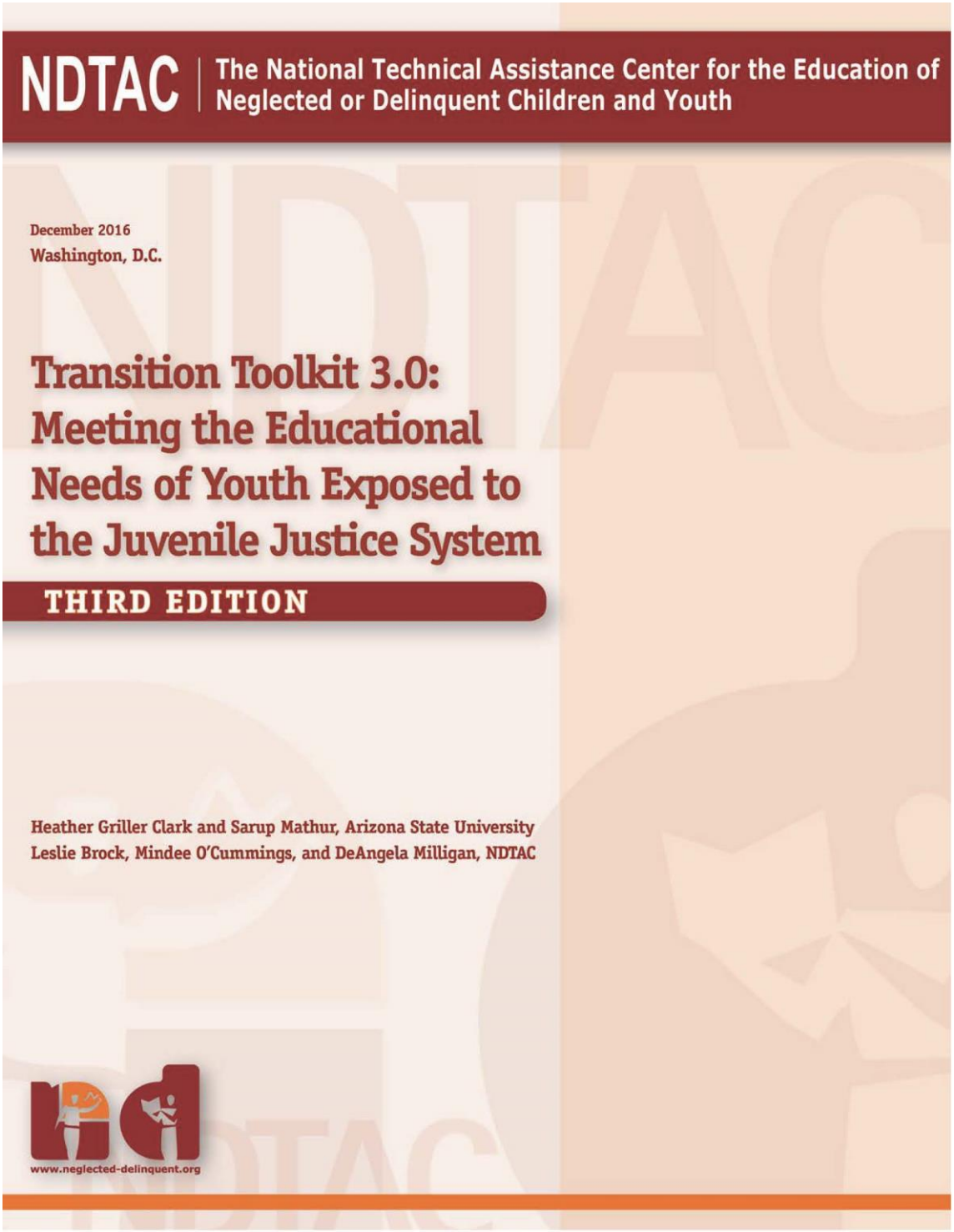
APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE TRANSITION TOOLKIT 3.0



The National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth

This document was developed by the National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth (NDTAC), which is funded by a contract awarded by the U.S. Department of Education to American Institutes for Research (AIR) in Washington, D.C. The mission of NDTAC is to improve educational programming for youth who are neglected, delinquent, or at risk of academic failure. NDTAC's mandates are to provide information, resources, and direct technical assistance to States and those who support or provide education to youth who are neglected or delinquent, to develop a model and tools to assist States and providers with reporting data and evaluating their services, and to serve as a facilitator to increase information-sharing and peer-to-peer learning at State and local levels. For additional information on NDTAC, visit http://www.neglected-delinquent.org.

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APPENDIX B: ONLINE ADULT STUDENT CONSENT FORM

Why are you being asked to take part?

You are being asked to take part in a research study because you are an adjudicated youth who was incarcerated in a state juvenile justice long-term residential facility or an adult correctional facility with a juvenile section, and have reentered a traditional public high school. You are being asked to take part in this research study because you have knowledge and experiences about reentry at a traditional high school as an adjudicated youth. You will be asked to participate in three interviews which will take about 60- 90 minutes. Each session will be audio and video recorded. Each participant will have to create a Zoom account online or download the Zoom App on an electronic device (phone, tablet, iPad). The chosen electric device must have a camera to participate in this study. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study between three and five hours over the next three months or until all three interviews are completed.

Study Procedures:

- You will be asked to find 3-5 photographs using an internet search database (Google, Yahoo, etc.) and/or choose to draw pictures or words that symbolize your public high school reentry process. No images of human subjects or that will identify you or others will be allowed.
- You will also be asked to provide a caption for the photographs and/or drawings, which will be turned into a collage.
- You will also be asked to participate in three one-on-one interviews ranging from 60 to 90 minutes every other week to discuss your reentry experience.

Interview 1	*Interview 2*	*Interview 3*
• Find 3-5 photographs using an internet search database (Google, Yahoo, etc.) and/or choose to draw pictures or words that symbolize your public high school reentry process.	• Continue interview: Discuss photographs and drawings.	• Continue interview: Discuss reentry experience at your high school.
• Provide a caption for the photographs and/or drawings, which will be turned into a collage.	• Discuss reentry experience at your high school.	• Discuss recommendations for juvenile justice and education personnel.
• Begin Interview		• Answer any questions.

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk
Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

Title: "So I am Back": Adjudicated Youths' High School Reentry Experiences

Study # 000306

Overview: You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this document should help you to decide if you would like to participate. The sections in this Overview provide the basic information about the study. More detailed information is provided in the remainder of the document.

Study Staff: This study is being led by Inita S. Knox who is a Doctoral Candidate in the College of Education at the University of South Florida. This person is called the Principal Investigator. Inita S. Knox is being guided in this research by Dr. Ann Cranston-Gingras. Other approved research staff may act on behalf of the Principal Investigator.

Study Details: This study is being conducted online using Zoom. Each participant will have to create a Zoom account online or download the Zoom App on an electronic device (phone, tablet, iPad). The Principal Investigator will provide each participant with a set of unique login instruction for his/her specific virtual meeting. The purpose of the study is to learn about your reentry experiences into a traditional public high school upon being released from a state's Department of Juvenile Justice long-term residential facility or an adult correctional facility with a juvenile section.

Subjects: You are being asked to take part because you are an adjudicated youth who was incarcerated in a state juvenile justice long-term residential facility or an adult correctional facility with a juvenile section, and have reentered a traditional public high school. You are being asked to take part in this research study because you have knowledge and experiences about reentry at a traditional high school as an adjudicated youth.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no penalties or loss of benefits or opportunities if you do not participate or decide to stop once you start.

Benefits, Compensation, and Risk: We do not know if you will receive any benefit from your participation. You will be compensated with a $25.00 Visa Gift Card upon completing all aspects of the research study (collecting photographs and/or completing drawings and all three interviews) for your participation. This research is considered minimal risk. Minimal risk means that study risks are the same as the risks you face in daily life.

Confidentiality: Even if we publish the findings from this study, we will keep your study information private and confidential. Anyone with the authority to look at your records must keep them confidential.

Each participant will be asked to email the Principal Investigator the photographs and/or drawings (participant can take a picture of the drawing). The photographs and/or drawings will be printed out and the email will be deleted by the Principal Investigator. Your photographs, drawings, and interviews will be assigned a code number to protect the confidentiality of your responses. If you participate in the interviews, each session will be audio-taped and video recorded so that the Principal Investigator can refer back to the information throughout the research study. After each interview session is completed, both the audio and video will be downloaded and stored a hard drive. You will be given a pseudonym so no one will be able to trace the findings back to you. Only the Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor will have access to the locked file cabinet stored in an office or password protected computer that will contain all records linking code numbers to participants' names and all records from photographs, drawings, interviews. The data will be stored for 5 years after the final report is submitted to the University of South Florida's Institutional Review Board, and destroyed by deletion and file shredding. The deleted file will be purged from the hard drive. Confidential data will not be shared as indicated in the consent. However, all photographs, drawings, audio recordings, video recordings, and transcriptions will be kept indefinitely by the Principal Investigator for research, publication, and educational purposes.

Total Number of Subjects

About 5 individuals will take part in this study at USF.

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You do not have to participate in this research study.

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

Benefits

We are unsure if you will receive any benefits by taking part in this research study.

Risks or Discomfort

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

Compensation

You will be compensated with a $25.00 Visa Gift Card upon completing all aspects of the research study (collecting photographs and/or completing drawings and all three interviews) for your participation. If you withdraw for any reason from the study before completion you will be compensated $5.00 per completed interview.

Costs

It will not cost you anything to take part in the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will do our best to keep your records private and confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Certain people may need to see your study records. These individuals include:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and its related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, and staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

If completing an online survey, it is possible, although unlikely, that unauthorized individuals could gain access to your responses. Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet. However, your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet.

What if new information becomes available about the study?

During the course of this study, we may find more information that could be important to you. This includes information that, once learned, might cause you to change your mind about being in this study. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call Inita S. Knox, Principal Investigator, at 561-310-8554. If you have questions about your rights, complaints, or issues as a person taking part in this study, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu.

Assent to Participate

I understand what the person conducting this study is asking me to do. I have thought about this and agree to take part in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

The adult student participant taking part in the study will affirm their agreement to participate by checking a box and providing his/her name online using the Qualtrics Survey Tool.

APPENDIX C: ONLINE SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL COMBINED CONSENT AND PARENT PERMISSION

Study ID: STUDY000306_MOD000001 Date Effective: 6/10/2020

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

USF RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Consent to Participate in Research and Parental Permission for my Child to Participate in Research

Information for parents to consider before agreeing to participate and allowing your child to participate in this research study

Title: "So I am Back": Adjudicated Youths' High School Reentry Experiences

Study # 000306

Overview: The following information is being presented to help you and your child decide whether you would like to be a part of a research study. The sections in this Overview provide the basic information about the study. More detailed information may be provided in the remainder of the document.

Study Staff: This study is being led by Inita S. Knox who is a Doctoral Candidate in the College of Education at the University of South Florida. This person is called the Principal Investigator. Inita S. Knox is being guided in this research by Dr. Ann Cranston-Gingras. Other approved research staff may act on behalf of the Principal Investigator.

Study Details: This study is being conducted online using Zoom. Each participant will have to create a Zoom account online or download the Zoom App on an electronic device (phone, tablet, iPad). The Principal Investigator will provide each participant with a set of unique login instruction for his/her specific virtual meeting. The purpose of the study is to learn about your child's reentry experiences into a traditional public high school upon being released from a state's Department of Juvenile Justice long-term residential facility or an adult correctional facility with a juvenile section.

Participants: You are being asked to take part, and to allow your child to take part because your child is an adjudicated youth who was incarcerated in a state juvenile justice long-term residential facility or an adult correctional facility with a juvenile section, and have reentered a traditional public high school. Your child is being asked to take part in this research study because he/she has knowledge and experiences about reentry at a traditional high school as an adjudicated youth.

Voluntary Participation: You and your child's participation is voluntary. You and your child do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no penalties or loss of benefits or opportunities if you and your child do not participate or decide to stop once you start.

Benefits, Compensation, and Risk: We do not know if you or your child will receive any benefit from participation. Your child will be compensated with a $25.00 Visa Gift Card upon completing all aspects of the research study (collecting photographs and/or completing drawings and all three interviews) for your participation. If your child withdraws for any reason from the study before completion, he/she will be compensated $5.00 per completed interview. This research is considered minimal risk. Minimal risk means that study risks are the same as the risks you face in daily life.

Confidentiality: Even if we publish the findings from this study, we will keep you and your child's study information private and confidential. Anyone with the authority to look at you and your child's records must keep them confidential.

Why are you & your child being asked to take part?

Your child is being asked to take part in a research study because he/she are an adjudicated youth who was incarcerated in a state juvenile justice long-term residential facility or an adult correctional facility with a juvenile section, and have reentered a traditional public high school. He/she are being asked to take part in this research study because his/her have knowledge and experiences about reentry at a traditional high school as an adjudicated youth. Your child will be asked to participate in three interviews which will take about 60- 90 minutes. Each session will be audio and video recorded. Each participant will have to create a Zoom account online or download the Zoom App on an electronic device (phone, tablet, iPad). The chosen electric device must have a camera to participate in this study. The total amount of time your child will be asked to volunteer for this study between three and five hours over the next three months or until all three interviews are completed.

Study Procedures:

If you and your child take part in this study, your child will be asked to:

- Find 3-5 photographs using an internet search database (Google, Yahoo, etc.)

  and/or choose to draw pictures or words that symbolize his/her public high school reentry process. No images of human subjects or that will identify you or others will be allowed.
- Provide a caption for the photographs and/or drawings, which will be turned into a collage.
- Participate in three one-on-one interviews ranging from 60 to 90 minutes every other week to discuss your reentry experience.

Interview 1	*Interview 2*	*Interview 3*
• Find 3-5 photographs using an internet search database (Google, Yahoo, etc.) and/or choose to draw pictures or words that symbolize your public high school reentry process.	• Continue interview: Discuss photographs and drawings.	• Continue interview: Discuss reentry experience at your high school.
• Provide a caption for the photographs and/or drawings, which will be	• Discuss reentry experience at your high school.	• Discuss recommendations for juvenile justice and education personnel.

turned into a collage.		
• Begin Interview		• Answer any questions.

Each participant will be asked to email the Principal Investigator the photographs and/or drawings (participant can take a picture of the drawing). The photographs and/or drawings will be printed out and the email will be deleted by the Principal Investigator. Your child's photographs, drawings, and interviews will be assigned a code number to protect the confidentiality of your responses. If your child participates in the interviews, each session will be audio-taped and video recorded so that the Principal Investigator can refer back to the information throughout the research study. After each interview session is completed, both the audio and video will be downloaded and stored a hard drive. Your child will be given a pseudonym so no one will be able to trace the findings back to him/her. Only the Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor will have access to the locked file cabinet stored in an office or password protected computer that will contain all records linking code numbers to participants' names and all records from photographs, drawings, interviews. The data will be stored for 5 years after the final report is submitted to the University of South Florida's Institutional Review Board, and destroyed by deletion and file shredding. The deleted file will be purged from the hard drive. Confidential data will not be shared as indicated in the consent. However, all photographs, drawings, audio recordings, video recordings, and transcriptions will be kept indefinitely by the Principal Investigator for research, publication, and educational purposes.

Total Number of Participants

About 5 individuals will take part in this study at USF.

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You and your child do not have to participate in this research study.

You and your child should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You or your child should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You and your child are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you and your child are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

Benefits

The potential benefits of participating in this research study include:

- Increasing public awareness and knowledge regarding high school reentry for adjudicated youth.
- Help juvenile justice and equitable education advocates identify what supports, programming, and barriers may exist throughout your child's reentry process.

Risks or Discomfort

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

Compensation

Your child will be compensated with a $25.00 Visa Gift Card upon completing all aspects of the research study (collecting photographs and/or completing drawings and all three interviews) for your participation. If you withdraw for any reason from the study before completion you will be compensated $5.00 per completed interview.

Cost

It will not cost you anything to participate and to let your child take part in the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will do our best to keep you and your child's records private and confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. You or your child's personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Certain people may need to see you or your child's study records. These individuals include:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and its related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, and staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include you or your child's name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

If completing an online survey, it is possible, although unlikely, that unauthorized individuals could gain access to your responses. Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet. However, your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet.

What if new information becomes available about the study?

During the course of this study, we may find more information that could be important to you or your child. This includes information that, once learned, might cause you to change your mind about you or your child's participation in this study. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Instructions

- Introduction to interviewer, purpose of discussion: I am interested in learning more about your thoughts and feelings regarding reentry experiences here at your high school since you have left a juvenile justice long-term residential facility or an adult correctional facility with a juvenile section.

- Broad overview: For the next 60-90 minutes or so, I would like to hear about different experiences you've had at your high school, and what supports, programming, and/ or barriers have you identified that have been helpful in your reentry process. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. Keep in mind that I'm here to gather information only, not to tell you how to act or think, or even to provide advice, just to listen.

- Confidentiality: Everything discussed today will be kept confidential (private) to the extent of the law. Your specific responses will not be shared with your teachers, parents, or any other adult. But, if you report plans to hurt yourself or someone else, I will have to notify your school in order to make sure you stay safe. I am tape recording and video recording this session only as a tool to capture all information. After what was said during this meeting has been typed, you will not be identified by name in this project.

Interview 1 Guiding Questions

- You selected three photographs to describe your re-entry experience. Please tell me about the pictures you selected.
- Tell me about yourself.
- What do you like to do for fun?
- How do you spend your time after school?
- Have you always attended your current school, or have you attended other schools?
    - What caused you to attend multiple schools?
    - How do you believe the situation could or should be addressed?
- How did you become involved in the juvenile justice system?
    - How long were you incarcerated?
- Looking back is there anything you would have done differently?
- Describe a typical school day.

Interview 2 Guiding Questions

- What would you say have been some of the barriers to reentering school?

    - How have you addressed these barriers?
    - What could have been done to prevent them?
- In your experience, are there teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, and staff that have been helpful since you have re-entered school?
    - How would you describe your relationships with teachers and staff?
    - How do your relationships influence how you feel about school?
- Do you feel that your incarceration has impacted the way teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, and staff treat you?
- How would you describe your relationship with your peers since re-entering your current school?
- What types of support have been offered to you at school?
- Do you feel that your incarceration has impacted your academics?

Interview 3 Guiding Questions

- Since we last talked, is there anything about your experience (photos or answers to previous questions) that you would like to add or change?
- Did you participate in a transition program at the juvenile justice program before re-entering your current high school?
    - How do you believe this helped you prepare to return to school?
    - If you had the opportunity to participate in a transition program, how do you think it would have helped you prepare to return to a school?
- How would you describe your overall re-entry experience?
- Is there anything that the school offers that helps you be successful, or keeps you from being successful?
    - Are there things you think students who transition from a juvenile justice long-term program should be asked when they re-enter a traditional school?
    - Are there any programs or activities that you believe should be offered to students who are transitioning from a juvenile justice long-term program? If not, what would you want them to be?
- Given your re-entry experience, what recommendation(s) would you make to juvenile justice system and school district given your experience?
- What are your plans after graduation?
- Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX E: PERMISSION TO USE PARTICIPANTS' QUOTES

University of South Florida

USF Fair Use Worksheet

The fair use exception was added to the Copyright Act of 1976 as section 107 and was based on a history of judicial decisions that recognized that unauthorized use of copyrighted materials were "fair uses." The distinction between fair use and infringement may be unclear and not easily defined. There is no specific number of words, lines, or notes that may safely be taken without permission. This worksheet is offered as a tool to help you determine if your use of copyrighted content is likely to be considered to be a "fair use."

Before you begin your fair use determination, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is the work no longer protected by copyright?
    a. Is it in the public domain?
    b. Did I retain my copyright ownership over a work I created when signing my publication contract?
2. Is there a specific exception in copyright law that covers my use?
    a. Does my use fit within Section 108 of copyright law: 'Reproduction by libraries and archives?'
    b. Does my use fit within Section 110 (1) of copyright law: 'performance or display of works in face to face classrooms?'
    c. Does my use fit within Section 110 (2) of copyright law: 'performance or display of works in online classrooms (also known as the TEACH Act)?' *see TEACH Act checklist*
3. Is there a license that covers my use?
    a. Is the work issued under a Creative Commons license and can I comply with the license terms?
    b. Do I have access to the material through library licensed content? *Ask your librarian*

If your answer to the above questions was no, then you should proceed with your fair use evaluation. Section 107 also sets out four factors to be considered in determining whether or not a particular use is fair:

1. The purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes
2. The nature of the copyrighted work
3. The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole
4. The effect of the use upon the potential market for, or value of, the copyrighted work

None of these factors are independently determinative of whether or not a use is likely to be considered fair use. In evaluating your use, you should evaluate the totality of the circumstances and consider all of the factors together. The Fair Use Worksheet will help you balance these factors to determine if your use of copyrighted material weighs in favor of 'fair use.' While valuable for your own documentation the Worksheet is not intended as legal advice, which can be provided only by USF General Counsel.

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Reviewed by USF General Counsel 08/11/2015

INSTRUCTIONS

Check all boxes that apply, and keep a copy of this form for your records. If you have questions, please contact the USF General Counsel or your USF Tampa Library Copyright Librarian.

Name: Inita Knox Date: 5/10/2023

Class or Project: Dissertation

Title of Copyrighted Work: Photographs provided by study participants

PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF THE USE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
☐ Educational ☐ Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use) ■ Research or Scholarship ☐ Criticism, Parody, News Reporting or Comment ☐ Transformative Use (your new work relies on and adds new expression, meaning, or message to the original work) ☐ Restricted Access (to students or other appropriate group) ■ Nonprofit	☐ Commercial ☐ Entertainment ☐ Bad-faith behavior ☐ Denying credit to original author ☐ Non-transformative or exact copy ■ Made accessible on Web or to public ☐ Profit-generating use

Overall, the purpose and character of your use ■supports fair use or ☐does not support fair use.

NATURE OF THE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
☐ Factual or nonfiction ■ Important to favored educational objectives ■ Published work	☐ Creative or fiction ☐ Consumable (workbooks, tests) ☐ Unpublished

Overall, the nature of the copyrighted material ■supports fair use or ☐does not support fair use.

AMOUNT AND SUBSTANTIALITY OF MATERIAL USED IN RELATION TO WHOLE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
■ Small amount (using only the amount necessary to accomplish the purpose) ☐ Amount is important to favored socially beneficial objective (i.e. educational objectives) ■Lower quality from original (ex. Lower resolution or bitrate photos, video, and audio)	☐ Large portion or whole work ☐ Portion used is qualitatively substantial (i.e. it is the 'heart of the work') ☐Similar or exact quality of original work

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Overall, the amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole ■supports fair use or ☐does not support fair use.

EFFECT ON THE MARKET FOR ORIGINAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
■ No significant effect on the market or potential market for the original ☐ No similar product marketed by the copyright holder ☐ You own a lawfully acquired copy of the material ■ The copyright holder is unidentifiable ☐ Lack of licensing mechanism for the material	☐ Replaces sale of copyrighted work ☐ Significantly impairs market or potential market for the work ☐ Numerous copies or repeated, long-term use ■ Made accessible on Web or to public ☐ Affordable and reasonably available permissions or licensing

Overall, the effect on the market for the original ■supports fair use or ☐does not support fair use.

CONCLUSION

The combined purpose and character of the use, nature of the copyrighted material, amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole and the effect on the market for the original

■likely supports fair use or ☐likely does not support fair use.

Note: Should your use of copyrighted material not support fair use, you may still be able to locate and request permissions from the copyright holder. For help on this, please feel free to contact your Copyright Librarian.

This worksheet has been adapted from:

Cornell University's Checklist for Conducting A Fair use Analysis Before Using Copyrighted Materials: https://copyright.cornell.edu/policies/docs/Fair_Use_Checklist.pdf

Crews, Kenneth D. (2008) Fair use Checklist. Columbia University Libraries Copyright Advisory Office. http://copyright.columbia.edu/copyright/files/2009/10/fairusechecklist.pdf

Smith, Kevin; Macklin, Lisa A.; Gilliland, Anne. A Framework for Analyzing any Copyright Problem. Retrieved from: https://d396ausza40orc.cloudfront.net/cfel/Reading%20Docs/A%20Framework%20for%20Analyzing%20any%20Copyright%20Problem.pdf

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APPENDIX F: IRB APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

APPROVAL

April 1, 2020

Inita Knox
[redacted]

Dear Ms. Inita Knox:

On 4/1/2020, the IRB reviewed and approved the following protocol:

Application Type:	Initial Study
IRB ID:	STUDY000306
Review Type:	Expedited 6, 7
Title:	"So, I am Back": Adjudicated Youths' High School Reentry Experiences
Funding:	None
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
Approved Protocol and Consent(s)/Assent(s):	• Inita S. Knox_Social-Behavioral ProtocolV.5.docx • Social Behavioral Combined Consent and Parental Permission_V4.pdf • Student Assent Form_V4.pdf • Adult Student Consent Form_V5.pdf Attached are stamped approved consent documents. Use copies of these documents to document consent.

Within 30 days of the anniversary date of study approval, confirm your research is ongoing by clicking Confirm Ongoing Research in BullsIRB, or if your research is complete, submit a study closure request in BullsIRB by clicking Create Modification/CR.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

Your study qualifies for a waiver of the requirements for the documentation of informed consent for eligibility screening of adult participants and children completed via parents only as outlined in the federal regulations at 45 CFR 46.117(c). Documented consent/parental permission will be obtained for the interview portion of the study.

This study involving child participants falls under the minimal risk category 45 CFR 46.404: Research not involving greater than minimal risk.

Requirements for Assent and/or Permission by Parents or Guardians: 45 CFR 46.408 Permission of one parent is sufficient. Assent will be obtained as outlined in the IRB application.

Sincerely,

Gina Larsen
IRB Manager