LIFE CONSTRUCTION INTERVENTION PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT FOR

MARGINALIZED YOUNG ADULTS: A CASE STUDY
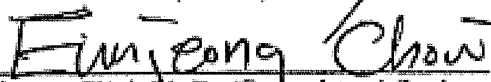
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ABSTRACT

Young adulthood—ranging approximately ages 18 to 26—is a defining period of

development with enduring ramifications for an individual's economic security, health,

and well-being. In this qualitative, explanatory, collective case study, intervention

programs developed for emerging young adults were examined to analyze the

components and services of those programs. Purposeful, non-random (non-probability)

sampling was selected for the study. Pattern matching was used in the study analysis by

focusing on the primary sources of data for this study, which were content and

documentary analysis, e.g., archival data, documentation, written records of events such

as program proposals, and semi-structured, open-ended interviews. The primary sources

of data were used to compare empirically based patterns with predicted ones to (a)

explore evidence-based program components and services demonstrated to contribute to

desired and effective change, (b) assess reasons why those programmatic components and

services were championed as being successful, and (c) determine which of the evidence-

based program components and services were developmentally and culturally appropriate

to build leadership capacity among marginalized young adults. The study findings

indicated that intervention program components and services such as identity

development, journaling, mentoring, and community service helped marginalized young

adults learn how to cope with life's pressures, and problem-solve more effectively. The

intervention program components and services also helped them to harness their

knowledge for better adaptability and decision making. Intervention program developers

can apply the study findings to inform best practice for safe, effective, and customizable

interventions to help marginalized young adults with their transition into socially

acceptable adult roles. Researchers have found that intervention program activities can help marginalized young adults to demonstrate increased awareness of experiences and life choices, build support systems, and influence leadership inclinations. Additional studies are recommended to confirm the transferability of the findings. The research methodology should also be extended to include a quantitative approach to understand further the factors contributing to life construction intervention program success.

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DEDICATION

Thank you to my husband, Jeff, for his constant support to me throughout this process. His patience and love have allowed me the time and resources to complete this study.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Young adulthood – ages approximately 18 to 26 – is a consequential period of development with long-lasting implications for young adults, and our society at large, as well as the development of the next generation. Healthy, productive, and skilled young adults are essential to the nation's workforce, global competitiveness, public safety, and national security. The report, *Investing in the Health and Well-Being of Young Adults* (2015), presented evidence-based consensus recommendations by an authoring committee of experts. The authors of the report indicated that most marginalized young adults entered adulthood with limited education and work experience. They were much less likely than other young adults to experience a successful transition to adulthood (Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults, 2015).

Meeting the needs of marginalized young adults not only improved their lives and helped to decrease persistent inequalities due to family background, but it also enabled them to become fully contributing members of society. A committee convened by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the National Research Council (NRC)(2015) researched young adults with a developmental life-course perspective. The committee found that literature needed to be carefully sourced and analyzed before an effective life construction intervention program for marginalized young adults could be developed. The research and analysis were required to determine what has been proposed as successful programmatic factors of marginalization mitigation among this distinct population of young adults.

The intent of this qualitative, explanatory, collective case study was to identify successful evidence-based components, practices, values, norms, and characteristics of successful intervention programs designed and implemented for marginalized young adults. Pauly, Wallace, and Perkin (2014) published an article intended to provide analytical methodological guidance and clarity in the use of case study designs and theory-driven approaches in the journal *Housing, Care, and Support*. Pauly et al. (2014) found that the explanatory case study research method could be utilized to provide an understanding of the mechanisms by which programs contributed to social change. An explanatory case study approach can help researchers to expound upon data bearing on cause-effect relationships – explaining which causes produced which effects. For example, the explanatory case study design used in this study helped to establish a focus on exploring whether a program worked to understand what it was about a program that made it work. The use of an explanatory research design also helped to establish rationale, methodological guidance, and theory-driven approaches to evaluate interventions that mitigated contributing factors of marginalization among marginalized young adults (Pauly et al., 2014).

The objective of this study was to increase knowledge regarding effective strategies utilized in life construction intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults to assist them with their transition into adulthood. Qualitative methods of collective case study design of inquiry were used to generate an in-depth, multi-dimensional understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context.

Patton, the author of several influential publications on qualitative research and evaluation methods, inquiry frameworks and analysis, stated qualitative analysis is used in an attempt to make sense of qualitative data by distinguishing patterns, recognizing themes, answering primary questions framing a study, and presenting substantively significant findings (Patton, 2014). Qualitative research does not require large sample sizes, given the nature of non-generalizability for qualitative data (Creswell, 2013; Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013; Patton, 2014), though saturation is recommended (Marshall et al., 2013). As noted by Patton (2014), there are limitations in situations (critical events or cases) that are sampled because it is rarely possible to observe all conditions within a single setting. Therefore, instances of multiple intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults were utilized for generating findings to inform changes in practices, programs, and policies. For this study, three convenience cases were selected.

Successful research requires efficient and thorough preparation. In the second edition of *Developing Effective Research Proposals*, Punch (2006) noted that a case study was a research strategy that focused on the in-depth, holistic, and in-context study of one or more cases. The case study is an empirical inquiry about a person, organization, event, campaign, or program – whatever the focus of research. Patton (2014) concluded that case studies were often discussed as a product. From this perspective, the core meaning of a case study was the case, not the methods by which the case was created.

Merriam (1997), the author of a resource guide for qualitative researchers in education, described various types of qualitative research, including case studies. Merriam (1997) highlighted the case study as a technique of inquiry, where the researcher examined, in depth, a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals utilizing a variety of data collection processes. Creswell, an American academic who wrote numerous journal articles and books on mixed methods research, research methods, and qualitative research, elevated the case study to a specific qualitative inquiry and research design tradition that was both an object of study and a methodology, in which the researcher bound the case by place and time. King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) and George and Bennett (2005), representing diverse academic traditions, focused on case studies as processes for developing and testing a theory in qualitative research. In contrast, Flyvbjerg (2011), author of "Case Study" in Denzin and Lincoln, editors, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, *Fourth Edition* found the Merriam-Webster Dictionary's (2009) definition of a case study acceptable: "An intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or community) stressing development factors in relation to environment" (p.103). Regardless of the differences in emphasis, a common thread in defining a case for study is that the case study is an exploration of *a bounded system* or a case (or multiple cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection, involving various sources of information. This bounded system is bounded by place and time, and it is the case under study – a program, an event, an activity, or individuals (Creswell, 1998).

This distinct research method and design, coupled with the social constructivism theory framework, helped to address questions about how social realities were produced, assembled, and maintained. In an article published in *Grounded Theory Review,* Andrews (2012) stated the theory of constructivism as a paradigm or worldview posits that every individual mentally constructs their world of experience through cognitive processes. Qualitative research methods linked with the sociological theory of social constructivism helped to provide valuable insight into the social acclimation behavior of marginalized young adults. Three life construction intervention programs were selected to help identify evidence-based components and services of intervention programs shown to contribute to a favorable transition from childhood to adulthood. The collective case study method was used in the research to assist in discerning why those elements were demonstrated as effective, and also to determine which of the program components and services were developmentally and culturally appropriate to help build leadership capacity among marginalized young adults. Once identified, the program components and services were recommended to serve as the foundation for the design and development of a life construction intervention program targeted toward marginalized young adults, ages 18 through 26, to assist them with their transition from childhood to adulthood.

Study Background/Foundation

Young adults ages 18-26 should be considered as a separate subpopulation in policy and research because they are in a determinative period of development when

successes or failures could significantly alter the trajectories of their lives (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2014). Young adults are in a significant development period as they face economic and social challenges while their brains are still maturing (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2014). A great deal of social, emotional, and cognitive maturation needs to take place before young adults can assume adult responsibilities. The maturation of young adults leads to different experiences, including the opportunities to take on new roles and responsibilities, and changes in their social contexts. Healthy, productive, and skilled young adults are essential to the nation's workforce, global competitiveness, public safety, and national security.

Emerging adulthood is a definitive stage of development. Marginalized young adults between the ages of 18 and 26 in their transition between childhood and adulthood needed improved interventions in the form of support and programs to help them become fully productive members of society (Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults, 2015). A declining number of family-sustaining wage employment opportunities for young adults without a college education, the cost of higher education, and the transition to adult roles exacerbated by economic volatility presented an underlying threat to young adults' healthy adjustment and functioning (Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults, 2015). Meeting the needs of marginalized young adults improved their lives and helped to decrease persistent inequalities due to family background and socioeconomic

circumstances. Helping to meet their needs also had the potential to help them become

fully contributing members of society (Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and

Well-Being of Young Adults, 2015). A comprehensive evaluation of intervention

program components and services that were demonstrated to deliver successful

intervention was lacking, which limited the development of policies and programs

intended to reduce their marginalization (Committee on Improving the Health, Safety,

and Well-Being of Young Adults, 2015).

      The consensus report, *Investing in the Health and Well-Being of Young Adults*

(Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015), described the years

between 18 to 26 in an individual's life as distinct for the development of the individual.

In the report *Investing to Improve the Well-Being of Vulnerable Youth and Young Adults:*

Recommendations for Policy and Practice, Langford, Badeau, and Legters (2015)

provided a framework for understanding vulnerable young people as they made the

transition into adulthood. Langford et al. (2015) found that young adults between the

ages of 18 to 26 experienced specific developmental achievements on their journey to

becoming healthy, connected, and productive adults. This chapter of life was filled with

hope and possibility for young adults as they began to evolve a sense of self, undertake

more independent decisions, create career objectives, embrace a value system, and

develop and intensify essential relationships. Emerging adulthood was also a stage of

development for young adults resulting in long-term consequences for the economic

security, health, and well-being of the individual that impacted their quality of life and

their ability to contribute to society meaningfully. During the years that young adults

were transitioning to adulthood, they also encountered heightened vulnerability and risk

(Langford et al., 2015). The publication by the National Academy of Sciences (2017),

Government Investments in Marginalized Young Adults, was intended to enhance new or

existing surveys or experimental research to advance knowledge regarding a healthy

transition to adulthood.

The NAS (2017) publication referred to young adults who exhibited

characteristics that put them at risk for poor outcomes during young adulthood as

marginalized young adults, whether they were receiving assistance from government

programs, or not (National Academy of Sciences, 2017). The young adults tended to be,

for example, single parents, children of low-income immigrants, those who failed to

complete high school or obtain a G.E.D., those living in poverty, those aging out of foster

care, those in the justice system, and those with disabilities. The young adults frequently

were referred to as marginalized young adults (Committee on Improving the Health,

Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults, 2015).

Although marginalized young adults were a heterogeneous group, they often

shared many characteristics and experiences. For instance, numbers of the young adults

had children outside of marriage before gaining the professional skills and income

necessary to support their families and subsequently were particularly affected by

undereducation and scarcity of employment opportunities. Fenske, Geranios, and Keller

(1997) in their article, "Early Intervention Programs: Opening the Door to Higher

Education" published in the *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*, found those types of circumstances played a significant role in the absence of desire to continue education to postsecondary levels, and in the ability to attain family-sustaining wage employment (Fenske et al., 1997).

Maynard and Ferdman (2015) organized a roundtable discussion for the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP) that included approximately 30 attendees who shared their expertise and passion for raising awareness of marginalized workers and their experiences. The SIOP roundtable attendees agreed that many young adults in this population encountered various trials as impediments to attaining family-sustaining wage employment. Those trials and hindrances involved cultural differences, work and family conflicts, low motivation, low self-efficacy, and difficulty in accessing resources, as well as challenges identifying and taking advantage of developmental opportunities (Maynard & Ferdman, 2015). As noted by Ingmire (2014) in an article titled "Young Adults Often Neglected in Policies and Programs That Could Help Them" published in the December 2014 edition of *UChicago News*, many marginalized young adults also were challenged with social, psychological, and economic complications, in addition to their transition into the adult world.

Many individuals in the marginalized young adult population tended to have, among other socioeconomic related concerns, poorer health, higher stress, and more significant financial challenges than other young adult populations of the same generation. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, in its *4th Edition of*

Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, published research-informed and practitioner-approved best practices for creating and sustaining impactful mentoring relationships and reliable program services. The authors of the MENTOR noted that many marginalized young adults typically did not get to enjoy the full or characteristic benefits that young adults closer to the center tended to receive. They were overlooked regularly despite prevalent leverage afforded mainstream young adults (Mentor, 2009).

The challenges mainstream young adults faced were usually not the result or consequence of a lack of positive male role models, a lack of education, or an inability to receive assistance. These young adults were more likely to be members of the middle class, traditional family, dominant cultural groups. Those cultural groups leveraged circumstances such as increased high school graduation rates, lower high school dropout rates, healthier relationships and lifestyle choices, higher college enrollment rates, and strong relationships with parents, teachers, and peers.

An inability of marginalized young adults to leverage circumstances such as increased high school graduation rates and higher college enrollment rates also hindered successful transition into adulthood. For example, since the early 1940s, the General Educational Development (G.E.D.) test was support for marginalized young adults who failed to complete high school. However, Giarratano (2014) conducted a study that focused on programs likely to help young adults gain the skills needed to succeed in college and careers. Giarratano (2014) found the costs, procedures, and examinations

associated with attaining a G.E.D. had increasingly become barriers impeding the attainment of this diploma.

Schwartz (2014) suggested there was a relationship between previous unfair negative educational spaces and G.E.D. attainment. This assessment was made by Schwarz (2014) based on an ethnographic study of an urban General Education Development (G.E.D.) program. Schwartz (2014) identified educational space as being significant to reemergent learners. For many marginalized young adults, their former learning environments were often unsafe, inappropriate, or unfair, and characteristic of unrelenting potential violence, abuse, excessive rules, dreary surroundings, and perceived ethics violations. Bullying, guns, gang fights, wide-ranging chaos, and tension led to feeling both physically and emotionally unsafe.

Large numbers of marginalized young adults also found it challenging to pay for expensive training and certification programs. Correspondingly, for those marginalized young adults with a high school diploma, the perceived incurred debt accompanying the attainment of a college degree was cost-prohibitive. Subsequently, numerous young adults in the population did not have the experience or training for the most in-demand careers. They had difficulty figuring out how to obtain and leverage their skill sets, as well as finding an ideal employment niche. Such inequality was noteworthy as it was related to marginalized groups who were represented disproportionately in lower socioeconomic brackets.

As noted by Windisch (2016), the Survey of Adult Skills, an international investigation of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as part of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), data indicated there was the necessity to upskill marginalized young adults to maintain national prosperity. The American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Educational Disparities (2012) advised that young adults were vital contributors to our nation's economic well-being and sustainability. The APA (2012) report also noted that many of them were or would become parents who played a vital role in the development of the next generation. The APA (2012) further suggested it was essential to consider the individual as well as societal costs associated with the pervasive underachievement of marginalized young adults. The personal, as well as social, costs of educational and vocational underachievement for this population of young adults, their immediate families, communities, and the economic viability of our nation, were considerable and not to be underestimated (American Psychological Association, 2012). Concern about the risks posed by the individual and societal challenges for marginalized young adults led to the formation and evolution of various intervention programs.

Historical Background

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Missouri Information for Community Assessment (MICA)(2017), created a web-based resource for planning, implementing, and evaluating interventions. MICA (2017) defined an intervention as a combination of program components or strategies designed to produce behavior changes

among individuals or an entire population. Interventions may include, for example, educational programs, new or stronger policies, improvements in the environment, or a health promotion campaign. Interventions can be implemented in different settings, including communities, worksites, schools, health care organizations, faith-based organizations, or in the home.

The report, *Developing A Successful Street Outreach Program: Recommendations and Lessons Learned* by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (2009), was a review of literature on developing recommendations and lessons learned regarding how to best implement intervention programs. In their report, the council noted the history of life intervention work dated back 150 years to when church members and charity groups endeavored to reach out to delinquent boys through offering "Boys' Meetings" (p. 7). Those meetings generally took place in areas outside of the physical confines of their organizations (National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2009). Many of the earlier intervention programs were intended to serve populations perceived as requiring assistance above and beyond what was available from their families and communities. Those programs were promoted further by other service organizations, such as the YMCA, Boy Scouts, and Boys' Clubs, which provided services to boys in the areas where they resided and frequented (National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2009).

More recently, interventions emerged within a broader framework, and outreach efforts for marginalized young adults became vital elements of more comprehensive marginalization mitigation efforts. Intervention programs significantly evolved and were

implemented differently over the past several decades. Though continuing to evolve after

decades of development, a key component of intervention efforts remained outreach work

that engaged marginalized young adults in their communities (National Council on Crime

and Delinquency, 2009).

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS)(2017) published an article in which

risk factors inherent among marginalized young adults were explored. The NAS

explained that while the transition to adulthood could be challenging for any group of

young adults, some young adults were especially vulnerable to having trouble during this

transitional period. Their vulnerability was evidenced as individual or group

characteristics that presented risk factors for a poor transition to adulthood in one or more

areas of health and well-being (National Academy of Sciences, 2017).

Marginalization. The concept of marginality originated in the field of sociology

in the early 20th century. DiFabio and Palazzeschi (2016), in "Marginalization and

Precariat: The Challenge of Intensifying Life Construction Intervention," a journal article

published in the March 2016 edition of *Frontiers in Psychology*, stated the recognition of

marginality was significant in sociological thinking and had a range of meanings. There

were three distinct interpretations of marginality: cultural marginality, social marginality,

and structural marginality. Cultural marginality was determined by differences in terms

of race, ethnicity, religion, and other cultural indicators. Social marginality took place

when a person was not considered part of a positive reference group because of age,

timing, situational constraints, or occupational role. Structural marginality was resultant

from the political, social, and economic powerlessness of specific disadvantaged groups in societies (DiFabio & Palezzeschi, 2016). Marginalization stressed the exclusion from access to power and resources and being on the periphery of society (Maynard & Ferdman, 2015). The concept informed the use of the designation of *marginalized young adults* of social exclusion. The concept was representative of the economic, social, political, racial, ethnic, and cultural marginalization experienced by some individuals. Social forces such as poverty, discrimination, violence and trauma, disenfranchisement, and dislocation were among contributing factors (National Academy of Sciences, 2017).

In "The New Structural Social Work: Ideology, Theory, and Practice," Mullaly and Dupre (2018) presented a coherent theory of social work, with oppression as its central focus. Mullaly and Dupre (2018) reasoned that some minority group populations experienced marginalization attributable to dominant discourses in society. Moreover, Burton and Kagan (2003) offered a framework for community psychology comparing the different contexts and factors that may have impeded initiation and growth of a) favorable ideological climate, b) organizational niches, and c) resources. Mullally and Dupre (2018) established that many marginalized young adults had minimal control over their lives and available resources, limited opportunities to make social contributions, low self-confidence, and low self-esteem (Burton & Kagan, 2003). Burton and Kagan (2003) also noted that disenfranchised young adults were often stigmatized, leading to destructive cycles of isolation indicated by lack of supporting relationships, and the capacity to meaningfully participate in community life.

Chauvel and Schroder (2014) conducted a research project in which they expounded on the formation of attitudes based on the social environment of an individuals' formative years. Chauvel and Schroder (2014) suggested that as young adults transitioned into full-fledged adults, they became less protected through their family. Alternatively, they became influenced by the society around them and developed attitudes based on their experiences during their formative years that frequently lasted a lifetime (Chauvel & Schroder, 2014). When the majority of marginalized young adults were approximately between 18 and 26 years of age, they transitioned between a phase of primary and secondary socialization (Berger and Luckman, 1966).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) asserted that reality was socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge analyzed the process in which this occurred. The sociology of knowledge is a subdivision of the field of sociology in which researchers and theorists focus on knowledge and knowing as socially established processes, and how knowledge is understood to be a social construction (Cole, 2018). Berger and Luckmann (1966) argued that individual members of society simultaneously externalized his/her being into the social world and internalized it as an objective reality. In primary socialization, the individuals' first world was constructed. Primary socialization involved learning sequences that were socially defined and ended when the concept of the generalized other (and all that it encompassed) was established in the consciousness of the individual. Secondary socialization was the internalization of institutional or institution-based 'sub-worlds' (p. 158). Secondary socialization was the attainment of

role-specific knowledge, the roles being directly or indirectly rooted in the division of labor (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Ways to assist marginalized young adults ages 18 to 26 with transitioning from childhood to adulthood that contributed to favorable desired and lasting change to help them become fully productive members of society led to achieving opportunities for the attainment of family-sustaining wage employment. The ways that poverty intersected with issues of marginalized groups were overlooked occasionally. Though poverty cut across identities, it demonstrably impacted some identities much more than others. When exploring why escaping poverty was not nearly as easy as people thought, Olsen (2017) explained that one of the most central aspects of conceptualizing how poverty impacted people was to understand that it was about more than a lack of money. As it related to marginalized young adults overcoming the ill effects of persistent poverty sometimes seemed to be treated as an afterthought. There were various emotional, physical, and even neurological disadvantages that accompanied poverty. Communicating the multiple difficulties that accompanied poverty and examining their impacts helped researchers and theorists to envision an opening that assisted in dismantling the narrative.

Distressing statistics showed that for many marginalized young adults, generational poverty was an absolute reality in many U.S. communities. In an article on the subject of poverty, Montealegre (2016) stated generational poverty occurred when a family had been in poverty for two or more generations. The state of impoverishment was an oppressive existence that nurtured hopelessness, starting with grandparents,

handed down to parents, and subsequently inherited by their children (Montealegre, 2016). The disadvantages associated with social status were often passed down or replicated from generation to generation (American Psychological Association, 2012).

In their research on historical effects, New York University sociologist Sharkey and co-author Elwert utilized the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) survey that provided information on thousands of American families since 1968. The PSID, declared the longest-running longitudinal household survey in the world (Institute for Social Research, 2017), began in 1968 with a representative sample of more than 18,000 individuals, living in 5,000 families in the United States. The survey information was collected continuously on individuals and their descendants, including data on employment, wealth, expenditures, health, marriage, childbearing, child development, philanthropy, education, and various other topics (Institute for Social Research, 2017).

The Panel Study of Income Dynamics survey data contributed to research opportunities for discoveries in understanding connections between economic status, health, and well-being across generations and the life course. The wide-ranging content of the data showed a multi-perspective evaluation and change within families over multiple generations (Institute for Social Research, 2017). Sharkey and Elwert (2011) found individuals who lived in a neighborhood where 20 percent or more of the residents were poor, and having had a parent who grew up in such an environment, appeared to lower the test scores of children. The effects of children living in a poor neighborhood and having parents who also lived in poor neighborhoods were more significant than the

effects of only the second generation living in poverty. Also, the children of two generations of poor neighborhoods fared much worse than those of two generations who managed to stay out of poor neighborhoods.

According to Sharkey and Elwert (2011), survey respondents in the first generation who grew up in poor neighborhoods ran more significant risks than other respondents, on average, of attaining less education, realizing inferior vocational opportunities, and having increased physical, social, and psychological issues. Not surprisingly, those individuals tended to end up in poor neighborhoods as adults. When the first-generation became parents, they often passed down their disadvantages, such as poor reading abilities, to their children. They also passed down their spaces, rearing the second generation in poor neighborhoods, which further hindered their children.

Payne (1996), author of *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, stated that people in poverty faced challenges from both hidden and apparent sources that were almost unknown to individuals of other socioeconomic classes. The reality of poverty manifested a survival mentality that turned attention away from opportunities taken for granted by others. Payne (1996) also noted the following information about generational poverty:

- Education was key to getting out and staying out of generational poverty.
- Being in poverty was rarely about a lack of intelligence or ability.
- Individuals stayed in poverty because they did not see a choice. If they did, they did not know how to access the proper resources or people to get them to the point

of actually choosing to organize themselves, complete assignments, behave

respectfully, plan for the future, and communicate in a conventional register

(Payne, 1996).

Tate, Fallon, Casquarelli, and Marks (2014) conducted a study in which they

investigated career and work-life challenges faced by traditionally marginalized

populations. Tate et al. (2014) explored action steps that could be used to address those

challenges. Although members of marginalized young adult populations faced

significant challenges transitioning to adulthood, Tate et al. (2014) acknowledged that

actions could be taken to resolve some of their more challenging problems.

Deficiencies in the Evidence

In March 2014, the Columbia Global Policy Initiative hosted more than 40

academics, youth activists, policymakers, practitioners, and civil society representatives

for an in-depth discussion on the marginalization and inequality facing young adults. The

Columbia Global Policy Initiative (2014) representatives submitted a report that provided

information about marginalized young adult experiences in times of global, economic,

social, human rights, and environmental challenges. The Columbia Global Policy

Initiative (2014) representatives advised that dedicated research, targeted approaches, and

investments were necessary (Offerdahl, Evangelides, & Powers, 2014) to not only

improve the lives of marginalized young adults but also to help them become fully

contributing members of society, and potentially eliminate cycles of generational poverty.

As noted by Kearney, Wood, and Teare (2015), some people may have attempted

to dismiss issues concerning marginalized young adults because the world has always

known those populations. However, that response, in itself, was a denial of opportunity

to recognize the scope and nature of the problem, and the possibility of taking decisive

action to help marginalized young adults overcome their marginalization through learning

and development initiatives. For example, Kearney et al. (2015), authors of *Designing*

Inclusive Pathways With Young Adults: Learning and Development for a Better World,

explored the potential for self-directed lifelong action learning (LAL) by focusing on the

design of developmental pathways with and for young adults. The authors explained the

reasons why LAL pathways were needed and reestablished innovative approaches

developed by the Global University for Lifelong Learning.

 Both non-governmental and governmental organizations implemented programs

to help combat social problems. However, the programs were often designed and

executed based on assumptions rather than based on data and facts. Unite for Sight

Global Health & Innovation Conference (2011) attendees convened to exchange ideas

and best practices across disciplines to improve public health and international

development. Attendees of the conference determined evidence-based social

interventions required that a better understanding of the barriers (at the person, family,

and provider level) was essential to learn conclusively what worked, what did not, and

why. An understanding of programmatic barriers was needed to determine the efficacy

of social interventions in practice rather than in theory before successful strategies for

marginalized young adults could be formulated (Unite for Sight, 2011). Editors Bonnie,

Stroud, and Breiner (2015) continued to follow the course of examining disparities found among marginalized young adult populations. In *Investing in the Health and Well-Being of Young Adults,* Bonnie et al. (2015) specified the need for improved research to inform integrated pathways, and to identify policy and program provisions for reducing marginalization among disenfranchised young adults.

Qualitative methods of inquiry helped to facilitate an examination of program participants' opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and ideas. Qualitative methods of inquiry also helped to provide program designers and implementers with data needed to determine the expected efficiency, effectiveness, and potential impact of an innovative intervention program before development and implementation.

Problem Statement

The problem is that there is a gap in the knowledge of evidence-based components and services of life construction intervention programs designed and developed to find ways to assist marginalized young adults ages 18 to 26 with their transition from childhood to adulthood, that were shown to contribute to favorable, desired and lasting change that helped them become fully productive members of society. In the report *Investing in the Health and Well-Being of Young Adults* (2015), the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NRC) conveyed that the ages spanning approximately 18 to 26 were significant in the development of young adults. The 18-to 26-year age span for young adults has far-reaching implications for personal economic security, health, and general well-being. The IOM/NCR report data (2015)

also showed that marginalized young adults, such as children of low-income immigrants, those aging out of foster care, those in the justice system, and those who dropped out of school, as well as those with responsibilities of raising young children, for example, were less likely than other young adults to realize a successful transition to adulthood.

Apart from deliberate action, this period of development for marginalized young adults was likely to intensify inequality with lasting consequences into adulthood. Inadequate program interventions were barriers interfering with program initiatives designed to facilitate program objectives. Life construction intervention program development required a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the goals, objectives, and outcomes that would best achieve results for marginalized young adults participating in a life construction intervention program.

Audience

The information in this study informs marginalized young adults ages 18 to 26. The research findings provide evidence-based guidance on life construction intervention program components and services shown to mitigate the social aspects of marginalization. The identified program components and services were also demonstrated as developmentally and culturally appropriate to enhance self-efficacy and build leadership capacity. The information in the study also enlightens program developers and policymakers, as it contributes to a holistic understanding of identified best practices into policies and procedures for mitigating effects of marginalization among marginalized young adults. Lawmakers, community leaders, parents, volunteers,

and potential funders can also benefit as findings developed from the research will help to provide a clear description of the problem. A clear description of the problem will help to convince stakeholders that interventions on behalf of this population of young adults are necessary (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.)). The information in the study also informs future researchers – as it provides baseline information concerning marginalized young adults and life construction intervention program development.

Specific Leadership Problem

Yukl (2006) and Northouse (2010) defined what leadership is, and they provided definitions suggesting several components central to the phenomenon of leadership. Some of them are as follows: (a) leadership is a process, (b) leadership involves influencing others, (c) leadership occurs within the context of a group, (d) leadership involves goal attainment, and (e) the goals are shared by both leaders and their followers (Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2006).

Competing priorities and ever-evolving concerns create meaningful challenges for leaders endeavoring to develop the next generation of leaders (Andenoro, Sowcik, & Balser, 2017). Andenoro et al. (2017) detailed a five-year study exploring the impact of an interdisciplinary undergraduate course on the development of global capacities, complex adaptive leadership, socially responsible agency, and systems thinking. The researchers noted that transferrable qualitative findings indicated that the landscape of leadership education had evolved significantly. At Oxford Brookes University (2011),

Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development, leadership interventions included

learners being taught that familiarity was not sufficient without the exercise of skills in

leadership. Knowing what to do, when, and how, were of central importance in

establishing and maintaining a favorable leadership position (Oxford Brookes University,

2011).

Additionally, ethics was essential to leadership, and comprehension of a

normative judgment of right and wrong decisions was of vital importance to that

understanding (Watkins et al., 2017). In a research paper about leadership, Watkins et al.

(2017) described a basic model for leadership education. Watkins et al. (2017) posited

an ethical theory, leadership development, and practice were interdependent to the degree

that ethics was an integral element of leadership conduct and responses. Effective

leadership supports and develops champions who can establish support and problem-

solve arising difficulties as well as efficiently manage and supervise themselves and

others (Durlak, 2017).

Durlak (2017) reviewed literature that emphasized how research findings and

practical applications confirmed the fundamental importance of program implementation

in successful character education interventions. Therefore, the intention is to develop

emergent leaders who understand complex systems, faithfully adhere to their ethical

value systems, are emotionally intelligent and flexible, and can adapt to emerging

situations (Watkins et al., 2017). Organizational stakeholders such as program directors,

program participants, program employees, potential employers, and the community from

which the program draws its resources, for example, challenge life construction intervention programs with developing leaders among program participants. These leaders will emerge with the capacity to demonstrate an awareness of environmental cues, adapt to changing situations, and thrive in uncertainty while maintaining their value systems (Watkins et al., 2017).

Although the universal value of leadership is well acknowledged, the preferential style of leadership for specific scenarios is arguable. In an influential book on program management leadership and creating successful team dynamics, Bojeun (2014) suggested leadership style plays a powerful role in connecting with individuals and their ability to perform satisfactorily, positively, and innovatively in the effort to meet or exceed business objectives (Bojeun, 2014). Leadership also has a significant effect on organizational culture, the work environment, individual satisfaction, and the achievement of socially responsible agency, along with adaptive leadership capacity and systems thinking (Andenoro et al., 2017). Bojeun (2014) found effective leaders established a style of leadership that agreed with the culture of the organization and promoted a healthy and safe environment for individuals in which to function without fear of retaliation, conflict, or backbiting.

In his Pulitzer Prize-winning, seminal leadership study, Burns (1978) noted that the principal function of leadership is to achieve a collective purpose. He also stressed that leadership is based primarily on a relationship between the leader and followers. Leadership identifies, reacts to, and is linked to the needs and goals of followers. In

determining the essential characteristics of leadership, Burns (1978) found leadership is executed by engaging and motivating followers to act to further specific objectives and purposes "that represent the values, and motivations, the wants and needs, the aspirations, and expectations of both leaders and followers" (p. 19). Chaneski (2016) discussed the situational leadership model developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard. Chaneski's (2016) comprehensive definition of leadership was that of guiding others to the desired result. The emphasis is on the word *guide* as it communicates the capability to behave in ways that influence the thinking, behavior, and performance of others.

Life construction intervention programs were intended to help program participants understand themselves better, develop their life and career paths, and construct their identities (DiFabio & Palazzeschi, 2016). Brock (2010) reviewed systematic research findings on the effectiveness of various interventions intended to help at-risk young adults. Brock (2010) argued that it was essential to bring practices demonstrated by evidence to scale and to test new concepts that might lead to better outcomes (Brock, 2010).

Career and personal development require an individual focus. Program participant developmental needs varied according to the wants, wishes, abilities, skills, and other personal qualities and attributes of the individuals. A recurrent theme addressed throughout the programs were the obstacles many marginalized young adults faced in making the transition to adulthood (Brock, 2010). The life construction

intervention program process was designed for participants to ask, and answer about themselves questions such as:

- What does it mean to you to be able to influence your future positively?

- What does it mean to you to take responsibility for your future?

- What does it mean to you to have a belief in your abilities to build your future?

Di Fabio and Palazzeschi (2016) proposed life construction intervention complemented participants' engagement in their development of life construction, assisting the progress of construction, deconstruction, reconstruction, and co-construction of their life story. Clear values were fundamental to concerns of credibility and effectiveness within the program development. Clear values guided the development of vocational skills that led to life-altering, meaningful employment opportunities, and opportunities to strengthen and build literacy skills for the achievement of continuing education.

Gravells (2012) examined factors providing the basis for an approach to both leadership selection and development and found subscribing to a strong belief-system within which decisions and behavior were deemed consistent helped program staff as well as program participants in several ways:

- It imbued in them a sense of passion and enthusiasm for what they were doing and supported them through difficulty and resistance.

- It provided credibility as leaders and role models for what their organizations represented.

- It empowered self-monitoring of decisions against a moral and ethical frame of reference.

- It permitted them to set an authentic tone for the organization and indicate the type of behavior that would be acceptable and acknowledged.

Leadership development is an essential component of the implementation and delivery of new intervention programs that increase the chances of program participants' realizing success. Effective program implementation cannot be accomplished without continual, capable leadership. Both research and practice suggest the exact nature of leadership style depending on the circumstance will vary. There is no one-size-fits-all leadership style.

Many leadership methodologies and theories have emerged over the last century, ranging from autocratic, bureaucratic, charismatic, democratic, to great man, laissez-faire, leadership traits, servant, situational, transactional, transformational, etc. Each leadership style has its pros and cons, assumptions, and limitations, as well as positive and negative qualities. Bojeun (2014) found that current research placed greater emphasis on situational and transformational leadership styles.

Situational Leadership

McCleskey (2014) described three seminal leadership theories and their development. He also discussed the concept of leadership development and offered

suggestions for practical applications of research findings. Developed by management experts Hersey and Blanchard in 1969, situational leadership McCleskey (2014) explained emphasized the need to adapt the leaders' style to the maturity level of followers. Situational leadership also characterizes effective leadership as conditional on follower capability. The point of view presented by McCleskey (2014) was this style of leadership highlights the way leaders skillfully affected combinations of leadership characteristics in a responsive, flexible approach to meet either the needs of the situation and environment or the needs of specific followers (Gravells, 2012). The situational leadership continuum represents the degree to which the leader places attention on required tasks, or their relationships with followers (McCleskey, 2014). Glaser, Stam, and Takeuchi's (2016) study focusing on leadership competencies drew on theories of behavioral decision making and situational strength to lead others and be adaptive to change. Based on insights gained from their study, Glaser et al. (2016) concluded one objective of situational leadership is to advance knowledge of individual differences that encourage followers to manage risks of proactivity and attain higher job performance from personal initiative (Glaser et al., 2016).

Situational leadership aligns leadership behaviors in ways that are either people or task-oriented. The effective leader utilizing a situational approach to leadership engages in a mix of task and relation behaviors (McCleskey, 2014). Task-oriented leaders develop organizational designs, designate roles for followers, institute strict communication channels, and disseminate precise instructions. In contrast, relation-

oriented leaders demonstrate concern for others, try to mitigate emotional conflicts, pursue amicable relationships, and manage equal participation. Both interpretations of situational leadership acknowledge that task-oriented and relation-oriented demeanors are dependent, rather than independent, approaches (McCleskey, 2014).

Chaneski (2016) suggested the situational leadership model defined four leadership styles that could be adopted in appropriate situations: "directing," "coaching," "supporting," and "delegating" (p. 44). Chaneski (2016) described the directing style of leadership as " very hands-on" (p. 44). The follower is directed in detail and closely monitored concerning how to complete assignments to ensure anticipated results are accomplished. The coaching style is the next step in situational leadership development and requires less directing. The coaching style is preferred when the leader continues to detail assignments but begins to open lines of communication and solicits ideas and suggestions from followers. A coaching style of leadership gives followers more significant challenges, as the leaders intend that followers take increased ownership of their assignments, while simultaneously increasing their skills and knowledge.

The third style of leadership in situational leadership progression is supporting. The supporting form of leadership permits followers' greater control and more freedom in decision making regarding the completion of an assignment after defined standards of performance have been met (Chaneski, 2016). The supporting style of leadership is intended to increase followers' abilities by providing them with more significant challenges to encourage them to offer more ideas and suggestions.

The final style of leadership in the situational leadership progression, according to Chaneski (2016), is delegating. Delegating takes on a laid-back approach to leadership and is the one most preferred by leaders (Chaneski, 2016). This style is optimal for leaders to guide high-functioning followers because, at this stage, followers have learned the skills necessary to function almost independently. Situational leadership can be defined as a leadership style that effects change in individuals and social systems.

Transformational Leadership

According to Kendrick (2011), Burns first introduced the concept of transformational leadership in his descriptive research on political leaders. The idea has now been recognized and endorsed by organizational development specialists as a significant style to advance operational and organizational change. McCleskey (2014) noted that published studies linked transformational leadership to CEO achievement, emotional intelligence, cross-cultural leadership, middle manager effectiveness, military leadership, personality, virtual teams, and various other subject matters. To achieve the findings reported in their study, *Achieving High Quality Through Transformational Leadership: A Qualitative Multilevel Analysis of Transformational Leadership and Perceived Professional Quality* authors Andersen, Bjornholt, Bro, and Holm-Petersen (2018) applied a qualitative multilevel comparative case design to investigate the transformational leadership- professional-quality relationship. Andersen et al. (2018) established that transformational leaders strive to make organizational visions transparent

for all stakeholders and that professional norms may be more congruent with an emphasis on how the organization contributes to society (Andersen et al., 2018).

Burns (1978) characterized a transformational leader as an individual who raises the consciousness level of followers regarding the significance and value of desired outcomes, and the methods of achieving those outcomes. Transformational leadership and action are needed to secure the benefits of the following five management practices fully: (1) stabilizing the tension between production efficiency and reliability, (2) developing and maintaining trust throughout the organization, (3) vigorously directing the change process, (4) engaging workers in the decision-making process of work design and workflow, and (5) utilizing knowledge management procedures to structure the organization as an institution of learning. Transformational leadership develops when leaders engage with their followers in pursuit of commonly held goals. Their intentions, although at the onset, may have been separate but related, become integrated (U.S. Committee on the Work Environment for Nurses and Patient Safety, Institute of Medicine, 2004).

Transformational leadership is a style of leadership framed as elevating or inspiring. As stated by McCleskey (2014), the transformational leader influences followers to go beyond their self-interest for the sake of the organization while simultaneously developing their needs on a scale from lower-level matters of safety and security to higher-level involvements such as achievement and self-actualization.

Followers often feel inspired to become more active, with the likely result that followers will themselves become leaders (Burns, 1978; Kendrick, 2011).

Bateh and Heyliger (2014) published an article in the *Journal of Leadership Education* in which they described their examination of the impact of leadership styles. Bateh and Heyliger (2014) identified transformational leadership as a leadership style that emphasizes followers. Transformational leadership influences are intended to motivate individuals toward self-realization to achieve higher performance levels and effect leadership characteristics within each individual. Essentially, transformational leadership is a relationship of reciprocal encouragement and inspiration that increases the level of human behavior, as well as the mutual aspirations of the leader and those led, therefore resulting in a transforming effect on both leaders and followers (Burns, 1978).

Transformational leadership is established by specific behaviors on the part of leaders. Leaders take an active role in developing and making a commitment to relationships with followers. The practices include the development of organized, continuous channels that promote open-ended communication and the transfer of information and ideas (U. S. Committee on the Work Environment for Nurses and Patient Safety, Institute of Medicine, 2004). Burns (1978) stated that transformational leaders modify and elevate the goals, motives, and values of followers by addressing their needs and instructing them on commonly shared objectives.

Kendrick (2011) suggested that transformational leadership embodies four motivators: a. Idealized influence, b. Inspirational motivation, c. Intellectual stimulation,

and, d. Individual consideration. To varying degrees, each of the four motivators is exhibited in efforts to get desired outcomes through followers (McCleskey, 2014).

Idealized influence. Idealized influence is based on trust. The individual in the leadership role must display high moral and ethical standards. Moral and ethical standards are the foundations upon which the bond between leaders and followers is established (Kendrick, 2011).

Inspirational motivation. Inspirational motivation assists followers to understand what the right thing is to do. Inspirational motivation also inspires the drive for collective goals and visions (Kenrick, 2011).

Intellectual stimulation. Intellectual stimulation encourages followers to question underlying assumptions as well and to conceive innovative solutions to problems.

Individual consideration. Individual consideration recognizes each follower as a unique contributor and enables guidance, the provision of evaluative information, mentoring, and development opportunities (Kenrick, 2011). Dolph (2017) suggested that this style of leadership is centered on leader personality and the ability to help followers cultivate a vision advancing meaningful goals. Li and Hung (2009) found that transformational leadership shifts the emphasis from the leader to the quality of the relationship between leaders and their followers and encourages followers toward self-realization.

Situational and Transformational Leadership

Leadership cannot always anticipate the problems that inevitably appear when something new is attempted, especially when the endeavor is complicated and requires the collaboration and cooperation of others (Durlak, 2017). Situational and transformational are evidence-based leadership styles demonstrated as applicable for effective intervention program implementation. Effective transformational leadership can encourage program participants toward self-actualization. Situational leadership proficiency supports adaptivity and flexibility according to the situation, environment, and program needs.

Situational leadership highlights leadership along a continuum between task-orientation and relation-orientation behaviors (McCleskey, 2014). Situational leadership also requires knowledge of diverse approaches to leadership, when to leverage the different approaches, and how to tailor the approaches to followers and situations (Bojeun, 2014). This leadership style also emphasizes levels of follower maturity as inherent qualities that must be considered when establishing an appropriate leadership style (McCleskey, 2014).

Transformational leaders guide and coach, treat individuals with respect, encourage creativity, act with integrity, help to inspire followers, and help followers contribute to a vision. With transformational leadership, results are achieved by utilizing the four motivators of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual

stimulation, and individual consideration to varying degrees to get followers to achieve

organizational outcomes (McCleskey, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify evidence-based components and

services of intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults. The

objective of the research was to establish what experts recognized as essential elements

of intervention programs that helped to build self-efficacy and leadership capacity among

marginalized young adults. The research findings are intended to help in the

development of intervention programs for marginalized young adults ages 18 to 26,

which are developmentally and culturally appropriate to assist them with a healthy

transition into adulthood.

A healthy transition to adulthood depends upon the development of individual

attributes that encourage, reflect, and support forward-moving, positive, mature

development. The impetus for the emergence of the situational leader model perhaps

started with a seminal work by Murphy (1941), who argued, "Leadership does not reside

in the person. It is a function of the whole situation" (p. 674). Murphy (1941) regarded

the leadership process as an interplay of forces; as an integrative activity. Leadership

comes into being when an individual meets specific social needs (Murphy, 1941). Life

construction intervention program components and services are designed to inform and

develop individual attributes while affirming the qualities of a person that distinguishes

him or her as a leader. Life construction intervention program participation helps

participants to discover that leadership takes multifaceted forms, that it is ambiguous, that the qualities essential at one time are nonessential at other times, that leaders rise and fall as situations change, and that the same individual alternates between leading and following (Murphy, 1941).

The purpose of this qualitative, explanatory, multiple-case study was to examine a convenience sample of three intervention programs designed and implemented to cultivate life readiness skills and workforce competencies for marginalized young adults. The main focus of the project was to generate information and identify components and services concerning intervention program activities that promoted a favorable and sustainable transition into adulthood for marginalized young adults. The relevant outcomes were self-efficacy, commitments to community service, career aspiration and attainment, self-sufficiency, and ways in which the programs helped marginalized young adult participants and translated into benefits for themselves and their respective communities. Outcomes were presented, emphasizing the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Methodology Overview

The qualitative, explanatory, multiple-case study approach was used in this research study to help answer questions that explained the presumed causal link among life construction intervention program implementation, participation, and program effects. Qualitative methods of research based on Creswell's (2014) collective case study design of inquiry that explore a social or human problem were relied on to investigate a

broad scope of complex issues. Qualitative research does not require large sample sizes, given the nature of non-generalizability for qualitative data (Creswell, 2013; Marshall et al., 2013; Patton, 2014), though saturation is recommended (Marshall, et al., 2013). A case study is a research strategy that focuses on the in-depth, holistic, and in-context study of one or more cases (Punch, 2006). Yin (2018) found a characteristic of case study research was the use of multiple data sources. Various data sources were used in this study to help establish credibility (Yin, 2018). Three select cases of intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults were utilized for purposes of case study comparison to generate findings that could be used to inform changes in practices, programs, and policies (Patton, 2014).

The qualitative, explanatory, collective-case study methodology was an approach to the research that facilitated the examination of complex phenomena in great depth. The phenomena were able to be examined within their contexts with careful attention paid to detail and nuance. The data collection was not constrained by predetermined analytical categories, which contributed to the potential breadth of the qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2014). Baxter and Jack (2008) stated when the qualitative method is applied correctly; it becomes a valued process for social science research to develop theory, evaluate programs, and establish interventions (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

A case study is a detailed and rich account of a person, organization, event, campaign, or program – whatever the focus of study. Creswell (1998) elevated the case study to a specific "qualitative inquiry and research design tradition" that is both an

object of research and a methodology, in which the researcher bounds the case by place and time (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) and George and Bennett (2005) focused on a case study as a process for developing and testing theory. In contrast, Flyvbjerg (2011) found the dictionary definition of a case study acceptable: "An intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or community) stressing developmental factors in relation to the environment (p. 301)."

Regardless of the differences in emphasis, a common theme in defining a case for study is that the case study is an exploration of a "bounded system" or a case (or multiple cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection, involving various sources of information (Creswell, 1998, p. 213). This bounded system is bounded by place and time, and it is the case under study – a program, an event, an activity, or individuals. From this perspective, the core meaning of a case study is the case, not the methods by which the case is created.

According to Punch (2006), qualitative research can be explanatory. An explanatory study is a type of research design that focuses on questions such as 'Why is this the circumstance of the situation?' or 'How does (or did) the situation come about?' Explanatory questions ask 'why.' Explanatory case studies are used to explore and describe phenomena but can also be used to explain causal relationships and to develop a theory. An explanatory approach to the research was used in this study to interpret the descriptive information. The explanatory research design was utilized to find the reasons for the phenomenon, showing why and how they are, what they are. When it is known

why (or how) something happens, more is known than just what happens, and the explanation(s) can be utilized for prediction.

A multiple-case study design facilitated the exploration of differences and similarities within and between the cases. The goal of the study was to replicate findings across cases. Because comparisons were made, cases needed to be carefully selected so that similar and contrasting results could be examined across cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Data sources for this study included but were not limited to documentation (e.g., newspaper articles, books), archival records (e.g., government reports), and quantitative survey data, which assisted a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study. Criteria-based case selection established on specific criteria (effective intervention program components and services) of cases that met the requirements were studied. Comparing the cases that met the requirements with those that did not contributed to selecting cases that revealed and illuminated key themes and patterns. Data from the multiple sources helped to establish lines of evidence that increased the rigor of findings and enabled the triangulation of evidence. The data were converged in the analysis. The study findings were utilized to provide insight into effective components and services of life construction intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults ages 18 to 26. The study findings also helped to inform the research recommendations.

Despite the multifaceted applications of case study designs, case studies have received criticism. The case study design has been criticized for lack of rigor, and the

tendency for researchers to convey a biased interpretation of the data. In an article about the case study as a research method Zainal (2007), noted other criticisms were that case studies provided little basis for generalization since they often used a small number of subjects; they were too lengthy and were often challenging to conduct. However, Yin (2003) found parameter establishment and objective setting of the research to be more important in the case study design than a large sample size.

Research Questions

In "Building Consistency Between Title, Problem Statement, Purpose, & Research Questions to Improve the Quality of Research Plans and Reports," Newman and Covrig (2013) stated research questions were subsequent to the why and what of the study. Research questions help to provide context to the research and expand the study's purpose. This research was conducted to discover data to answer each of the following questions:

RQ #1 –What evidence-based components of life construction intervention programs, developed for marginalized young adults, have been shown to contribute to the effective transition from childhood to adulthood successfully?

RQ #2 - Why do specific components of life construction intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults contribute to the effective transition from childhood to adulthood successfully?

RQ #3 – What programs and services are developmentally and culturally appropriate, to assist in the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to build leadership capacity among marginalized young adults?

Study Limitations

In any data analysis, there is the possibility for mistakes. In this study, the investigation was focused on perceptions of what was considered effective intervention program components and services based on feedback from program administrators, participants, and a secondary data review. The inherent subjectivity of these perspectives may have impacted or influenced the interpretation of the findings. Various authors, such as Trochim (2006), have discussed the advantages of secondary data analysis, some of those advantages include efficiency, conservation of participant pools, and the benefit of using unobtrusive measures to obtain the data. While the use of secondary data makes the data representative, a secondary analysis is not without difficulties (Trochim, 2006). For instance, Chudagr and Luschei (2016), in "The Untapped Promise of Secondary Data Sets in International and Comparative Education Policy Research," observed that the absence of a key variable could pose a challenge that makes an otherwise interesting data set impractical for a specific research question.

Also, when using secondary data for analysis, it is essential to consider sampling error. Researchers working with secondary data must consider associated aspects such as if the data already collected was accumulated using faulty or biased procedures. If so, the findings of the subsequent case study analysis would be ambiguous. Miles and

Huberman (1994), authors of a sourcebook for researchers using qualitative data, stated

determining adequate sample size in qualitative research was ultimately a matter of

judgment. A highly representative sample produces very little error. However, a gap

between sample and population can be problematic. The small number of units for

analysis in this study may have made it challenging to find significant relationships in the

data. However, it is essential to note that the sample size is typically smaller in

qualitative research. The researcher could continue to collect more data. However, more

data do not necessarily generate more information (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The degree to which data measurements reflected what they were trying to

measure was a vital consideration when factors of validity and reliability were

considered. When describing methods of ensuring validity in qualitative studies, authors

such as Lincoln and Guba (1985), Golafshani (2003), Maxwell (2005), and Leung (2015)

agreed that unlike quantitative research, where statistical or experimental methods are

applied to ensure validity, qualitative studies are validated and considered reliable

through 'trustworthiness' and 'rigor' (Lincoln & Guba, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985;

Golafshani, 2003; Maxwell, 2005; Leung, 2015).

For this study, validity concerned the credibility inherent in the data, or the

likelihood that the assessment made sense for the data being evaluated. Validity was

dependent on truth value, constancy/impartiality, and applicability (Noble & Smith,

2015). Reliability addressed whether the measurement taken would yield similar results

every time the analysis was undertaken.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative, explanatory, multiple-case study was to explore life construction intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults, by examining intervention programs and how the programs translated into benefits for marginalized young adults. Before developing a strategy to address the problem, it was imperative to establish that the problem was understood. An evaluation of the problem was essential to develop clear goals, and more importantly, the appropriate target population of the outreach, necessary partners, and the types of resources needed to support the targeted population (National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2009). When considering the high levels of need among marginalized young adults without clear goals and strategies, it could have been tempting for outreach program developers to target a more extensive range of needs than the programs could reasonably expect to effectively impact (National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2009).

This chapter, Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study, provided an overview of seminal research concerning marginalized young adults and the development of interventions implemented to assist them with their transition from childhood to adulthood. The information in this chapter also presented the focus of the research, which was young adult marginalization and intervention program development. Chapter 2: Literature Review, provides a synopsis from a variety of published data sources that advocated life construction intervention program development to assist marginalized young adults with their transition into adulthood.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Young adulthood is typically associated with ages beginning at 18 and ending at 26; however, its physical, psychological, or cultural manifestations may start earlier and end later. Thus, age provides only a general idea of young adulthood; therefore, scholars have found it challenging to agree upon its exact definition. In studying young adulthood development age can be characterized biologically, as the physical evolution noticeable by the onset of puberty and the completion of growth; cognitively, as developments in the ability to think abstractly and multi-dimensionally; or socially, as a stage of preparation for adult roles. An overall approach to defining young adulthood is the period of transition from child-to-adulthood. This period of development manifests long-term consequences for the economic security, health, and well-being of the individual, which also have residual implications that impact the quality of life and the ability to contribute to society meaningfully.

During the transition period to adulthood, young adults enter new contexts across a range of domains, e.g., school, work, and relationships. The transition period from childhood to emerging or young adulthood has been distinguished as a season of exploration and human capital acquisition. The transition period from childhood to adulthood therefore serves as a decisive precursor to successful adulthood. The transition to adulthood in the United States has become increasingly individualized and prolonged in the present-day generation of young adults compared to earlier generations.

Along with the advent of the twentieth century came the realization of childhood and adolescence as singular stages in which young people should be provided support to learn and develop. The American people resolved to take increased responsibility for the care of its young adults. At the outset, interventions to support young adults were primarily in response to existing crises. The focus of a majority of the interventions was on reducing crime or transforming unsuitable character attributes.

As problems with young adults became pervasive, intervention and treatment for a considerable number of specific issues were established. Over the past several decades policies and services intended to reduce problem behaviors of troubled young adults increased concerning issues such as substance abuse, conduct disorders, delinquent and antisocial behavior, academic failure, and out of wedlock pregnancy. Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins (2002) published research findings on the evaluation of programs emphasizing young adult interventions. Their report was a summary of the assessments of interventions, identifying elements that contributed to both the success and lack of success in intervention programs and program evaluations. Catalano et al. (2002) also identified the need for systematic review across programs to further their positive outcomes.

Throughout the 1950s, increased crime rates, in addition to concerns about troubled young adults, inspired numerous federal funding initiatives to respond to the issues. During the 1960s, crime rates, and concerns about troubled young adults increased, along with national poverty rates, single parenthood, and family mobility

(Catalano et al., 2002). In the 1980s, intervention efforts that focused solely on individual problem behavior came under increased scrutiny. In the 1990s, educational intervention programs developed with the objectives of providing social and educational services to reduce gaps and to provide advice and guidance to encourage school or vocational success (Catalano et al., 2002). Moving forward beyond the developments of the 1990s, intervention practitioners adopted a broader view. The promotion of social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development was increasingly recognized as being essential to preventing problem behaviors and educational and vocational attainment.

Hanover Research (2014) released a report delineating best practices for improving student achievement. The report included strategies for engaging students and improving student outcomes, including career and technical education. Section 1 of the report, *Closing the Achievement Gaps for Student Sub-Groups*, provided information on the state of achievement gaps and promising, evidence-based approaches to narrowing performance gaps based on factors such as socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity. The strategies applied were intended to increase performance through various methods such as differentiated approaches to learning, autonomy growth, social participation, as well as the promotion of self and social acceptance (Hanover Research, 2014). An extensive body of research and secondary literature concerning marginalized young adults supported that successful transition to adulthood for marginalized young adults required more than information about drug and violence avoidance (Catalano et al., 2002).

Approximately two decades ago, intervention approaches began to appear with an emphasis on averting problem behaviors before they happened. Increasingly, investigators and practitioners sought ways to address the challenging circumstances of young adult lives. Commonly predicated on earlier prevention efforts, most intervention programs focused on preventing a single problem/behavior. Many early intervention programs were not based on theory and research on young adult development or the factors that influenced it. Intervention strategies changed as applications were evaluated, especially when some approaches proved ineffective at influencing positive behaviors.

A significant turning point took place when researchers and service providers began incorporating information from longitudinal studies that identified predictors of significant challenges young adults encountered, especially as they transitioned into adulthood. Developers of intervention strategies sought to use this information about predictors to interrupt the progressions leading to specific problems. For example, drug abuse prevention programs began to address empirically identified predictors of adolescent drug use, such as peer and social influences, and behaviors that were ostensibly condoned or endorsed as social norms (Catalano et al., 2002). Those intervention activities were often influenced by theories about how people made decisions.

The developers of the predominant intervention models urged the examination of complexities inherent in problem behaviors, as well as common predictors of multiple behavior problems (Catalano et al., 2002). Researchers began to encourage the

integration of knowledge concerning environmental influences and connections between individual and environmental influences. The practitioners, when trying to understand and mitigate both cognitive and developmental factors inherent in learning differentiation, helped expand the design of intervention programs. Many practitioners, policymakers, and prevention scientists supported emphasizing problem prevention in addition to addressing issues of positive self-efficacy. Cherry (2018), an author, educational consultant, and speaker dedicated to helping students learn about psychology, stated psychologist Albert Bandura defined self-efficacy as one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task. One's sense of self-efficacy plays a significant role in how one approaches goals and challenges. Self-efficacy reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's motivation, behavior, and social environment.

Effective intervention programs addressed a range of favorable development objectives, yet shared common themes. Most programs had goals that were intended to help participants to strengthen social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral competencies, and address issues of self-efficacy, as well as family and community standards for healthy social and personal behavioral development. Intervention programs included developmental components intended to:

- encourage bonding

- cultivate resilience

- develop social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and moral competence

- advance self-determination

- promote spirituality

- cultivate positive self-identity

- stimulate belief in the future

- provide recognition for positive behavior, and opportunities for prosocial participation, and,

- champion prosocial norms (healthy standards for behavior) (Catalano et al., 2002).

The Health Resources and Services Administration and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Defense recognized a lack of attention to young adulthood as a distinct season of life in policy and research. They commissioned the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and the National Research Council (NRC) to review and summarize what was known about the health, safety, and well-being of young adults, and to offer recommendations for policy and research. In the resulting consensus report, *Investing in the Health and Well-Being of Young Adults* (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015), the years between 18 to 26 were described as pivotal in the development of the individual.

Lee and Waithaka (2016) examined studies that focused on emerging adulthood. In "The Intersections of Marginalized Social Identities in the Transition to Adulthood: A Demographic Profile," Lee and Waithaka (2016) warned that young adults from marginalized populations were more inclined to experience transitional challenges. They either adopted adult roles earlier than their more privileged peers or lacked opportunities necessary to successfully assume adult roles. Either instance could increase the probability of a challenging transition to adulthood.

Arnett (2019), a contributing author to the growing body of literature on emerging adulthood, in *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road From Late Teens Through the Twenties*, defined adulthood as manifesting characteristics such as taking responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions and becoming financially independent. Those transitional traits resulted in significant challenges when young adults could not acquire the identity and human capital that their more privileged peers typically achieved during this period (Lee & Waithaka, 2016). Lee and Waithaka (2016) also noted that general trends during this transitional period presented unique opportunities that altered developmental trajectories, especially adverse pathways that further reinforced childhood disadvantages.

Information in the 2015 IOM/NRC report described many marginalized young adults as poor, having little or no exposure to postsecondary education and occupational training, often lacking access to gainful employment, and as being socially and economically neglected. This description of marginalized young adults closely aligned

with the definition found in the Encyclopedia of World Problems & Human Potential

(2000). The 2015 IOM/NRC report findings also indicated that successful transition to

adulthood for marginalized young adults was less likely than for those of other young

adult populations. The 2015 IOM/NRC report findings further established that programs

targeted toward marginalized young adults lacked a comprehensive view. The lack of a

holistic view was problematic for many reasons. One of the reasons was that the majority

of citizens in the U.S. would be people of color by the middle of the century.

Identity, marginalization, and privilege are interrelated. The intricacies of identity

merge to create a network of privilege or marginalization that influence access to

resources such as employment opportunities, quality educational experiences, and

equitable access to prosperity (Ratts, 2017). In an article published in the *Journal of

Mental Health Counseling*, "Charting the Center and the Margins: Addressing Identity,

Marginalization, and Privilege in Counseling," Ratts (2017) stated identity was

interpreted as a social category that individuals gave meaning to, such as age, economic

class, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation, to list a few. Status refers

to whether one's identity leads to marginalization or privilege in society. Unless more

marginalized young adults achieve higher levels of education and training, the U. S.

society will possibly fail to cultivate the human talent that is vital for the health and

success of our nation.

Failure to successfully achieve desired and meaningful employment was

experienced by many people, particularly, as noted by Lysaght and Cobigo (2014), those

in social groups that have commonly been socially isolated. Often excluded from local and national development advances, marginalized young adults were particularly vulnerable to economic disturbances, social instability, and conflicts. Marginalized young adults also faced myriad issues concerning healthy transitions into adulthood; one of those issues was social exclusion.

Social inclusion is an integral part of the quality of life. Social inclusion and gainful employment are essential in the development of self-image, self-efficacy, and empowerment. Lysaght and Cobigo (2014) presented a theoretical model of social inclusion. The model had as its core social role participation and helped to clarify and offer insights as to how inclusion and social role success contributed to the quality of life across a wide range of populations.

As a complementary approach, Jacobson (2013) proposed mitigating patterns of marginalization through personal development education (PDE). Personal Development Education (PDE) – a process of internal analysis, reflection, and questioning included interpersonal and interaction skills designed to prepare lower-income and immigrant students with skills that were required for individuals to function and succeed in global-oriented 21st-century colleges and careers. The PDE process was designed as a means of disrupting patterns of exclusion of socio-economically disadvantaged young adult populations. The PDE process was considered as an avenue for providing authentic knowledge, skills, and abilities to encourage their success in educational and vocational pursuits. The emphasis was on "soft skills," meaning the skills that did not fall into the

technical domain (Jacobson-Lundeberg, 2013, p. 26). The process of personal

development education (PDE) helped to equip young adults with another set of

navigational skills to mediate the cultural capital assets of the dominant class less familiar

to socio-economically disadvantaged populations.

In her qualitative study, Jacobson (2013) examined students' perceptions of how

intentionally taught 21st-century skills transformed their lives. One of the findings from

the study indicated that communication was the gateway skill to 21st-century

proficiencies. This finding was resultant of students' perceptions of how the PDE process

improved their abilities to communicate more effectively and work collaboratively with a

diversity of individuals.

For example, the program design for the Community Improvement Through

Youth (CITY) intervention program utilized PDE methods to advance a purposeful,

strength-based process to encourage the necessary supports and opportunities needed to

succeed in both life and the workplace. The Community Improvement Through Youth

(CITY) program used one of Cornell University's Cooperative Extension's Signature

Programs, Youth Community Action (YCA), as a model for encouraging civic

engagement, workforce preparation, and asset development among at-risk young adults.

The CITY program was designed to be a broad-based community collaboration approach

that promoted participants to become community change agents. The program

participants gained job skills through paid employment as they performed community

improvement projects. The primary objective of the program was to help program

participants set achievable goals and work in partnership with them to create lasting, sustainable changes in their communities.

The program concept originated from a body of research concerning the features of intervention programs demonstrated to promote positive developmental outcomes. The CITY program administrators adhered to a set of *Guiding Principles* developed by the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR). The CYFAR funding program was a grant program that allocated funding for community-based programs for at-risk children and their families. The CYFAR guiding principles provided a formal code of ethics for behavior that guided the principles of conduct used in making decisions. Table 1 presents the principles developed by CYFAR used by CITY to guide interventions targeted in the program.

Table 1

CYFAR Guiding Principles

Guiding Principle	Description
Physical and Psychological Safety	The program was designed to emphasize safe and health-promoting facilities and practices that increased safe peer group interaction and decreased unsafe or confrontational peer relations.
Appropriate Structure	The program was designed to encourage limit setting, consistent rules and

	expectations, control, continuity and predictability, clear boundaries, and age-appropriate monitoring.
Supportive Relationships	The program was designed to encourage and demonstrate warmth, closeness, connectedness, respectable communication, caring, support, guidance, safe attachment, and responsiveness.
Opportunities to Belong	The program was designed to integrate opportunities for meaningful inclusion, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disabilities, social inclusion, social engagement and integration, opportunities for social-cultural identity formation, and support for cultural and bicultural competence.
Positive Social Norms	The program was designed to provide rules of behavior, expectations, injunctions, procedures, values and morals, and obligations for community service.

Support for Efficacy	The program was designed to emphasize support for efficacy: utilizing empowerment practices that supported autonomy and making a difference in the community. The program was designed to help program participants practice empowerment, enhance responsibility, and promote meaningful challenges.
Targeted Audiences	The program was designed to customize efforts and target audiences based on community demographics, needs, and assets.

The CITY program participants were provided with opportunities to feel a sense of belonging and to develop caring relationships with program mentors and peer program participants. Program participants reportedly increased their educational knowledge, skills, and abilities, and gained workforce readiness skills. Program participants were recognized and awarded for their accomplishments and contributions to their communities. They were also provided opportunities to gain the respect of self, respect from family members, and members of their communities (Giarratano, 2014).

The attainment of knowledge, skills, and abilities to prevail in family-sustaining wage-earning employment opportunities and realize postsecondary education is viewed

increasingly as vital for economic security in our progressively global and technological society. As noted by Symonds, Schwartz, and Ferguson (2011), one essential responsibility of any society is to prepare its young adults to live productive and prospering lives as adults. A sizeable number of marginalized young men and women did not possess the knowledge or marketable skills to survive in the reality of adulthood. Concomitantly, research reflected that a focus on college readiness alone did not equip this population of young adults with the competencies they needed to transition into adulthood favorably.

The American Psychological Association (2012) suggested that more research was needed to examine intervention programs to identify determining factors that contributed to favorable outcomes and to understand how and why they were successful. Similarly, Arnett (2019) appealed for researchers to study the transition to adulthood for marginalized young adults and to conceptualize alternative pathways. Conceptualizing alternative pathways presents opportunities for current and future leaders to be better equipped in breaking the cycle of marginalization.

According to Symonds et al. (2011), creating multiple "pathways to prosperity" was increasingly recognized as a successful approach to preparing marginalized young adults to live rewarding lives (p. 30). In 2012, the American Psychological Association's Presidential Task Force on Educational Disparities released a report of its investigation of the educational disparities existing among ethnic groups. In addition to endorsing research and policy efforts to improve the educational landscape, the task force

recommended that several actions be taken at the community level. One of the measures was to implement and enhance professional development programs to mitigate challenges faced by young adults who would one day become community leaders (APA, 2012).

Giarratano (2014) conducted a case study where she examined programs aimed at developing job readiness skills and workforce competencies. The focus of the research was on program delivery methods and how those methods shaped program participant outcomes and translated into benefits. Giarratano (2014) suggested that intervention programs served marginalized young adult populations by focusing on specific skill sets. Program participants were more likely to acquire the skills needed to succeed in college and careers. Moreover, to become active and involved citizens who contributed to their community's economic vitality by developing job readiness skills and workforce competencies (Giarratano, 2014).

Intervention programs developed and designed specifically to provide a variety of support services to marginalized young adults were demonstrated to improve their educational and vocational achievement (Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults, 2015). The results of the research further revealed that intervention program activities that focused attention on emotional and practical support to promote sustainable independence had merit. Those types of programs also advanced a broader pedagogical hypothesis: that from late adolescence onward, most young adults learned best in structured programs that integrated work and learning, and where knowledge was contextual and applied (Symonds et al., 2011). The philosophy was not

merely about learning; it was also about enabling young adults to make a successful transition to working life.

Participating in a life construction intervention program assisted marginalized young adults with building occupationally relevant skills and credentials. Program participation also helped the young adults to develop the needed confidence when responsibilities became far more real, e.g., when they were faced with paying their bills, supporting their family, attending college, and maintaining employment. Findings from several studies indicated that participation in life construction intervention programs contributed to a variety of favorable developmental outcomes, such as increased life skills, augmented workforce skills, improved self-efficacy, and greater engagement in community and leadership activities (Giarratano, 2014).

Giarratano (2014) also found that intervention programs that had activities that provided opportunities for participants to design and implement community improvement projects exposed them to careers and connected them in meaningful ways to their communities. Participating in community improvement projects also helped them to cultivate workforce/job readiness skills such as working as part of a team, organizing, planning, time management, conflict resolution, communication, cooperation, and computer technology. In addition to other developmental assets that had long-term positive outcomes for the program participants and the communities in which they lived, research findings showed that meaningful involvement in community service,

developmental education, and work experiences helped to increase self-efficacy (Giarratano, 2014).

Intervention programs that incorporated exercises that advocated project-based learning provided clear benefits for stimulating participant interest by placing them in control of their learning. Krish (2017), Chief Executive Officer of Wisewire, a learning design company, explained that the objective of project-based learning was to develop a collaborative, supportive, and rigorous environment that helped both groups and individuals to arrive at realizations on their own. Many of the project-based learning assignments involved the use of vital 21st-century skills that transferred to professional environments. For a majority of the young adults, the results of participating in project-based learning were improved content retention, better problem-solving skills, and better collaboration ability.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this qualitative, explanatory, collective-case study was to explore intervention programs to discern evidence-based program components and services shown to assist marginalized young adults with their transition from childhood to adulthood. Glass' (2007) work about social constructionism, which found a human society in general and social order are created and maintained through the ongoing interaction between and among individuals, was a key element of the research framework. The theory of social constructivism suggests that individuals mentally construct their world of experience through cognitive processes.

The development of a life construction intervention program was framed through a social constructivist lens, where questions were posed about how social realities were produced, assembled, and maintained (Andrews, 2012). From a constructivist perspective, it is presumed that new knowledge is socially and culturally constructed through interactions among individuals within a social context. Assuming a constructivist approach involved engaging in an inquiry process helped to develop understanding as a result of interpreted constructions (Andrews, 2012).

Representations of marginalization and young adult marginalization, as well as initiatives, methods, and strategies of intervention programs developed for marginalization mitigation, were presented and explored in this chapter. When compared to previous and current strategies for marginalization mitigation and intervention program development for marginalized young adults, an explication of the literature suggested that researchers were supportive of viable interventions. Evidence-based intervention program components and services of various programs demonstrated to be beneficial were delineated for their foundational applicability in the development of a life construction intervention program for marginalized young adults, ages 18 through 26.

Key themes

The American Psychological Association (2012) advised that young adults were key contributors to our nation's economic well-being and sustainability and further endorsed the importance of considering the individual, as well as social costs associated with the significant underachievement of marginalized young adults. Identifying best

practices for mitigating marginalization among young adults included the application of numerous approaches, each proving to have advantages and limitations. A preventive approach stressed the importance of building and strengthening vocational capabilities by focusing on specific skill sets, such as the skills employers believed to be most crucial for workplace success. Giarratano (2014) stated those skills included: critical thinking, adaptability, problem-solving, oral and written communications, collaboration and teamwork, creativity, responsibility, professionalism, ethics, and the ability to use technological developments.

Marginalized young adults were particularly affected by undereducation and a scarcity of employment opportunities. Consequently, numerous young adults in this population did not possess the experience and training for the most in-demand careers. They had difficulty assessing how to obtain and leverage their skill sets as well as establishing an optimal employment capacity. Consideration of the challenges of access into another class and work setting may facilitate a generation to unsettle the status quo, benefit from formal education, and advance more equitable results in America. Questions such as where, how, and why needed to be asked and answered to address such a rooted problem.

Gaps in the literature. Despite the number of programs and services developed and implemented to assist marginalized young adults with their transition between childhood and adulthood, there is a lack of evidence-based intervention program components and services shown to effect desired and lasting change to help them become

fully productive members of society. Windisch (2016) published an article in the *International Review of Education* titled "How to Motivate Adults with Low Literacy and Numeracy Skills to Engage and Persist in Learning: A Literature Review of Policy Intervention." Windisch (2016) examined policy interventions for adults with low literacy and numeracy skills to identify what motivated persistence in basic literacy and numeracy learning. Windisch (2016) suggested that basic skills played a key role in facilitating adaptation to change and professional advancement.

Additionally, in their study, Tate et al. (2004) investigated the career and work-life challenges faced by traditionally marginalized populations. The purpose of their research was to identify action steps that could be taken to address such issues. Tate et al. (2014) found that several authors recommended that culturally and contextually relevant life development intervention practices be used with traditionally marginalized young adult populations. The recommendation indicated the need for life construction intervention to promote the obviation of difficulties in constructing desirable identities and lives for marginalized young adults (DiFabio & Palazzeschi, 2016).

To understand the development and processes of life construction intervention program planning, in their report *Ethnic and Racial Disparities in Education: Psychology's Contributions to Understanding and Reducing Disparities*, the American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Educational Disparities (2012) proposed recommendations for practice, training, theory, research, social justice, and advocacy:

Research Recommendation 4: More research is needed to examine ethnic and racial minority individuals who participated in selective programs to identify the factors that contributed to their success. The particular programs that are successful with ethnic and racial minorities should be examined to understand how and why they were successful with those groups of individuals.

Research Recommendation 5: Further research is needed to examine the long-term efficacy of interventions based on stereotype threat principles.

Research Recommendation 6: Greater importance should be given to pursuing evidence-based interventions that exercised multiple pathways (e.g., academic support programs; leadership development; and family, school and community partnerships) that can lead to higher achievement for marginalized young adults, to increase the probabilities of those individuals attaining academic and vocational success.

The information presented in the report also advanced several study-related recommendations for research identifying population needs and success factors for marginalized young adults. The final section of the report presented conclusions and recommendations for programs to carefully address program implementation quality.

The Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults (2015) proposed that previous approaches to assisting marginalized young adults were inefficient and contributed to their marginalization. The research by the committee was intended to fill a gap concerning the existence and development of intervention programs for marginalized young adults. An analysis of several intervention programs

facilitated the identification of what experts established as essential elements of a life construction intervention program that can help to build self-efficacy and leadership capacity among disenfranchised young adults.

Life Construction Intervention

Life construction intervention programs were aimed at providing resources to help participants cope with life and career transitions, to encourage reflection on the future, to identify one's strengths, and to plan future projects. Life construction intervention was based on several key concepts of the life design approach. The life design approach is a framework based on the synthesis of career construction, self-construction, social and social-constructivists theories, as well as intra-individual learning and dynamic processes such as career adaptability and career competencies. This approach to life construction intervention supported individual flexibility and adaptability to developmental tasks to help marginalized young adults to project themselves positively toward their future and to manage and anticipate occupational transitions. The life design approach differed from other interventions in that it was not a structured training on one construct (Ginevra, DiMaggio, Nota, and Soresi, 2017).

As supported by the life design approach, attention should be given to those individuals who are more likely to be at-risk when engaging in the labor market, career construction, employment, and re-employment processes. Individuals who used the life design approach were encouraged to participate in retrospective and prospective reflection and reasoning about their lives. The use of reflection helped program

participants to identify their strengths and to contemplate their personal and professional future by expressing purposes and making a commitment to self. The life design thinking approach helped young adults to develop the necessary reflexivity and capabilities so that they could survive and thrive in a rapidly changing world (Ginevra et al., 2017).

Ginevra et al. (2017) conducted a study in which they examined a career intervention based on the life design approach. The intervention was developed for a group of young adults at risk in the process of career construction. The purpose of the study was to examine the effectiveness of a life construction intervention based on the life design approach in supporting a group of young adults with developing knowledge and abilities for the analysis of complex dynamics, non-linear causalities, multiple subjective contexts, and environmental settings. The results of the study provided evidence for the effectiveness of the intervention.

For life construction intervention programs to be effective, the program activities needed to motivate participants to cooperate, convey necessary skills, and encourage learner persistence. The acquired skills also needed to be continued through use and applied in sustainable wage-earning employment. It was essential for life construction intervention programs to have well-articulated, attainable goals, and the activities utilized in the applications needed to be appropriate to achieve those goals. While the primary purpose of the programs was to promote more significant development of knowledge, skills, abilities, and self-efficacy, the efforts often also included an emphasis on the development of the "whole" (p. 90) person (American Psychological Association, 2012).

A life construction intervention program developed for marginalized young adults was also a framework where marginalized young adults gained new knowledge and competencies, experienced new contexts and different roles, and consequently, realized a desirable life and career.

Life construction intervention program development involved research that: 1.) Informed integrated pathways to identify policy and program needs (Committee on Improving the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Young Adults, 2015); 2.) Identified the population needs and success factors (APA Presidential Task Force on Educational Disparities, 2012); 3. Focused on specific skill sets (Giarratano, 2014); and 4.) Stressed the importance of building on inherent individual strengths (Giarratano, 2014). Life construction intervention program activities such as identity development, mentoring, journaling, and community service served to enhance self-efficacy and help program participants to understand him/herself better, to develop his/her life and career paths, and to construct his/her identity. Program participation increased participants involvement in their process of life construction, facilitating the process of construction, deconstruction, reconstruction, and co-construction of his/her life story (DiFabio & Palazzeschi, 2016).

Summary

The authors of the report *Investing in the Health and Well-Being of Young Adults* published by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NCR) (2015) explored the landscape for young adults. They found that the world was increasingly global and more networked than ever before. The outlook for young adults

was also marked by increased knowledge and information transfer, heightened risks, relatively low social mobility, and greater economic inequality (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies, 2015). Young adulthood, adult prosperity, and societal benefits are closely linked. When connecting findings to a conceptual framework, Steinkamp (2016) utilized a developmental systems theory, which served as a lens to inform the research. The study by Steinkamp (2016) contributed to a larger body of research on traditionally marginalized young adults' developmental systems theory and positive young adult leadership development programs. Steinkamp (2016) concluded that healthy young adulthood led to prospering in mature adulthood. Prospering adults productively contributed to society (Steinkamp, 2016).

A qualitative, explanatory, multiple case study approach aligned with a social constructivist perspective was used as a strategy to examine intervention programs designed to assist marginalized young adults with challenges they faced with the transition into adulthood. The purpose of the research was to determine the components and services of intervention programs that contributed to enhanced self-realization and self-efficacy. The use of a qualitative methodology facilitated inquiry into selected issues in great depth with careful attention paid to detail, context, and nuance. The data collection was not constrained by predetermined analytical categories, which contributed to the potential breadth of the qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2014). Social constructivism, a theory recognized as possessing a prominent place in social sciences, provided an

applicable framework for identifying and selecting appropriate theoretical perspectives on collecting data and generating meaning from the data.

A review of the literature indicated that there was support for personal development education in a globalized, high-tech, knowledge-based world while also advocating that it was foundational to the success of socio-economically disadvantaged populations in particular (Jacobson-Lundeberg, 2013). Reviewing the literature led to answers for each of the following research questions:

RQ #1 –What evidence-based components of life construction intervention programs, developed for marginalized young adults, have been shown to contribute to the effective transition from childhood to adulthood successfully?

RQ #2 - Why do specific components of life construction intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults contribute to the effective transition from childhood to adulthood successfully?

RQ #3 – What programs and services are developmentally and culturally appropriate, to assist in the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to build leadership capacity among marginalized young adults?

The literature review process facilitated the identification of research that reinforced findings indicating that marginalized young adults could be assisted with meeting the challenges they faced. Recommendations included (a) assisting with social and organizational assimilation and conflict prevention/resolution; (b) promoting coaching, mentorship, career development, and job initiatives; (c) finding ways to

increase acceptance of marginalized young adults within organizations; and (d)

identifying factors that diminished the actual or perceived risk in hiring workers from

traditionally marginalized groups (Maynard & Ferdman, 2015).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In social sciences, obtaining research information applicable to the research problem customarily involves determining the type of evidence needed to test a theory, to evaluate a program, or to describe and evaluate meaning related to an observable phenomenon. The research process for this study facilitated an in-depth exploration of the challenges faced by marginalized young adults with their transition from childhood to adulthood and how those challenges were mitigated by participating in an intervention program. The goal of the study was to identify evidence-based components and services of intervention programs shown to mitigate issues of marginalization. The method adopted for the research for this study is presented in this chapter. Also, this chapter contains a detailed explanation of the research design, instruments, participants, data analysis methods, and research limitations.

Research Method

This study was intended to identify programmatic intervention components and services for marginalized young adults that have been shown to contribute to demonstrable, favorable, lasting, and positive change in support of their transition into adulthood. The research method should be seen as a process of how the research study was intended to be conducted. A qualitative approach was most appropriate for this study because it fostered a better understanding of the lived experiences of the participants and their perceptions of how intervention program participation helped to promote self-actualization and self-efficacy. Qualitative approaches were relied on in

this research study to realize subjective meanings by building on text and image data and utilizing unique steps in the data analysis. Smith (2005), in a book review of an interactive qualitative analysis by Northcutt and McCoy, stated both Northcutt and McCoy agreed that this approach required that the researcher focuses on attempting to achieve a sense of the meaning that others gave to their situations (Smith, 2005).

The research methodology was determined by the nature of the research question(s) and the subject being investigated. The foundations that guide qualitative research served as the means to contextualize and understand the research questions for this study. The particular format of questions used in qualitative inquiry helped to advance subjective and multiple perspectives. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ #1 –What evidence-based components of life construction intervention programs, developed for marginalized young adults, have been shown to contribute to the effective transition from childhood to adulthood successfully?

RQ #2 - Why do specific components of life construction intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults contribute to the effective transition from childhood to adulthood successfully?

RQ #3 – What programs and services are developmentally and culturally appropriate, to assist in the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to build leadership capacity among marginalized young adults?

The selection of cases played a pivotal role in this case study. The focus of this qualitative, explanatory, multiple-case study was on intervention programs designed for emerging adults. Criterion-based sampling was utilized. Programs were selected that had characteristics relevant to the research questions. The selected programs were independent of each other and afforded enough data to address the issues of interest. The programs were chosen intentionally to as closely as possible fit the required conditions of the topic under study. Therefore, each case was an intervention program that was consistent with the features of the study's chosen unit of analysis, i.e., intervention programs where program participants were marginalized young adults between the ages of 18 to 26.

The availability of evidence for the selected cases and access to that evidence was an essential criterion of case selection. The rationale for the criterion was that it afforded a typical representation of the phenomenon under study. In each of the programs, marginalized young adults between the ages of 18 to 26 participated; therefore, each program was representational of the population defined in the research objectives.

A qualitative study facilitated the exploration of phenomena such as feelings or thought processes that were difficult to extract or learn about through conventional research methods. Hesse-Biber (2016) stated that qualitative studies, unlike quantitative studies, are less confirmatory – their primary goal is not to test a hypothesis, but rather to explore and discover meaning(s) of certain phenomena as identified by study participants (Hesse-Biber, 2016). Conducting research using qualitative approaches are often

attempts to realize subjective implications, rely on text and image data, have different steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse designs (Creswell, 2014). Through exploration, description, and interpretation, a qualitative research approach supports arriving at an extensive understanding of a phenomenon in a particular setting or context. Taut (2007) conducted an action research study in which she aimed to clarify how she saw methodological and conceptual challenges in empirically studying process use. Taut (2007) found that qualitative studies helped researchers to understand complex individual, social, and cultural interactions better.

In this study, constructivism was utilized as a paradigm for teaching and learning. Participants' perceptions and lived experiences of program interventions that contributed to favorable and effective support in their transition to adulthood were explored. Qualitative research is interpretative research (Creswell, 2014) in which the researcher is the key instrument in data collection and interpretation. The following qualitative research procedures were utilized in this study: (a) collection of multiple forms of data; (b) focus on perspectives, meanings, and subjective views; (c) assumption of reflective and interpretive role by the researcher to understand participants' views; and (d) presentation of a holistic view of issues and concerns by using multiple perspectives and factors to interpret data findings (Creswell, 2014).

Research Design

The research design refers to the overall strategy selected to integrate the various components of the study coherently and logically, therefore ensuring the research

questions would be effectively addressed. The research design also constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data (Creswell, 2014). The purpose of the study generally guides the selection of a specific type of case study design. The role of a particular type of case study design is to link the research questions with the evidence to be collected, interpretations, and conclusions.

Researchers use an explanatory case study design to help explain how/why a phenomenon occurs. An explanatory, multiple-case study research design was used to guide the data collection and analysis of this study. The purpose of using an explanatory, multiple-case study research design was to illuminate decisions or set of choices regarding life construction intervention programs for marginalized young adults, why they were completed, how they were implemented, and with what results. The explanatory, multiple-case research methodology utilized in this study came from the need to determine which intervention program components and services were applicable to assist with the transition to adulthood for marginalized young adults. This design was selected because the research questions for this study were focused on insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing. Steps for design alignment included: determining the purpose of the inquiry, focusing inquiry questions for the study, deciding which data to collect, and selecting relevant cases for examination (Patton, 2014).

In an article on case study research design, Shuttleworth (2008) explored how the case study research design has evolved over the past several years as a useful qualitative tool for investigating trends and specific situations in many scientific disciplines. Tellis

(1997) also expounded on the case study research design in an article published in *The Qualitative Report.* Tellis (1997) noted that as a case study is recognized as a triangulated research strategy, a case study as a research tool is a reliable method when executed with diligence (Tellis, 1997). In making a case for the case study, Longhofer, Floersch, and Hartmann (2017) integrated ideas from across disciplines to explore the complexities of case study methods and theory. Longhofer et al. (2017) further delineated ways in which a case study has been used by evaluation researchers to examine and develop understandings of causality in program outcomes (Longhofer et al., 2017).

Zainal (2007) reviewed aspects of case studies as a research technique. He described motivations for the recognition of the case study as a research method. Zainal (2007) expressed that researchers were becoming concerned about the limitations of quantitative methods in providing holistic and in-depth meanings of social and behavioral problems. Harling (2002) provided an overview of the case study to help develop an understanding of the case study method. Harling (2002) noted that the increased utilization of case study research methodology among his colleagues was because they had determined that a case study let them explore problems that they had not been able to address very well with traditional methods. Zainal (2007) expressed an advantage of the technique was that the case study has its design, data collection, and analytic procedures, and embraces the complete set of tasks required to do research. It is a comprehensive analysis that explores a contemporary phenomenon within its natural setting (Harling,

2002). According to Yin (2003), a case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answ*e*r how and why questions; (b) the researcher(s) cannot manipulate the behavior of those participating in the study; (c) the researcher(s) want to include contextual conditions because they believe them to be relevant to the phenomenon under investigation, or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. A case study is a unique way of observing any natural phenomenon which exists in a collection of data.

Unique generally means that only a small geographical area or a limited number of subjects of interest are examined in detail. Unlike quantitative analysis, where patterns in the data are observed at the macro level based on phenomena occurrence frequency, case studies are used to observe data at the micro-level (Zainal, 2007). A case as an inquiry form involves collecting in-depth and detailed data that are rich in content and include diverse sources of information. Sources of information can include but are not limited to direct observation, participant observation, interviews, audio-visual materials, documents, reports, archival records, and physical artifacts. The variety of data sources provides a broad scope of information to provide a comprehensive depiction (Harling, 2002). The case study is essential to the production of meaningful and new knowledge (Longhofer et al., 2017).

When using a case study design, an in-depth investigation is undertaken, usually of a program, event, activity, process, or one or more persons. A detailed analysis assures that the phenomenon is explored through a variety of lenses to facilitate multiple

facets of the phenomenon being revealed and understood (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In the second edition of "Applications of Case Study Research," Yin (2003) presented 21 individual applications of the case study method designed to help with case study research. Case study research supports the deconstruction and subsequent reconstruction of various phenomena (Baxter & Jack, 2008). As noted by Zainal (2007), the case study methods allow researchers to go beyond quantitative statistical results and understand behavioral conditions from participants' perspectives.

Researchers can implement either a single-case or multiple-case design depending on the issue in question. There are differences as well as similarities between single- and multiple-case studies. One notable difference between a single-case study and a multiple-case study is that with a multiple-case study, the researcher examines multiple-cases to understand the differences and the similarities between the cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995). In a seminal book on case study research, *The Art of Case Study Research*, Stake (1995) found a collective case study design provided a framework to gain insight into the subject of interest across settings, as it facilitated comparison within and between cases. Yin described collective case studies as analytical generalizations as opposed to statistical generalizations (Harling, 2012).

Multiple cases facilitate empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using various sources of evidence. The collective case study affords a general understanding of a phenomenon using several instrumental case studies that either happened on the same site or came from several sites. When

using multiple-case research, the researcher can analyze data both within and across

settings (Yin, 2003). Thus, the use of multiple cases supports a broader exploration of

the research questions and theoretical evolution. Some researchers and theorists argue

that the strength of interpretation is enhanced with multiple cases and contend that its

explanatory power lies in the comparison of cases (Longhofer et al., 2017). Gustafsson

(2017) stated that evidence developed from a multiple-case study is considered robust

and reliable. Baxter and Jack (2008) believed that a better understanding of a

phenomenon could be achieved by conducting a multiple-case study.

Explanatory case study methodology has been used to answer 'how' or 'why'

questions with little control on behalf of the researcher over-occurrence of events (Tellis,

1997). Explanatory case studies have been used by researchers not only to explore and

describe phenomena but also to explain causal relationships and to develop a theory

(Longhofer et al., 2017). In a formative book on case study research and applications,

Yin (2018) explained that the purpose of explanatory case study research is to increase

understanding of theoretical propositions developed for a particular situation. An

explanatory case study can help a researcher to better focus on phenomena within the

contexts of real-life situations. Explanatory case studies have also been used to create

models of outcome for complex conditions where several variables may have influenced

the result. The explanatory strategy for this particular study came from the need to

determine the extent to which intervention program components and services assisted the

transition to adulthood for marginalized young adults.

Instruments

The researcher is the data collection instrument in qualitative research. He/she

needs to consider all relevant factors regarding him/herself as the researcher, the study

participants, the research context, the research approach, and implementation as well as

ensuring that the research is predicated on the development of specific research

procedures (Taut, 2007). Using a case study design, what is selected includes the case(s)

in addition to data sources that best help to understand the case(s), thus – what is sampled

occurs at two levels; (1) the case, and (2) unspecified data sources within the case

(Gentles et al., 2015).

Gentles et al. (2015) presented insights about sampling in qualitative research that

stemmed from a systematic methods overview conducted from the literature of grounded

theory, phenomenology, and case study research traditions. According to Gentles et al.

(2015), purposeful sampling was probably the most commonly described means of

sampling in qualitative methods literature. For the study of intervention programs in

several sites, the data collection included purposeful, non-random, non-probability

replication of three intervention programs sharing common characteristics or conditions

that categorically bound them together (Gentles et al., 2015). Replicated studies of the

same population provided historical trend data. The purpose of conducting this study was

to learn about the effects of intervention program participation among marginalized

young adults and to describe desired and beneficial changes, as well as perceived benefits

of changes resultant from program participation.

After the type of case study for the project has been identified, the data collection process begins. A trademark of case study research is the use of diversified data sources, an approach that also augments data credibility (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2018). Examples of case study instruments that can be utilized include archival research, content or documentary analysis, focus groups, individual in-depth interviews, narratives, and participant observation, as well as structured and non-structured interviews. Primary sources of data for this study were content and documentary analysis, e.g., reports, written records of events within the cases being studied, and semi-structured, open-ended interviews.

A review of three instrumental intervention programs developed for young adults illustrated by indicators of desired and beneficial outcomes of program participants helped to extrapolate key themes and outcomes. For each program review, key aspects that were examined included program history, program context, program attributes, program activities, and program outputs. The case study fieldwork, based on interviews and document reviews, e.g., reports and written records of events, helped to explore and expound upon the implications of program processes in terms of:

- The role of the program(s)

- The effectiveness of the program(s)

- The impact of the program(s)

Examining critical incidents was essential to this case study approach. A critical incident was an event that illustrated or revealed a key relationship or dynamic intrinsic

to program participation. A critical incident typically involved one of the formal

activities of the program(s). Examples of critical incidents were activities such as

mentoring or community service activities, which had a transformative effect (something

happened, something changed). Where it might have been possible to relate something

about the nature of the program to the outcomes experienced by participants, such as

personal development, employment attainment, economic revival, and social cohesion.

In addition to the cases themselves, secondary data sources were also used in the

analysis to address the research questions. Secondary data sources comprised but were

not limited to archival records, documentation, interviews, participant observation, and

physical artifacts (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Available published data were:

- Various publications of the federal, state or local governments

- Technical and trade journals

- Books, magazines, and newspapers

- Reports and publications of various organizations

- Reports prepared by research scholars, universities, etc.

- Public records and statistics, historical documents, and other sources of
  published information.

These and other types of documents were available through Internet searches and

presented opportunities for inclusion in the collection of secondary data sources.

Considerable amounts of data have been collected by governments, businesses, schools, and other organizations and are stored in electronic databases.

Many databases are national, and numerous researchers have maintained their data in electronic form for analysis and research purposes. With the growing prevalence of data collection efforts accompanied by increasing participation in these efforts, the potential for relevant research across diverse data management systems has expanded substantially (Chudagr & Luschei, 2016). Also, management information systems such as data.gov, as well as quite a few other databases, provided information available for expedited data collection.

Sources of secondary data included items such as proposals for intervention projects and programs as well as other written reports of events. Additional secondary data sources included administrative documents – proposals, progress reports, formal studies, and evaluations of similar types of case studies. Archival records often in the form of computer files also proved to be highly relevant. Examples of archival records included public use files such as those showing the number of participants served over a given period, and organizational documents such as data previously collected about a site's program participants (Yin, 2018).

Data from a variety of secondary data sources were incorporated into the collection and analysis processes. Each data source was one piece of the puzzle, with each part contributing to a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study (Baxter

& Jack, 2008). Although qualitative research does not require large sample sizes, the saturation of the data was recommended (Creswell, 2014).

Data saturation is a methodological principle acknowledged across a range of approaches to qualitative research. The origins of data saturation lie in grounded theory. Data saturation refers to reaching a point of informational redundancy where additional data collection contributes little or nothing new to the study. Data saturation has become widely recognized as a guide or indicator that sufficient data collection has been achieved. Data saturation is used in qualitative research as a gauge for judgment for discontinuing data collection and analysis based on the data that have been collected. Stopping research data collection short of saturation is generally discouraged (Gentles et al., 2015).

In an article on data saturation in qualitative research, Fusch and Ness (2015) critiqued two qualitative studies for data saturation. The authors explained that there was no one-size-fits-all method to reach data saturation. Nonetheless, Fusch and Ness (2015) cited failure to reach data saturation had an impact on the quality of the research and affected content validity.

As the researcher sees similar instances repeatedly, the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated. Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested there was a direct link between data triangulation and data saturation; the one (data triangulation) ensures the other (data saturation). In other words, data triangulation is a process to arrive at data saturation. The recommendation is that data saturation should be

more concerned with reaching the point where further data collection becomes 'counter-productive, and where 'new' does not necessarily add anything to the overall story or theory. There is no one-size-fits-all method to reach data saturation; more data is not necessarily better than less data, and vice versa.

Saunders et al. (2017) discussed four models of saturation. With the first saturation model, established in traditional grounded theory, saturation is achieved by the development of categories and an emerging theory in the analysis process as the measure for additional data collection. This model has been labeled as theoretical saturation. The second model has a similar approach; however, saturation is determined by the identification of new codes or themes. It is based on the number of said codes or themes rather than the comprehensiveness of existing theoretical categories. This method is referred to as inductive thematic saturation. In this model, saturation is limited to the level of analysis; its consequence for data collection is at best implicit. In the third model, datum is collected to illustrate the theory at the level of lower-order codes or themes rather than to develop or refine theory. This model has been regarded as a priori thematic saturation, as it indicates the idea of pre-determined theoretical categories and leads away from the inductive logic characteristic of grounded theory. Finally, in the fourth model, data saturation is considered to have been achieved when identifying redundancy in the data with no necessary reference to the theory linked to these data.

The data saturation approach utilized for this study was based on the fourth model of saturation identified by Saunders et al. (2017) — the notion of informational

redundancy. Data saturation was considered achieved when there was enough information to replicate the study when the ability to attain new information had been realized, and when further coding was no longer feasible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). From this perspective, saturation was considered as separate from and preceding formal analysis. The decision to use the data saturation approach of informational redundancy was made before coding and category development.

Database

The use of a computerized database was essential to organize and manage the data. Baxter and Jack (2008) found a significant advantage of using a database to accomplish the functions of data organization and management was that raw data was available for independent review. A self-created resource database in the form of an EXCEL spreadsheet was utilized to keep track of sources intended for use in this study. Using a database enhanced the reliability of the case study, as it facilitated tracking and organizing data sources, including notes and key documents, for easy retrieval at a later date.

Participants

The selection of participants for this study was based on a strategy referred to as purposeful, non-random (non-probability) sampling. Maxwell (2005), in *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, described a selection "strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other sources" (Maxwell,

2005, p. 235).   The sample for this study consisted of three intervention programs designed, developed, and initiated to mitigate issues of marginalization where marginalized young adults between the ages of 18 through 26 participated.

Also, interviews were conducted with administrative staff members of two intervention programs in a mid-western city. Selecting administrators to be interviewed for this study was purposeful in that they were leaders of their respective intervention programs concerning marginalized young adults and best understood the processes utilized within their separate programs. One of the intervention programs had ministries that primarily served the residents of one of the poorest zip codes in the country. The other intervention program was implemented to help to eliminate the root causes of poverty, racism, and injustice through education.

Resources, time available as well as the research objectives and the characteristics of the study population determined the intervention program selection. When selecting the intervention programs for this research project, identity-focused development programs for emerging adults were selected. In each of the programs, marginalized young adults between the ages of 18 to 26 participated; therefore, each intervention program was representative of the population specified in the research objectives. Data was collected from those intervention programs where there was convenient access to participants who could provide the richest information.

Data Analysis Methods

As with any other qualitative study, the data collection and analysis coincided. Upon completing an extensive data collection process, the analysis of the data began. In a qualitative case study analysis, data analysis means a search for patterns in the data (Yin, 2018). Data analysis for this study was about identifying themes, categories, patterns, and answers to the research questions. The cases were in effect the units of study (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Comparisons were made so that similar results could be predicted across cases or conflicting results predicted based on a theory (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The goal was to reproduce findings across cases. When the case study is a multiple/collective case study, the researcher analyzes all of the forms of data and creates themes found in each case, which is called a within-case analysis. The researcher then conducts a cross-case analysis – this occurs when the researcher identifies what themes are in common between all of the cases. Finally, as noted by Flipp (2014) in his lecture on the case study, the researcher makes assertions, which are interpretations of what the meaning of the data is regarding the case.

One of the strengths of qualitative analysis is being able to look at program units holistically (Patton, 2014). In the case of this qualitative, explanatory, multiple-case study, the focus was on gaining more in-depth insight into the phenomenon of the relationship(s) with marginalized young adults between the ages of 18 through 26 and intervention program components and services that supported the positive and favorable

transition into adulthood. As suggested by Patton (2014), the process of analysis began by concentrating on the details and specifics of the data to discover emerging patterns, themes, and interrelationships. Exploration of the data and attention to what emerged from the data was followed up with inquiries confirming conclusions; analysis from the general to the particular was aligned with analytical principles rather than rules. Analyzing results for this case study was inclined to be more opinion based than statistical methods. The general idea was to try to judge trends and not analyze every piece of data (Shuttleworth, 2008).

Whereas quantitative research requires necessarily large sample sizes to produce statistically precise quantitative estimates, smaller samples are used in qualitative research. The use of smaller samples is because the general aim of sampling in qualitative research is to gather the information that is useful for understanding the complexity, depth, variation, and context surrounding a phenomenon rather than to represent populations as is the case with quantitative research (Gentles et al., 2015).

According to Patton (2014), the sampling procedure in qualitative research is more commonly understood to involve the selection of data sources. Sampling in qualitative research is typically focused on relatively small samples selected purposefully to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon in depth. Qualitative study researchers often use purposeful or criterion-based sampling; that is, a sample that has characteristics relevant to the research questions. Duan, Bhaumik, Palinkas, & Hoagwood (2015), in an article about methodologies for implementation research, stated

the researcher, when utilizing purposeful sampling, purposely selects samples from the intended population that as closely as possible fit the required criteria with the topic under study. Purposeful sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling in which the researcher selects only those subjects that satisfy the needs of the study. It is essential to note that a bias of this sampling method is that it is vulnerable to errors in judgment by the researcher.

The essence of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases for the most effective use of resources (Palinkas et al., 2012; Patton, 2002). Thus, sampling in qualitative research can be determined as the selection of specific data sources from which data are collected to address research objectives. The most significant advantage of this sampling procedure is that the researcher can be sure to limit study participants to those specified in the realm of their research and can potentially examine specific demographics as variables, such as age, gender, and educational history.

Purposeful, non-random (non-probability) sampling was selected for this study because it is a sampling technique in which the selected samples could be based on the subjective judgment of the researcher. This sampling technique permitted a deliberate choice of study participants due to the qualities the participants possessed. To be able to decide what needed to be known and seek participants who could provide the information because of their knowledge or experience was the reason for choosing purposeful, non-random (non-probability) sampling. A specific advantage of this sampling technique was that it did not require underlying theories or a set number of participants. Answers to

each of the research questions were considered by analyzing intervention programs

designed and developed for marginalized young adults. The case study data were used to

explain various phenomena such as similarities and differences among the characteristics

of the programs to get a better understanding of intervention program components and

services. The emergent design strategy also promoted the pursuit of new paths of

discovery as they become known.

Yin (2003) briefly described five techniques for qualitative data analysis: pattern

matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case

synthesis. In an article about how pattern matching principles could be used in the design

and implementation of qualitative research, Sinkovics (2018) explained that the pattern

matching technique compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one. In a

journal article about case study methodology, Kaarbo and Beasley (1999) reviewed

various definitions and uses of case studies. They integrated several insights and

advances into conducting case study research. The pattern matching technique, a vital

advantage of the case study method, according to Kaarbo & Beasley (1999), is

considered one of the most suitable techniques for case study analysis.

The pattern matching technique was utilized in this study to compare patterns

across cases. In an article published in the *Electronic Journal of Business Research

Methods,* Vohra (2014) evaluated the multiple case study design. Vohra (2014) indicated

that the technique of pattern matching was used to capture rich, descriptive contexts and

to strengthen the pattern of findings. Pattern matching is a type of pattern recognition

within the data where emerging themes, patterns, and outcomes become the categories for analysis involving the identification of a decisive moment and encoding it before a process of interpretation (Vohra, 2014). When using the pattern matching technique, a single predicted pattern can be compared to the pattern observed in the cases, or mutually exclusive rival patterns can be examined for their consistency with the patterns observed in the cases (Yin, 2003). By replicating a case through pattern-matching, a technique linking several pieces of information from the same case to some theoretical proposition, the multiple-case design enhances and supports earlier results (Zainal, 2007).

To inform the subsequent development of an intervention program designed to assist marginalized young adults ages 18 to 26 with a favorable transition into adulthood, the strategy used for analysis and reporting was inductive analysis and creative synthesis. The process entailed an exploration of and attention to what emerged, followed by a confirmatory investigation resulting in the creative synthesis of many concepts into a new whole (Patton, 2014). The analysis began with immersion in the details and specifics of the inquiry to discover meaningful patterns, themes, and relationships. The data analysis strategy assisted in determining factors that helped marginalized young adults with their transition to adulthood.

A secondary data analysis generally represents the re-analysis of existing empirical and anecdotal data (Trochim, 2006). Secondary data analysis is a process that applies the same basic research principles as studies that use primary data and has procedures to be adhered to just as with any other research method. The key to

secondary data analysis is the application of theoretical knowledge and conceptual skills to utilize existing data to address research questions. Johnston (2014), in an article published in *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries,* asserted that secondary data analysis was a viable method to utilize in the process of inquiry. Johnston (2014) also noted that secondary analysis offered methodological benefits and contributed to research by generating new knowledge.

The use of the qualitative research strategy, recognized as triangulation, helps to strengthen a study analysis by combining methods (Patton 2014; Stake, 1995; Weyers, Strydom, and Huisamen, 2014). The process of triangulation can result in using a combination of several kinds of techniques or data, including the use of both quantitative as well as qualitative approaches. Flyvbjerg (2011) recognized four types of triangulation: (a) data triangulation – the utilization of a diverse mix of data sources, (b) investigator triangulation – the use of more than one researcher or evaluator from the same or different disciplines to study the phenomenon, (c) theory triangulation – employing more than one theoretical design in the interpretation of the phenomenon. Consequently, the researcher uses multiple theories or perspectives in the analysis of the data (Weyers et al., 2014), and (d) methodological triangulation – the use of various methods to study a phenomenon (Patton, 2014). Stake (1995) specified that triangulation was the procedure used to establish accuracy and alternative explanation. The process of triangulation can primarily be considered as the utilization of multiple theoretical

perspectives/procedures/methods, sources of data, investigators, or theories to collect and interpret data about a phenomenon.

Data triangulation was utilized for this research project – the use of multiple sources of data to establish accuracy and alternative explanations. A constructivist perspective was adopted to reinforce the links between research and teaching activities in practice. Both Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) developed their respective approaches to a case study on a constructivist paradigm. Constructivists believe that truth is relative and dependent on an individuals' perspective. Constructivism is based on the premise of the social construction of reality (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This paradigm acknowledges the significance of the subjective human construction of meaning.

Thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative analytic method, was utilized for the coding and analysis of the data used for this study and was undertaken to develop themes and concepts. Thematic analysis was adopted as a flexible method to facilitate the search for themes relevant to the phenomenon. The process involved the identification of themes, patterns, and outcomes through careful reading and re-reading of the data sources (Vohra, 2014). When using thematic analysis, it was essential to continually refer to earlier data to build on existing knowledge and ensure findings were as applicable as possible.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed an alternative paradigm in which the researcher avoided manipulating research findings - a constant comparative approach. A constant comparative approach also was utilized in this case study to look for ways of

organizing the data to reveal a range of findings. The data were coded and analyzed

concurrently using the constant comparative approach to develop concepts by continually

comparing specific incidents in the data, examining their relationships to one another, and

integrating them into an understandable explanatory model. The constant comparative

approach to data analysis involved the process of departmentalizing the data into discrete

incidents and coding them into categories. The categories that emerged from the process

in most cases took two forms: those that were resultant of the program administrators'

customs and language, and those that were determined to be significant to the study's

focus-of-inquiry. Thus, the process of constant comparison stimulated thought that led to

both descriptive and explanatory categories (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Coding of Themes

After conducting the interviews, to create order out of the different commonalities

and patterns represented in the data, a coding process was used. Significant segments of

data were highlighted to document patterns and themes. Finally, the data were analyzed

and coded into generative themes. The specific themes were described in a way that was

both descriptive and explanatory. The process of coding included (a) open coding, (b)

axial coding, and (c) selective coding.

Open coding. The step of open coding required reading and re-reading the data

to get an idea of how patterns could be clustered and coded. Open coding involved the

procedure of naming the id*entifi*ed patterns or categories that emerged, breaking them

down into discrete parts, carefully examining them, and comparing them for similarities and differences.

     Axial coding. Axial coding was the next step in the process, which involved looking for links and connections between the themes so that related subjects could be merged into clusters. DeVos (2005) explained this procedure as classifying or looking for categories of meaning. Axial coding is a qualitative research technique that involved searching for categories of meaning that had internal convergence and external divergence.

     Selective coding. The final step in the coding process was selective coding, whereby the emerging themes from secondary data and literature review sources combined with the program administrators' themes were divided into a selected number that comprised the final presentation. The importance of the coding process was winnowing the data and reducing it to a small, manageable set of themes to write into the final narrative (DeVos, 2005).

Interviews

     In *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing,* Kvale (1996) noted that interviewing was an essential tool in the repertoire of the qualitative researcher. There were four compelling reasons for using interviews as one of the primary data sources for this study.   First, qualitative interviewing is appropriately used when studying people's understanding of the meaning of their lived world (Kvale, 1996). Second, the purpose of interviewing was to find out what was in and on someone else's

mind. "We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot observe" (Patton, 1996, p.196). Third, Merriam (2002) stated that qualitative interviews resulted in thick descriptions of the subject being studied that aided readers to make decisions about the transferability of the study results (Merriam, 2002). Finally, interviews facilitated the triangulation of the data and, therefore, increased the credibility of study findings (Stake, 1995).

Intervention program administrators were selected as participants to interview for this research study. Interviewing intervention program administrators allowed for identifying and soliciting knowledge from those Patton (1990) named *key informants.* Key informants for this study were individuals who were particularly knowledgeable about the inquiry setting and articulate about their experiences. They were people whose insights assisted in understanding events that happened and the reasons why those events happened.

With the participants' approval, audio recordings of the interviews were generated to ensure accurate transcription. Handwritten notes also were taken during each meeting, which facilitated tracking key points to return to later or to highlight ideas of particular interest or importance. A semi-structured interview approach (Merriam, 2002) and a uniform set of open-ended questions were used to obtain: (a) demographic information on program applicants, and (b) participants' perceptions and experiences with program applicants as well as to collect, analyze, and utilize data concerning the operations of a life construction intervention program.

Open-ended questions were used for the interview protocol to encourage the interviewees to respond freely and openly to inquiries. Probing and follow-up questions were used when necessary to encourage the interviewees to elaborate on or clarify a response. The process of transcribing began after the first interview. Each transcript was reviewed while simultaneously listening to the audio recordings of the interviews to ensure transcription accuracy. Also, the transcripts were presented to the interviewees for their review to ensure integrity.

Limitations

The case study methodology has several limitations. As noted by Flipp (2014), it can be challenging to determine the case(s) or find an issue/cause and then find a case(s) to illustrate it or to study the case itself. It can also be challenging to determine whether to explore one or multiple instances. Another limitation of the case study research design and methods is that it can be challenging to define the boundaries of the case.

Additionally, determining adequate sample size in qualitative research is a matter of judgment and experience in evaluating the quality of the information collected against the uses to which it will be applied (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study was limited in scope to the analysis of three intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults designed to mitigate factors of marginalization. Studying more than one case meant going into less depth for each example (Flipp, 2014).

In any data analysis, there is the possibility of mistakes. The analysis for this study was focused on the perceptions of intervention program participants as well as

program facilitators regarding the efficacy of their program components and services based on participant feedback, educational and community experiences, program goals, accomplishments, and other relevant perspectives. Describing the benefits of the participation of young adults in life construction intervention programs in terms of proficiency in gains and improved productivity, employment, and earnings was challenging because of the methodological problems of much of the research (Windisch, 2016).

While the use of secondary data sources made the data representative, a secondary analysis was not without difficulties (Trochim, 2006). When using secondary data sources for analysis, it was essential to consider sampling error. The use of a highly representative sample produces very little error; however, a gap between sample and population can be problematic. If the data already collected was collected using faulty or biased procedures, the findings of the subsequent case study analysis would be ambiguous.

Validity concerned the credibility inherent in the data or the likelihood that the assessment made sense for the evaluated data. Reliability addressed whether the measurement taken would yield similar results every time the analysis was undertaken. The degree to which the data measurements were a reflection of what they were trying to measure was a vital consideration when factors of validity and reliability were considered. Therefore, another limitation was the tendency to jump to unjustified conclusions about causal relationships.

The researcher of this study utilized the following strategies to provide validity and reliability:

- Explained personal biases so that the findings were not prejudiced.

- Recognized the biases in sampling methods, to ensure sufficient depth and relevance of data collection and analysis.

- Established a comparison check of the similarities and dissimilarities while recording diverse perspectives.

- Systematic record keeping. Ensured there was a distinctive decision path and transparency in data interpretations.

- Included detailed and thick verbatim descriptions of participants' accounts to support findings.

- Validated interview data through respondents by inviting them to cross-check the presentation of their transcript along with the themes and concepts to ensure adequate reflection of the issue investigated.

- Triangulated data through various methods and perspectives, thus producing a comprehensive set of findings.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to demarcate effective, evidence-based components and services of intervention programs for marginalized young adults. Before an intervention program could be developed to mitigate factors of marginalization among a diverse population of young adults, an accurate frame of reference was needed. An

accurate frame of reference was required to help identify who was affected most by the problem and where the problem occurred most frequently to better target interventions (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.)).

Qualitative research techniques linked with a social constructivism perspective helped to provide valuable insight into the social acclimation behavior of marginalized young adults. The research design, data collection process, and analysis and reporting strategies selected allowed for flexibility. A systematic approach to the data collection was mindful of and attentive to system and situational dynamics. Using this approach to data collection provided opportunities to align themes with recommendations that corresponded with the unearthing of emerging patterns. Utilizing the strategy of criterion-based case selection analysis facilitated an understanding of the what, how, who, and why of intervention program development for marginalized young adults. The case study analysis process helped to conclude paradigm shifts and new conceptions of knowledge. The study findings will help to forward the knowledge-building process of accessing answers to complex questions that revealed subjugated knowledge useful for discovering understanding that lay hidden, which was difficult to tap into because it had not been part of the dominant culture or discourse.

The use of qualitative methodology, aligned with an explanatory, collective case study design, helped to provide an in-depth understanding of the issues and barriers to intervention program development for marginalized young adults. The research method

also helped to inform best practices of program development and interventions tailored to meet the unique challenges and needs of marginalized young adults to assist them with their transition from childhood to adulthood better. The research findings were predicated on influential perspectives of identifying effective, evidence-based program components and services of intervention programs. The thematic intervention program components and services were demonstrated to strengthen self-efficacy and assist in the development of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that helped marginalized young adults with a favorable transition into adulthood.

The development and implementation of a life construction intervention program for marginalized young adults required an in-depth examination of issues, including the identification of the phenomenon, the identification of the population of concern, specific behaviors that needed to be addressed, goals and objectives that needed to be defined, and a clear insight into what needed to be accomplished. Having a clear sense of purpose was vital during the implementation of a life construction intervention program for marginalized young adults. A clear sense of purpose was established when there was an understanding of the importance of the problem. There was also an understanding of the expectations from and on behalf of the program participants. Success was more likely for the program participants when the program was executed with a clear mission.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to identify evidence-based components and services of intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults to determine what experts recognized as effective elements of the programs that helped them with their transition into adulthood. The results of the research will be used to inform the development and implementation of a life construction intervention program for marginalized young adults ages 18 to 26 that is developmentally and culturally appropriate. The research findings, along with their implications, are explained and discussed in this penultimate chapter. The following research questions informed this study:

RQ #1 –What evidence-based components of life construction intervention programs, developed for marginalized young adults, have been shown to contribute to the effective transition from childhood to adulthood successfully?

RQ #2 - Why do specific components of life construction intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults contribute to the effective transition from childhood to adulthood successfully?

RQ #3 – What programs and services are developmentally and culturally appropriate, to assist in the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to build leadership capacity among marginalized young adults?

Stake's (1995) qualitative collective case study approach aligned with a constructivist perspective – where there was the recognition that reality was a product of

human intelligence interacting with experience in the real world were the concepts under which the phenomenon was investigated. Data were collected to explore the development and implementation of effective, evidence-based components and services of intervention programs designed for marginalized young adults demonstrated to help them with their transition into adulthood. The research findings described in this chapter were based on the analysis of interview transcripts, information about the intervention programs, and secondary data sources. A variety of data was collected, including project proposals, reports, presentations, abstracts, and policies, along with web site data. As a source of contextual information about events that could not be observed directly, information from detailed and summary documents was used to confirm or question ambiguous data (Stake, 1995).

Implementing an in-depth analysis of the data helped to provide contextual and historical information within which to frame the case. Documents were visually scanned to get an idea of any information related to the application of effective program interventions. Relevant data found in the documents were highlighted and returned to for further analysis. The scanning process facilitated the linkage of the pertinent data in the documents with the information presented by the participants.

The case was analyzed by conducting a cross-case analysis by searching for meaning by looking for patterns and consistency within certain conditions. A cross-case analysis strategy was used to reach interpretations about the case through the aggregation of instances until instances were considered easily identifiable repeated occurrences.

This approach to the data analysis was found to be consistent with the constructivist orientation advocated by Stake (1995).

The meaning of the data was determined by focusing on the research questions and utilizing an inductive analysis approach. Thomas (2006) described a general inductive approach for analysis of qualitative evaluation data noting that the general inductive approach provided an easily used and systematic set of procedures for analyzing qualitative data that produced reliable and valid findings in the context of the research questions. The intentions for using an inductive analysis were to (a) condense raw textual data into a brief, summary format; (b) establish transparent relationships between the evaluation or research objectives and the summary findings resulting from the raw data; and (c) establish a framework of the underlying structure of experiences or processes that were manifest in the raw data (Thomas, 2006). For example, from the information about the programs, the examination of critical incidents, categorical aggregation, and establishing patterns, the use of inductive analysis made it possible to inform credible explanations (Stake, 1995).

The phraseology used in this chapter were program administrators instead of the terminology participants. The interviews conducted with the intervention program administrators were focused on the exploration of pivotal issues identified in response to the research questions established for this study. However, a more in-depth analysis of what the focal issues meant was explored.

Cross-case Analysis

Intervention programs developed for young adults were assessed to identify the experiential components and services of the programs that contributed to favorable outcomes. A synthesis of the data sources provided both insights into practices and a basis for future research on effective strategies for intervention programs designed to improve the well-being of marginalized young adults. The overarching aim of the case study was to build on findings from intervention programs designed to assist young adults with their transition into adult roles. The purpose of the research was to advance understandings of how to reinforce a favorable transition to adulthood among marginalized young adults.

Three model pioneering intervention programs designed to extend identity-focused positive development to samples of emerging adults were examined. Pseudonyms were used to identify the programs investigated for this case study; therefore, the programs were identified as Program A, Program B, and Program C. Table 2 briefly describes each program and identifies the number of individuals who participated in each program.

Table 2

Program Description and Number of Participants

Program	Description	Number of Participants
Program A	A participatory transformative approach used to expand self-understanding through identity exploration.	A sample of 43 juniors and seniors enrolled in a personal growth elective psychology course at a public university.
Program B	A university-based intervention for enhancing identity exploration among emerging adults.	The sample for the study included 90 students at a public university.
Program C	A self-facilitated identity focused intervention.	The sample consisted of 141 emerging adults (19-29 years old).

A careful examination of the programs revealed similarities and differences between the models, which enhanced or limited their theoretical or practical utility. Meca et al. (2014) synthesized findings from an analysis of the three model pioneering intervention programs aimed to extend identity-focused positive development to samples of emerging adults. The study by Meca et al. (2014) was carried out to explore whether supporting the self-exploration of emerging adults promoted identity establishment and subjective well-being. Meca et al. (2014) also investigated whether reducing transitionally related distress was a mediating developmental intervention process underlying the outcomes.

Meca et al. (2014) utilized an outcome mediation model to assess the outcomes of the programs under investigation. The results of their study were derived from weighted random-effects analyses based on post-test assessments conducted at the end of the programs. There was a universally positive evaluation concerning the effectiveness of the applications regarding the initial objectives of the programs.

Few positive development programs have focused on emerging adulthood. Meca et al. (2014) described identity-focused positive development programs designed for emerging adults. Meca et al. (2014) provided evidence for the effectiveness of positive identity interventions during emerging adulthood. For some young adults, the process of transitioning into adulthood often involved working through a period of identity-related uncertainty before making enduring identity commitments. The results of the Meca et al. (2014) study provided promising support for the effectiveness of promoting positive identity development in emerging adults.

The overarching aim of this study was to augment the findings of the positive development programs investigated by Meca et al. (2014) to identify transformative strategies for marginalized young adults that assisted with a favorable transition into adulthood. The difference between the study conditions was that the program activities, and emerging adults in the programs examined by Meca et al. (2014) used to construct a path through life, provided the foundation of intervention strategies and transformative activities for promoting a favorable transition of marginalized young adults into adulthood. The content of the programs were examined in this study to provide a focal

point of the program components and services that guided the choices and actions that fostered a disposition among emerging adults to take control of and accept responsibility for their lives.

Program A

The active reflection of oneself and particular aspirations were the intervention applications emphasized in Program A. Program A utilized a participatory transformative approach as the pedagogy underlying its practices and anticipated outcomes. The participatory transformative approach was intended to cultivate self-understanding and insight through identity exploration, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

The developmental purpose of the intervention activities was to help foster a personal temperament for taking control and accepting responsibility for life. Program participants purposefully identified their problems and engaged in activities to solve them. Participants were able to develop mastery, which was found to translate into empowerment and positive identity development.

Berman, Kennerley, and Kennerley (2008) conducted a feasibility study where they examined pretest to posttest differences in a sample of 43 students enrolled in a personal growth elective psychology course at a public university. They used an identity status model to assess intervention change. The identity status model indicated that identity exploration and commitment processes were criteria that could be used to classify individuals' identity formation. Targeting identity as an outcome variable,

Berman et al. (2008) evaluated the feasibility of extending to young adult populations intervention strategies designed for positive development interventions. The findings from the study indicated that participants' identity distress decreased, and that identity exploration increased. The study findings also showed that the number of program participants who explored possible life directions and committed to a particular path increased by the end of the program.

Program B

Program B was an exploratory evaluation of a university-based intervention for empowering identity discovery among emerging adults. The study sample consisted of 90 public university students. The intervention strategy consisted of a group-based empowerment approach that applied a transformative pedagogy to help participants identify life challenges and work collectively to co-construct solutions to those challenges. The findings from the explorative evaluation indicated that cognitive intervention strategies were effective in promoting self-construction, while emotion-focused approaches (e.g., mentoring) proved conducive in supporting self-discovery identity processes. Recommendations based on the study findings advised that both cognitive and emotion-focused approaches be included in identity-focused interventions for emerging adults.

Program C

Program C was a self-facilitated identity-focused intervention that provided emerging adults with opportunities to proactively work through the self-identity process

by participating in the self-directed exploration of current life goals, pathways, and positive development. Program C utilized intervention strategies that were refined extensions of the participatory transformative approaches used by both Programs A and B. The intervention approaches used in Program C were focused explicitly on emerging adulthood.

Program C was a peer-led positive development program geared toward promoting positive identity development among emerging adults. The intervention approaches used in the program drew on the life course framework that utilized a socio-ecological model. The life course framework was developed to help individuals to focus on life stages and the impacts of transitions, events, and experiences across their lifespan. The life course socio-ecological model emphasized that the period of emerging adulthood is a time when there is an increased likelihood that individuals would make a significant break from their current life path.

The goals of the program were to establish opportunities for participants to optimize their potentials through an in-depth exploration of their current sense of self and identity and to gain access to support for resolving identity-related uncertainty or distress. The objectives of the program were to help emerging young adults to lessen identity uncertainty and distress. Program participation was also meant to encourage the establishment of a coherent and cohesive sense of identity that informed the decisions and actions used to construct a life path. The findings from the study provided evidence for the effectiveness of positive identity interventions during emerging adulthood.

Presentation of Findings

Pseudonyms were assigned to each program administrator that participated in the research project to maintain their anonymity. Therefore the interviewees were referred to as PA1 and PA2. The study findings were organized under key themes described in the context of constructivism perspectives.

When analyzing the data, four themes: identity development, journaling, mentoring, and community service, emerged and are discussed in this section. The themes of identity development, journaling, mentoring, and community service were identified by the evidence of repeated occurrences in a preponderance of the data. However, it is essential to note that the themes were not isolated happenings. Furthermore, the subjects were not presented in any sequential or hierarchical order.

An awareness of similarities between descriptions and implementation of intervention programs, components, and services developed while going through the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Each of the program administrators conveyed that personal experience, as well as anecdotal evidence, showed that identity development, journaling, mentoring, and community service were among the program components and services that contributed to a favorable and sustainable transition to adulthood for marginalized young adults. The intention of using these strategies was to create contexts in which the individuals themselves could discover their competence for influencing the course of their lives.

The program administrators described their perceptions and experiences with intervention program involvement in informing decisions for evaluative analysis. Reviews of the participant interview transcripts revealed that the program administrators were seeking ways to improve their pedagogy and were achieving success in similar ways. The administrators also discussed the program components and services utilized to realize program participant outcomes and stated that overall, participants typically accomplished their individual goals and objectives in approximately one year.

An essential criterion of the intervention programs was to ensure that program participants established a source of income. PA1 related, "Most of our people come to us because they want to get a job. Having a financial source equals having a mindset that allows them (program participants) to function self-sufficiently." The programs were also designed to provide opportunities for participants to learn the knowledge, skills, and abilities that helped them to transition into traditionally more socially acceptable "adult roles. "

RQ #1 - What Evidence-Based Components Of Life Construction Intervention Programs, Developed For Marginalized Young Adults, Have Been Shown To Contribute To The Effective Transition From Childhood To Adulthood Successfully?

Identity development. Within the field of identity development, there was an awareness of the need for intervention programs (Ferrer-Wreder et al., 2002). A leading-edge intervention strategy was to improve positive identity outcomes for emerging adults

starting with the most meaningful relationship of all, the relationship with self. PA1

referred to identity development as "character education" as individuals made meaning of

themselves, the social world, and their place in it. Identity development activities

provided opportunities for program participants to look in the mirror and understand that

their sense of identity was established predominantly by the choices and commitments

they made regarding certain personal and social traits (David, 2014).

Historically, the identity development process was viewed as a primary

developmental task of adolescence – the transition from dependency in childhood to

increasing responsibility for one's aspirations, desires, drives, interests, and needs in

adulthood (David, 2014). The transition involved a cognitive restructuring in how young

adults considered themselves in regard to others as they achieved physical, social, and

psychological maturity. The process of development generally involved working through

a period of identity-related uncertainty before making sustained identity commitments.

When speaking of identity development in the context of the intervention program setting

PA2 expressed:

> The operational word is growth. You're trying to take people where they are and
> get them back on track. When young adults begin to act like adults and can
> make decisions, and they are not solely dependent on others, but can make their
> own decisions…that's called growing-up.

The performing of identity development activities while participating in the programs

empowered participants to grow and move with purpose and direction in life. Thus,

identity was not something that participants resolved once and for all at the end of

adolescence; instead, identity continued to evolve and change throughout adult life

(Kroger, 2017). Participants who conveyed having well-functioning identities expressed that they experienced feelings of personal meaning and well-being and moved with purpose and direction in life.

  Journaling. Journaling facilitated self-directed transformative activities. Journaling was the exercise of recording events, ideas, and thoughts over a period of time, often with a specific purpose or project in mind. As part of the program objectives, journaling activities, and the techniques utilized with them were intended to bring about self-development. The journaling exercises were based upon the premise that by expressing ideas and thoughts in writing, the mind was freed of repetitiveness and the potential obstruction of other ideas or activities.

  Mentoring. The program administrators emphasized that anecdotal evidence and personal experience demonstrated that mentoring relationships were a vital source of support for a favorable transition to adulthood for marginalized young adults. Keller (2010) suggested that the age-old concept of mentoring with its complex and nuanced history has evolved to become a popular and mainstream development strategy regarded as a caring relationship focused on the consistent support and positive development of an individual. Murrell, Crosby, and Ely (1999) defined a mentor as a trusted and experienced advisor who, by mutual consent, takes an active interest in the development and education of a younger, less experienced individual. Sulimani-Aidan (2018) conveyed that mentoring relationships were a vital source of support for at-risk young

adults. PA2 explained the importance of mentoring for the program participants by

stating the following:

> There are those who want more purpose and meaning in life. There are those who
> want someone to show them how to reconcile back to their family. There are
> those who want to have more long-term stable employment. And there are those
> that really just want to know how to do life better. Mentoring helps them
> (program participants) to reintegrate into the community, to stabilize their lives
> and start moving on the right track.

PA1 shared the following vignette about a particular mentoring relationship that was

established between a mentor and mentee in the program:

> We had one gentleman that said he was ready to do something different. He had
> some skills, so we took those skills and built on them. He had some experience
> of driving large trucks. So, the mentor he was working with helped him to get
> into the union, helped him get his union card, and helped him to get a loan to
> purchase a truck. He purchased the truck from a family member who was ready
> to retire. His mentor even helped him get certified as a minority business owner.
> This (relationship) was probably 5 to 6 years in the making, so he established a
> relationship with his mentor. He was in here yesterday and told me he got a bid
> on a bridge for one hundred thousand dollars. That's a success. He's bought
> himself a condo, and he has a brand-new car, he has his own business and is
> getting ready to hire somebody to work for him. He was in here yesterday, and he
> was bringing lunch to the person that was his mentor. That's a relationship that
> will probably last a lifetime.

Weiston-Serdan (2017) stated that a considerable amount of research helped to frame its

impact and effect, expand, and illuminate a need for mentoring relationships.

Community service. Performing community service was shown to contribute to

a favorable transition to adulthood among marginalized young adults as it provided

opportunities for young adults to find purpose and meaning in their lives and to follow

their dreams. Flanagan and Levine (2010) reviewed research on community service

among U.S. young adults and concluded that involvement in community service was

meaningful for personal growth and identity formation during the transition to adulthood.

PA1 stated that "Community service gives back to the community."

RQ #2 - Why Do Specific Components Of Life Construction Intervention Programs Developed For Marginalized Young Adults Contribute To The Effective Transition From Childhood To Adulthood Successfully?

When asked why specific components of life construction intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults contributed to the effective transition from childhood to adulthood successfully, PA1 said:

> A foundational springboard for helping marginalized young adults is about restoring hope and transforming lives, helping them to re-establish life purpose. When people feel that they are deficient and unable to make things happen, you have to supply them with a source of hope. It's a matter of truly being able to look at the situations they are in and providing them the ability to know that things can change. I think that you will find that when you work with these marginalized individuals trying to bring them into community and society, the number one thing they find is life purpose.

Identity Development. Identity development consisted of a multidimensional process by which program participants came to develop a sense and understanding of themselves within the context of cultural demands and social norms. Identity development was theorized to have a positive relationship with well-being. PA2 noted, "When you believe in your mind that you can do something although around you there are challenges to it, you are most likely to succeed as you are willing to take on the challenges." An underlying assumption of this intervention program component was that effective identity development involvements provided opportunities for young adults to develop the competencies essential for finding and redefining adaptive identity

commitments. The practical implications of drawing on this approach were that the participants and interventionists worked together to explore creatively and thoroughly assess potential life choices (e.g., participatory learning activities).

Participants attained considerable critical thinking skills and transformed their sense of control and responsibility by engaging in this reciprocal process. They also increased their proactive participation in defining for themselves who they were and in what they believed. The next step entailed generating plans of action (e.g., transformative activities) to address identified choices and challenges.

Journaling. Journaling was considered to be a decisive change producing behavioral intervention strategy that promoted a promising transition to adulthood because journaling assisted in facilitating empowerment and positive identity development (Meca et al., 2014). The process of writing through ideas and thoughts promoted insightful thinking and the drive for working on them (Reece, 2014). PA1 stated that journaling contributed to an effective transition because, "When they (program participants) come in, they journal about what's going on in their lives or whatever – it gives them experience writing in sentences, writing in paragraphs and improving their writing skills." PA2 pointed out, "It is a matter of truly being able to look at the situations they are in and providing them the ability to know that things can change."

Program participants were encouraged to maintain journals to demonstrate the development of knowledge acquisition, changes in personal attitudes or feelings, and academic involvement. For example, Program C used the *Life Course Journal* to provide

a focal point for the participatory transformative group work to facilitate program participants' construction of a narrative storyline about "who I am" and "what I want to do with my life" (Meca et al., 2014).

Journal exercises were intended to target cognitive and emotion-focused identity exploration. Journaling activities required participants to reflect on their life course by, for example, plotting turning points in their lives, elaborating on long-term goals, and creating plans to reach those goals. By engaging in journaling activities, participants were encouraged to think about their goals and then do something to achieve them.

Description of life course journal exercises (Meca et al., 2014).

Phase	Exercise	Description
Engagement	Exercise 1	Participants determined their most important life course events and defining moments and co-constructed their life stories taking turns sharing with the group.
	Exercise 2	Participants built on the developing narrative groundwork by identifying their most important life goals, breaking those goals into activities vital for achieving the goals, and examining their emotional responses to carrying out the activities.

Participatory Co-learning	Exercise 3	Group members conceived their life change goals, shared them with the group so they could see how their life change goals overlapped (or did not overlap) and contemplated the difference in the group if members realized their life change goals.
	Exercise 4	Group members established an avenue towards their life change goals by co-constructing with the group possible choices for achieving the life change goals and carefully evaluating the alternatives. Selected solutions that developed from this process represented probable transformative activities.

The role of journaling as a method of reflective practice, its significance, and its value were found in its potential to empower heightened reflexivity through both the writing and the reading processes (Reece, 2014). The ability to consciously reflect on issues arising from activities, discussions or readings often brought about a new understanding. Ultimately, the advantage of journaling was the extent to which new awareness was beneficial, and for this awareness, a reflexive approach took on importance in driving forward ideas. The reflective circularity of action in the journaling procedure made use of the journal a stimulus for personal development and social engagement.

Mentoring. According to the program administrators*,* program participants reported that they found direction and strength from mentors who walked alongside them as they explored their purposes and discovered their vocations. PA1 specified that mentoring was the most important of the program services, "Because I just think it keeps people on track. It establishes a good relationship, and that relationship can last after the program is over."

Mentoring participants in the development of social responsibility nurtured and helped to (a) instill a discriminating way of thinking so that they acted in responsible ways to meet the needs and requirements of a changing contemporary world; (b) foster tolerance and commitment to civic duties and human rights; and (c) promote the ability and passion for working wisely, creatively, and effectively for the betterment of humankind (Brodeur, 2013).

Community service. Community service-learning was a pedagogical approach in which program participants participated to reinforce comprehension of core concepts. Community service work also empowered program participants to make contributions to their communities. As noted by Warren (2012), a substantial amount of research exists concerning the positive effects of participating in community service on many areas of knowledge. The positive effects of community service for program participants on areas of knowledge included civic engagement/responsibility, cultural awareness, empathy, higher-order thinking, life skills, motivation to engage in social issues, motivation to study, personal and interpersonal development, and self-efficacy. PA1 suggested, "It

(community service) helps them take pride in their community." Participants who took part in community service had an investment in and wanted to contribute to their communities. They also helped to sustain democratic societies by directing their discontent into constructive pathways (Flanagan and Levine, 2010).

Flanagan and Levine (2010) found that taking part in community service was also significant for the growth and process of maturing it encouraged in young adults. Key benefits included the fulfillment of the human need to belong and believing that life had a purpose beyond the pursuit of individual advancement. For example, a panel of a representative community found that taking part in community service strengthened intrinsic work values and encouraged a less individualistic focus on careers. Participating in community service activities also helped program participants to become more confident about finding the right job and assisted them in reevaluating what they were looking for in a career. Doing community service work also helped them to develop viable alternatives to low-skill, low-paying occupations. Community service learning provided opportunities to work in teams, develop leadership skills, gain better problem-solving skills, and augment planning abilities.

The personal and psychological benefits of community service work for individual program participants in terms of motivations and skills depended on the quality of the service project. Owens and Wang (1996) emphasized that community service work-related learning was influential, context-bounded, and grounded in natural and often unanticipated opportunities in real work situations. PA2 noted, "It teaches

more of the soft skills. It's about attitude and behavior that build character so that you can know how to deal with problems on the job." PA1 said, "It gives them an opportunity to meet somebody where they could maybe get a job idea."

RQ #3 - What Programs And Services Are Developmentally And Culturally Appropriate, To Assist In The Development Of Knowledge, Skills, And Abilities Needed To Build Leadership Capacity Among Marginalized Young Adults?

Identity Development. The program administrators recommended the program component of identity development as developmentally and culturally appropriate. Identity development activities assisted in the growth of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to build leadership capacity. A well-developed identity gave program participants a sense of their strengths, weaknesses, and individual uniqueness. A participant with a less well-developed identity was not able to define his or her strengths and weaknesses and did not have a well-articulated sense of self.

When asked, "Of the components that you described as successfully contributing to the effective transition from childhood to adulthood that would help to build leadership capacity, which one do you believe is the most important and why?" PA2 stated:

> I would say identity development because it's self-reflection, self-building, building to self-accountability of your behaviors and actions. Because I think you have to be willing to look at self and then apply what you have learned – even more, you're getting further instructions for what you must do. Self-reflection – when you correlate that with identity development that even brings on a new identity or stronger identity of who I am. You need to know who you are and where you are going. There is continual involvement in life, and there are some core principles that will always be with you, but there are some things that will change, and you have to know how to adjust or work through those changes.

> There is a lot in the mindset of how you perceive things and how you perceive others, and you have to be ready for change.

When discussing identity development in the context of their programs, PA2 said, "Identity development contributes to an effective transition from childhood to adulthood because it helps them (program participants) identify who they are and what they're capable of. It provides direction in life and encouragement to lead others." PA1 shared the following as an example to demonstrate how leadership proclivities were encouraged in the context of program participation:

> Say you have a speaker, select one of the participants to contact the speaker after you figure out who the speaker is going to be and have them set up a plan for the day that they (the speaker) come in. That gives them a little leadership experience and helps to build self-esteem. It's making them plan and is making them execute, so they learned that you have to have a plan, and then you execute the plan.

PA1 explained that leadership development occurred within the identity development process by giving program participants tasks along the way as part of the program.

Journaling. The culturally responsive practices were described as using the experiences and perspectives of the program participants as tools to support them more effectively. Language, reading, and writing are strongly shaped by culture. Regular journaling helped to improve reading skills and learn to understand perspectives and values while simultaneously facilitating openness to new ideas. The value of journaling in developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to cultivate leadership inclinations also occurred in the process. The process of journaling encouraged program

participants to have deeper self-awareness and confidence by embracing personal and professional insights.

Hardy (2017) suggested that keeping a journal was a high-leverage activity that increased self-awareness. By journaling, participants had opportunities to gain access to and reflect upon aspects of their everyday lives that they took for granted (Lehmann, Murakami, & Klempe, 2019). Wong (2017) noted that researchers found that when subjects wrote in the form of the narrative focused on positive outcomes in adverse situations, they reported a decrease in emotional distress. Without a journal, intense emotional experiences could be crippling. However, an honest and inspired journal session was considered one of the best forms of therapy.

Mentoring. Mentoring was recognized as developmentally and culturally appropriate because between mentor and mentee, there was a shared system of beliefs, attitudes, and values that created expectations and norms for behaviors.   The program mentees were provided with meaningful feedback and support. The practice of mentors providing mentees with meaningful feedback and support increased participants' levels of confidence in their leadership abilities. Program mentees also gained leadership knowledge and skills through dialogue with their mentors. PA1 indicated:

> Mentors being available helps with retention. The cultural piece is having experiences of people that are culturally the same or culturally sensitive to the needs of the population you're serving. Sometimes we get former clients that are doing well to come back in and mentor others. We try to find a person that looks like them. When a peer comes alongside and lets them know, 'I believe in you, and I believe you can do it,' then that person tends to have more motivation. There is acceptance in the process. 'Yes, you may have made some unwise choices along the way that have cost you, but you know what? Let's move on and

get a new start. You are worth the work. You have a support system that is not just focused on the past in terms of how it has contributed to where you are today.' It helps to meet them exactly where they are in terms of what's happening in life. It puts them in a position where their level of confidence is different. It provides direction in how-to live-in community and encouragement.

Hansman (2005) noted that mentoring as a learning relationship has been commonly accepted as a distinctive method to foster learning in the workplace, advance careers, facilitate new employees learning workplace culture, and provide developmental and psychological support.

Community service. Work-related learning through community service was a social and corporate process where knowledge was co-constructed. The emphasis of the community service program component was on collaborative or partnership working. Examples of the strategies used within the program settings included modeling, coaching, questioning, scenario building, organizing and sequencing of project experiences, and encouraging interpersonal interactions. By collectively explaining and reflecting on experiences, knowledge, thoughts, and expectations, respective meanings and understandings evolved in dialogue. Tacit knowledge was reconstructed into explicit instruction. This process, labeled externalization, enabled transferable knowledge. Participation in an experience that generated responsibility and a sense of worth positively affected how program participants thought and felt about themselves.

Performing community service work was assumed not only to have helped the community but also to have promoted prosocial development in participants. Service to the community provided challenges that expanded participants' concepts of what they

were able to do and what they might do in the future. The experience of serving and

working with people from different cultural and social backgrounds and age groups also

encouraged a heightened and increased sense of connection to other people.

Regarding cultural appropriateness, community service facilitated participants'

confronting their prejudices. It enhanced their understanding of social relationships

because community service activities supported access to adult society, development of

responsibility, collaborative and cooperative work, and control over planning and

outcomes. Developmental opportunities included having the responsibility to make

decisions, identifying and reflecting on values, working closely with adults, experiencing

new and challenging situations, and accepting appropriate blame or credit for their work

(Yates & Youniss, 1996). Additional benefits of community service for program

participants were increased responsibility, competence, and efficacy. Participants were

shown to exhibit an increased sense of competence and efficacy, both in their attitudes

and actions. They also indicated experiencing changes in general feelings of self-worth

and confidence in social situations.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to expound on the research findings regarding

specific components and services of intervention programs recommended as being

appropriate for developing efficacy and leadership capacity among marginalized young

adults. The study findings were based on a detailed analysis of intervention programs,

program administrators interview transcripts, and secondary data sources that provided

in-depth information about intervention program components and services that assisted marginalized young adults with their transition to adult roles and responsibilities. Identity development, journaling, mentoring, and community service were the major themes that emerged from the data.

The study findings were intended to add to the research on positive identity interventions for marginalized young adults by identifying program components and services shown to foster a favorable transition to adulthood among marginalized young adults. The information obtained from the data sources promoted the rationale that opportunities for assisting positive identity and leadership development present themselves throughout the transition to adulthood. To promote positive identity and leadership development during emerging adulthood for marginalized young adults required providing different types of support than during adolescence, suggesting that positive change in psychosocial developmental domains may manifest as positive change across various capabilities.

The development of effective intervention program components and services required knowledge of the types of processes that governed change. The design of intervention programs to facilitate self-efficacy development and leadership inclinations among marginalized young adults called attention to the need for more detailed and specific knowledge of intervention strategies and their links to the developmental processes they were intended to impact. Empirical data were useful in addressing

whether it was helpful to focus on developing intervention strategies to target specific processes when working with particular individuals or populations.

In "Charting the Center and the Margins: Addressing Identity, Marginalization, and Privilege in Counseling," Ratts (2017) endorsed a social justice advocacy perspective that incorporated multilevel interventions and strategies that required work inside and outside office and classroom environments. Addressing the challenges of marginalized statuses of young adults while integrating advocacy required new structures, models, and approaches. A life construction intervention program developed for marginalized young adults was also a framework where the young adults gained new knowledge and competencies, experienced new contexts and different roles, and consequently, a desirable career and life.

Symonds, Schwartz, and Ferguson (2011) found that creating multiple pathways to prosperity was an effective way of preparing marginalized young adults, as emphasized by PA2 "to re-establish life purpose." Participating in activities such as identity development, journaling, mentoring, and community service helped to promote self-efficacy and leadership proclivities. The intervention program components and services also helped participants to understand themselves better, advance their life and career paths, and forge their identities.

Influenced by the underlying principle that promoting positive psychosocial functioning was a foundational objective of promoting positive development, it was advocated by researchers, such as DiFabio and Palazzeschi (2016), that participating in

life construction interventions were linked with increases in well-being- including

emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Results from the study indicated that

promoting positive development required program activities that were flexible, adaptable,

engaging, participatory, co-learning, and transformative. The most effective programs

included interventions and strategies that complemented one another.

The study findings also indicated that promoting constructive transitional

capabilities generated effects that, instead of flowing directly from intervention to

favorable outcomes, were likely to follow complex pathways. The complex pathways

interacted in multidimensional ways that could best be described as circular causality.

Meaningful engagement through life construction intervention was demonstrated to

promote positive relationship building, co-learning, power-sharing, and empowerment.

Also, the development of positive interpersonal relationships was encouraged to support

the meaningful transition into adulthood within safe, open, and non-judgmental spaces.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative, explanatory, collective case study was to determine evidence-based components and services of intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults. The intent was to establish what experts recognized as essential elements of an intervention program that would foster self-efficacy and leadership capacity among marginalized young adults. This chapter includes a discussion of the findings as they related to the evaluation of intervention programs, participant interview transcripts, and secondary data sources that provided in-depth information on intervention program components and services developed to assist young adults with their transition to adult roles and responsibilities. The chapter concludes with a review of the study findings as they related to leadership and recommendations for action.

This chapter contains discussion and future research possibilities to help answer the following research questions:

RQ #1 –What evidence-based components of life construction intervention programs, developed for marginalized young adults, have been shown to contribute to the effective transition from childhood to adulthood successfully?

RQ #2 - Why do specific components of life construction intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults contribute to the effective transition from childhood to adulthood successfully?

RQ #3 – What programs and services are developmentally and culturally appropriate, to assist in the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to build leadership capacity among marginalized young adults?

Discussion of Findings and Conclusions

Emerging adulthood spans from the late teens through the twenties (Golojuch, 2015). It is a developmental period distinguished by instability, extensive self-focus, and feeling in-between adolescence and adulthood (Arnett, 2019). Emerging adulthood is also a distinct period, where there are immeasurable possibilities for personal development and experimentation with new life contexts and life roles (Karas, Cieciuch, Negru, & Crocetti, 2015). This phase of life is a crucial developmental stage in young adults' lives and is considered an important milestone between adolescence and adulthood. During this period, all young adults must make meaningful decisions in major areas of their lives, including housing, employment, career, and marriage (Sulimani-Aidan, 2018). Therefore, emerging adulthood was considered a much more challenging time of life for at-risk young adults. At-risk young adults in transition to adulthood entered this vital and challenging period of their lives with very little concrete support and low emotional and practical support from their families. The words *minoritized* and *marginalized* are used to characterize people who are 'othered' with regard to mainstream ideologies. Individuals that were othered were treated fundamentally differently from another class of individuals often by emphasizing their apartness ("Other," 2017). Individuals were othered by categories such as race, class, sexuality, or ability (Shaw,

2015) and were often met with considerable social opposition (Osborne & Grant-Smith, 2015). This characterization created a recurring structure of oppression by which the othered came to underestimate their cognitive worth, creating an inferiority complex with negative epistemic consequences (Bradley, 2014).

The outsider status of minoritized and marginalized people was disturbingly acknowledged as an undeniable reality even by those who sought to assist them in their efforts to integrate (Timmer, 2013). Those individuals had racialized and problematized identities whose status in society had been significantly affected. Many minoritized and marginalized individuals were challenged with economic oppression, suppression, calculated miseducation, and trauma in educational situations. Also, a reality for many of them was the road from school to prison, an absence of culturally relevant spaces, and narrowly defined outlets of expression (Weiston-Serdan, 2017).

The toxicity in which minoritized and marginalized individuals lived repressed, humiliated, traumatized, and killed. Recognizing and addressing this toxicity was considered necessary. The life construction intervention process was developed to help marginalized young adults mitigate those issues. Having one location with a purpose that integrated all the information and resources minoritized young adults needed to negotiate their transition to adulthood favorably helped to effectively address the differentiated needs of those individuals in various life areas (Sulimani-Aidan, 2018).

A synthesis of interview transcripts and secondary data sources identified components and services, e.g. (a) identity development, (b) journaling, (c) mentoring, and

(d) community service as being frequently identified with intervention program components and services utilized to assist marginalized young adults with their transition to socially acceptable adult roles. It is important to note that the assumptions articulated by those ideals represented a Western value system often based on self-determination theory, which theorized that competence, autonomy, and relatedness governed the definition of success (Pao, 2017).

RQ #1 - What Evidence-Based Components Of Life Construction Intervention Programs, Developed For Marginalized Young Adults, Have Been Shown To Contribute To The Effective Transition From Childhood To Adulthood Successfully?

Successful transition from childhood to adulthood was shown to be context and culturally dependent (Pao, 2017). There were several universal concepts of what was thought to be fundamental to becoming a successful adult as a young adult transitioned, reached for realization, and tried to thrive in adulthood. Successful young adults developed skills to lessen risks and handle challenges typical of this life stage.

As there was not one specific pathway to successful adulthood, visions needed to be articulated clearly and evaluated, and goals of success clarified as this led to particular interventions. Ferrer-Wreder et al. (2002) concluded that pioneering intervention work by several sociologists provided evidence that it was possible to enhance processes believed to promote identity development through short-term training. The central idea was to redirect the energies of young adults toward productive styles of living and

prevent society's confirmation of and a young adult's commitment to a socially

marginalized identity. Marginalized young adults needed to establish bonds with family,

partners, and peers to stay on a positive developmental trajectory and provided with

prosocial opportunities to build competencies and skills in work and community settings

over time.

Identity development. One personal quality that gained significant prominence

in the past couple of decades was the importance of identity development. Identity

formation neither begins nor ends with adolescence (McLean & Syed, 2014). Altered life

circumstances, coupled with changing biological and psychological needs, induce

continuous identity development over the course of adult years.

As noted by McLean and Syed (2014), identity's normative time of dominance as

a matter of primary concern was during adolescence and young adulthood when decisions

about the foundations on which one entered adult life strove for clarification and

resolution. Identity, however, was not a fixed entity remaining static once initial

determinations were made. Identity was shaped and reshaped by contextual forces as it

mediated or was mediated by them.

Journaling. Within the intervention program setting, there was an emphasis on

writing to learn. Reece (2014) stated that journaling was closely associated with

professional development practices in numerous fields of work. Reflective journaling

was widely considered the most common form of journaling. Reflective capacity was

deemed to be central to the experiential learning theory. To display reflective ability was

an indication of transformative learning in which a program participant demonstrated that he/she could reconcile actual experiences within a range of theoretical concepts.

Mentoring. Weiston-Serdan (2017) suggested that mentoring was an approach based on the premise that the mentoring process was informed so that it was capable of becoming a strategy focused on the marginalization of marginalized young adults. The exploratory study conducted by Sulimani-Aidan (2018) concerning mentoring and emerging adulthood theory examined the barriers, challenges, and needs of caseworkers who mentored at-risk young adults during the transition to adulthood. The study findings emphasized the effectiveness of mentoring for improved outcomes across behavioral, social, emotional, and academic domains of young adult development.

Brodeur (2013) believed that most mentors understood that knowledge and learning of value were ultimately transforming and linked with the entire life. The successful development of marginalized young adults into adulthood included instilling positive psychological self-perceptions and skills building with hopes of achieving social mobility (Pao, 2017). Clayton, Sanzo, and Myran (2013) emphasized that the benefits of mentoring were significant for both mentees and mentors. The benefits included but were not limited to the opportunities to share, reflect, and participate in mutual professional development.

Community service. Participating in community service and civic engagement played a significant role in the personality development of the young adult. Owens and Wang (1996) found that community service work-related learning necessitated, to some

degree, the intention to learn. This finding indicated that learning was a purposeful and conscious activity that could be advanced through the development of learning skills, such as critical thinking, creative thinking, communicating, and collaborating.

RQ #2 - Why Do Specific Components Of Life Construction Intervention Programs Developed For Marginalized Young Adults Contribute To The Effective Transition From Childhood To Adulthood Successfully?

How young adults interacted with the world, the internal compass that they used to make decisions consistent with their values, beliefs, and goals, and how they were able to be functional in different competencies were key factors demonstrated to contribute to a favorable transition. They were characteristics that facilitated young adults' management of and adaptation to changing demands and the successful navigation of various settings with different cultures and expectations. The characteristics were representational of the mindsets, values, and integrated identity competencies that would enable them to set and achieve goals of personal importance and direct their own lives. They also underscored the knowledge, skills, and self-regulatory capacities that were essential for productive adult functioning.

Identity development. Identity development was proclaimed to be a program component that empowered participants to move with direction and effectiveness. Identity development activities helped them to find meaningful avenues for the actualization of their interests, talents, and values within a social setting. David (2014) stated that the establishment of a coherent and cohesive sense of identity helped young

adults engage in meaningful identity exploration through refocusing and redirection…proving to them the ability to know that things could change. Regarding the relationship between identity consolidation and well-being, researchers emphasized the role of identity development in promoting positive psychosocial functioning and averting specific socially unfavorable outcomes. People must have the self-awareness to make meaningful and lasting changes.

David (2014) provided an integrated presentation of identity theory. David (2014) found that identity involved the adoption of a) a sexual orientation, b) a set of values and ideas, and c) a vocational direction. Karas et al. (2015) described a comprehensive exemplification of relationships between identity and well-being with a cross-national perspective. Karas et al. (2015) noted that a realization of stable identity in multiple life domains (e.g., education, work, relationships) led to stability, security, and consequently lower distress. Creating one's identity through firm commitments and active exploration promoted increased positive well-being (Karas et al., 2015).

Journaling. The practice of journaling proved to be particularly useful in promoting thought. Journaling also provided an outlet for sharing anxiety about life experiences. Program participants reported that journaling helped them to build confidence by placing value on thought and encouraged autonomy by bringing responsibility for learning into focus. Journaling was honest, trusting, non-judgmental, and it helped to strengthen a sense of self. Hardy (2017) found that the benefits of journaling included an increased focus, more profound levels of learning, order, action,

and release, holding thoughts still so they could be changed, integrated, and empowered. Other benefits of journaling were that it enabled improved stability, enhanced self-trust, directed attention, and discernment and offered new perspectives.

Cathro, O'Kane, and Gilbertson (2017) described reflective journals as written documents that individuals composed as they contemplated various concepts, events, or interactions over a period of time to realize insights into self-awareness and learning. Reflective writing helped program participants become aware of their implicit knowledge and practical wisdom, which contributed to building the skills and confidence needed to take on new responsibilities. Reflective writing helped to generate cognitive awareness in considering past actions and allowed complex problems to become better understood (Rykkje, 2017). The program administrators shared a belief that the features of journal writing helped program participants to become reflective practitioners.

The program activities that involved intentional reflection drew on a variety of educational theories, including instructional design and experiential learning, and was demonstrated to lead to credible learning and teaching (Cathro et al., 2017). Reflective practices facilitated program participants' engagement in continuous learning, and to make meaning of past experiences (Woodbridge & Brenda, 2017). As noted by Rykkje (2017), examining practices reflectively was a personal process that resulted in a changed perspective. Without reflection, the beliefs and expectations rooted in opinions and judgments had free rein concerning what was believed appropriate, correct, and fair in a particular situation. The program activities that included intentional reflection created

opportunities for program participants to step back from habitual practice and respond from a place of greater understanding (Rykkje, 2017).

Hardy (2017) related that information from several research studies indicated that:

- Journaling cleared emotions.

- Journaling accelerated the ability to manifest goals.

- Journaling created a springboard for daily recovery.

- Journaling generated clarity and congruence.

- Journaling ingrained learning.

- Journaling increased gratitude.

Mentoring. Within the context of life construction intervention, mentors were trained to understand the complexities and nuances of marginalization and purposely moved forward to address and change them. The mentoring process involved an experienced older adult partnering with a program participant to impart knowledge, reimagine structures, and build bridges to resources. Mentors provided good company as marginalized young adults began conceptualizing new questions and possibilities. Mentors were said to be respectful of the competencies of the young adults while simultaneously being prepared to be present in ways that encouraged more growth and learning.

A mentoring environment that prepared marginalized young adults for the present-day assisted in developing norms of communication and inclusion that (a) invited

honest dialogue, (b) supported critical thinking, (c) inspired holistic awareness, and (d) developed a practice of reflection (Brodeur, 2013). As noted by Byington (2010), keys to establishing a successful mentoring relationship included creating a relationship of trust, clearly defining roles and responsibilities, setting short- and long-term goals, using open and supportive communication, and collaboratively solving problems.

Community service. Community service work reinforced the premise that learning was an intentional and responsive activity that encouraged the development of learning skills. Diemer, Rapa, Voight, and McWhirter (2016) noted that as marginalized peoples' thinking about and understanding of their social circumstances developed, their perspectives of themselves relative to society also developed. As their reasoning about social systems became increasingly refined and sophisticated marginalized young adults became less psychologically constrained by their social circumstances. They also successively developed the motivation and capacity to change those circumstances, resolve developmental challenges, and dictate their own lives.

Warren (2012) recommended that community service-learning met four criteria to be considered advantageous: (a) personal and interpersonal growth, (b) understanding and applying learned knowledge, (c) perspective transformation, and (d) matured sense of citizenship. Work-related development of knowledge through community service reinforced the importance of intentional learning, illumination, and collective reflection. Learning from community service experiences was often circumstantial, informal, and

inherent. For example, learning did not occur through formal education or training; it was based on ordinary and often unanticipated opportunities in real work situations.

Learning through community service work was, to a great extent, an embodied and responsive phenomenon that commonly incidentally occurred while performing. Furthermore, community service was also socially and contextually informed contingent on individuals' emotions, intuitive or implicit understanding, and personal knowledge since those regulation processes influenced participants' impressions and experiences of the situations. Responsibility, organization, independent work, collaboration, and self-regulation were widely considered fundamental learning skills acquired through community work.

Community service work also helped young adults to:

- Improve overall well-being: Participating in volunteer-based community service helped the young adults feel like they were doing something beneficial for the world. Many of the marginalized young adults struggled with feelings of incompetence and inadequacy. Getting involved and helping others who may not have been able to support themselves made the young adults feel like they were making a difference. Community service work was also believed to reduce stress and decrease symptoms of depression.

- Boost relationship skills. A challenge many marginalized young adults encountered was the inability to develop and sustain healthy relationships. By going out into the community and interacting with individuals with different

perspectives and backgrounds, program participants worked on gaining social skills and became more outgoing.

- Learn through experience. The various backgrounds of individual clients' work throughout community service projects helped participants to broaden their worldview and experience new cultures and ideas. In addition to information obtained from people they met, the young adults also learned new skills depending on what the community service work project involved.

- Prepare for future careers. While participating in community service work, program participants acquired some necessary skills they could adapt to future employment. Also, the experience gained through service work could be included in their resumes for potential employers to consider.

RQ #3 – What Programs And Services Are Developmentally And Culturally Appropriate, To Assist In The Development Of Knowledge, Skills, And Abilities Needed To Build Leadership Capacity Among Marginalized Young Adults?

Identity development. As indicated by Fadjukoff (2016) increasing empirical evidence confirmed that considerable identity development occurred over the course of adulthood. Identity development exercises required an in-depth reflection of program participants' lives and values and were seen as an important step toward developmentally and culturally appropriate practices in leadership. Identity development practices helped program participants to reflect on and examine their own cultural identities and values.

Developing a coherent sense of self helped to support a consistent set of choices in career aspirations. Moreover, program participants with an internally consistent sense of identity reported higher self-esteem, lower internalizing symptoms, and were less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors (Meca et al., 2017). Meca et al. (2017) established that a coherent personal identity provided individuals with a sense of structure within which to understand self-relevant information and thus shaped how they negotiated with the social environment and the opportunities they chose to pursue. Identity development was seen as developmentally and culturally appropriate to assist in building leadership capacity as it was an intervention program component that supported the ability to enact and maintain lasting commitments and a clear sense of purpose and direction.

Journaling. The act of journal writing had both physical and emotional benefits. Program participants reported that journaling increased their self-awareness and enhanced their overall sense of well-being. Journaling prompted self-reflection and self-discovery and helped program participants to figure out who they were, what they needed, and what they wanted. It helped them to make better decisions and focus on what supported them in taking compassionate care of themselves and others.

By writing in the form of regular journaling, the learning and critical thinking of program participants improved. Bahmani (2016) assessed the progress of critical thinking through journal writing and showed that all three categories that displayed critical thinking through reflective reasoning improved: analysis, comprehension, and

application. Through this regular activity, they learned to develop analytical skills, which were very important as it provided them with the opportunity for active engagement in everyday life. By writing, learning resulted from interactions that took place in social, cultural, and even political contexts. Fundamental characteristics of those interactions were reciprocity, trust, and shared norms and values – characteristics of leadership which was modeled in educational, personal and vocational relationships.

Mentoring. Weiston-Serdan (2017) described mentoring as adults devoted to development work in which they fostered long-term relationships dedicated to investing in young people and increasing their capacity for success. Brodeur (2013), a Learning and Assessment specialist, defined mentoring in its classic form as an intentional, mutually challenging, and meaningful relationship between two people – a younger adult and an older, wiser person who helped the young adult in the ways of life. For the intervention program participants, a mentoring environment served as a useful context in the development of meaning, purpose, and social responsibility, and also provided a network of belonging.

Community service. Community service was considered developmentally and culturally appropriate because it equipped participants with formal models and tools, helping them to feel more prepared and empowered to engage in leadership responsibilities and roles. Community service was utilized as a structured tool designed to provide additional opportunities for professional development by developing the relationships emergent leaders would need to progress in their careers via the creation of

collaborative projects and professional networks (Mendenhall & Grube, 2017). Community service activities were implemented throughout the programs to help participants to develop strategies for goal achievement and served as a framework that allowed the participants to drive goal development and attainment by identifying and capitalizing on their strengths and resources.

Application of Findings and Conclusions to the Problem Statement

The problem is that there is a lack of understanding of evidence-based components and services of life construction intervention programs developed to find ways to assist marginalized young adults ages 18 to 26 with their transition to adulthood. Components and services of life construction intervention programs that have also shown to contribute to effective, desired, and lasting change that helps them become fully productive members of society. A report submitted jointly by the Institute of Medicine, and the National Research Council (2015) conveyed that the ages between 18 and 26 are of particular significance in the development of young adults with broad implications for economic security, health, and general well-being for the individual and society at large.

The transformative potential of marginalized young adults participating in life construction intervention programs was demonstrated. Life construction intervention program participation helped empower participants to mitigate oppressive conditions. The research for this study focused on the components and services of intervention programs developed for emerging young adults. The information provided in the study helped to establish life construction intervention program goals and objectives in the

context of specific transitional development assistance. They can be considered

transferable as a framework for interventions developed for marginalized young adults.

Information from this study can be used to inform policy and evidence-based intervention

program development with expectations that it will lead to improved outcomes regarding

transitional development assistance for individuals of the marginalized young adult

population.

The first practical contribution of this research is that it provides empirical as well

as anecdotal data regarding the components and services of intervention programs

intended to mediate transitional challenges faced by some marginalized young adults. A

second implication of the study derived from findings indicated that specific capabilities,

information sources, decision styles, and strategies utilized to effect knowledge

mobilization might differentiate marginalized young adults that participate in life

construction intervention programs from those that do not.

A third implication comes from a reframing of how to nurture and support

marginalized young adults in developmental rather than instrumental ways. The study

findings indicated that intervention program components and services such as identity

development, journaling, mentoring, and community service were practices that

supported marginalized young adults' transition to adulthood. The transitional potential

of the program components and services is predicated on an individuals' capacity. This

capacity can and needs to be learned and refined as each individual's perceived context,

and tasks change over time. Findings from the research also set forth suggestions about

how to nurture and support the knowledgeability of marginalized young adults. The

knowledge of how to nurture and support the knowledgeability of marginalized young

adults may need to be addressed in terms of how transitional capabilities could be

informed, developed, and improved through reflexive and continuous monitoring.

The basic conceptual structure of developmental approaches for a life

construction intervention program for marginalized young adults is premised on the idea

that each 'theme' (identity development, journaling, mentoring, and community service)

is individualistic and can facilitate the building of specific capabilities. The life

construction intervention program framework also proposes that the idea of a one-size-

fits-all approach to address challenges young adults face due to marginalization be

rejected. The recommendation instead is to embrace more individual-centered and

context-sensitive strategies and solutions. Lastly, the study provides indications to

marginalized young adults regarding desirable and necessary skills that they may need to

cultivate to transition to socially acceptable adult roles.

Application to Leadership

The mission of life construction intervention is to bring about lasting, life-

altering, and positive changes in the behaviors of program participants with attention

given to addressing structural effects of marginalization through self-efficacy

development initiatives. Life construction intervention programs also provide leadership

development models for supporting and promoting leadership, in particular, the

characteristics related to both situational and transformational leadership styles among

program participants as well as those individuals involved in program administration and implementation.

A factor of leadership development is an acceptance of the need for continuous improvement. Developing a learning (or growth) mindset is perhaps the best thing any aspiring leader could hope to do. There is general agreement that the ability to lead effectively relies on the development of several essential skills. Those skills are:

- Self-confidence and a positive attitude.

- Personal motivation and drive.

- Integrity and honesty.

- Flexibility.

- Communication skills.

- Motivation skills.

- Delegation skills.

- Problem-solving and decision-making skills.

- Strategic thinking skills.

- Innovation and creative thinking skills.

The induction of these and other skills in the context of a favorable transition to adulthood was accomplished via program participant experiences that included identity development, journaling, mentoring, community service activities, and success building strategies.

Leadership tendencies evolved through self-awareness and communicating it to others, building trust with others, and taking effective action to realize personal leadership potential. Program participants developed leadership skills via decision-making, getting along with others, learning self-organization, self-awareness, and working with groups, for example, through taking part in community service activities. Through the use of these approaches, leadership development occurred by encouraging the growth of personal characteristics such as self-awareness, developing trust when cooperating with others, being able to effectively communicate their vision to others, and becoming conscious of one's leadership strengths (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2018).

An analysis of data led to the identification of themes and insights within each theme regarding the developmental influences, core activities, and formative experiences that influenced self-efficacy and leadership proclivities. This section underscores the aspects of the themes revealed in the analysis that affected personal leadership development processes, in particular the importance of formative experiences on leaders' development, the need for emotional management skills, the capacity to work with collectives of people, and the ability to adapt to contextual demands.

Identity development. Identity development work helped program participants understand the impact that their identities had on their leadership qualities and skills. A leader identity referred to the extent to which an individual self-identifies as a leader and contemplated the leader role as a fundamental part of who he or she was (Day, Hammond, & Halpin, 2009). Leadership, in many instances, was regarded as a complex,

multi-component progressive competency rather than a fixed personality trait. Within this definition, leadership was considered to be a dynamic process that could be inspired using appropriate interventions.

Identity development activities were believed to augment an individual's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and procedures. Identity was characterized as the synthesis of various facets of one's self-concept and was considered to serve as a guide and facilitator of motivation and behavior (Key-Roberts, Halpin, & Brunner, 2012). Understanding how identity was formed, how identity was changed, and how identity influenced behavior was essential. As part of the identity development process, program participants developed goals and formulated courses of action to improve performance and achieve maximum potential. Identity development typically began with a narrow focus, which expanded as individuals learned their strengths and weaknesses, determined needs, and became independent.

Identity development exercises were aimed to raise program participants' readiness and potential for positions of greater responsibility. Identity development was seen as an integral aspect of the leader development process. Support for a strong relationship between leader identity, leader self-efficacy, and motivation to lead was consistent with the precepts of both motivational and identity theory. Seeing oneself as a leader and believing in one's capacity to take the lead were precursors to feeling inspired to engage in leadership roles (Key-Roberts, Halpin, & Brunner, 2012).

One explanation for the relationship between identity and behavior is that humans are compelled to maintain a stable self-concept. They do so by conducting themselves in ways that are consistent with their identity. When taking into consideration the correlation between identity and behavior, it was likely that individuals who saw themselves as leaders were inspired to act accordingly and were more likely to seek out leadership experiences.

Journaling. The process of keeping a journal strengthened participants' understanding of how life moves and what they could learn from it. Journaling that effected leadership inclinations was the distinct action of reflection designed for deliberate learning. This type of purposeful learning activity set the brain's mode into a constructive contemplation, which acted as an influential characteristic of development. The procedures of writing and reflection built self-awareness for program participants, encouraged learning, and opened the door to adaptability.

Research showed that many organizations used journaling as part of almost all of their leadership development program experiences. The emphasis was that learning did not come from the doing but in the reflecting on the doing. As noted by Jemal (2017), the transitive cycle of developing reflection and action was a foundational aspect of discerning economic, political, and social contradictions and in taking steps against the oppressive facts of existence. Reflection was commonly considered a foundational process because (tacit) knowledge developing (implicitly) from (spontaneously achieved) experiences may have advanced incorrect assumptions or may have been used

haphazardly. By reflecting on experiences and integrating tacit or practically attained knowledge with other types of knowledge, experiences became significant, and what had been learned could be evaluated, tested, and revised.

Program participants who reportedly examined their behaviors and outcomes continuously improved their relationships and results. Journaling provided writers with a better self-insight, an awareness of their patterns of behavior, and a means of stopping the cycle of repeating self-defeating actions. Journaling presented opportunities for the brain to pause amidst the chaos to unravel recent observations and experiences.

For example, a team of researchers at the Harvard Business School explored the benefits of journaling. The HBS researchers observed that by journaling in 15 minutes increments each day, there was an improvement of confidence among the journalists; motivation was stronger, and actions deliberate towards learning. By turning journaling into a part of life, participants in the Harvard study understood the outcomes of learning opportunities between action and results and how it worked as motivation (Mecozzi, Ball & van 't Veld, 2018). Participants who journaled wanted more challenging tasks, applied more considerable effort, and faced professional adversities with improved stability.

As found in Killip (2003), Block, an EdD in human development and educational leadership, taught writing and life-span development courses, and was also the co-founder of The Human Development Consulting Group. Block noted that keeping a journal helped individuals to look at life from many different perspectives – the physical, psychological, sociological, and cultural. Intervention program participants reported that

the most significant advantage of keeping a journal was an increased self-awareness. Self- awareness of strengths, stimulants, challenges, and hinderances was a decisive driver of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence (the capability to know and govern yourself and others) was a core driver of success in leadership (Inam, 2017).

 Mentoring. Program participants who participated in mentoring relationships were provided with opportunities for knowledge transfer. Program administrators and program participants agreed that there was a positive correlation between a positive mentoring experience and a measurable improvement in leadership growth. As program mentors and mentees worked together, their relationships strengthened and became beneficial relationships that profoundly impacted the growth of leadership abilities for the mentees. Effective mentors helped mentees by being role models. Mentoring enabled program mentees to see what leadership looked like as the mentors advised them, used leadership skills to effectively communicate, used leadership skills to encourage them and drive them forward, and used leadership skills to hold them accountable for real progress. Mentors also provided mentees looking for improved leadership tools with the activities and practical suggestions for becoming better leaders (Vamos, 2014).

 Intervention program mentees reported that they assimilated leadership attributes such as ethics, values, and standards; style, beliefs, and attitudes; and methods and procedures (Hart, 2010). As mentees, program participants learned leadership attributes such as how to set goals and gain new understandings of how people from different generations or backgrounds approached their work and careers. Mentoring helped

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mentees learn how to be flexible, honest, open, and receptive to feedback and insight. Program participants also learned how to understand conflict and explore ways to deal with problems.

Program mentees built confidence through their mentor/mentee relationships and became more empowered to make decisions. They learned to be willing and able to act in pursuit of goals, to invest in learning, and to take steps toward needed change. They also gained the leadership experience of what it was like to serve as a confidant, sounding board, and personal advisor (Hart, 2010).

Intervention program mentors were genuinely interested in helping program participants to develop their confidence through motivation, support, and inspiration, and to help them work through strategies to manage relationships with other people. Having the guidance, encouragement, and support of trusted and experienced mentors provided mentees with a broad range of personal and professional benefits. For instance, mentoring relationships, among other advantages, helped program participants to:

- Develop skills and competencies.
- Improve their confidence in their abilities to execute tasks.
- Improve their communication skills.
- Practice in accepting feedback.
- Maintain professional relationships.
- Expand their network of contacts.

As a mentee, a program participant learned to communicate with others in more senior positions, as well as gain confidence in dealing with people from unfamiliar backgrounds. Mentors assisted program participants in the goal-setting process by helping them figure out their strengths and weaknesses. The goal-setting process was valued because participants were able to see how others viewed them, compared to how they saw themselves, allowing them to learn and improve. Mentoring also helped to develop career paths or understandings of the requirements to get into a field of interest. Mentees who worked with mentors embarked on their careers significantly better prepared, had more positive attitudes, and displayed more effective leadership qualities than their peers who did not.

Community service. There were myriad benefits to community-service involvement. One of the most effective ways for program participants to learn foundational leadership skills was by helping others. Through participation in a life construction intervention program, the concept of developing leaders through community service involved taking program participants and allowing them to lead a community project with the primary intention of honing their leadership abilities. While volunteering, program participants were focused on completing tasks, overcoming obstacles, and accomplishing goals – which is why community service projects were said to be influential teaching experiences that empowered leadership inclinations.

While performing community service projects, program participants were reminded of their values and encouraged to reflect on the things that were important to

them. The process helped build empathetic future leaders and encouraged them to see the

bigger picture and to realize that their work had an impact far beyond any single project

(Coates, 2018). Community service work also enabled networking. Volunteer activities

allowed program participants to meet individuals from organizations from whom they

were able to learn valuable leadership skills or who were able to offer support to help

them grow their careers.

As volunteers, program participants gained leadership skills by offering guidance

and support to each other in different ways than they might have in different

circumstances. Those expressions of influence gave participants a voice and allowed

them to step up and show leadership skills that might otherwise not have been

recognized. While participating in community service projects, individuals had to follow

new systems or processes, and this helped to challenge their thinking and adaptability.

Program participants were also sometimes asked to work with people from different

cultures and backgrounds, and this helped them improve their abilities to bridge

communication gaps and relate to others regardless of differences (Coates, 2018).

Recommendations for Action

The information in this research study was intended to help understand better

components and services of effective and meaningful life construction intervention

programs for marginalized young adults. Of value are the potential that the insights,

theories, and relationships offer for improving the design and delivery of life construction

intervention program models and frameworks. The study findings also indicated there is

support for life construction intervention programs. The study findings are intended to provide evidence-based guidance to a cross-section of community stakeholders such as program developers, policymakers, lawmakers, community leaders, parents, volunteers, and potential funders. Research findings showed that the most successful intervention programs were based on broad partnerships within the community. Program activities such as identity development, journaling, mentoring, and community service were recommended as components and services that can be utilized for developing and implementing evidence-based life construction intervention programs for marginalized young adults.

A cross-section of community stakeholders can contribute to providing a range of resources that support both the quality and sustainability of the programs. Community stakeholders may include, for instance, community-based organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, local government, parents, civic groups, and law enforcement. Working with a diverse group of community partners can increase the potentiality of the program because each partner comes with its constituency and contacts that provide extensive support that can benefit the program. By way of illustration:

- A church could provide space for the program.

- Local parks and recreation departments could provide community service activities.

- A local business could provide computers.

- Community leaders could establish potential funders.

- Community-based organizations could provide staff for the program.

- Businesses could solicit support for the program from their peers.

- Program participants could give testimonials about the value of the program to local government officials.

In many ways, the message of this research study is a simple one. All young adults deserve the opportunity to experience rich and rewarding lives. Helping marginalized young adults to achieve this aim resulted in creating meaningful, formal professional development programs and other opportunities to learn, as well as implementing policies and practices that nurtured cultures of learning. As simple as this message may seem, the proverbial devil is in the details.

One recommendation is that marginalized young adults be suitably guided and motivated to develop their self-efficacy further. Society and their environment can easily influence young adults between the ages of 18 to 26. Augmented self-efficacy can empower an individual's belief in his or her competency to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments. With the right guidance and support, marginalized young adults will be ready to face the challenges of adulthood, will develop a sense of making the right decisions, and be more prepared to solve problems that may arise in the future.

Another recommendation is that the design of intervention programs for marginalized young adults be enhanced by incorporating features for life construction. Strategies such as identity development, journaling, mentoring, and active involvement in

community service have shown to be influential in fostering healthy social and emotional development. Such program developments would create viable alternatives for marginalization mitigation. A final recommendation is to provide social and financial support for life construction intervention programs to develop and disseminate integrated approaches to help mitigate issues of marginalization among marginalized young adults.

Recommendations for Further Research

This case study, being of an exploratory and interpretative nature, presents several opportunities for future research both in terms of theory development and concept validation. More research will be necessary to refine and further elaborate on the study findings. The analysis of intervention programs, interview transcripts, and secondary data sources focused on the endeavors of intervention programs and program administrators involved with assisting marginalized young adults. Although the analysis generated several useful conceptual themes, very little can be said of the nature of information concerning a more extensive population of programs and program administrators. Therefore, this study could be extended in search of statistical generalizability, rather than analytical and qualitative as this study is.

Second, the study offers opportunities to refine and validate the constructs that emerged from the inductive analysis. For example, the construct of identity development could use further refinement and elaboration in terms of both its component elements and its internal dynamics. Identity development is the complex process of developing, committing to, and maintaining an identity that leads to greater personality consistency.

A research study could be designed to investigate whether and to what extent it is possible to identify different conceptions of exploration that presumably lead to future commitment so that a broader range of identity development forms of knowledgeability for marginalized young adults can be established.

Further research is necessary to examine the practices of life construction intervention programs from the perspectives of individual program participants. Additional research can shed light on the dynamics of knowledge mobilization, sharing, and exchange among the program participants asking what sort of infrastructure they need both individually and as a group. Research into the nature and practical utility of the development of life construction intervention programs for marginalized young adults seem likely to be productive, to target a more thorough understanding that would contribute to more effective use of such programs.

Data have mostly not been collected on programs informed by the tenets of self-efficacy that can produce improvements in outcomes of interest. Little is known about the development of a holistic intervention program curriculum that is concerned with connections of the human experience – connections between mind and body, between linear thinking and intuitive ways of knowing, between individual and community, and the awareness of the personal self-identity for a life construction intervention program for marginalized young adults. In particular, empirical support for comprehensive program content and evidence-based approaches to developing life construction intervention programs have not been established. Measures that assess young adults' sense of

empowerment, identity development, and critical consciousness could be administered before and following program participation to analyze the extent to which programmatic interventions may be influencing targeted outcomes. For example, Eisman et al. (2016) proposed that measures of psychological empowerment, including intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral empowerment, may be useful for programs to integrate into evaluations.

While activities commence to understand and refine life construction intervention programs for marginalized young adults more thoroughly to develop holistic and more comprehensive programs, it is essential to make the most effective use of the programs as they are currently understood. Other practitioners could employ practices discussed in this study in intervention program settings to learn how practical the applications are. Also, of course, life construction intervention program developers for marginalized young adults could experiment with methods of their own.

Concluding Statement

The study findings indicated four themes: (a) identity development, (b) journaling, (c) mentoring, and (d) community service as components and services for life construction intervention programs that helped marginalized young adults transition into becoming responsible, and fully productive adults. The related conclusions and recommendations based on sample-specific findings can be found to be transferable for the population to whom the study was intended to apply. The themes identified in the data had a dynamic dimension to them that could best be described as opening up

pathways to achievement, continuous learning, creativity, proficiency in problem-solving, and variety in terms of career choices and leadership roles.

RQ #1 –What evidence-based components of life construction intervention programs, developed for marginalized young adults, have been shown to contribute to the effective transition from childhood to adulthood successfully?

Identity development was an essential component as individuals' needs and priorities changed. Journaling activities were seen as conduits for self-expression and as gateways to new challenges and growth opportunities. In contrast, mentoring was associated with helping participants to see themselves as valued and competent, and it also helped them to understand that the onus for life-altering possibilities was primarily on them. Community service represented growth opportunities and entry to broadening one's world view with relationships, career specialties, paths, and experiences.

RQ #2 - Why do specific components of life construction intervention programs developed for marginalized young adults contribute to the effective transition from childhood to adulthood successfully?

The results of this study indicated that marginalized young adults who participated in life construction intervention programs were motivated to be challenged continuously and inclined to grow in taking responsibility for their lives - and advancing into leadership roles at any point in their journey. Identity development, journaling, mentoring, and community service as components and services of life construction intervention programs for marginalized young adults supported individual flexibility and

adaptability. The program components and services were also shown to assist in the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to discover self-efficacy to influence the trajectory of their lives and to engage in educational pursuits and career construction proactively.

RQ #3 – What programs and services are developmentally and culturally appropriate, to assist in the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to build leadership capacity among marginalized young adults?

Developmentally and culturally appropriate practice required meeting the marginalized young adult program participants where they were. The exercises of identity development, journaling, mentoring, and community service helped marginalized young adults to be responsive to the social and cultural contexts in which they lived. Life construction intervention program involvement helped marginalized young adults to reach goals and objectives that were both challenging and achievable to stabilize their lives and become valuable to their communities, our nation, and more importantly, themselves.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1.   Please provide some background information about yourself and your

       involvement in your organization.

2.   In your experience, what evidence-based components of life construction

       intervention programs, developed for marginalized young adults, have proven to

       successfully contribute to effective transition from childhood to adulthood?

3.   Why do those specific components of life construction intervention programs,

       developed for marginalized young adults, prove to successfully contribute to

       effective transition from childhood to adulthood?

4.   What programs and services are developmentally and culturally appropriate, to

       assist in the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to build

       leadership capacity among marginalized young adults? Why?

5.   Of the services and/or components you described as successfully contributing to

       effective transition from childhood to adulthood that would also help to build

       leadership capacity among marginalized young adults – which one of the

       program components or services do you believe is the most important? Why?