

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH: REDUCING
JUVENILE RECIDIVISM RATES

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By
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH: REDUCING
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my father who has always helped me achieve my educational and life goals. Without you I do not know where I would be, but I do know this would not have been possible. You are my biggest fan and my greatest supporter. I love you!

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to capture the opinions of juvenile offenders regarding their perspective of how to best lower recidivism rates using Participatory Action Research (PAR). This study employed a quantitative questionnaire which was distributed to fifteen juvenile offenders who were incarcerated in a juvenile facility located in the central valley of California. The survey was distributed over the course of a three-month period. Major findings via a univariate analysis showed that juvenile offenders thought the following suggestions would best reduce juvenile recidivism rates: (1) individual and/or group counseling; (2) individual/group counseling offered by someone who has been in a similar situation as them; (3) relocation services; (4) focusing on the individual needs of the offender; (5) developing healthy relationships with others; (6) encouragement from family members; and (7) military recruiters. Discovering new methods of reducing juvenile recidivism rates can benefit the juveniles, their families, local communities, and the larger society. Subsequent studies could place greater emphasis on qualitative analysis and use a larger sample size to increase further insight and gain more perspective on this subject.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

There is a major problem in the state of California and that is once a juvenile enters the juvenile justice system the odds that they will re-enter the system again at a later date is high. According to the California Division of Juvenile Justice, 70% of state-committed youth are re-arrested within two years of release (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2007). This is called recidivism. “Recidivism is measured by criminal acts that result in re-arrest, reconviction, or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the prisoner’s release” (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013, p.1). For operational purposes, minors who break the law will be defined in this study as “juvenile criminal offenders” and include “707b offenders”. This delineation excludes 601 offenders (crime only juveniles can be arrested for, such as curfew violation) and informal probationers (those who have committed minor infractions or misdemeanors) due to the lack in severity of their crimes (See Appendix A). According to the Legislative Analyst's Office (LOA), a 707b offender is a juvenile who is 14 years of age or older, who commits specified felonies under the offense category of 707b in the California penal code and therefore is not fit to stand trial in juvenile courts (2007).

The majority of juveniles who enter the system do not escape it after they serve their time because they lack effective interventions and therefore are more “likely to recidivate while at the age for peak offending” (Lipsey, Wilson, & Cothorn,

2000, p. 1). This may lead juvenile criminal offenders to enter the adult correctional system. What should be important as a social worker is the loss of these juvenile offenders' lives to the system. These young individuals have not only been imprisoned but once released; it might be more difficult for them to re-acculturate into society due to their juvenile record. Juvenile criminal offenders often have difficulties as a result of the "void [they fall] back [into at] home, schools don't want them, families can't control them, and probation officers can't offer much help" (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2007, p. 1). Social workers can assist by finding interventions, designing programs, and utilizing resources that will help former juvenile offenders stay out of correctional facilities.

According to the California Juvenile Justice Re-Entry Partnership, approximately 30,000 children and youth on average are released from a period of confinement in a juvenile justice or probation facility per year (2012). This means that approximately 500 juvenile offenders a week are released from placement and sent home. Of these youth released from custody, approximately 10,000 are housed at juvenile halls, 20,000 are housed at county probation facilities or group homes, and 1,700 are housed at youth prisons known as the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), formally known as the California Youth Authority (CYA). According to a study conducted by the State of California's Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in 2004-2005, over the course of three years after the juvenile offenders had been released, 81.1% had re-offended. Of those juveniles who re-offended over the course of three years after release from confinement, 56.5% were returned to state-level

incarceration, 33.8% were returned or recommitted to the DJJ, and 32.3% re-offended and were sent back to Division of Adult Institutions (DAI) (2010).

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to capture the opinions of juvenile offenders regarding their perspective of how to best lower recidivism rates. This study aims to find out, what do juvenile offenders think would help reduce juvenile recidivism rates? Also, do juvenile offenders agree with researchers about what would best help reduce juvenile recidivism rates? This study uses PAR as a method to gather feedback from juvenile offenders regarding juvenile recidivism. PAR is a “qualitative research paradigm in which the researcher’s function is to serve as a resource to those being studied [...] as an opportunity for them to act effectively in their own interest” (Rubin & Babbie, 2011, p. 442). The type of study that was chosen to analyze the current problem of juvenile recidivism is exploratory in nature. The reason an exploratory research method was selected is due to the non-existence of studies using PAR in attempt to lower juvenile recidivism rates. This researcher conducted informal meetings with a group of juvenile offenders similar to the population being studied. This researcher, along with these juvenile offenders, co-created the questions that comprise this study’s survey instrument.

For the PAR strategy to work, it is important to embrace ideas from great social justice thinkers, such as Paulo Freire, whose mindset mirrors that of PAR researchers. According to Johnston-Goodstar (2013) PAR is “built upon an amalgamation of critical social science perspectives, including Freire’s (1970) theory

of critical pedagogy”. Freire stated that “leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people--they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress” (2000, p. xx). Therefore, the role of a social work researcher is to work with the intended population and the community to discover the answers and solutions. As Freire states, “Any situation in which some men prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence...to alienate humans from their own decision making is to change them into objects” (2000, p. 85). Cornell West, a social activist, was quoted in the documentary *Examined Life* saying “I believe that Theodor Adorno was right when he said that the condition of truth is to allow suffering to speak.” By allowing juvenile offenders to speak of their suffering, perhaps the truth of why they reoffend and what might help prevent it will be divulged. That is why this research study aims to include juvenile offenders in the efforts to reduce juvenile recidivism rates.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it will be the first study conducted that uses PAR in an effort to reduce juvenile recidivism rates by allowing juvenile offenders to partner in the methodological design. Participation in PAR will provide juvenile offenders an opportunity to take place in research that directly affects them. This research will grant a voice to a current population that is being oppressed and normally does not have a say in how research gets conducted. This approach aims to incorporate a power-with stance instead of power-over stance which is commonly associated with the juvenile justice system. This research will also allow juvenile

offenders to partake in a process that involves their own interest. Therefore, it attempts to give them the ability to act effectively on their own in the future.

This study is significant because it is an issue of fighting social injustice. Most people and governments look at this problem on a fiscal scale such as how much it costs to staff correctional facilities, house people in them, and then supervise them after their release. According to one study, youth violence also affects communities by “increasing the cost of health care[s], reducing reproductively, and diminishing property values” (Vivola, Matjasko, Massetti, 2011). A study conducted in 2000, “estimated that the medical care and lost productivity costs associated with youth violence were more than \$70 billion” (Vivola, Matjasko, Massetti, 2011, p.141). This is quite a substantial amount of money. However, there are bigger concerns than just the fiscal costs.

The injustice can be alleviated to an extent if researchers and program designers give juvenile offenders (who are powerless in the juvenile justice system and powerless when it comes to the creation of programs designed to reduce juvenile recidivism rates) a voice that will allow them an opportunity to take part in the creation of these programs. This is relevant to social workers for reasons stated by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), "Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people. Social workers' social change efforts are focused primarily on issues of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and other forms of social injustice. These activities seek to promote sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and

cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers strive to ensure access to needed information, services, and resources; equality of opportunity; and meaningful participation in decision making for all people" (NASW, 2008, p. 16-17). Therefore, discovering new methods of reducing juvenile recidivism rates can benefit the juveniles, their families, local communities, and the larger society. This study may cause correctional facilities and law enforcement to rethink their policies and procedures that focus on deterring juvenile recidivism. Thus, social workers who work in this field would be provided with greater opportunities to help this population. Adolescents who are incarcerated are very vulnerable and may be placed in a situation of disadvantage when they return to society. Therefore, it is important to give juveniles the opportunity to make changes in their own lives.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

History of the Juvenile Justice System

The juvenile justice system has changed immensely over the years.

Throughout history children as young as seven years old who were accused of wrongdoing were imprisoned as adults (The Department of Juvenile Services, 2014). This occurred because children were originally seen as young adults or property (State of Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice, 2014). In 1824 the first juvenile house of reform opened in the United States. The reform house was located in New York and known as The House of Refuge (The Department of Juvenile Services, 2014). The first juvenile court for youth under the age of 16 was established in Chicago in 1899 and focused on rehabilitation instead of punishment. In the 1967 U.S. Supreme Court case of *In re Gault*, juveniles were entitled to the same constitutional rights as adults and this caused major reform in the juvenile justice system. In the 1970's, a community-based deinstitutionalization model began to emerge from the juvenile justice system. However, there was a major change in the 1990's due to increases in violent juvenile crime. This caused legislators to pass harsher punishments on juvenile offenders, such as, trying juvenile offenders as adults (State of Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice, 2014). Currently, in the millennial era, there is a renewed effort to return to rehabilitation by focusing on deinstitutionalization and addressing juvenile justice issues on a smaller community-based model (e.g., getting neighborhoods more

involved in problem-solving and preventative approaches to address juvenile crime) (State of Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice, 2014).

In 2002 juvenile crime entered its lowest level since the 1980's, but "more than 2.25 million juvenile arrests [are still occurring] yearly, including more than 92,000 arrests for violent crimes such as murder, aggressive assault, forcible rape, and robbery" (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 2007, p. 5) This was less than half of what the juvenile crime rate was in 1994 (McWhirter et al., 2007). While juvenile crime is on the decrease, the years in which a juvenile commits his/her first offense is beginning at an earlier age. The decrease in crime rates are encouraging, however, "The Surgeon General still reports that between 30% and 40% of boys and between 15% and 30% of girls have committed a serious violent offense by age 17" (Ash, 2006, p.147). This is about 10% of our total youth population being arrested (McWhirter et al., 2007). Youth released from the DJJ in 2004-05 had an 81.1% re-arrest rate at the end of three years. Most of these arrests (62.2%) took place by the end of the first year of being released from DJJ custody (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2010).

Criminal Justice Models: Punishment versus Rehabilitation

Due to increases and decreases in the crime rates, the legal system has shifted between the two schools of criminal thought – The Classical School (which uses punishment) and the Positivist School (which uses rehabilitation) (DeLuca, Miller, & Weidemann, 1991, p. 37). This applies to both the adult justice system and the juvenile justice system (State of Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice, 2014).

Punishment means to inflict “either pain or loss on the criminal as retribution for the crime committed”, while rehabilitation means “creating a change in the criminal’s attitude or resources so that crime is neither a desired or necessary activity” (DeLuca et al., 1991, p. 37-38). However, according to DeLuca et al. (1991), “it is virtually impossible to create an environment in which punishment is inflicted on the inmate; at the same time, the social values and goals advanced by the institution are accepted and internalized by them” (DeLuca et al., 1991, p.37).

According to DeLuca et al. (1991), different states and agencies use varying methods to reduce recidivism. Certain agencies focus primarily on punishment or rehabilitation while others use both (DeLuca et al., 1991). This applies to juvenile facilities as well, who have fluctuated throughout the course of history between the two models (State of Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice, 2014). Texas uses punishment primarily to deter recidivism while states such as Massachusetts and Connecticut stress rehabilitation (De Luca et al., 1991). Other institutions, such as the Federal Bureau of Prisons, use both systems of treatment inside the penal facility while the state of Michigan uses both models of treatment outside of the prison facility. DeLuca et al. (1991) suggest that the criminal justice system should focus on a “short period of punishment followed by a lengthy period of community-based rehabilitation and strict supervision” (p. 37). Other researchers such as Gilligan (2012) state that rehabilitation works and that punishment fails and this is evident by the fact that two-thirds of prisoners will re-offend within three years of being released from prison, often returning with a more serious and violent offense. These statistics

are similar to those released from the DJJ for juvenile offenders (California Department of Rehabilitation, 2010). However, by using research created by a rehabilitation model, they could reduce violence in jails, reduce the frequency of violent offending after leaving the jail, and enhance public safety (Gilligan, 2012).

Several researchers state that there have not been enough studies conducted on what would be effective treatments for reducing recidivism rates (Lipsey, Wilson, & Cothorn, 2000). Researchers state that the programs that are available have not been tested to a degree that would show whether they are effective in reducing recidivism rates and whether the degree in which they reduce recidivism is acceptable. There are researchers who state some programs completely lack the ability to reduce recidivism rates but are still being used (Lipsey et al., 2000).

Research on Reducing Juvenile Recidivism

According to research conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, which compiled previous studies, it was found that there was a 12% reduction in recidivism rates for those juvenile offenders who received interventions (Lipsey et al., 2000). In a study conducted by Lipsey (2000) they found evidence that showed the most effective interventions were interpersonal skills training, individual counseling, and behavioral programs for non-institutionalized juvenile offenders, and interpersonal skills training and community-based, family-type group homes for institutionalized juvenile offenders (Lipsey et al., 2000). Another effective method for reducing recidivism is cognitive-based training along with a cell-phone follow up (Burraston, Cherrington, & Barr, 2012). Burraston et al. (2012) used 90-minute training sessions

that were taught over the course of six weeks. During these courses, juvenile offenders discussed key concepts, watched video clips on those concepts, had in-class exercises, used examples from newspapers and other media, and reviewed homework assignments. Individuals set goals at the end of the courses along with the amount of phone calls they wished to receive and what prime question they would like to be asked. After the courses were completed, the researchers monitored behavior through phone calls for one year (Barraston et al., 2012).

Adolescent Brain Development

Juvenile brain development is a major topic in the juvenile justice system because of the controversy surrounding whether we should rehabilitate or punish juvenile offenders. Also, whether or not juveniles should be treated like adults in the justice system. The juvenile justice system was created to separate the adult system from juveniles because it was meant to emphasize rehabilitation over punishment while acting in the best interest of the child involved. (Bradley, Mayzer, Schefter, Olups, Miller, & Laver, 2012). However, the get tough on crime ideology that is very strong in the justice system, public attitudes, and social policy has begun to sway the juvenile justice system back to a punishment based program (Bradley et al., 2012). There are several issues with this punitive method of dealing with juvenile offenders and one of them is brain development.

According to a report released from the American Bar Association (2004), “an adolescent is at a crossroad of changes where emotions, hormones, judgment, identity, and the physical body are so in flux that parents and even experts struggle to

fully understand” (p. 1). Since the late 1990’s, scientists have discovered new information proving that adolescent brains are far less developed than previously believed (American Bar Association, 2004). Research conducted by Dr. Elizabeth Sowell and her colleagues found that the frontal lobe undergoes the most changes during adolescents than any other stage of life (American Bar Association, 2004). A researcher at the National Institute of Mental Health explains that a juvenile’s brain is still being built so they lack an adult’s ability to organize, plan, and strategize (American Bar Association, 2004). Dr. Yureglun-Todd from the Harvard Medical School explains that adolescents respond more strongly using gut instinct and tend to not think about the consequences of their actions (American Bar Association, 2004). Dr. Gur who is a neuropsychologist and the Director of the Brain Behavior Library at the University of Pennsylvania stated that juveniles are less criminally culpable because their frontal lobe is not fully developed and that is what helps control aggression and other impulses (American Bar Association, 2004).

Studies on brain development in adolescents, research showed that “cognitive and psychosocial skills are still developing throughout adolescents [and that]... many juveniles show deficits in understanding and decision making, compared to adults” (Bradley et al., 2012, p. 2413). This is because studies have shown that brain maturation does not stop until early adulthood (Bradley et al., 2012). “Empirical research has shown that one third of juveniles ages 13 and younger demonstrate significant levels of impairment in understanding or reasoning, whereas 16 to 17-year-olds perform like adults; and 14- to 15-year-olds score in between” (Bradley et

al. 2012, p. 2413). A lot of differences were found with among adolescents when given criminal justice vignettes, with younger adolescents showing higher levels of compliance with authorities but not perceiving the negative consequences or long-term consequences associated with these actions, indicating psychosocial immaturity (Bradley et al., 2012).

Further, there are several psychological disorders that may affect an adolescent's developmental maturity, such as: attention deficit hyperactive disorder, anxiety, learning disorders, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, and conduct disorder (Bradley et al., 2012). There are also significant differences between the frontal cortex, synaptic connections, and axon myelinization (which helps improve cognitive speed and efficiency) between adults and adolescents that cause adolescents to have a lower cognitive speed and efficiency (Bradley et al., 2012). This may also affect their impulse control, selective attention, attention-shifting, working memory, planning, problem solving, and decision making (Bradley et al., 2012). Studies further show that adolescents have greater difficulty in controlling their emotions due to greater activation in their limbic system (Bradley et al., 2012).

Participatory Action Research

A research method that was used in developing countries that has begun to spread in its use is Participatory Action Research (PAR). According to Rubin and Babbie (2011), PAR is a qualitative research paradigm in which the researcher's function is to serve as a resource to those being studied – typically, disadvantaged groups – as an opportunity for them to act effectively in their own interest. The

disadvantaged participants define the remedies desired, and take the lead in designing the research that will help realize their aims (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). There have been no research studies conducted using PAR in regards to reducing juvenile recidivism rates. However, there have been a few studies using PAR to study youth violence prevention, and alcohol and drug prevention for juveniles. These particular studies and other studies conducted using this method have shown positive results. In the study conducted by Gosin, Dustman, Drapeau, and Harthun, researchers found that “overall students gained in their ability to resist drugs, demonstrating a 16% decrease in alcohol use compared to a 20% increase in alcohol use for control students. Moreover, experimental site students showed a less positive attitude towards using drugs after the intervention. Thus, the intervention positively influenced anti-drug norms and attitudes in addition to lessening use of drugs and alcohol” (Gossin et al., 2002, p. 374).

There are a lot of intervention/prevention strategies that have been mentioned in research studies. However, in a meta-analysis conducted by Lipsey et al. of 200 experimental or quasi-experimental studies of interventions on delinquency, researchers found that current intervention/prevention strategies have only a 12% success rate at reducing juvenile recidivism rates. Therefore, these approaches to reducing juvenile recidivism appear to only be mildly effective. While a 12% decrease is better than no decrease at all, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done (Lipsey et al., 2000). A possible intervention strategy to reduce recidivism rates with juvenile offenders would be to incorporate the use of PAR. This would allow

juvenile offenders to take part in the creation of the prevention/intervention that affects them the most. Critical aspects of the intervention/prevention strategy that would be offered are allowing juvenile offenders to decide the major aspects of the research design. To allow them to take part in creating a new program/intervention to lower juvenile recidivism rates. They would help decide every aspect of the research study down to data collection, selecting the interviewers, devising what questions would be helpful, determining the research methodology, and in the end creating a prevention/intervention program that will help reduce juvenile recidivism rates.

YPAR

The extension of PAR to youths is being referred to by researchers as YPAR (Youth-led participatory action research (Ozer, Newlan, Douglas, & Hubbard, 2013). YPAR recognizes the power struggles youth face and allow them to confront, challenge, and respond to misuse of power and authority in their lives (Johnston-Goodstar, 2013). YPAR “engages young people in identifying problems that they want to improve, conducting research to understand the nature of the problems, and advocating for changes based on research evidence” (Ozer et al., 2013).

According to Johnston-Goodstar, YPAR has been practiced extensively with young people. “Through numerous collective research projects, young people and their partners have influenced educational curriculum and policy, documented and acted upon school push-out practices, reinvigorated multicultural education, explored political decision making and its effects on their daily lives, countered misrepresentations and expanded public discourse on gentrification, and resisted at-

risk constructions of girlhood” (Johnston-Goodstar, 2013, p. 318). YPAR is becoming increasingly more common in urban communities as young people are promoting engagement with their communities and schools (Ozer et al., 2013). “For example, youth researchers have educated communities regarding childhood obesity prevention and the judicial system...advocated for policy changes to improve their neighborhood food access and reduce diesel bus emissions...and participated in urban planning processes (Ozer et al., 2013, p. 14).

Theoretical Approaches to Reduce Juvenile Recidivism Rates

Empowerment Theory

Empowerment is the “process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals can take action to improve their life situations” (Kirst-Ashman, 2011, p. 81). According to Kirst-Ashman (2011), Empowerment Theory as an approach that strives “to change oppressive cognitive, behavioral, social, and political structures or conditions that thwart the control people have over their lives, that prevent them from accessing needed resources, and that keep them from participating in the life of their community” (p. 81). Empowerment Theory focuses on five main dimensions: social justice, consciousness raising, mutual aid, power, and multicultural socialization (Kirst-Ashman, 2011). Empowerment Theory and PAR are strongly related due their core elements. PAR and Empowerment Theory focus on giving power back to those who are affected by the issues at hand. They both strive to overcome oppressive cognitive, behavioral, social, and political issues by giving a voice to those who might not normally be heard. This research

practice and social work theory have similar values and both emphasize the need to focus on empowering oppressed groups.

Behavioral Theory

“Behavioral Theory consists of ideas about how human actions and emotions develop, are sustained, and are extinguished through principles of learning” (Walsh, 2010, p. 123). Behavioral practitioners focus more on physical observable, “objective” behavior and have a relative lack of concern for their client’s internal mental processes (Walsh, 2004). According to behavioral theorists, humans base their decisions, perceptions, and conduct on events we learned throughout our lifeline and these experiences underlie socially acceptable behavior, as well as delinquency and criminality (Martin, 2005). According to behaviorists, Pavlov’s theory of conditioning could be applied to criminals and delinquents (Martin, 2005). This school of behaviorists believes that environmental stimuli can operate either as a punisher or can reinforce behavior (Martin, 2005). This theory believes that “criminals and delinquents are stimulated (reinforced) by their environment to continue acting out deviantly until they are punished in some manner. Therefore, when offenders are repeatedly rewarded for their deviance and receive no punishment for breaking the law, they are likely to continue until the authorities catch them” (Martin, 2005, p. 81).

Public Attitudes and Juveniles Capability to Change

The American Bar Association states that “as a society, we recognize the limitations of adolescents and, therefore, restrict their privileges to vote, serve on a

jury, consume alcohol, marry, enter into contracts, and even watch movies” because we understand that they are not fully capable of making rational choices on their own (2004, p. 1). However, when it comes to the juvenile justice system, the general public has conflicting opinions and attitudes towards juvenile offenders and the juvenile justice system (Bradley et al., 2012). Research has shown that in a study of college students, college students viewed juvenile offenders as less responsible for their actions, less competent of legal proceedings, and their situation (Bradley et al., 2012). Further, the more violent the offenses were, the respondents sought more punitive punishment (Bradley et al., 2012).

In a research study conducted with law-enforcement personnel, the respondents recognized that there are differences between juvenile offenders and adult offenders, such as word comprehension, body language, peer influence, impulsiveness, and failure to take long-term consequences into consideration (Bradley et al., 2012). Further research from Canada showed that the general population, respondents stressed how important it was to incorporate rehabilitation with juvenile offenders (Bradley et al., 2012). In a study conducted at University of North Dakota and Mayville State University of undergraduate students, the study concluded that participants thought younger victims were less competent than their older counterparts and juvenile offenders were less responsible for their crimes, age, whether a target was planned, and whether or not the crime was delayed were also considered when determining competency for the crime (Bradley et al., 2012). According to the American Bar Association, “these discoveries support the assertion

that adolescents are less morally culpable for their actions than competent adults and are more capable of change and rehabilitation” (2004, p. 3). Based on the current research on juvenile brain development and a juvenile’s ability to change, a study using YPAR should be able to produce information on what would help decrease juvenile recidivism rates.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

Currently in the central valley of California, the focus of the juvenile justice system is stated to be one of rehabilitation even though it has had little effects in reducing juvenile recidivism rates. In research conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice on studies involving juvenile recidivism, it was found that there is only a 12% reduction in recidivism for juveniles who received interventions. A new research method that is being utilized in developing world countries that has begun to spread in its use is Participatory Action Research (PAR). There have been no research studies conducted using PAR in regards to reducing juvenile recidivism rates in the United States. However, studies conducted using PAR to study youth violence prevention, and alcohol and drug prevention for juveniles have shown positive results (Gossin, Dustman, Drapeau, & Harthum, 2002). This study aims to obtain information in which future researchers and/or providers can utilize to develop programs and services that will decrease juvenile recidivism rates based on PAR.

Research Plan

This study will use an exploratory research design. One of the reasons that an exploratory design was chosen is because there have not been studies conducted where juvenile offenders are active participants in the development of the services provided in which they are mandated to participate in while incarcerated. The second reason that an exploratory design was selected is due to a desire to look at the opinion

of two specific groups that have not been researched previously. To respect the privacy of the juvenile facility the groups will be labeled Program A and Program B and are located at a juvenile correctional facility located within the central valley of California. Juvenile offenders from these two programs will be given a survey during the final phases of the programs.

Quantitative methods of inquiry will be used based on feedback provided by the juvenile offenders during the creation of the survey instrument. Juvenile offenders sentenced to Program A and Program B have five steps they must complete before being released from custody. A permission slip will be issued to the juvenile offenders and their parent/guardian before they enter the second, third or fourth phase of the program. Juvenile offenders will be surveyed in the last four phases of the program (phase one, two, three and four) so they can provide more insight on what services they think are helpful in the program and how the program can improve. Therefore, they will have completed the orientation phase before taking the survey. This researcher will allow the juvenile offender an hour to complete the survey. The juvenile offender will be placed in a private setting with the researcher due to the juvenile offenders not being allowed to be left alone and in order to decrease distraction. The surveys will be self-administered; however, this researcher will be available to clarify questions regarding the survey instrument and to assist those who may face difficulties with literacy.

Sampling Plan

The group that this research will be recruiting is male juvenile offenders who are housed at a juvenile correctional facility in the central valley of California and are in the final phases of Program A or Program B. The survey will be distributed over a three-month period. The reason a three-month period was chosen is due to the rate juvenile offenders are sentenced to either program. It is estimated that a maximum of fifteen juvenile offenders will participate in this survey over the course of this three-month period. This researcher is currently an employee at the facility where the surveys will be passed out and supervises juvenile offenders sentenced to these programs. One of the program managers assigned to this facility has given written approval for the study to take place (see Appendix E). Every juvenile offender who is currently sentenced to either of these programs during the time survey is being distributed will be given an opportunity to participate. Juvenile offenders who took part in the creation of the survey will not be eligible to complete the survey. This researcher will distribute the survey one day per month (for three months) and will direct participants into the Multipurpose Room. No more than four participants at a time will complete the survey in the Multipurpose Room to allow some degree of privacy and to minimize distractions in the facility. This researcher will be available while each participant completes the survey as they cannot be left completely alone due to the facilities policy, and to assist if the juvenile offender has difficulty reading or interpreting the survey. Food and drinks, such as pizza and soda, will be available while the juvenile offender completes the survey.

This study will utilize a non-probability sampling plan as the opinion of juvenile offenders is keenly needed. Purposive sampling has been selected because these are the juvenile offenders who this researcher has the most access to and were chosen based upon an established relationship with the program. There is a likelihood that more juvenile offenders will participate in the completion of the survey based on the preexisting relationship with this researcher. This researcher will talk to juvenile offenders sentenced to Program A or Program B on an individual basis and present them with a brief introduction to the study. The survey may not be representative of all the juvenile offenders housed in the facility where the survey is being distributed. However, since these juvenile offenders have already been sentenced to a rehabilitation-type program, the results of this study might benefit them the most.

Instrumentation

The intention of this study is to distribute a survey instrument (See Appendix F) to juvenile offenders, that was created by PAR and that is centered on ideas to reduce juvenile recidivism rates. The questions on the survey were designed by this researcher and seven juvenile offenders sentenced to Program A and Program B. The survey will be disseminated among juvenile offenders who meet the same criteria (male juvenile offenders who are sentenced to Program A and Program B). The instrument created will contain internal consistency reliability and will have already gone through a pilot test on a sub-group of seven juvenile offenders housed at the facility being utilized to see whether the internal scale is a consistent measure. The

survey will consist of thirty-seven quantitative questions. There are a total of three demographic questions.

Data Collection

All of the data will be collected by this researcher after the one-hour timeframe given to complete the survey. Juvenile offenders will be given additional time, if needed. The survey will be completed with no more than four participants in a private setting that allows for little to no distractions to occur. This researcher will collect surveys one day a month over a three-month time period. One of the strengths of this data collection method will be a lot of detailed information obtained from the source that this information directly affects. Currently there are nine juvenile offenders sentenced to Program A and Program B. Therefore, I believe ten-fifteen participants over the course of a three month period should be an accurate representation of this population. Conversely, a weakness is that it is not generalized to all populations of juvenile offenders due to the fact that there are a limited number of participants in the sample pool. Further, having one data collector analyzing the qualitative data leaves a lot of information up to the data collector's single interpretation.

Plan for Data Analysis

This researcher will primarily be using quantitative data analysis procedures and possibly qualitative analyses if participants decide to respond to the one open-ended survey question. Newman's five-part plan consisting of sorting and classifying, open coding, axial coding, selective coding, and interpreting and elaborating will be

used for creating the themes from the question in the survey that is qualitative (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003). The Statistical Package for Social Services (SPSS) will be used to analyze the questions in the survey that are quantitative. This researcher will use SPSS to gather univariate statistics and descriptive statistics. The data will be presented in the form of a document with information about the results along with tables to display the statistical results of the survey. When the data analysis is completed it will be presented to the program manager in charge of Program A and Program B.

Protection of Human Subjects

Participants who qualify to complete the survey will be provided with information that describes the study and its purpose. If the juvenile offender wishes to partake in the survey, informed consent forms will be obtained from both the participant and his guardians/parents (See Appendix C and D). If the participant is eighteen years of age, then the informed consent form will be obtained from the participant only. Data will be kept in a locked container during the study and retained for one year after the study has been conducted. None of the data collected will contain any of the participants' names or contain information that could identify the participants. This researcher will be visible to cameras or other staff members at all times while present with the juvenile offenders.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Overview

This questionnaire consisted of 37 questions, 36 were quantitative and 1 was qualitative. Three of the questions were demographic questions. A univariate analysis was used to interpret the results of the data collected from the questionnaire. The survey had seven main quantitative sections about reducing juvenile recidivism rates and one qualitative section. The first section, discussed several different services that are currently being offered or could be offered to juvenile offenders who are incarcerated in the juvenile justice system in order to decrease juvenile recidivism rates. The second section discussed different trainings that are in use or may be used in the future to help reduce juvenile recidivism rates. The third section provided information on what programs should focus on in order to reduce juvenile recidivism rates. The fourth section captures feedback on what types of relationships juvenile offenders think would help reduce juvenile recidivism rates. In the fifth section, juvenile offenders selected which time frame a juvenile should be committed to custody in order to reduce the amount of times recidivism occurs. The sixth section focused on how encouragement may help reduce juvenile recidivism rates. The seventh and final section of this study addressed what type of guest speakers that the offenders think would help lower juvenile recidivism rates.

The estimated sample size was between 10-15 participants based on the average amount of juveniles booked into these programs over a three month time

period. This sample consisted of fifteen male juvenile offenders. The ages of the juveniles ranged from fourteen to nineteen. The majority of the juvenile offenders are between sixteen and seventeen years of age. Approximately 65% of the juveniles who participated claimed their ethnicity to be Hispanic. Approximately 50% of the juveniles who participated were from Program A and the other 50 percent of juveniles who participated were from Program B.

The purpose of this study was to capture the opinions of juvenile offenders regarding their perspective of how to best lower recidivism rates. This study's aim was to find out, what do juvenile offenders think would help reduce juvenile recidivism rates? To find answers to this question, an informal focus group was created using juvenile offenders from Program A and Program B and conducted over the course of two months. In the focus group, current trends in reducing juvenile recidivism rates based on research were discussed, and any ideas they thought would help reduce juvenile recidivism rates. "Meta-analytic studies indicate that the most effective treatment plans (a) use cognitive behavioral methods that focus on thinking patterns and skill development, (b) target high risk offenders, (c) focus treatment on specific needs of the offender (such as anger management, peer associations, or chemical dependencies), (d) are intensive in nature (lasting 3-9 months), (e) are implemented well, and (f) are conducted by trained therapists" (Burraston, Cherington, and Bahr, 2010, p. 62). A survey was then formed based on these discussions and distributed to other juvenile offenders from Program A and Program B over the course of a three-month period.

In the first section of this study (shown in Table 1), data were collected in regards to what services would help reduce juvenile recidivism rates. From the research collected, 80% of juveniles think that individual and/or group counseling would help reduce juvenile recidivism rates. Eighty percent also believe that individual and/or group counseling would be most effective if offered by someone who has been in a similar situation as them. Out of all the services discussed, counseling was considered the service that would be most effective in reducing juvenile recidivism rates, while tattoo removal was considered the least effective at only 33%. Relocation services were the second highest with 75% of the juvenile offenders thinking this would help reduce juvenile recidivism rates. Wraparound services, drug treatment services, community services all fell in the 60% category. Aftercare services and community partnerships fell just under the last three at 50% percentile of juvenile offenders thought would be effective in reducing juvenile recidivism rates.

It seems that a few additional questions could have enhanced the quality of some of the responses. Three of the services (aftercare services, wraparound services, and community partnerships) received a response of 33 % “unsure”. Perhaps, the juvenile offenders did not understand what certain services were and were then unsure of what the answer would be. Therefore, it may have been beneficial to add a qualitative section that participants only had to answer if they marked unsure. This way it would be clear if they just did not know whether the services would work or if they were unsure of what the services were.

Table 1.
Services and Reducing Recidivism

Different Services	Yes	No	Unsure
Counseling Services	80%	20%	0%
Aftercare Services	53%	13%	33%
Relocation Services	73%	20%	7%
Wraparound Services	60%	7%	33%
Community Partnerships	53%	13%	33%
Community Service	60%	20%	20%
Drug Treatment Services for Teens (RAFT)	64%	36%	0%
Tattoo Removal Services	33%	53%	13%

The second set of questions displayed in Table 2 pertains to which trainings juvenile offenders think would reduce juvenile recidivism rates. Sixty percent of the juvenile offenders surveyed believe that interpersonal skills training and employment training would be best to reduce juvenile recidivism, followed by social response

training, job interview training, and work learning training in the 40th percentile. Leadership Development Training was considered the least effective with only 33% of juvenile offenders thinking it would help reduce juvenile recidivism rates. However, 53% of participants stated they were unsure if Leadership Development Training would be effective. Therefore, the participants may not have been aware of what Leadership Development is. One-third of participants were also “unsure” on Interpersonal Skills Training, it would have been beneficial to put a follow-up with a qualitative question stating if Unsure please state why. Therefore, more information could have been gathered making the results clearer.

Table 2.
Trainings and Recidivism

Different Trainings	Yes	No	Unsure
Interpersonal Skills Training	60%	7%	33%
Leadership Development Training	33%	13%	53%
Employment Training	60%	27%	13%
Social Response Training (Life Skills)	40%	47%	13%
Job Interview Training	47%	27%	27%
Work Learning Academy (WLA)	47%	33%	20%

In the third section of this study, shown in Table 3, the survey captured responses about what a program should focus on in order to reduce juvenile recidivism rates. Approximately three-fourths of the participants surveyed believe the program needs to focus on the specific needs of the individual in order to reduce juvenile recidivism rates. Learning positive values and having high standards of behavior were in the 60th percentile. Fifty-three percent of individuals surveyed

thought that focusing on the individual's educational abilities and learning to abide by the rules would help reduce juvenile recidivism rates. Forty percent of the individuals surveyed were unclear if focusing on an individual's educational abilities would help reduce juvenile recidivism rates. Perhaps the students were not sure what educational abilities are or how the program would focus on them. A follow-up qualitative question would be beneficial for future studies.

Table 3.
Program Perceptions

Different Focuses	Yes	No	Unsure
Learning Positive Values	60%	27%	13%
Specific Needs of the Individual	73%	13%	13%
Educational Abilities of the Individual	53%	7%	40%
High Standards of Behavior	67%	20%	13%
Abiding by the Rules	53%	20%	27%

The fourth section of the questionnaire targeted what types of relationships juvenile offenders think would be beneficial to reducing juvenile recidivism rates as shown in Table 4. Eighty percent of the participants surveyed believe that building healthy relationships with others can help reduce juvenile recidivism rates, but only 40% believe building positive relationships with staff will help reduce juvenile recidivism rates. However, approximately three-fourths of the individuals believe that they have a positive relationship with most staff members. Approximately, 20% of all participants were unsure if these relationships would help

reduce juvenile recidivism rates. It would be helpful to know the reasons why 20% of respondents were unsure regarding this section. Perhaps they just do not know if these relationships would help based on lack of experience or if they were unclear about the questions.

Table 4.
Relationships and Recidivism

Types of Relationships	Yes	No	Unsure
Developing Healthy Relationships with Others	80%	0%	20%
Building Positive Relationships with Staff	40%	40%	20%
Do you have a Positive Relationship with Most Staff	73%	7%	20%

This section of the survey captures opinions about what time frame would be best to help lower juvenile recidivism rates. Approximately half of the individual's surveyed thought 3-6 months is the best amount of time for an individual to serve to reduce juvenile recidivism rates. About one-fourth believed 0-3 months was the best amount of time for an individual to serve to reduce juvenile recidivism rates. While one-eighth of individuals surveyed believed 6-12 months would be most effective and the other one-eighth believed 9-12 months would be most effective. It is important to consider in this section that personal gain could be responsible for the time frame selected and may not best represent a time frame that could capture all the aspects to help lower juvenile recidivism rates.

Table 5 of this questionnaire addresses how encouragement affects juvenile recidivism rates. Out of the juvenile offenders surveyed, approximately 70% of juveniles think encouragement from family would help reduce juvenile recidivism rates, followed by encouragement from anyone at 67%, and encouragement from staff at 53%. Twenty-three percent of respondents answered unsure to family encouragement. It would be relevant to find out if this is because they are not used to receiving encouragement from family members.

Table 5.
Perceptions on Encouragement

Types of Encouragement	Yes	No	Unsure
From Staff	53%	33%	13%
From Family	71%	7%	21%
From Anyone	67%	20%	13%

The final grouping of this survey (as seen in Table 6) gathered responses on what types of guest speakers would help reduce juvenile recidivism rates. Approximately three-fourths of respondents thought that military recruiters would be the most efficient in reducing juvenile recidivism rates, followed by college recruiters (67%), and speakers who have similar backgrounds as the juvenile offenders but who have changed their lives (60%). Thirteen percent of respondents were unsure about all types of speakers. This is a relatively low percentage. Therefore, perhaps most individuals had a clear understanding of the questions asked in this section.

Table 6.
Perceptions on Guest Speakers

Types of Guest Speakers	Yes	No	Unsure
Criminal Backgrounds who have changed	60%	27%	13%
Military Recruiters	73%	13%	13%
College Recruiters	67%	20%	13%

There were some statements that were repeated a few times by different participants in the open-ended section of the survey as seen in Table 7– help with finding employment, help with getting back into school, help with drug problems, participants learning from their mistakes, and being involved more with the community. With more participants the qualitative information may have shown a stronger pattern between ideas. In the future, a larger sample pool may yield more in depth information regarding the topic.

Table 7.
Perceptions of Reducing Juvenile Recidivism Rates

Participant 3	To take AA classes in [city] Juvenile Hall we had a speaker named [sic] come and talk to us. He will make anyone stay out of trouble... And if our time here didn't feel like punishment [but] more like rehabilitation. Because honestly this place has only made me worse.
Participant 4	Instead of probation and the judge putting us in programs like RAFT Anger Management and etc., they should let us pick our programs, like sports and things we like and look forward to going.
Participant 6	#25 The reason I picked 'no' is because building a positive relationship with staff will just want to make you want to go back to juvenile hall and visit.
Participant 7	I don't know
Participant 8	What I think this survey is a good start but if you really want the minors to change you have to ask them what do you want in life. Multiple people ask me that and to be honest I still feel this day. I don't know what I want in life.
Participant 9	I think that helping a juvenile get a job for when he/she gets out will help, or helping them enroll back to a regular high school.
Participant 10	I would say to give the students more free time outside of the community to see there is more out there for them to do beside getting in trouble.
Participant 11	The idea I have to not have juveniles back at the juvenile hall is if they have learned from their mistakes. If they have learned from their mistakes then they won't be back. But those kids that haven't learned will be continuing to come back. There are a lot of ways to help someone so they don't come back, but only one person can make sure they don't come back and that's themselves. Many kids are involved in gangs and nobody can change that. But if they chose to live that life they got to live it smarter. A kid can have all the help in the world and they still won't change their ways. A person has to want to stay out the juvenile hall to not come back. If they don't really want to then they will come back. All this help is great the programs, counseling, and extra help, but the person has to want to change if they want to stop coming here.

Participant 12	I believe that students that build strong ties with their communities (such as involvement in youth groups, community service projects, sports leagues, etc.) are less likely to come back to juvenile hall because they'd be preoccupied and feel better about what they're doing. I also believe that if there was more structure and if the rules were more heavily enforced then juveniles would feel less comfortable being here.
Participant 13	Sometimes you have to make mistakes to learn from them, but sometimes it's too late... It's really up to yourself if you want to change, if you want to succeed, and if you want/need help. Many will fall, but some will rise. But some who rise, will eventually fall, and those who fell will get back up and rise higher than those who have risen already.
Participant 14	Helping kids get jobs, helping with their drug problems, finding more rehab places.
Participant 15	I think if you give them things to do like find a job, go to school, go to the military or have someone that went thru what they are going thru help them learn that the way we are going ain't helping our lives, our family's, and our community's. And I heard it takes 30 days for a person to change their thought process.

The juvenile offenders that participated in this studied agreed with the research study conducted by Burraston et al. to an extent. They agreed that counseling would be very helpful in reducing juvenile recidivism rates; however, they thought it would be more beneficial if the person was someone who had been through similar experiences, rather than a trained professional. This study did not delve into different types of counseling due to the complicated nature of how long it would take for a participant to truly have an understanding of each type of counseling service available.

Interpersonal skills training was another subject that researchers and juvenile offenders agreed upon and was considered one of the most effective ways to reduce juvenile recidivism rates. Juvenile offenders also thought as Lipsey et al. did, that focusing on the specific needs of the offender was important in reducing juvenile recidivism rates (2000). Participants agreed with researchers Burraston et al. in regards to the intensive nature of the study with most juvenile offenders stating 3-6 months would be the best time frame for reducing juvenile recidivism rates (2012). There were mixed results in the study whether a program that is implemented well would help reduce juvenile recidivism rates. Juvenile offenders identified several other ideas that they thought would significantly reduce juvenile recidivism rates such as: relocation services, employment training, focusing on high standards of behavior, developing healthy relationships with others, encouragement from family members, having military recruiters visit, and guest speakers are just a few of the most agreed upon methods. Therefore, in part, researchers and juvenile offenders agree on some methods that would reduce juvenile recidivism rates such as counseling, interpersonal skills training, focusing on the specific needs of the offenders, and that the program's time frame should be intensive in nature but they also thought other methods would be helpful such as those identified above. It would be beneficial to discuss why these differences occur.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Overview of Major Findings

There were several critical issues that were discovered while conducting this study. One of them is that juvenile offenders agreed with discoveries made by other researchers on what some of the most effective forms of reducing juvenile recidivism are. However, they varied on a few of the major points identified by researchers and brought up other aspects of what they thought would help reduce juvenile recidivism rates. The respondents felt that counseling was one of the most effective forms of reducing juvenile recidivism, although the juvenile offenders varied from researchers on who would be best to provide counseling services. Juvenile offenders believed that counseling would have the best results if offered by someone who had been in similar situations yet turned their life around. It seems these juvenile offenders find it easier to connect with a person who has a background that is familiar to theirs, which provides hope that there is a possibility to change.

Juveniles also thought relocation services would be extremely helpful in reducing juvenile recidivism rates, but this is not a topic that was discussed in current research studies. Sixty percent of juveniles thought that interpersonal skills training would be effective to reduce juvenile recidivism rates which are similar to researchers' discoveries. However, juvenile offenders also thought employment training would be beneficial in reducing juvenile recidivism rates, which disagrees with current research that states there is weak to no effects for this type of treatment

with institutionalized offenders (Lipsey et al., 2000). Approximately three-fourths of juvenile offenders thought it would helpful to reduce juvenile recidivism rates by focusing on the individual needs of the offender. Lipsey et al. (2000), found that offering multiple services to institutionalized offenders showed positive effects but had less consistent evidence than interpersonal skills training and teaching family homes.

A large portion of juvenile offenders thought that building healthy relationships with others could decrease the amount of juvenile offenders that return to the juvenile hall. Almost half of the juvenile offenders surveyed thought 3-6 months would be the most effective time frame to help reduce juvenile recidivism rates, which is similar to what researchers have found (Burraston, Cherington, and Bahr, 2010) . Juvenile offenders thought that the best type of encouragement in order to reduce juvenile recidivism rates should come from family members. Three-fourths of juvenile offenders thought that having military recruiters come out to the juvenile hall to speak to them would help lower juvenile recidivism rates. This may have to do with the fact that they would be offered an alternative lifestyle to the one they are living while also being able to relocate.

Limitations

There were several limitations within this study. One of them is that it was conducted with a small population of only 15. The study would be better represented if applied on a larger scale. Also, the subject pool consisted of predominately Hispanic participants and this researcher is uncertain if the results would be the same

across different ethnic backgrounds. Another limitation is that it would have been helpful to add additional qualitative sections to gather more information on why juvenile offenders were unsure about certain questions.

The findings from this study are important for direct social work practitioners working in the field with at-risk youth because it shows what juveniles offenders think would be best to keep them out of juvenile detention centers. Therefore, practitioners could use this knowledge to assist the juvenile offender not to re-offend. This could also be beneficial for those who help create models for juvenile facilities or court systems that affect these juvenile offenders. These findings should be used by the social work field to help prevent juvenile offenders from returning to the juvenile justice system. In doing such, it keeps the community safer and allows at-risk youth opportunities for positive change. These findings show how important it is for social workers to include their target population while using PAR in the creation of their studies. This would enable them to have a more in-depth study. It would also empower the population being targeted by the researcher which is very important in the field of social work.

Most policies regarding juvenile offenders are created based on current research or public opinion that does not include the juvenile offender. Therefore, it may not be beneficial for these current policies to stay in affect if they are unsuccessful in reducing juvenile recidivism rates and according to current research, they are not working. Juvenile offenders have a very high rate of recidivism, approximately 70% within two years of being released from custody (Center on

Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2007). These findings suggest that it would be important to incorporate juvenile offenders in the process of creating policies or those that have been in similar situations so they could provide insight on what would be most effective in reducing juvenile recidivism rates.

It would be beneficial for future researchers to expand the study to a larger population base. However, researchers might want to use this study as a foundation while creating a new study based on a new focus group to target the specific population they are trying to gather information on. That way the best treatment plan could be created for the members of that particular population group. Creating a new focus group may also add further insights on other critical issues that may need to be addressed. It could also be important to discuss which family members are most influential in reducing juvenile recidivism rates and why. It is also recommended by this researcher to add a qualitative section to each of the questions if the respondent had a neutral answer in order to gain a richer understanding of the population being studied.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The following list identifies and operationally defines key terms used throughout this study.

Juvenile Offender. For operational purposes of this study juvenile offenders are being defined using the definitions provided by the Legislative Analyst's Office (LOA). According to the LOA, juvenile criminal offenders are "offenders under the age of 18 years who have committed a misdemeanor or felony" (2007, p. 19).

707b Offender. The LOA defines 707b offenders "as any juvenile age 14 or older, who commits specified felonies and is determined not fit for adjudication in juvenile court"(2007, p. 19).

601 Offender. For operational purposes of this study 601 offenders are defined using definitions provided by the LOA. According to the LOA 601 Offenders are "juveniles who have committed offenses unique to a juvenile, such as truancy, a curfew violation, and incorrigibility" (2007, p. 20).

Informal Probationer. According to the LOA an Informal Probationer is a juvenile who has committed a minor offense. (2007, p. 20)


Recidivism. According the National Institute of Justice, recidivism refers to a person's relapsed into criminal behavior, often after receiving sanctions or undergoing intervention for a previous crime (2010).

Recidivism rate. Recidivism rates are a measurement of the rate at which offenders commit other crimes, either by arrest or conviction baselines, after they are released from a period of incarceration (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013, p.1).

Participatory action research (PAR). According to Rubin and Babbie, PAR is a qualitative research paradigm in which the researcher's function is to serve as a resource to those being studied—typically, disadvantaged groups—as an opportunity for them to act effectively in their own interest. The disadvantaged participants define their problems, define the remedies desired, and take the lead in designing the research that will help them realize their aims (2011).


APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP APPROVAL LETTER



MERCED
COUNTY

PROBATION DEPARTMENT



Scott W. Ball
Chief Probation Officer

Date: May 21, 2013

From: Joe Frontella
Program Manager
Merced County Probation Department

To: Whom it may concern

Re: Christine Burk Proposal

I have reviewed Ms. Burk's proposal to conduct a focus group utilizing the students ordered into the Bear Creek Academy at Merced County's Iris Garret Juvenile Justice Correctional Complex. Given her proposed methodology we feel it would be mutually beneficial to her as a Master's student and the Bear Creek Academy to obtain the results of such a focus group. I have also received approval from Chief Scott Ball for the focus group to take place in the juvenile facility. Therefore, this is a letter of support in Ms. Burk's educational endeavors as they relate to her focus group in the Bear Creek Academy. If there any follow up questions please contact me at 209-381-1418.

STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE

APPENDIX C

JUVENILE INFORMED CONSENT

California State University of Stanislaus**Minor's Informed Consent to participate in a Survey Conducted at the juvenile facility they are being housed.**

Dear Participant:

You are being asked to participate in a research project that is being done to fulfill requirements for a Master's degree in Social Work at California State University Stanislaus. We hope to learn your ideas on what would reduce juvenile recidivism rates. (What we could do to keep juvenile offenders from returning to custody.) If you decide to volunteer, you will be asked to participate in a one-time survey about ideas on reducing juvenile recidivism rates. The survey consists of 37 questions and will take approximately one hour to complete.

There are no known risks to you for your participation in this study.

It is possible that you will not benefit directly by participating in this study. Others may benefit from this study in the future if these ideas are incorporated into programs aimed to reduce juvenile recidivism rates. The information collected will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under the law. All data will be kept in a secure location. Names and information will be kept solely by this researcher. Information from the data collected will be shared with the facility they are currently being housed in and California State University of Stanislaus.

There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the procedure(s) described above. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

If you agree to participate, please indicate this decision by signing below. If you have any questions about this research project please contact me, Christine Burk-Garcia, at **(209) 381-1400** or my faculty sponsor, Dr. Kilolo Brodie at **(209) 667-3126**. If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the Campus Compliance Officer by phone (209) 667-3794 or email IRBAdmin@csustan.edu.

I also understand that there may be food present at this meeting and if I have any dietary concerns or food allergies, I will write them below.

Sincerely,

Christine Burk-Garcia

Master of Social Work Student

Participant Signature _____ Date: _____
M.S.W. Student Signature _____ Date: _____
Dietary Concerns: _____

APPENDIX D

PARENT INFORMED CONSENT

California State University of Stanislaus
Parent/Guardian's Informed Consent for their child to participate in a Survey
Conducted at the juvenile facility they are currently being housed in.

Dear Parent/Guardian:

You are being asked to give permission for your child to participate in a research project that is being done to fulfill requirements for a Master's degree in Social Work at California State University Stanislaus. We hope to learn their ideas on what would reduce juvenile recidivism rates. (What we could do to keep juvenile offenders from returning to custody.) If you decide to allow your child to volunteer, they will be asked to participate in a one-time survey about ideas on reducing juvenile recidivism rates. The survey consists of 37 questions and will take approximately one hour to complete.

There are no known risks to your child for your participation in this study.

It is possible that they will not benefit directly by participating in this study. Others may benefit from this study in the future if these ideas are incorporated into programs aimed to reduce juvenile recidivism rates. The information collected will be protected from all inappropriate disclosure under the law. All data will be kept in a secure location. Names and information will be kept solely by this researcher. Information from the data collected will be shared with the facility your child is currently being housed in and California State University of Stanislaus.


There is no cost to you or your child beyond the time and effort required to complete the procedure(s) described above. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

If you agree to participate, please indicate this decision by signing below. If you have any questions about this research project please contact me, Christine Burk-Garcia, at **(209) 381-1400** or my faculty sponsor, Dr. Kilolo Brodie at **(209) 667-3126**. If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the Campus Compliance Officer by phone (209) 667-3794 or email IRBAdmin@csustan.edu.


I also understand that there may be food present at this meeting and if I have any dietary concerns or food allergies, I will write them below. Sincerely,
Christine Burk-Garcia
Master of Social Work Student

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date: _____
M.S.W. Student Signature _____ Date: _____
Dietary Concerns: _____

APPENDIX E
THESIS APPROVAL LETTER

 **MERCED**
COUNTY

PROBATION DEPARTMENT



Scott M. Ball
Chief Probation Officer

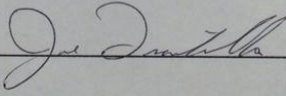
Date: November 4, 2013

From: Joe Frontella
Program Manager
Merced County Probation Officer

To: Whom it may concern

Re: Christine Burk Survey

I have reviewed Ms. Burk's proposal to conduct a survey utilizing the students ordered into the Bear Creek Academy at Merced County's Iris Garret juvenile Justice Correctional Complex. Given her proposed methodology we feel it would be mutually beneficial to her as a Master's student and the Bear Creek Academy to obtain the results of such a survey. I have also received approval from Chief Scott Ball for the survey to take place in the juvenile facility. Therefore, this is a letter of support as it relates to Ms. Burk's survey in the Bear Creek Academy. If there is any follow up questions please contact me at 209-381-1418.

Program Manager Signature: 

Date: 12/9/13

STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE

APPENDIX F

SURVEY

PAR-Juvenile Recidivism

The purpose of this study is to get your opinion on what will reduce juvenile recidivism rates. Juvenile recidivism rates are a measure of how many times a juvenile comes back into custody after being arrested the first time. In short- what would prevent kids from coming back to the juvenile hall?

1. Do you think individual or group counseling would help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

2. Which counseling service do you think would be more effective in reducing the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall: Services offered by a trained professional or those offered by someone who has been in a similar situation as you?

- Trained Professional
- Someone who has been in a similar situation
- Unsure

3. Do you think offering training in interpersonal skills training (i.e., social skills and anger control) would help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

4. Do you think learning positive values such as: Integrity, Honesty, and Trustworthiness would help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

5. Do you think learning how to develop healthy relationships with others would help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

6. Do you think Aftercare services (such as: help with re-entering the school system, obtaining employment, obtaining health care, obtaining mental health services, and help avoiding gangs) would be helpful in reducing the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

7. Do you think moving to another county or to another state help reduce the amount of juveniles who come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

8. Wraparound services involve different agencies working together to address the multiple needs of the individual across home, school, and community, including living environment; basic needs; safety; and social, emotional, educational, spiritual, and cultural needs. Do you think Wraparound services would help reduce the amount of juveniles who come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

9. Do you think that it would reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall if the Probation Department formed community partnerships that would help with the transition from juvenile hall back into the community?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

10. Out of the time frames listed below, which time frame do you think would be best for a program trying to reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- 0-3 months 3-6 months 6-9 months 9-12 months

11. Do you think allowing juveniles to participate in community service reduces the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

12. Do you think it is important for the program to focus on the specific needs of the individual in order to reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

13. Do you think that any program that offers treatment (help) will help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes No Unsure

14. Do you think that leadership development classes would reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

15. Do you think that education focused on the juveniles abilities would help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
 No
 Unsure

16. Do you think employment training such as (building or rehabbing houses, job skills, and trade work) would help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

17. Do you think if a program has high standards of behavior that it would help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

18. Do you think that if a juvenile learns to abide by the rules it will help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

19. Do you think for a program to reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall, that it needs to be implemented well and does what it states it is supposed to do?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

20. Do you think the skills learned in the Work Learning Academy (WLA) (such as gardening, landscaping, physical labor, use of tools) will help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

21. Do you see individuals using the skills learned in WLA once they get out of juvenile hall to reduce the amount of times they come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

22. Do you think encouragement from the staff can help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

23. Do you think that encouragement from family can help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

24. Do you think any encouragement from people will help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

25. Do you think building positive relationships with the staff at the juvenile hall can help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

26. Do you feel like you have a positive relationship with most staff members?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

27. Do you think the life skills (cooking, education, and training) learned in Social Response Training (SRT) help reduce the amount of juveniles who come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

28. Do you think learning skills for job interviews will help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

29. Do you think Recovery Assistance for Teens (RAFT-a drug treatment program) helps reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

30. Do you think having guest speakers that juvenile offenders can relate to (ex., those with criminal backgrounds who have changed their lives) would help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

31. Do you think having military recruiters come to the facility to speak and help juveniles with the process of joining, would help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

32. Do you think having college recruiters come to the facility to speak and help juveniles with the process of applying to school, would help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

33. Do you think tattoo removal clinics would help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

34. Which program are you currently enrolled in?

- Long Term (LT)
- Youth Treatment Program (YTP)

35. How old are you?

- 12-13
- 14-15
- 16-17
- 18-19

36. What is your ethnicity?

- Caucasian
- Asian
- Hispanic
- African American
- Native American
- Other _____

37. What ideas do you have that would help reduce the amount of juveniles that come back to juvenile hall? (OPTIONAL)
