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Focus On Success: An Explanatory Embedded Multiple-Case Study On How Youth Successfully Navigate Workforce Development Programs In Southern Nevada

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FOCUS ON SUCCESS: AN EXPLANATORY EMBEDDED MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY ON
HOW YOUTH SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMS IN SOUTHERN NEVADA

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ABSTRACT

This explanatory qualitative study investigated the perspectives of participant's and practitioner's perceived barriers to success and the necessary navigational expertise for overcoming the identified barriers. This multiple-case study research design examined three WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs in Southern Nevada, with out-of-school youth participants as the embedded units of analysis. Padilla's (2009) Expert Model of Student Success was selected as the conceptual framework for this study. A qualitative survey was the research method applied using the unfolding matrix technique with participant focus groups for data collection. Individual interviews were also incorporated for additional data acquisition. The methods selected for analysis of the data were taxonomies, thematic maps, and concept modeling. In addition, cross-case analysis led to the development of localized conceptual models of participant success. Strategies enhancing credibility, consistency and transferability were employed to increase the trustworthiness of the findings.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Florentino and Paz Villalobos. Without your love and sacrifices I would not have been able to pursue my dreams. I am here because of you. I will forever be grateful to you for instilling in me a work ethic that has been the cornerstone of my Ph.D. journey. Gracias Don Tino y Doña Maria!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The youth workforce development system is complex and consists of multiple views and components (Weigensberg, Schlecht, Laken, Goerge, Stagner, Ballard, & DeCoursey, 2012). Programs within the system utilize an assortment of employment and training services for youth populations to improve outcomes, such as placements in unsubsidized employment and postsecondary education (Relave, 2006). On an annual basis, over one million American young adults disengage from the systems that are designed to prepare them for their futures (Corcoran, Hanleybrown, Steinberg & Tallant, 2012). Specifically, it is estimated that of the nation's 38.9 million youth 16-24 years old, at least 6.7 million or 17 percent are neither enrolled in education nor participating in the labor market (Belfield, Levin & Rosen, 2012). Unsuccessful attempts at effectively engaging this volume of educationally and economically disengaged populations has notable repercussions (Relave, 2006). Unfortunately, a dearth of research exists that helps identify successful participants and understanding of what makes them successful.

The large numbers of youth who disengage from these programs are causing state and federal legislators to rethink the effectiveness of these programs. The greatest concern is the economic impact for taxpayers, society at large, and for these economically disadvantaged individuals. The millions of young adults who are out of school and out of work are not obtaining the educational and occupational skills that are necessary for economic survival in today's economy (Fernandes & Gabe, 2009). Findings from national surveys such as the American Community Survey and the Current Population Survey and from longitudinal surveys, such the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 and the Educational Longitudinal Survey of 2002, as reported by Belfield, Levin and Rosen (2012) calculated a \$1.6 trillion aggregate

taxpayer burden and \$4.75 trillion aggregate social burden for a cohort of 6.7 million disconnected youth, which included lost earnings, lower economic growth, lower tax revenues and higher government spending associated with out-of-school and unemployed youth. Their disengagement represents a significant loss of economic opportunity for themselves and the nation.

The federal workforce legislation aiming to address the economic encumbrance of disconnected young people was the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). In addition to youth, WIA programs also generally served economically vulnerable adults and dislocated workers (Fernandez-Alcantara, 2012). The legislative intent was to offer a pathway to enhance participant economic success (Giloith, 2000) and reform the way investments were made in workforce development (Schade, Espinosa, Ochs, & Ranghelli, 1999; Nilsen 2003). Education and training systems under the WIA were thus brought together to increase efficiency with the emphasis on employer engagement, integration of workforce resources, long-term outcomes, and state and local engagement (Giloith, 2000; Strawn & Martinson, 2000). A guiding key principle of the WIA was fundamentally changing the employment and training services provided to the nation's youth (United States Department of Labor, 2000). Regardless of its legislative modifications however, workforce development programs have yet to determine evidence-based research that leads to increasing successful placement outcomes for youth served, particularly at local levels.

Statement of the Problem

Current research fails to adequately identify how participants successfully navigate their barriers, while participating in workforce development programs. In particular, evidence is scant with regard to a local understanding of participant experiences in workforce development

programs (United States General Accounting Office, 2004). The problem is compounded because local planning relies on a broad-based approach to managing these employment and training programs and compliance to general federal guidelines (Piiparinen, 2006).

Disadvantaged young adults consequently experience programs that are unaware of who they are and what they need to reengage in the workforce (Ivry & Doolittle, 2002; Piiparinen, 2006). As a result, agencies receiving WIA youth funding allocations often design programs driven by common national guidelines, which lack a local context, rather than by a localized understanding based on identified barriers and characteristics of local youth.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to produce a local understanding of barriers experienced by participants in a youth workforce development program, as well as the knowledge and actions they employ to overcome such barriers.

Significance of the Study

This study was significant because empirical data resulting from the research can be applied to facilitate increased participant success outcomes for workforce development youth programs in Southern Nevada. Moreover, in light of the recently signed Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2015 (WIOA), this research will inform efforts toward implementing initial best practices and policies that are localized and empirically based. Results describing identified local barriers, the knowledge required to overcome them, and the actions that successful participants take, can be used to create a conceptual model of participant success to improve the delivery of services for local youth success outcomes resulting in unsubsidized employment or postsecondary education placements.

Research Questions

To acquire a local understanding, the author employed Padilla's (2009) Student Success Modeling. This model allows for the identification of barriers to success for a population within a specific youth workforce development program; recognition of the knowledge base successful participants possess to overcome identified barriers; and illumination of the actions these participants take to overcome the barriers. Given these components, this research investigated how successful out-of-school youth navigated their geography of barriers while participating in WIA youth workforce development programs in Southern Nevada. The primary research question of this study was:

1. How did successful out-of-school youth navigate their geography of barriers while participating in WIA youth workforce development programs?
 - a. What barriers to success did completers experience in WIA youth workforce development programs?
 - b. What was the knowledge completers possessed in order to overcome the identified barriers?
 - c. What were the actions completers took that enabled them to overcome the identified barriers?
 - d. What changes did completers think would reduce or eliminate the barriers to success?

Conceptual Framework

Padilla's (2009) Expert Model of Student Success (EMSS) was adopted for this study to investigate how successful participants navigated their barriers in local youth workforce development programs. The framework was constructed on assumptions about how participants

experienced programs and from the expert systems theory (Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez & Trevino, 1997). The first assumption was the program experience could be envisioned as a “black box.” In other words, we know what goes in and what comes out, but are limited in knowing what goes on within (Padilla, 2009). The second assumption assumed a geography of barriers influences either successful or unsuccessful outcomes (Padilla, 2009). The final assumption suggested successful participants demonstrated expertise at circumventing the barriers. Specifically, participants possessed the required knowledge and actions to overcome the barriers to attain successful outcomes (Padilla, 2009).

Miller (2005) provided an example of the application of Padilla’s Student Success Model in an elementary school setting. Her findings suggested that regardless of environment, schools with similar demographics may face comparable barriers and students can acquire the necessary knowledge and take required actions to overcome those barriers. Barker (2005) examined high school student success applying Padilla’s model. Her study led to an understanding of success within the context of a high-minority high school based on an empirically based local student success model she developed. Similarly, Wirth (2006) investigated college student success applying Padilla’s (2009) conceptual framework and consequently created a local model of student success for a particular community college.

These studies provided evidence the EMSS was applicable to almost any specific setting (Padilla, 2009). For this study, Padilla’s model was applied to understand how successful participants navigated their geography of barriers while participating in youth workforce development programs in Southern Nevada. Once developed, a localized model could be implemented to inform local institutional planning and improvements in order to help more individuals be successful (Gray & Grace, 1997).

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following key terms were defined:

A participant was an out-of-school youth whom was determined eligible to participate in, and who was receiving services under a workforce development program authorized by the Workforce Investment Act. Participation commenced on the first day following determination of eligibility, on which the individual began receiving WIA services (WIA Sec. 101 (34)).

The geography of barriers was the black box of identified barriers participants experienced that must be resolved while participating in a program (Padilla, 2009).

Placement was a participant securing unsubsidized employment with wages equal to or greater than the state and federal minimum wage per hour and/or securing participation in a program at an accredited degree-granting institution that led to an academic degree (e.g., A.A., A.S., B.A. and B.S.) (United States Department of Labor, 2006b).

Summary

Envisioning participant success within local workforce development programs was the central phenomenon of interest for this study. This study investigated how successful participants navigated their geography of barriers while participating in youth workforce development programs in Southern Nevada. Improved understanding was critical to facilitating effective strategies and improvements for local programs. Moreover, empirically-based research about addressing participant local barriers strengthens the entire youth workforce development system and helps policymakers, practitioners, and participants to interpret valuable information and improve localized programs, which in turn leads to successful placement outcomes.

This research is presented in six chapters. Chapter I includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research questions,

conceptual framework, and definition of terms. Chapter II presents a review of the literature, which includes approaches to student success, various levels of the Workforce Investment Act legislation and federal workforce development programs aimed at serving youth, barriers to educational and employment success, and an explanation of the conceptual framework adopted for this study. Chapter III describes the methodology, which includes the rationale for a qualitative case study design; more specifically, an embedded multiple-case study. It also contains the methods and procedures, which includes selection of cases and participants, data collection and analysis procedures, design quality, and concludes with strengths and limitations of the study. Chapter IV discusses the data acquired from participants and practitioners representing three different WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs in Southern NV. The chapter also includes taxonomies, thematic maps, and conceptual models of participant success based on analysis of the data. Chapter V presents a cross-case analysis between the programs. It also includes a comparison and contrast between the perspectives of participants and practitioners. Finally, Chapter VI discusses the findings and concludes with recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate how successful participants navigated their geography of barriers while participating in WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs in Southern Nevada. In general, youth workforce development systems are complex and consist of numerous training and employment programs at the federal, state and local levels (Weigensberg, Schlecht, Laken, Goerge, Stagner, Ballard, & DeCoursey, 2012). These systems utilize a variety of service delivery models and provide services for diverse populations with varying needs (Decker & Berk, 2011). As a result of investing billions of dollars in a wide range of programs designed to assist at-risk young people, identifying successful employment programs and understanding what makes them successful at placing individuals into employment and post-secondary education amid such variety is significant for funding, policy and participant decision-making (Relave, 2006).

A growing focus on youth workforce development is drawing increased attention to the needs for programs that contribute to positive youth outcomes and help them effectively make the transition to adulthood (Relave, 2006). Researchers concerned with student success outcomes have considered a variety of approaches aimed at describing the conditions and characteristics that improve rates of positive results (Hirschy, Bremer & Castellano, 2011). In particular, understanding at-risk participant success in workforce development programs deserves focused attention because these individuals are known to have high dropout rates and the dominant student success theories and models were not developed with this particular population in mind (Belfield, Levin & Rosen, 2012). Consequently, and on an ongoing annual basis, over one

million American young adults disengage from the systems that are designed to prepare them for their futures (Corcoran, Hanleybrown, Steinberg & Tallant, 2012).

In light of the millions of youth who are neither enrolled in education nor participating in the workforce economy (Belfield, Levin & Rosen, 2012), the first section of this chapter examines various approaches focused on student outcomes in general. The next section explains the federal legislation of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and in particular, the youth programs authorized under the Act, which aim to improve the educational and employment outcomes of the nation's economically vulnerable youth. The third section describes barriers faced by disadvantaged youth as it relates to reaching educational and occupational success. The final section explains the conceptual framework of a student success model in order to provide understanding of what will be required to address identified barriers and improve outcomes for out-of-school youth in WIA workforce development programs.

Approaches to Student Success

According to Padilla (2009), a majority of the traditional research on student success at various levels of the educational system emphasizes the lack of success rather than achievement. Studies about preventing students from dropping out of programs therefore concentrate on what accounts for premature departures (Padilla, 2009). Given the conventional research on dropouts, there are a variety of key approaches that have been used to study the phenomenon (Astin, 1984; Bean, 1983; Bean & Eaton, 2000; Kuh, 1999; Kuh & Love, 2000; Nora, 2004; Tinto, 1987).

For instance, Tinto's (1987) integrationist theory suggests students must assimilate into the academic and social environments if they are to continue to completion and not leave a program prematurely. Bean's (1983) intentional approach, suggests departure is a deliberate act based on the individual's assessment of fit within a program. Those who dropout, do so because

of a lack of suitability. Astin (1984), Bean and Eaton (2000), and Kuh (1999) all agree psychological constructs and theories such as self-efficacy, locus of control, self-theories, motivational theories, etc. is another explanation of why participants drop out precipitately. Cultural incompatibilities along with issues of racism, discrimination, etc. are yet other influences affecting lack of success (Kuh & Love, 2000; Nora, 2004). However, examining why individuals dropout does not necessarily provide understanding to why some progress.

Although not as extensive as the dropout research, the inquiry of progress has also solicited reasonable attention. Chickering and Gamson (1987) for example, suggest a person's level of effort and engagement impacts their ability to endure struggles. Satisfaction (Ahrens & Boatwright, 1997) and capacity to persist (Bourdon & Carducci, 2002; Cofer & Somers, 2000) also affect a person's perseverance. Individuals continue to progress when they are generally satisfied with their experience. The study of resilience, which looks at the individual attributes and environmental factors contributing to determination in spite of serious challenges and obstacles, is yet another major approach used to study student progress (Gordon, 1996; McMillan & Reed, 1994).

The aforementioned research literature on departure and progress points to student success, but falls short of depicting student success as the primary focus. Although the approaches of participant success as the core concentration are still evolving, a few methods have gained momentum. One approach suggests systemizing the use of institutional data and best practices to promote success (Lumina Foundation for Education, 2007; Purnell & Blank, 2004; Santiago & Brown, 2004). Swail, Redd and Perna (2003) recommend examining correlational and descriptive studies that aim to discover relationships between numerous individual and environmental variables and success. Taking it a step further, Stahl and Pavel (1992) suggest

incorporating empirically grounded models, which utilize complex correlational studies that include conceptual models of success. A most recent approach to studying success is Padilla's (2009) student success model, which incorporates expert system theory to facilitate student success modeling based on qualitative research methods.

This research literature aimed to instantiate an approach emphasizing participant success as the central phenomenon of interest within WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs. With an understanding of the key methods used to studying dropouts, progress and success, the research turned attention towards major federal employment and training legislation and its youth workforce development initiatives in order to provide context for the current study. Particular attention was given to Workforce Investment Act youth programs in order to eventually integrate one of the aforementioned methods towards facilitating success outcomes for particular populations served by the legislation.

Workforce Investment Act of 1998

According to Fernandes-Alacantara (2012) the federal government has participated in assisting young people to secure employment and achieve academic success for more than 70 years. Although in place for over seven decades, Holzer (2012) suggested understanding the role of recent employment and training programs – or what is now referred too as workforce development – aimed at disadvantaged youth, should continue to remain a high priority. Generally, these individuals are defined as being vulnerable in some way, because they are economically disadvantaged and face barriers to securing employment and/or completing their education (Fernandes-Alacantara, 2012). To put this population within the context of the Workforce Investment Act, a transitory overview of the national, state, and local legislations are provided, shadowed by descriptions of youth programs authorized under the Act.

Federal legislation.

Up until most recently on July 22, 2014, when President Barack Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the federal workforce legislation aiming to address the needs of the nation's labor market has been the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). Although WIOA supersedes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the new legislative reform of the public workforce system did not take effect until July 1, 2015. Moreover, accountability provisions did not take effect until July 1, 2016 (United States Department of Labor, 2014). This review of the literature therefore focuses on the WIA legislation since outcomes for WIOA are yet to be determined and consequently measured.

The legislative philosophy of the Workforce Investment Act was, "To consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs in the United States, and for other purposes" (Workforce Investment Act, 1998, p. 2). Approximately eighteen years ago, On August 7, 1998, President Clinton expressed the statute was his resolve of

... consolidating the blizzard of government programs into one grant that we could give a person who was unemployed or under-employed so that they could decide... what to do with the help we were giving them on the theory that they would know what is in their own best interest and be able to pursue it. (Clinton, 1998, p. 1584)

Nilsen (2003) suggested the purpose of WIA was to once again reform the nation's workforce development system in several ways. A major modification was eliminating its predecessor's (i.e., Joint Training Partnership Act) programs and consolidating the year-round and summer youth programs into a single funding stream (Nilsen, 2003). Correspondingly, and

with regard to its statutory purposes, the United States Department of Labor (DOL) presented as one of its key principles to guiding this implementation of the Act was fundamentally changing the employment and training services provided to youth in order to facilitate their educational and occupational successes (United States Department of Labor, 2000).

On the other hand, similar to its federal workforce legislative forerunners (i.e., Comprehensive Employment Training Act and Joint Training Partnership Act), WIA also included provisions for statewide and local workforce investment systems, which impacted youth outcomes. Workforce Investment Act (1998), Section 106, states these structures are:

... to provide workforce investment system activities, through statewide and local workforce investment systems, that increase the employment, retention, and earnings of participants, and increase occupational skill attainment by participants, and, as a result, improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the Nation. (p. 11)

Although it had been in existence as the latest federal workforce legislation for over a decade, Decker and Berk (2011) suggested no experimental evaluation of the Workforce Investment Act's impact on participants had been conducted. While Hollenbeck, Schroeder, King, and Huang (2005), along with Heinrich, Mueser, Troske, Jeon, and Kahvecioglu (2009), have provided suggestive evidence on the effectiveness of the Workforce Investment Act adult and dislocated worker programs, very minimal was known about the Act's impact on youth employment training services (Bellis, 2004; Decker & Berk, 2011). Moreover, marginal information is known of WIA youth program effectiveness because DOL has not yet conducted an impact evaluation and data collected are questionable because of problems with state

information systems and inadequate oversight of data quality (Bellis, 2004). Suffice it to say, this issue speaks to the need and importance of relevant data collection practices for youth workforce development programs.

Albeit the dearth of information and its validity, this review of the literature provides an analysis of federal evaluations conducted on three primary youth programs authorized under the WIA. However, the specific research of how young adults navigate their geography of barriers and reach successful placement in employment or post-secondary education following participation in federal job training youth programs is practically nonexistent (Decker & Berk, 2011). Nonetheless, this study aimed to address this phenomenon, at least from a local perspective.

State legislation.

The State provision allows for the Governor of a state to establish a state workforce investment board to assist in the development of a state plan to carry out statewide youth workforce functions (WIA, Section 111). The membership of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) includes individuals with expertise in the delivery of workforce activities and/or experience with youth activities (WIA, Section 111 (b)(1)). A third of its primary objectives are consequently youth related. For instance, one priority is determining allocation formulas for the distribution of funds for youth employment and training activities. The development and improvement of the comprehensive state performance measures for youth is another priority. Lastly, it is responsible for the continuous improvement of the statewide workforce investment system, including successful youth outcomes (WIA, Section 111 (d)).

Relative to this study, statutes require the state to provide a strategy for providing comprehensive services to eligible youth recognized as having significant barriers to education

and employment and ultimately facilitate the improvement of positive youth outcomes at the state level (WIA Section 112 (18)). This review of the literature however, produced no studies for what knowledge participants possess and what actions they take in order to successfully navigate their geography of barriers while participating in youth workforce development programs, which in turn would improve statewide student success outcomes for WIA youth programs in Nevada.

Local legislation.

The WIA established a framework for providing youth workforce development services at the local level (Relave, 2006). Suitably, local areas could customize approaches to targeted youth served, the services provided, and how they are delivered (Bellis, 2004). To ensure youth programs are tailored to local areas, federal legislation requires the participation of a variety of local representatives – youth policy experts, practitioners from youth-serving agencies, parents, and others with a vested interest in local youth development (Bellis, 2004). Thus the obligation for a youth council, which sets policy for programs serving youth within local designated areas (WIA, Section 117 (h)(1)).

Responsibilities of the youth council include developing portions of the local plan related to eligible youth activities, recommending awards to eligible providers, conducting oversight of youth providers, coordinating youth activities, and other duties designated suitable by the chairperson of the local board (WIA, Section 117 (h)(4)). Nevertheless, similar to both federal and state literature reviews, research for what facilitates success outcomes in local youth workforce development programs, are nonexistent.

In order to ascertain the knowledge and actions of successful youth participants in workforce development programs, the ensuing review of the literature explains federally funded

programs authorized under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and implemented at both state and local levels. This overview is critical because these programs are targeted towards the nation's most disadvantaged youth, which face the greatest obstacles to educational and occupational success (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2012).

Workforce Investment Act Youth Programs

The United States Department of Labor's (DOL) Employment and Training Administration (ETA) governs job training and employment services for youth under the Workforce Investment Act (United States Department of Labor, 2013). The following programs serve economically vulnerable individuals and collectively make up the federal job training and workforce system for the nation's youth:

- Job Corps, a program that provides job training and related services primarily at residential centers maintained by contractor organizations;
- YouthBuild, a competitive grant program that emphasizes job training and education in construction; and
- Youth Formula Activities, a formula grant program for states that includes employment and other services that are provided year-round (United States Department of Labor, 2009).

Job Corps.

For more than 30 years, Job Corps has been assisting economically disadvantaged youths aged 16 to 24 who need and can benefit from an intensive model of education, training, and supportive services operated mainly under a residential setting (United States General Accounting Office, 1998). From its inception, the program's single most important service is helping youth find jobs or other beneficially economic activities such as pursuing further

education or advanced training, or enlisting for a career in the military (Levitan, 1975). Spending an average of 7 months in the program, per participant cost is approximately \$15,000; making Job Corps the most expensive national youth job training program (United States General Accounting Office, 1998). The reasons for the high participant costs are do to serving severely disadvantaged individuals, who face many barriers to employment and its comprehensive services being provided in a residential setting (United States General Accounting Office, 1995).

Less than one decade after its legislative inauguration, an evaluation study reported only 57 percent of all trainees were successfully placed either in employment, education, or the military (UNCO, 1972). However, Levitan (1975) concluded it was difficult to quantify the positive impacts of Job Corps on a national scale. Two decades later, upon conducting six site visits to various Job Corps centers, a U.S. General Accounting Office (1995) report to Congress suggested continued concerns about the program's effectiveness in light of its high costs. That same report concluded that completing the program was significant in achieving successful placement outcomes, yet only one-third of enrollees did so. It also noted that a substantial portion of the Job Corps' funds, 40 percent at the six sites visited during the evaluation, was spent on non-completers.

Although successful completion is the aim, minimal research exists of how participants holistically traverse barriers to completion in the Job Corps programs. One in particular, and in alignment with student effort and engagement (Chickering & Gamson, 1987) and participant satisfaction (Ahrens & Boatwright, 1997) theories noted earlier, Gallegos and Kahn's (1986) study of factors predicting outcomes of underprivileged youths in Job Corps training programs suggested that a participant's level of engagement and desirability was associated with success or nonsuccess. However, their research didn't account for how participants navigated barriers to

completion in the Job Corps program; only factors that influenced completion or non-completion. Furthermore, since Gallegos and Kahn's (1986) investigated success factors at one Job Corps center, the findings are not generalizable to the national Job Corps program as a whole. This is significant because of WIA authorized programs continuing to be funded, Job Corps receives the largest appropriation year-after-year, from \$1.4 billion in Fiscal Year 2000 to \$1.7 billion in Fiscal Year 2012 (Fernandes-Alacantara, 2012). Although its high federal allotment and its proposed outcomes, not much is known about the knowledge and actions which successful Job Corps completers possessed and used to circumvent their plethora of barriers.

YouthBuild.

In comparison, funding for the YouthBuild model in Fiscal Year 2010 was \$102.5 million, the highest level to date, but decreased to \$79.8 million in Fiscal Year 2011 and lesser to \$79.7 million in Fiscal Year 2012 (Fernandes-Alacantara, 2012). Although funded approximately half the amount of Job Corps, YouthBuild targets employment and training services towards similar disadvantaged individuals as Job Corps. Specifically, participants are eligible for YouthBuild if they are between the ages of 16 through 24; a member of a low-income family; basic skills deficient, a youth in foster care, a youth offender, an individual with a disability, a child of incarcerated parents, or a migrant youth; and a school dropout (United States Department of Labor, 2012).

Unlike Job Corps, the YouthBuild program is not operated in a residential setting. Instead, YouthBuild's occupational training similarly involves a range of education and workforce investment activities which includes instruction, skill building, alternative education, mentoring, and occupational skills training in rehabilitation or construction of housing (United States Department of Labor, 2006a). Fifty percent of the program's design must be centered on

addressing educational needs, at least forty percent requires occupational and skill development activities, and ten percent concentrates on leadership development (Fernandes-Alacantara, 2012).

As with any federally funded program, Congress requires accountability regarding the model's effectiveness. A U.S. Government Accountability Office (2007) report discovered that while under the auspices of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), minimal oversight of YouthBuild grantees was conducted. The evaluation, which analyzed 245 closeout reports, representing 46 percent of nationwide grantees, concluded limited participant outcome data precluded any generalized assessment of this federally funded WIA program. Consequently, YouthBuild was transferred from HUD to the Department of Labor (DOL) under the YouthBuild Transfer Act that same year in 2007 (United States Government Accountability Office, 2007).

Shortly thereafter, a 2009 What Works Clearinghouse Intervention Report identified 32 evaluation studies of YouthBuild that were published or released between 1996 and 2009. Specifically, 25 of these studies lacked the utilization of a comparison group, four didn't include outcomes within the study design, and three did not meet evidence standards because they used a quasi-experimental design in which the analytic intervention and comparison groups were not shown to be equivalent.

The scarcity of reliable empirical evidence makes it problematic to assess the effectiveness of YouthBuild overtime and determine strategies and practices that specifically improve successful outcomes for participants (Heinrich & Holzer, 2011). Moreover, it's challenging to draw any dependable conclusions of how participants navigate the difficulties they experience during participation in the program's employment and training services.

Youth Formula Activities.

The Youth Formula Activities programs authorized by WIA are the primary source of federal funding for vulnerable youth employment and job training activities, ranging from \$924 million to \$1.1 billion in each of Fiscal Year 2000 through 2008 and \$2.1 billion for Fiscal Year 2009 (Fernandes-Alacantara, 2012). Similar to Job Corps and YouthBuild, the purpose of the Youth Activities program is to facilitate job training, employment, and educational attainment for select youth. The emphasis of these activities is thus placed on long-term, comprehensive services delivered year-round through collaborative systems in order to prepare young men and women towards becoming economically self-sufficient (Bellis, 2004).

A youth is eligible to receive services if he or she is between the ages of 14 through 21, is a low-income individual, and facing one or more of the following barriers to employment or education: basic skills deficiency; high school dropout; homeless, runaway, or foster child; pregnant or a parenting; juvenile offender; or requiring additional assistance to complete an education program or to secure an maintain employment (WIA, Section 101(13)). Department of Labor Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 9-00 mandates 10 Youth Activities be available to all eligible youth and pertain to improving educational achievement, supporting youth services, developing leadership, and preparing for and succeeding in employment (United States Department of Labor, 2001).

As with the previously noted federal evaluations of Job Corps and YouthBuild, WIA Youth Activities are also assessed for programmatic effectiveness. A U.S. Department of Labor (2003) evaluation of youth program outcomes conducted by the Office of Inspector General discovered the entered employment outcome was recorded for 30 percent (13 of 43) of the exited older youth (ages 19 to 21); yet, only 54 percent of those (7 of 13) could be substantiated.

Besides lacking significant generalizability for older youth, the evaluation also admitted that only 37 percent of the recorded performance measures for its random sample of 420 youth cases from a judgmental sample of 14 local workforce investment boards across the continental United States were adequately documented. Inadequate oversight of documentation validity consequently makes it problematic to assess effectiveness of programs to scale (Bellis, 2004).

Although WIA had been operational for more than ten years, Decker and Berk (2011) concluded reliable experimental evidence on the effectiveness of the overall WIA youth programs was absent. The U.S. Government Accountability Office has criticized the WIA program for its limited evaluation efforts and the inadequacies of those attempted as noted above (United States Government Accountability Office, 2009).

Barriers to Placement in Employment and/or Postsecondary Education

All federal training and employment services for youth authorized under the Workforce Investment Act are comprised of one or more of the following at-risk targeted populations which are: deficient in basic literacy skills; school dropouts; homeless, runaway, or in the foster care system; pregnant or parenting; juvenile offenders; or individuals (including a youth with a disability) who require additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment (WIA, Section 101 (13)).

According to Deluca, Hutchinson, DeLugt, Beyer, Thornton, Versnel, Chin & Munby (2010) being at-risk is usually due to “a confluence of factors” (p. 305). There is no single outstanding barrier responsible for impeding the progress of at-risk youth (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2012). Rather, there is a mixture of real-life issues limiting young people’s educational and occupational attainments (Swanson & Tokar, 1991; Ladany, Melincoff, Constantine, & Love,

1997; Albert & Luzzo, 1999). Their myriad of challenges are complicated and part of a context that cannot be understood in isolation.

With respect to the WIA youth populations (e.g., dropouts, adjudicated youth, foster youth, etc.), the review of the research literature related to barriers can be organized around five categories: (1) Personal barriers (Swanson & Tokar, 1991; D'Andrea, 1995; Wentling & Waight, 1999; Christle & Yell, 2008; Meeker, Edmonson, & Fisher, 2008); (2) Social barriers (Kenny, Gualdron, Scanlon, Sparks, Blustein & Jernigan, 2007; Christle & Yell, 2008; Meeker et al., 2008); (3) Educational barriers (D'Andrea, 1995; Wentling & Waight, 1999; Kenny et al., 2007; Christle & Yell, 2008; Meeker et al., 2008); (4) Occupational barriers (Swanson & Tokar, 1991; Barclay, 2004); and (5) Societal barriers (Wentling & Waight, 1999; Kenny et al., 2007; Christle & Yell, 2008). Each of these barriers will be discussed further in the following sections.

Personal barriers.

Personal barriers were recognized as impediments towards youth educational and occupational achievements (Swanson & Tokar, 1991; Constantine, Erickson, Banks, & Timberlake, 1998). For instance, to offer a perspective of barriers related to educational and career goals, Kenny et al. (2007) conducted semi-structured interviews of 16 students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds at an urban public high school in a large Northeastern city. Using consensual qualitative research, the authors identified a lack of self-discipline, which includes a lack of focus, lack of effort, or bad decision-making, as a typical barrier to success.

Similarly, youth lacking self-confidence are less likely to believe successful high-status high-paying occupations are attainable (Arbona, 1990; Weinstein, Madison, & Kuklinski, 1995). As a result, they are more likely to have lower occupational and educational expectations regarding their goals because they don't perceive themselves as "smart enough" (McWhirter,

1997, p. 136). Utilizing a free-response, thought-listing instrument containing five stimulus statements representing common career-related experiences (e.g., choosing a major, getting a degree, getting the first job, advancing in a career, balancing life) by both genders (N = 48, 50% of each sex), Swanson and Tokar (1991) concluded self-confidence was an important element of the vocational development process. Tangri and Jenkins (1986) agree that there is a noteworthy connection between the internal assurance of youth and their ultimate occupational attainment.

Barclay's (2004) quantitative study of perceived barriers for 317 adjudicated youth calculated descriptive statistics for item means to examine which barriers were most commonly perceived by the overall sample. His findings discovered illicit activities such as drug and alcohol use, the possession of a criminal record, and general deviant behaviors were revealed as major perceived obstacles to obtaining employment.

Although a different population and more than a decade separating their findings related to career development barriers, Barclay's (2004) investigation of incarcerated youth and Swanson and Tokar's (1991) research of male and female college-bound students, both agreed that a lack of interpersonal skills also obstructs employment opportunities for youth. Whether going to jail or college, the inability to relate to others is perceived as a barrier to positive employment outcomes.

Regardless of societal status, from a youth's viewpoint, additional individual barriers preventing progress for youth included physical appearance (Barclay, 2004). A qualitative study collecting data by means of surveys, focus groups and interviews, Meeker et al. (2008) noted that of the 158 participants in their study, 41 of them listed being perceived as pregnant or as a parent being a factor preventing them from educational success. Physical perceptions of others are perceived as hindrances to youth success (Barclay, 2004 & Meeker et al., 2008). This is

important because of youth targeted for WIA programs, pregnant and/or parenting youth are expected to be recruited and served.

Social barriers.

There is no shortage of research when it comes to the social influence of family on the post-secondary and employment options and opportunities for underprivileged populations. Family attitudes and problems are preventative factors about college and careers (Luzzo, 1993). Utilizing MANOVA to determine college preventive factors and setting the confidence level at .005 for univariate analyses, McWhirter (1997) discovered that Mexican-Americans were more likely than their Euro-American counterparts to agree that if they did not attend college, it would be because of family problems and because of family attitudes about college. This suggests that enhancing the perceived value and relevance of going to college might be an important component of efforts to increase educational attainment for Hispanic youth served in WIA youth programs (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2012).

Using case study analyses of three American Indian high school students who chose to leave the traditional school settings because of social influences, Jeffries, Nix and Singer (2002) discovered family values impacted these youth's educational outcomes. One student in particular who dropped out of school shared that her mother also dropped out of high school. Yet, her mother placed a great deal of emphasis on her daughter completing high school education in spite of her mother's lack of educational example. Although parents continually stress the importance of education, their own lack of example in completing high school or reaching a certain level of education significantly impacts the educational attainments of their children (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2012).

Additionally, deficiencies in social support and unstable household structures, which include negative relationships with family members and single-parent home environments are common challenges for vulnerable populations (McWhirter, J., McWhirter, B., McWhirter, A. & McWhirter, E., 1995). Most problematic, are the limited, most often even absent, or dysfunctional dynamics with family commonly experienced by runaway, homeless and foster youth (Osgood, Foster & Courtney, 2010); all of which are targeted for services in WIA youth programs.

Kenny et al. (2007) also found that family misfortunes such as the deteriorating health or death of a family member also limited the achievements of an adolescent's post-high-school educational and career goals. During an interview, a Latino student expressed, "Family members really need the money for something and you need the money... What they need is more important... So you feel like helping them more because your dream can hold for a while, and they might need it for like medical problems" (Kenny et al., 2007, p. 340).

Social barriers such as unpredictable familial misfortunes can prevent young adults from going to college or experiencing increasing levels of occupational attainment. The researcher's review of the literature realized reasons additionally include, but are not limited to, family problems, social attitudes, social deficiencies of support and structure, and lack of positive parental examples.

Educational barriers.

McWhirter (1997) suggests students' perception about their academic abilities plays a part in their post-secondary education and employment ambitions. Educational barriers include a sense of not possessing enough education or a perception of being too credit deficient (Swanson & Tokar, 1991; Meeker et al., 2008). The link between education level and barriers to

employment reveals that those with lower levels of education typically encounter more barriers than their higher educated counterparts (Lindsay, 2011).

A lack of literacy and poor academic performance are considered leading risk factors of delinquency and dropping out of high school which consequently become barriers to employment (Barclay, 2004; Guerra, 2012; Wakefield, Sage & Coy, 2003). Christle and Yell (2008) on the other hand, discovered that literacy was a significant factor against deviant behavior and subsequent potential ramifications. Additionally, students who assumed they lacked sufficient study skills prevented themselves from envisioning future career progress or simply making career choices altogether (Luzzo, 1993).

Beyond the perception of their own academic deficiencies, the lack of quality educational environments also influences student development and progress (Kenny, et al., 2007). At-risk high school students making vocational choices regarding their intent to go to college or to identify employment options are often times contending with inhospitable settings (McWhirter et al., 1995). Such discomfort with institutions was identified as a reason for dropping out of high school for urban American Indian students (Jeffries et al., 2002).

Personnel were also perceived as having an impact on student's academic achievements (Meeker et al., 2008). In Wentling and Waight's (1999) study of barriers that hindered the successful transition of minority youth into the workplace, it was discovered that an institution's resistance to change was the most commonly mentioned obstacle (81%). For example, their findings indicated instructors teach the way they were taught and thus believe all students should learn similarly. This pedagogical approach results in students not receiving a variety of learning opportunities and consequently not receiving the academic preparation they need to eventually succeed in the workplace (Wentling & Waight, 1999).

Educational issues such as illiteracy, poor academic performance, inadequate study skills, inhospitable environments, and traditional pedagogy, are but a few items this research discovered as impediments to success. These items are important to contemplate since one of the designated populations to serve in federal workforce development programs are individuals that are basic skills deficient.

Occupational barriers.

Occupational barriers are not specific to youth, but have a more pronounced effect on youth because of their comparative lack of experience to other labor market participants (Fernandez-Alcantara, 2012). Youth with deficiencies in pre-employment skills and work maturity therefore perceive themselves as already being competitively disadvantaged (Barclay, 2004). Fernandez and Gabe (2009) suggest a young person's detachment from the workforce or education is an indicator he or she may not be adequately making the transition to employment or postsecondary education.

Besides reengaging disconnected youth into the workforce, equipping them for potential forthcoming opportunities is also essential. Maldonado's (2000) study of student's transition to postsecondary technical education, which provides opportunities for advanced training in industry-specific fields, revealed secondary schools "fail to provide career information that relates to current labor market demands and trends; as a result, youth fail to investigate careers in occupations that require an associate-level degree or less" (p. 82).

Compound this lack of information and preparation with Wentling & Waight's (1999) findings regarding the lack of communication amongst the education system and local businesses and the challenges for at-risk youth become even greater for successfully transitioning youth from school into the labor force. Their research noted the communication gap is often times

considered so wide that when businesses are dissatisfied with the entry-level quality of high school graduates into the local labor market, they criticize the educational system. This lack of alignment between local employers and educational institutions ultimately obstructs occupational opportunities for youth.

Occupational preparedness is critical to improve chances for employment, particularly for economically disadvantaged young adults (Fernandez-Alcantara, 2012). As discovered in the researcher's review of the literature, this includes opportunities for work experiences, development of workplace skills and maturity, adequate and relevant labor force information and congruent communication between business and education communities. Otherwise, a lack thereof creates barriers to success for youth.

Societal barriers.

Multiple societal barriers are viewed as hindrances to at-risk youth. Youth of color, for instance, experience a variety of obstacles related to personal, educational and career development. (Constantine et al., 1998; D'Andrea & Daniels, 1992; Luzzo, 1993; Osgood et al., 2010). D'Andrea (1995) discovered that multiple national surveys revealed major impediments to educational and occupational attainments for racial and ethnic minority youth. In particular, Hassinger and Plourde's (2005) research regarding how Hispanic students overcome academic adversities suggested that being a minority was an identifying factor for at-risk status in today's educational system. According to D'Andrea & Daniels (1992), Black youth experience fewer successes than most other ethnic youth populations. Moreover, Jeffries et al. (2002) cited higher high school dropout rates for American Indian students than for any other ethnic group. Among people of color in general, Leong (1985), Arbona (1990), and Lent, Brown and Hacket (1994) all

argue that an individual's minority status is perceived as a barrier to educational and career goals.

In addition to being a youth of color, a lack of understanding minority cultures was also considered a barrier affecting the career possibilities of minority youth (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1992). Biases and presumptions result in low expectations that adults in the community have for marginal youth, which leads to lack of support and opportunities for them (Wentling & Waight, 1999).

Thirdly, peers can also serve as persuasive and potent deterrents to the pursuit of school and career goals. Kenny & Bledsoe (2005) found that student's perceptions of their peer's beliefs concerning the value of school explained their level of educational engagement. In their study of urban adolescents, Kenny, et al. (2007) and Fordham and Ogbu (1986) discovered that negative peers and friends with anti-school values were identified as barriers to post-high-school educational and career goals.

Furthermore, study after study mentions poverty as one of the most commonly cited barriers to academic and occupational progress (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2012; Hughes, Newkirk, & Stenhjem, 2010; Jeffries et al., 2002; Wentling & Waight, 1999). Vulnerable youth themselves perceive limited economic resources as a hurdle to career development and progress (Luzzo, 1993; Osgood et al., 2010). At-risk students making vocational choices regarding their intent to go to college or to identify employment options are also often times contending with poverty (McWhirter et al., 1995). Suffice it to say, socioeconomic status interferes with the ability to acquire educational credentials, proper work attitudes and behaviors required to succeed in the workplace (Wentling & Waight, 1999).

Being a minority and subsequent biases and presumptions of such, negative peer influences and low socioeconomic status were realized as barriers in the literature review. Youth facing these barriers in workforce development programs need to understand what it takes to traverse these societal obstacles in order to reach success academically and vocationally. In particular, the WIA programs noted earlier in the research are all required to serve low-income individuals (WIA, Section 101 (25)). In addition, the majority of youth served in WIA youth programs are minority youth since they are more likely than their white peers to not be working or in school (Fernandes & Gabe, 2009).

Thus far the review of the research literature has revealed the impact of multiple barriers on achievement of successful outcomes for youth. Yet, the research of how successful participants navigate the geography of barriers noted above in workforce development programs is nonexistent. Improved understanding about participant's barriers and how they navigate those barriers within the context of these programs is critical to facilitating improvements. In addition, increased knowledge about addressing barriers will strengthen the entire youth workforce development system and help policymakers to interpret successful outcomes and improve decision making about funding.

Understanding the knowledge and actions that explain the achievement patterns of at-risk youth is limited and largely focuses on what these individuals lack and thus experiencing failure (Pallas, Natriello & McDill, 1989). The emphasis is mainly deficit-oriented. To optimize learning and maximize the potential of disadvantaged youth, research must also understand which factors lead to success (Bereiter, 1985) and how these factors exercise productive advantages (Cool & Keith, 1991; Linney & Seidman, 1989). To foster this achievement we must understand why some individuals experiencing a multitude of challenges are yet able to

successfully navigate their geography of barriers and complete programs. If we can understand how it is such individuals achieve their success, programs can develop enabling strategies and practices that lead more students to perform as the successful ones do (Padilla, 2009).

Accordingly, this study emphasizes an asset-oriented approach to discover the knowledge participants possess and the actions they take to be successful in spite of their barriers.

Conceptual Framework

Padilla's (2009) conceptual framework will be utilized to understand how successful participants can navigate their geography of barriers while participating in WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs. Envisioning participant success, not failure, thus became the central phenomenon of interest for this study. Gray and Grace (1997) suggest a student success model, which generates local outcomes data, can be instantiated to provide evidence of local institutional effectiveness and inform local institutional planning and improvement.

For instance, Miller (2005) reports on a comparative study of a high-performing and a non-high-performing elementary school using Padilla's (2009) conceptual framework as a tool for comparison. Her study examined two schools with similar demographics, yet differences in outcomes. Stakeholders (e.g., students, parents, teachers, and administrators) at each school were asked to share their knowledge of what contributed to student success at their respective schools. The findings resulted in the development of two contrasting models of student success. Nonetheless, the research at the two schools revealed that schools with similar demographics could face similar barriers. It also showed that some students could possess heuristic knowledge and take effective actions to overcome barriers regardless of their environment.

Barker (2005) examined high school student success applying the identical framework.

Her study identified barriers perceived by high school students along with the knowledge and actions students used to overcome those barriers. Additionally, the investigation explored the extent to which the perceptions of those in charge of ensuring student success (e.g., teachers, counselors, administrators) were consistent with the barriers perceived by the students themselves. The study led to an understanding of student success in the context of a high-minority high school. The model of student success that was developed illustrated how successful students could overcome the identified geography of barriers present at their particular campus.

Similarly, Wirth (2006) investigated student success at a community college. Padilla's (2009) framework served as the instrument for creating a local model of student success for a specific south Texas campus setting. The local student success model as a concept model described the relationship between barriers to student success, the corpus of heuristic knowledge and the action repertoire of successful students at the college. In turn, an implementation model for student services was created based on Padilla's (2009) framework and called for effective institutional action.

Although the studies are preoccupied with examples of doing research from the elementary school level to postsecondary education, the components of the conceptual structure can be applied to almost any specific setting (Padilla, 2009). Once developed, a localized model can be implemented to take actions that may help individuals be more successful (Gray & Grace, 1997).

To accomplish a localized model of success for youth workforce development programs, the research design for this study adopted Padilla's (2009) conceptual framework for student success modeling since the parameters of the structure were applicable to participants within

programs in general (Padilla, 2009). The conceptual framework generates local data. Therefore findings will be used to inform planning and improvements for local WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs in Southern Nevada. Padilla's conceptual framework is explained below.

Expert model of student success.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher adopted Padilla's (2009) conceptual framework, the Expert Model of Student Success (EMSS), to investigate how successful youth navigated their geography of barriers while participating in local WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs. The EMSS was constructed on assumptions of how participants experienced programs and on conceptual borrowings from the expert systems theory (Harmon & King, 1985).

Black box. The initial assumption of the EMSS treats the program experience as a "black box" (Padilla, 2009, p. 21). We know what goes into the black box (i.e., inputs) and what comes out (i.e., outputs). However, we are limited with regards to what happens inside the box (i.e., experience). The black box approach thus allows the investigator to assume various ideas about what may be emerging within the black box (Padilla, 1999). Likewise, it provides the advantage to study a phenomenon without having much knowledge about what is going on as inputs are transformed into positive or negative outputs (Padilla, 1999).

Figure 2.1 illustrates the black box conceptualization and abstractly reflects only two possible outcomes for inputs, successful or unsuccessful outputs. What happens within these two temporal points is the black box experience (Padilla, 1999). What is it in the black box experience that determines whether a given input succeeds or fails? In other words, what accounts for one input making progress and exiting successfully while another input drops out

before completion? More specifically, why is it that inputs within a particular experience attain success while some of their peers do not?

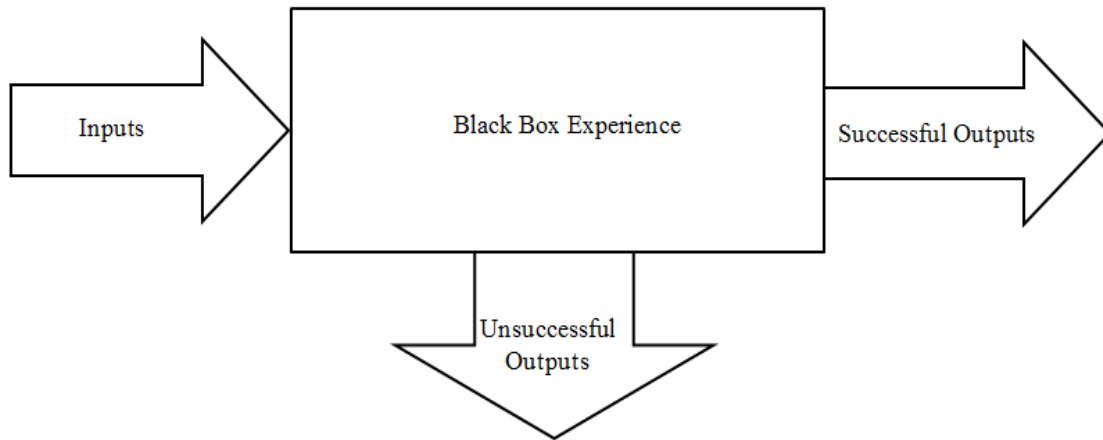


Figure 2.1. A conceptualization of the black box experience (Padilla, 2009). Adapted.

Geography of barriers. The preceding questions can be addressed empirically if a subsequent assumption is made about the black box experience (Padilla, 1999). The second assumption assumes the black box presents a geography of barriers that each input must navigate during their experience (Padilla, 2009). Discernibly, not all inputs will face the exact same barriers, nor level of similar severity for each particular obstacle (Padilla, 2009). Nonetheless, an input's success depends on the salience of each individual barrier for a given input and that input's ability to overcome a particular configuration of barriers within a black box experience (Padilla, 1999). Figure 2.2 portrays a conceptual representation of the geography of barriers that is assumed to be present in any given black box. Given that not all inputs in a given black box are successful in overcoming barriers, what might account for the difference in outcomes between successful and unsuccessful outputs?

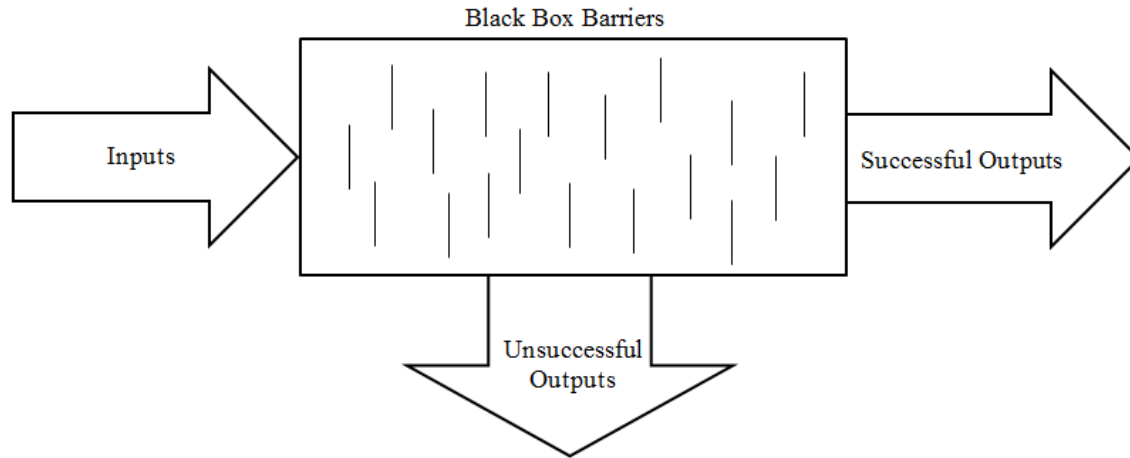


Figure 2.2. Black box experience conceptualized as a geography of barriers facing inputs (Padilla, 2009). Adapted.

Participant expertise. Padilla (1999 & 2009) suggests being able to answer the difference in outcomes if we assume that successful outputs are experts at navigating the challenges within the black box based on specific knowledge that is relevant to the problem at hand and taking effective actions to overcome each specific barrier they face. In other words, inputs apply their expertise to overcome the barriers that confront them during the black box experience.

According to Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, and Trevino (1997), the Expertise Model of Student Success is based on the results of qualitative research and on Harmon and King’s (1985) expert systems theory, which suggests that successful outputs are those who are in effect “experts” at being successful within a given black box experience. Consistent with expert systems theory, expertise is viewed as formal and informal knowledge (Harmon & King, 1985). The EMSS thus assumes accumulated knowledge provides the expert participant the total knowledge to successfully navigate the barriers within the black box (Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, and Trevino, 1996).

In addition, the EMSS assumes the will to act on the behalf of the participant since knowledge is necessary, but not sufficient in and of itself to overcome barriers to success

(Padilla, 2009). Participants must take effective actions in order to navigate the black box barriers. Therefore, the EMSS also helps identify the necessary action repertoire of successful outputs.

Combining all components, Padilla's (2009) conceptual model of student success includes three qualitative parameters that must be empirically determined for any given "black box" in order to create a local participant success model and provide suggestions for programmatic change (Wirth & Padilla, 2008). These parameters include the barriers participants encounter, the accumulated knowledge they acquire to identify effective solutions, and the actions taken to overcome the barriers (Padilla, 2009).

The following chapter describes the implementation of the Expert Model of Student Success, outlines the methods and procedures used, and explains the applicability of the framework upon which this study is based for three local workforce development programs.

Summary

Bempechat (1998) believes we can learn a lot about student success by studying those who defy the odds and overcome barriers to success. With that in mind, one primary objective of this literature review was discovering an asset-oriented approach, which emphasized participant success as the principal phenomenon of interest in order to apply the method to local WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs.

Accordingly, this chapter also reviewed the literature related to the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and its corresponding youth programs in order to examine the legislation's effort to assist young people with securing employment and achieving success (Fernandes-Alacantara, 2012). However, although WIA had been operational for more than a decade, reliable experimental evidence on the effectiveness of WIA youth workforce development programs was

practically nonexistent at federal, state and local levels (Decker & Berk, 2011). The research that exists was considered inadequate (United States Government Accountability Office, 2009). Therefore, another aim of this study was providing empirically based research for WIA out-of-school youth programs in Southern Nevada, and subsequently to prepare such programs for implementing best practices as they transition to WIOA.

In relation to WIA youth populations, the researcher also discovered barriers to placement in employment and/or postsecondary education organized around five categorical barriers: personal, social, educational, occupational, and societal. Padilla (2009) nevertheless expressed it is possible to understand why some individuals, albeit facing a plethora of these barriers, are still able to succeed. For that reason, this study examined Padilla's (2009) conceptual framework in order to investigate how successful youth navigate their geography of barriers during participation. Chapter Three will describe the methods and procedures utilized within Padilla's conceptual framework for a local WIA out-of-school youth programs in Southern Nevada. It also describes the integration of thematic analysis in order to develop conceptual models of participant success for the programs.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate how successful out-of-school youth navigated their geography of barriers while participating in WIA youth workforce development programs in Southern Nevada. The primary research question of this study was:

1. How did successful out-of-school youth navigate their geography of barriers while participating in WIA youth workforce development programs?
 - a. What barriers to success did completers experience in WIA youth workforce development programs?
 - b. What was the knowledge completers possessed in order to overcome the identified barriers?
 - c. What were the actions completers took that enabled them to overcome the identified barriers?
 - d. What changes did completers think would reduce or eliminate the barriers to success?

This chapter begins with the rationale behind utilizing a qualitative approach followed by an explanation of how a case study design most appropriately addresses the abovementioned research questions. It then elucidates the selection of a specific type of case study for this research, the embedded multiple-case study design. Next, the implementation of the EMSS conceptual framework is introduced, along with its methods and procedures for this study. The chapter also includes the methods and procedures for thematically analyzing interviews. The design quality of the research then follows, concluding with the strengths and limitations of the

design. Figure 3.1 is a visual portrayal of the research process for this study.

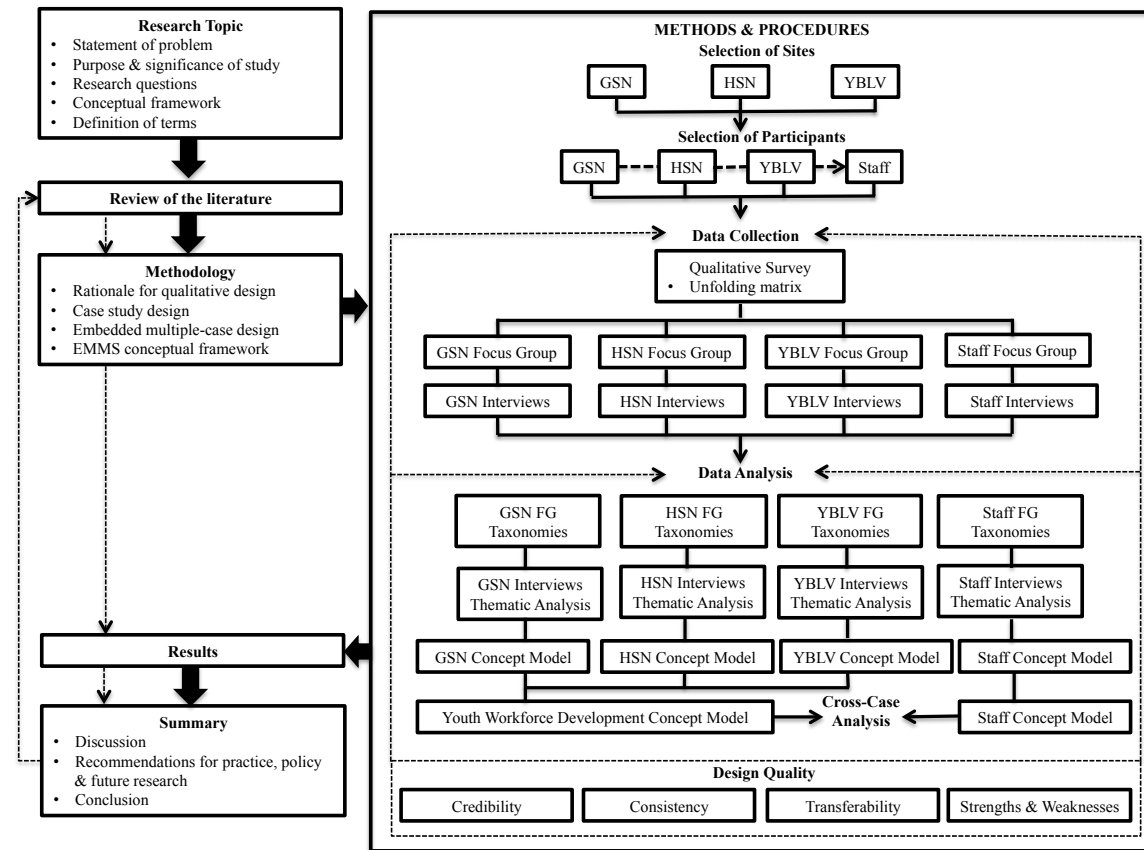


Figure 3.1. Visual representation of research process.

Rationale for Qualitative Design

Qualitative research is utilized when the researcher wants to understand how individuals interpret, construct, and attribute meaning to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggests qualitative research involves studying “things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). It is a broad approach to the study of social phenomena and aims to understand how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

According to Merriam (2009), the following four features are key to understanding the nature of qualitative research:

- The focus is on process, understanding, and meaning;
- The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis;
- The process is inductive; and
- The product is richly descriptive. (p. 14)

In terms of research design, Lapan and Armfield (2009) argue the importance of implementing the approach that is most appropriately and effectively addressing the research questions of inquiry. For example, in their study of exploring barriers that hindered the transition of youth into the workplace, Bogdan and Bilken (1992) utilized a qualitative approach because of its descriptive nature to understand the whole of youth experiences through insight and discovery. Similarly, to understand student success from the insider's views at a high-performing, high poverty school, Miller (2005) employed qualitative techniques to construct meaning from their specific situation. Barker (2005) also applied a qualitative approach to focus attention on building a holistic understanding of complex challenges faced by students at a secondary school. Yet another example included Wirth's (2006) qualitative aim to describe, understand and explain students' perspectives on success at a public community college.

Moreover, the conceptual framework upon which this study was based prescribes qualitative research methods to show that knowledge and behavior of successful students can be systematically and empirically identified (Padilla, 2009). The Expert Model of Student Success falls within the qualitative research paradigm, and provided a framework for gathering the participant's own voices in order to build an insider comprehension of student success. It helped accomplish the three tenets of this qualitative study: describing, understanding, and explaining

(Tellis, 1997).

Explanatory case study design.

The first and most important condition for deciding which specific qualitative research method to apply was determined by the type of research question(s) being asked. “How” questions favor the use of an explanatory case study design and seek to explain how a phenomenon occurs and asks about contemporary events over which the investigator has little or no control (Yin, 2009). Accordingly, the overarching purpose of this study was to investigate how successful participants navigated their geography of barriers while participating in WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs.

In terms of the research process, Yin (2009) defined case study research as “an empirical study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18). As a form of qualitative research, case studies allow the researcher to search for meaning and understanding, emphasize the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, strategize inductive investigations, and conclude with in-depth and rich descriptions of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

A key characteristic of case studies is the notion of boundedness, in which a researcher is able to study a case in its entirety for a time frame consistent with the research questions (Putney, 2010). Concurring, Lapan and Armfield (2009) provided additional common characteristics of most case studies, which included:

- Contextualization of a case, where certain details are provided for the reader;
- Triangulation of data collection methods and data sources;
- Purposeful sampling, where information-rich sources are sought because that is where

the answers to the study questions are likely to be found; and

- Summaries are used to review and synthesize results offering interpretations that do not reflect judgments. (p. 177)

Although there are varying types (e.g., single-case holistic designs, single-case embedded designs, multiple-case holistic designs, and multiple-case embedded designs), case studies are chosen because the researcher is ultimately interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation (Yin, 2009). While all designs can lead to successful case studies, Yin (2009) suggests when the opportunity allows multiple-case designs are preferred over single-case designs.

Explanatory embedded multiple-case study. For the purpose that was set forth in this study, an explanatory embedded multiple-case study design offered the opportunity to explore, rich and in-depth, how successful participants in three WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs navigated their geography of barriers in order to reach placement in employment and/or postsecondary education. In an embedded design, subunits reside within the main unit (Yin, 2009). As such, the main unit in this case study was Workforce Investment Act youth workforce development programs, whereas the subunits of analysis were successful WIA out-of-school youth participants.

The rationale that guided the selection of this explanatory embedded multiple-case study design included: (a) the findings and interpretations are more robust and compelling than a single-case design (Herriott & Firestone, 1983); (b) the opportunities for comparison of similar and/or contrasting results (Lapan & Armfield, 2009); (c) the outcomes are presented as individual portraits that contribute to our understanding of the issues, both individually and collectively (Putney, 2010); and (d) viewing successful students through multiple lenses rather than one isolated case provides a holistic and meaningful understanding of a complex

phenomenon (Yin, 2009). In addition, Yin discusses the use of analytic generalization as “...the opportunity to shed empirical light about some theoretical concepts or principles...(Yin, 2013, p. 40). Yin (2013) also notes that analytic generalization can result in corroborating or refuting the theoretical framework used in designing a study, or extending the original theory with new concepts uncovered in the attempts to illustrate the concepts in a case study.

The Role of the Researcher

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggested the manner in which a researcher approaches a study is determined, in large part, by “a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be studied” (p. 19). Accordingly, this study’s data collection and analysis were closely related to the researcher’s background and pre-existing views regarding WIA youth workforce development programs. The researcher acknowledges involvement in WIA youth workforce development programs as an administrator for Southern Nevada’s Local Workforce Development Board. As an administrator, the researcher’s responsibilities involve developing practices and policies to improve positive placement outcomes, as well as working directly with and assessing and approving WIA youth workforce development programs. The experiences affirmed the researcher’s desire to study youth workforce development programs as part of an in-depth empirical research process. The researcher’s background created insights as well as barriers, yet Merriam (2009) suggested that rather than trying to eliminate these biases and predispositions, the researcher should monitor them as to how they may shape the collection and interpretation of data. The researcher therefore monitored preconceived biases via triangulation strategies used to promote qualitative research validity. These strategies included member-checking, data triangulation, methods triangulation, inference descriptors, and participant feedback (Johnson, 1997). Examples are discussed in detail under design quality.

Methods and Procedures

Data Collection

Data collection for this study included the selection of sites and participants. It also applied the qualitative survey as a means of data acquisition utilizing the unfolding matrix as the primary instrument for focus groups. Interviews were incorporated for gathering additional information and triangulation purposes.

Selection of sites.

As an explanatory multiple-case study, the potential existed to investigate numerous workforce development programs, and compare and contrast the experiences of the participants in the programs. The local workforce development board's data management system, Workforce Connections (WC), the One-Stop Operating System (OSOS), and the Department of Labor's YouthBuild Management Information System (YBMIS), provided access for identifying multiple WIA programs throughout southern Nevada. For purposes of this study, the researcher, an administrator at the board, requested the following information from WC's Manager of Strategic Planning and Analysis in order to determine which programs to involve in this research:

- 1) WIA Program Year 2014 youth programs that served out-of-school youth;
- 2) WIA targeted populations served by each of the respective programs; and
- 3) Placement outcomes in unsubsidized employment and/or postsecondary education for each program.

Table 3.1 portrays a variety of WIA Program Year 2014 (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015) programs that provided employment and training services to out-of-school youth targeted via WIA, and their placements in unsubsidized employment and/or postsecondary education. The rural youth services providers included the Lincoln County-Youth Career Program (Lincoln) in

Lincoln County and the Nye Communities Coalition-Youth WERKS Program (Nye) in Nye and Esmeralda counties. One program in Boulder City was St. Jude's Ranch for Children. Programs in Southern Nevada, included Goodwill of Southern Nevada (GSN), HELP of Southern Nevada (HSN), Olive Crest (OC), Southern Nevada Regional Housing Authority (SNRHA), Academy of Human Development (AHD), GNJ Family Life Center (GNJ), Latin Chamber of Commerce Community Foundation (LCCCF), Nevada Partners Inc. (NPI), Youth Advocate Program (YAP), and YouthBuild Las Vegas (YBLV).

Although numerous programs could be considered for this study, caution was taken to limit the number of cases in order to allow for extensive analysis and rich description of each case (Putney, 2010). Since the researcher aimed to discover, understand and gain insight from a sample from which the most could be learned for this study (Merriam, 2009), purposeful sampling was employed based on WIA criteria. This included the following:

- 1) A Workforce Investment Act youth workforce development program in Southern Nevada;
- 2) A program that served out-of-school youth during Program Year 2014 (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015); and
- 3) A program that reported performance outcomes related to placement in unsubsidized employment and/or placement in postsecondary education.

Of note, the data reflected in Table 3.1 was self-reported as individuals selected all that applied during the eligibility intake process for WIA programs. The numbers reported (*n*) are not necessarily unique and therefore may not represent the number of participants enrolled (*N*) for each program. For instance, a participant that marked their ethnicity as "African-American" may have also marked "Caucasian" and subsequently, "Biracial/Multiracial." This was also the case

regarding their categorical WIA targeted populations. During the assessment process someone who was inputted for being Basic Skills Deficient may have also been inputted for being “In need of additional assistance.”

On the other hand, “Placement” was determined by the OSOS as staff inputted their placements in “Employment” and/or “Postsecondary Education.” But once again, participants may have been placed in both categories and therefore the “Placement” outcomes do not necessarily reflect unique numbers per se. These instances apply to the ensuing tables reflecting participant demographic characteristics and outcomes.

Upon reviewing the list of programs, the researcher selected the following three cases – Goodwill of Southern Nevada (GSN), HELP of Southern Nevada (HSN), and YouthBuild Las Vegas (YBLV), based on the following rationale: 1) access; 2) number of participants available for focus groups; 3) awarding of additional year of funding; and 4) program director’s approval to participate in the study. One reason for selecting these cases was access. The local workforce development area includes the four southern counties of Nevada, which include Clark, Lincoln, Nye, and Esmeralda. Proximity to the latter three would have created significant time commitment throughout the period of data collection. Although not as distant, St. Jude’s Ranch for Children in Boulder City would have also presented time constraints. This therefore left ten potential cases within the Las Vegas area.

A second selection factor was based on the number of participants available to participate in the focus groups. AHD ($N=18$) and NPI ($N=3$) did not have a reasonable sample pool on which the researcher could rely on for group interviews. Consequently, both programs were also excluded as potential cases.

Table 3.1

Program year 2014 participant demographics, WIA targeted populations, and placement outcomes.

WIA PY2014 OSY Program	GSN	HSN	Lincoln	OC	SNRHA	AHD	GNJ	LCCCF	NPI	Nye	YAP	SJR	YBLV	Totals
Total Number of Youth	N=94	N=103	N=12	N=36	N=58	N=18	N=71	N=44	N=3	N=40	N=35	N=8	N=31	N=553
Ethnicity														
African-American	42.6% (n=40)	51.5% (n=53)	0.0% (n=0)	41.7% (n=15)	60.3% (n=35)	27.8% (n=5)	62.0% (n=44)	25.0% (n=11)	66.7% (n=2)	10.0% (n=4)	57.1% (n=20)	25.0% (n=2)	45.2% (n=14)	44.3% (n=245)
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.0% (n=0)	2.9% (n=3)	25% (n=3)	2.8% (n=1)	0.0% (n=0)	5.6% (n=1)	5.6% (n=4)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	2.5% (n=1)	5.7% (n=2)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	2.7% (n=15)
Asian	3.2% (n=3)	1.0% (n=1)	0.0% (n=0)	5.6% (n=2)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	7.0% (n=5)	2.3% (n=1)	0.0% (n=0)	7.5% (n=3)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	3.2% (n=1)	2.9% (n=16)
Caucasian	57.4% (n=54)	39.8% (n=41)	75% (n=9)	63.9% (n=23)	19.0% (n=11)	44.4% (n=8)	22.5% (n=16)	22.7% (n=10)	0.0% (n=0)	75.0% (n=30)	37.1% (n=13)	75.0% (n=6)	6.5% (n=2)	40.3% (n=223)
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2.1% (n=2)	2.9% (n=3)	0.0% (n=0)	5.6% (n=2)	5.2% (n=3)	0.0% (n=0)	4.2% (n=3)	4.5% (n=2)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	2.7% (n=15)
Hispanic/Latino	34.0% (n=32)	39.8% (n=41)	16.7% (n=2)	38.9% (n=14)	27.6% (n=16)	66.7% (n=12)	25.4% (n=18)	70.5% (n=31)	33.3% (n=1)	27.5% (n=11)	17.1% (n=6)	25.0% (n=2)	35.5% (n=11)	35.6% (n=197)
Biracial/Multiracial	38.3% (n=36)	36.9% (n=38)	16.7% (n=2)	47.2% (n=17)	12.1% (n=7)	44.4% (n=8)	22.5% (n=16)	22.7% (n=10)	0.0% (n=0)	22.5% (n=9)	17.1% (n=6)	25.0% (n=2)	9.7% (n=3)	27.8% (n=154)
WIA Targeted Population														
Basic Skills Deficient	98.9% (n=93)	99.0% (n=102)	91.7% (n=11)	91.7% (n=33)	98.3% (n=57)	100% (n=18)	94.4% (n=67)	95.5% (n=42)	0.0% (n=0)	92.5% (n=37)	100% (n=35)	87.5% (n=7)	87.1% (n=27)	95.7% (n=529)
Foster Care	0.0% (n=0)	1.0% (n=1)	0.0% (n=0)	58.3% (n=21)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	2.9% (n=1)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	4.2% (n=23)
Homeless or Runaway	1.1% (n=1)	25.2% (n=26)	0.0% (n=0)	5.6% (n=2)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	8.5% (n=6)	4.5% (n=2)	33.3% (n=1)	2.5% (n=1)	8.6% (n=3)	62.5% (n=5)	25.8% (n=8)	9.9% (n=55)
Pregnant or Parenting	4.3% (n=4)	12.6% (n=13)	0.0% (n=0)	27.8% (n=10)	17.2% (n=10)	16.7% (n=3)	8.5% (n=6)	4.5% (n=2)	0.0% (n=0)	7.5% (n=3)	20.0% (n=7)	37.5% (n=3)	32.3% (n=10)	12.8% (n=71)
Youth Offender	5.3% (n=5)	14.6% (n=15)	8.3% (n=1)	5.6% (n=2)	17.2% (n=10)	5.6% (n=1)	1.4% (n=1)	2.3% (n=1)	0.0% (n=0)	5.0% (n=2)	100% (n=35)	0.0% (n=0)	22.6% (n=7)	14.5% (n=80)
In need of additional assistance	71.3% (n=67)	70.9% (n=73)	50.0% (n=6)	88.9% (n=32)	53.4% (n=31)	83.3% (n=15)	77.5% (n=55)	68.2% (n=30)	33.3% (n=1)	40.0% (n=16)	94.3% (n=33)	12.5% (n=1)	100% (n=31)	70.7% (n=391)
Placement														
Employment	73.4% (n=69)	75.7% (n=78)	50.0% (n=6)	66.7% (n=24)	84.5% (n=49)	94.4% (n=17)	76.1% (n=54)	84.1% (n=37)	100% (n=3)	52.5% (n=21)	54.3% (n=19)	50.0% (n=4)	64.5% (n=20)	72.5% (n=401)
Postsecondary Education	26.6% (n=25)	8.7% (n=9)	8.3% (n=1)	8.3% (n=3)	6.9% (n=4)	27.8% (n=5)	4.2% (n=3)	20.5% (n=9)	0.0% (n=0)	0.0% (n=0)	5.7% (n=2)	12.5% (n=1)	16.1% (n=5)	12.1% (n=67)

Sources: *Workforce Connection's One-Stop Operating System and Department of Labor's YouthBuild Management Information System.*

A third selection criteria included whether programs had been awarded an additional year of funds to transition from WIA to WIOA services during program year 2015 (July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016). Data collection with these programs would have been difficult to complete with programs that concluded WIA employment and training services after June 30, 2015. As such, SNRHA, GNJ, LCCCF and YAP either opted not to compete for or failed to procure funds through WC's competitive procurement process for program year 2015. This left GSN, HSN, OC, and YBLV as available cases. However, since OC specialized in services to foster youth, and the overall foster youth population were the least representative of the system at-large (4.2%), the researcher decided to eliminate the program as a case for this study. Table 3.2 reports the demographics, WIA populations served, and placement outcomes for the three cases selected.

A final selection criteria was the approval from the program director's to participate in this research study. These directors were interested in learning how to improve their outcomes. Directors felt having their youth participate would benefit their youth programs in the future. They also realized the benefit of individualized conceptual models of participant success for their programs.

Selection of participants.

Purposeful sampling was also used to determine the selection of participants, which were the embedded units of analysis. It was important to involve only those subjects presumably qualified to provide the best insight into the specific phenomena of interest (Charmaz, 2000). As with case selections, this also allowed the investigator to discover, understand, and gain insight from a specific sample from which the most could be learned (Merriam, 2009). Since the selected cases were programs serving out-of-school youth, participants for this study were subsequently successful out-of-school youth who completed their programs. As such, purposeful

sampling of these participants increased the prospect that the research captured an accurate characterization of the target population (Padilla, 1999; 2009).

To recruit participants for this study, the researcher reached out to staff from each of the cases (GSN, HSN, and YBLV) via email and phone calls requesting their assistance to recruit participants who met the following criteria:

- 1) An out-of-school youth, between the ages of 18-21 years, who participated in their respective WIA program during Program Year 2014 (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015);
and
- 2) An out-of-school youth who was successfully placed in unsubsidized employment and/or post-secondary education following program participation.

The staffs were asked to assist in identifying available participants matching the criteria because they were familiar with their programs and were also able to recruit participants based on their awareness of program outcomes and participant performances. Recruiting 18-21 year olds removed the obligation of requiring parental consent for individuals to participate in the study since they were consenting adults. Secondly, WIA capped the age at 21 for out-of-school youth participating in WIA youth programs.

A second sample of participants included practitioners from the selected cases. As noted earlier, these individuals had awareness of their youth workforce development programs and could provide an added perspective based on their views of participant performances and outcomes. Thus, staff which had assisted in recruitment of the out-of-school youth participants for this study were contacted via email and phone and requested to participate based on the following criteria:

Table 3.2

Program year 2014 participant demographics, WIA targeted populations, and placement outcomes of selected cases.

WIA PY2014 OSY Program	GSN	HSN	YBLV	Totals
Total Number of Youth	<i>N</i> =94	<i>N</i> =103	<i>N</i> =31	<i>N</i> =228
Ethnicity				
African-American	42.6% (<i>n</i> =40)	51.5% (<i>n</i> =53)	45.2% (<i>n</i> =14)	46.9% (<i>n</i> =107)
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	2.9% (<i>n</i> =3)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	1.3% (<i>n</i> =3)
Asian	3.2% (<i>n</i> =3)	1.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	3.2% (<i>n</i> =1)	2.2% (<i>n</i> =5)
Caucasian	57.4% (<i>n</i> =54)	39.8% (<i>n</i> =41)	6.5% (<i>n</i> =2)	42.5% (<i>n</i> =97)
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2.1% (<i>n</i> =2)	2.9% (<i>n</i> =3)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	2.2% (<i>n</i> =5)
Hispanic/Latino	34.0% (<i>n</i> =32)	39.8% (<i>n</i> =41)	35.5% (<i>n</i> =11)	36.8% (<i>n</i> =84)
Biracial/Multiracial	38.3% (<i>n</i> =36)	36.9% (<i>n</i> =38)	9.7% (<i>n</i> =3)	33.8% (<i>n</i> =77)
WIA Targeted Population				
Basic Skills Deficient	98.9% (<i>n</i> =93)	99.0% (<i>n</i> =102)	87.1% (<i>n</i> =27)	97.4% (<i>n</i> =222)
Foster Care	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	1.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.4% (<i>n</i> =1)
Homeless or Runaway	1.1% (<i>n</i> =1)	25.2% (<i>n</i> =26)	25.8% (<i>n</i> =8)	15.4% (<i>n</i> =35)
Pregnant or Parenting	4.3% (<i>n</i> =4)	12.6% (<i>n</i> =13)	32.3% (<i>n</i> =10)	11.8% (<i>n</i> =27)
Youth Offender	5.3% (<i>n</i> =5)	14.6% (<i>n</i> =15)	22.6% (<i>n</i> =7)	11.8% (<i>n</i> =27)
In need of additional assistance	71.3% (<i>n</i> =67)	70.9% (<i>n</i> =73)	100% (<i>n</i> =31)	75.0% (<i>n</i> =171)
Placement				
Employment	73.4% (<i>n</i> =69)	75.7% (<i>n</i> =78)	64.5% (<i>n</i> =20)	73.2% (<i>n</i> =167)
Postsecondary Education	26.6% (<i>n</i> =25)	8.7% (<i>n</i> =9)	16.1% (<i>n</i> =5)	17.1% (<i>n</i> =39)

Sources: *Workforce Connection's One-Stop Operating System and Department of Labor's YouthBuild Management Information System.*

- 1) A currently employed WIA staff member at one of the selected cases (GSN, HSN or YBLV);
- 2) A staff member that worked with WIA out-of-school youth during Program Year 2014 (July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015); and
- 3) Approval to participate in the study from their direct report.

These out-of-school youth who successfully completed their programs and the practitioners that worked with them, provided the most accurate understanding of the contextual background of the situation under investigation based on their insider views (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In addition, these selected participants were familiar with barriers to completion and were more likely to be informed about the causes of dropping out as well as the solutions to the problem (Padilla, 2009). From firsthand experience, these participants knew what it took to complete the program, the necessary actions to overcome barriers, and successfully reach placement in employment and/or postsecondary education.

Informed consent. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas' Institutional Review Board approval for this study occurred in Spring 2015 prior to the commencement of this study. The informed consent was a written agreement of the participant's willingness to be included in this study and be audio-recorded voluntarily. Subjects were made aware participation may make them uncomfortable and could stop at any time. Each participant was presented the opportunity to ask questions prior to consenting. Consent was obtained from individuals involved in participant and practitioner focus groups (Appendix A), as well as participant and practitioner individual interviews (Appendix B).

Qualitative survey.

In quantitative methodology, the word survey implies studies primarily aim to describe

numerical distributions of variables in a population (Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, Singer & Tourangeau, 2004). In qualitative research, surveys define and investigate variation in populations as well. However, they do not aim at establishing frequencies, means, etc., but rather determining the diversity of some topic of interest within a given population (Jansen, 2010). The qualitative survey is not designed to provide a summation of people with similar characteristics, but instead meaningful variations established within that population. In short, the qualitative survey studies diversity, not distribution, within a given population (Jansen, 2010).

The method used to construct the EMSS relied on a qualitative survey. According to Padilla (1999),

... a qualitative survey consists of a set of qualitative data acquisition and analysis techniques that when applied to a local situation, result in an understanding of that situation based on the emic perspectives of participants in that situation as well as the interpretation of the situation by the investigator. (p. 138)

This inductive technique allows for the development of an understanding applicable to a local situation being studied and makes it “time, context and participant bound” (Padilla, 1999, p. 138). To accomplish this, the qualitative survey implemented for this study utilized the unfolding matrix as the main data collection tool for the focus groups.

Unfolding matrix. The data acquisition instrument used in the EMSS was the unfolding matrix (Padilla, 2009) (see Figure 3.2). This tool consisted of rows and columns that were initially empty, with the exception of the column headings. The column headings provided a context from which to accumulate applicable data from the subjects. This technique allowed for efficient data acquisition as the researcher was attempting the arduous task of collecting qualitative data.

The matrix was completed incorporating the participant's own words as described below in the focus group's portion. It began with the key construct of "Barriers" and subjects provided information, called exemplars by Padilla (2009), to fill the column. As many rows were added to the matrix as there were barriers identified by the participants. After they had exhaustively identified the barriers to success, subjects identified the knowledge successful participants possessed and the actions they took allowing them to overcome each barrier. Subjects also proposed potential changes to programs, services, etc. that would help facilitate greater success for overcoming each of the identified barriers. Accordingly, the other columns were labeled with the other key constructs corresponding to "Barriers," which included "Knowledge," "Actions," and "Changes." The bottom of the matrix was left open-ended, implying no limit to the number of exemplars for each construct.

Barriers	Knowledge	Actions	Changes




Figure 3.2. Unfolding matrix used as a data collection instrument for the EMSS.

Focus groups. As a method of acquiring data for the unfolding matrix, focus groups of successful completers were utilized. As with any other data collection method, focus groups were used as the suitable process to obtain the maximum data that addressed the research questions (Merriam, 2009). According to Krueger (1994) this data acquisition approach solicits

information of particular interest to the researcher and produces qualitative data that provides insights into the attitudes, perceptions, and opinions of participants. Focus groups also provided the opportunity to construct collective meaning on a given topic with a group of specific individuals who had knowledge on the subject (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

As an advantage of interviewing small groups, members tend to self-correct as information is provided by individuals within the consortium (Krueger, 1994). Through dialogue with each other and/or with the facilitator, the focus group members had the opportunity to clarify what they meant. These group interviews had a built-in cross-check on the quality of the data being gathered (Padilla, 2009).

The focus group was a special type of group in terms of size and purpose. Although there were no hard and fast rules about how many to include in the group, Krueger (1994), Merriam (2009), Padilla (2009) agreed that a typical group should be composed of somewhere between 5 to 10 participants who were selected because they had certain characteristics in common that related to the topic of interest. If a group was too large, there may not have been enough time for all participants to share, whereas if it was too small, participants may have felt inhibited or too exposed (Padilla, 2009). It therefore needed to be small enough for everyone to have the opportunity to share insights, and yet large enough to provide diversity of perceptions (Krueger, 1994).

Krueger (1994) also suggested that a study involving focus groups should consist of a minimum of three focus groups so discussions could be conducted several times with similar types of participants to identify trends and patterns in perceptions. Accordingly, this study consisted of four focus groups; three represented out-of-school youth from selected programs and one made up of practitioners that represented the three cases. Each consisted of 5 to 7

participants per focus group. Having four separate focus groups provided opportunities to compare and contrast between the participant experiences and perceptions of practitioners (Lapan & Armfield, 2009; Putney, 2010).

The duration of a focus group interview can be adjusted to meet participant demands. Padilla (2009) recommended a minimum of 60 minutes, whereas Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) suggested a maximum of two-and-a-half hours. However, since longer timeframes had the potential to diminish productivity and loss of engagement in filling out the matrix (Padilla, 2009), each focus group for this study was scheduled for 90 minutes. This was deemed sufficient time to achieve breadth while simultaneously allowing the researcher to attain depth within set boundaries (Patton, 1990).

With all this in mind, this portion of the data collection process closely followed Padilla's (2009) EMSS as described in the qualitative survey, utilizing the unfolding matrix. The procedures were similar across each focus group. As noted earlier, staff assisted with the recruitment of participants from each of the programs. Based on anticipated attrition, the goal was to recruit 12-15 participants per program's focus group. To mitigate attrition, program staffs assisted the researcher with recruitment and were asked to designate a day, time, and location most convenient for as many participants as possible to attend a focus group session.

Once confirmed, the researcher scheduled to meet with selected participants for their particular focus group. Subsequently, in order to minimize no-shows, the researcher requested staff follow-up with participants via phone calls to confirm their attendance two-weeks prior, one-week prior, and also the day before the scheduled focus group. Table 3.3 summarizes demographic characteristics and outcomes of the eighteen total participants in the data management systems who showed up for the out-of-school youth focus groups.

Table 3.3

Demographics, WIA targeted population, and placement outcomes of out-of-school youth focus group participants.

OSY Focus Group Participants	GSN	HSN	YBLV	Totals
Total Number of Youth	<i>N</i> =5	<i>N</i> =7	<i>N</i> =6	<i>N</i> =18
Ethnicity				
African-American	20.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	71.4% (<i>n</i> =5)	50.0% (<i>n</i> =3)	50.0% (<i>n</i> =9)
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)
Asian	20.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	5.6% (<i>n</i> =1)
Caucasian	40.0% (<i>n</i> =2)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	11.0% (<i>n</i> =2)
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)
Hispanic/Latino	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	50.0% (<i>n</i> =3)	16.6% (<i>n</i> =3)
Biracial/Multiracial	20.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	28.6% (<i>n</i> =2)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	16.6% (<i>n</i> =3)
WIA Targeted Population				
Basic Skills Deficient	60.0% (<i>n</i> =3)	100% (<i>n</i> =7)	50.0% (<i>n</i> =3)	72.2% (<i>n</i> =13)
Foster Care	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)
Homeless or Runaway	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	42.9% (<i>n</i> =3)	16.7% (<i>n</i> =1)	22.2% (<i>n</i> =4)
Pregnant or Parenting	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	33.3% (<i>n</i> =2)	11.1% (<i>n</i> =2)
Youth Offender	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	14.3% (<i>n</i> =1)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	6.0% (<i>n</i> =1)
In need of additional assistance	40.0% (<i>n</i> =2)	57.1% (<i>n</i> =4)	33.3% (<i>n</i> =2)	44.4% (<i>n</i> =8)
Placement				
Employment	100% (<i>n</i> =5)	57.1% (<i>n</i> =4)	83.3% (<i>n</i> =5)	77.8% (<i>n</i> =14)
Postsecondary Education	20% (<i>n</i> =1)	57.1% (<i>n</i> =4)	33.3% (<i>n</i> =2)	38.9% (<i>n</i> =7)

Sources: *Workforce Connection's One-Stop Operating System and Department of Labor's YouthBuild Management Information System.*

Focus group members for this study met in their respective program's conference room located at each site (GSN, HSN and YBLV). Prior to commencing each focus group, the researcher prepared a large empty unfolding matrix that was drawn on plain white 20" (w) x 23" (h) Post-it wall sheets, which were attached to a wall. After the preliminaries of the welcome and assurance of confidentiality, the researcher informed the group participants of the purpose of the study and explained the unfolding matrix instrument (see Figure 3.2) since interviewees generally want to know what is expected of them (Padilla, 2009). In order to prime the participants for the matrix completion, the researcher used the protocol in Appendix C.

Participants responded to questions about barriers, knowledge, actions, and changes, which reflected their experiences in these programs. Each group provided as many exemplars as possible for approximately 90-minutes. As participants responded within the allotted timeframe, the researcher scripted responses verbatim into the matrix cells.

When one topic was exhausted, the researcher moved the discussion to the next topic. However, due to time constraints, some cells in the unfolding matrices were left empty. Nonetheless, the completed matrices represented the participants' perceptions about barriers and how successful participants managed to overcome them. The completed matrices became the basis for the categories and subcategories which emerged from the data analysis conducted later.

Interviews. In addition, individual 60-minute semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain a "special kind of information" that was not collected during the group interviews (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). These also allowed for triangulation of the focus group data and the opportunity to ask for clarification (Griffie, 2005). A third purpose of the one-on-one interviews was to solicit participant feedback about the preliminary taxonomies designed from the participant's focus groups. Taking into consideration the interviewee's schedule, 60-minutes was

considered ample time for collecting additional data and providing opportunity for triangulation. All interviews were transcribed and member-checked prior to analysis. The transcriber's confidentiality agreement can be viewed via Appendix D.

Individuals were selected for interviews based on interest and availability to share a richer and deeper understanding about the phenomenon of interest. Accordingly, two participants per focus group were selected, totaling six out-of-school youth participants and two practitioners. Other than the data in Table 3.4, the investigator cannot be more specific than what is noted in order to maintain confidentiality of the six out-of-school youth participants.

Similar to the process of securing participants for the focus groups, program staff assisted the researcher by reaching out to the interviewees and scheduling a day, time, and location most convenient to the participant for their interview. With regards to the practitioner interviews, the researcher reached out to them via phone to schedule interviews. Once the interview appointments were confirmed, the researcher arranged his schedule accordingly to meet with the participants for their interviews during various days, times and locations. In order to also minimize no-shows for the out-of-school youth interviews, the researcher requested staff members to follow-up with participants via phone calls to confirm their attendance two-weeks prior, one-week prior, the day before, and the day of the scheduled interview. The researcher followed the same procedure with staff, with the exception of the same day follow-up.

Each interview was hosted at the participant's program conference room site. The process was parallel for each interviewee. In preparation for the interviews, the researcher placed all the respective focus group matrices information unto a spreadsheet and made copies for each of the participants. Preliminary taxonomies were also prepared for participant review and feedback. These items served as stimuli for the interviews to gather in-depth information about participant

comments on barriers, knowledge, actions and changes (see Appendix E).

Upon arrival to the interview, the participant was welcomed, thanked for participating, and assured of confidentiality. Prior consent was sought from participants to record the interviews via audiotape. The researcher then reminded the participant of the purpose of the study and explained the process of the interview.

As noted in Appendix E, interviewees were initially provided a copy of their focus group's completed unfolding matrix as a reminder and encouraged to comment upon review. Interviewees were then provided a preliminary graphical taxonomy of the barriers and given a moment to review the categorical barriers as determined by exemplars collected during the focus groups and analyzed by the researcher. Any questions that arose were answered. After the interviewee was provided sufficient time to review the preliminary taxonomy of barriers, ask questions, clarify, and comment, the interviewee was asked to share more about barriers the participant and other successful participants faced during participation in their particular program.

After the barriers topic had been exhausted, interviewees were primed for discussing the subject of knowledge. Participants were then provided a preliminary graphical taxonomy of the knowledge needed to overcome identified barriers and given time to review the knowledge categories as determined by the researcher's analysis based on exemplars collected during the focus group. Any questions that arose were answered. After the interviewee had been provided ample time to ask questions, clarify, and comment on the taxonomy, the interviewee was prompted to share an example of knowledge the participant possessed to overcome a particular barrier. Then the interviewee was asked to express what else the program could do to provide better knowledge to participants so they could overcome barriers during participation.

Table 3.4

Demographics, WIA targeted population, and placement outcomes of interviewed out-of-school youth participants.

OSY Participant Interviews	GSN	HSN	YBLV	Totals
Total Number of Youth	<i>N</i> =2	<i>N</i> =2	<i>N</i> =2	<i>N</i> =6
Ethnicity				
African-American	50.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	50.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	100.0% (<i>n</i> =2)	66.7% (<i>n</i> =4)
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)
Asian	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)
Caucasian	50.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	16.7% (<i>n</i> =1)
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)
Hispanic/Latino	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)
Biracial/Multiracial	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	50.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	16.7% (<i>n</i> =1)
WIA Targeted Population				
Basic Skills Deficient	50.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	100.0% (<i>n</i> =2)	50.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	66.7% (<i>n</i> =4)
Foster Care	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)
Homeless or Runaway	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	100.0% (<i>n</i> =2)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	33.3% (<i>n</i> =2)
Pregnant or Parenting	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	50.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	16.7% (<i>n</i> =1)
Youth Offender	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)
In need of additional assistance	50.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	50.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	50.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	50.0% (<i>n</i> =3)
Placement				
Employment	100.0% (<i>n</i> =2)	50.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	50.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	66.7% (<i>n</i> =4)
Postsecondary Education	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	50.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	50.0% (<i>n</i> =1)	33.3% (<i>n</i> =2)

Sources: *Workforce Connection's One-Stop Operating System and Department of Labor's YouthBuild Management Information System.*

Following the discussion about knowledge, participants were asked to review the actions taxonomy and comment accordingly. In addition, they were asked to share about an action they took to overcome a particular barrier and what else the program could do to encourage participants to take the necessary actions to overcome barriers.

The final taxonomy presented to the participants were changes the program could make to help more participants be successful. As with previous steps, interviewees were given a moment to reflect on and assess the changes categories determined by exemplars collected and subsequently analyzed. They were then asked to share about additional changes the program could make in order to increase participant success rates.

In concluding the interview, the researcher summarized the session and checked in with the participant to make sure the information had been captured accurately. The interviewee was allowed time to respond and clarify anything the researcher may have misrepresented. The interviewee was thanked for participating in the individual interview and their willingness to elaborate on overcoming barriers.

Although the researcher had planned 60-minutes per interview, out-of-school youth participants were not as talkative as anticipated. Thus, durations of the interviews varied in order to accommodate the participant's comfort level. Timeframes ranged from approximately 23- to 36-minutes, with some interviewees being more conversational than others. The duration of the practitioner interviews, on the other hand, ranged approximately 50- to 56-minutes. The duration of the interview, total words, and total transcription pages are reflected in Table 3.5. The information in this table is limited due to similar confidentiality concerns previously mentioned.

Regardless of duration, the interviewees were able to offer ample feedback for the purpose of this study, which included confirmation, comments, additions, and changes, if

applicable, to the unfolding matrices derived from the focus groups and preliminary taxonomies developed per program.

Table 3.5

Interviews methods table for out-of-school youth participants and practitioners.

Interviewee	Duration	Word Count	Transcription Pages
1	36:07	5,070	12
2	22:48	3,199	10
3	32:14	4,500	11
4	33:05	3,549	9
5	31:51	5,121	11
6	29:41	4,748	12
7	49:53	6,767	14
8	55:55	7,167	16

Data Analysis

Taxonomic and thematic analyses were the primary procedures used to analyze the data collected from the focus groups and individual interviews. Graphical taxonomies resulted from the analysis of unfolding matrices per focus group (Padilla, 2009). Thematic maps resulted from thematic analysis from each interview (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Conceptual models were developed as a result of combining taxonomies and thematic maps.

Taxonomic analysis.

A taxonomy is a set of categories that can be presented graphically (see Figure 3.3) or in tabular form (see Table 3.6) (Padilla, 2009). In the EMSS, the taxonomic analysis begins with the exemplars linked to a particular category, starting with the key construct. The analysis results in a set of categories that include all or most of the exemplars listed in the data columns of the unfolding matrix. The key constructs (barriers, knowledge, actions, and changes) are analyzed so

that the entire matrix is reduced to a set of categories and subcategories that summarize barriers faced by participants in a given program and how successful ones overcome them. This accomplishes data reduction and contributes to a more abstract understanding of the situation.

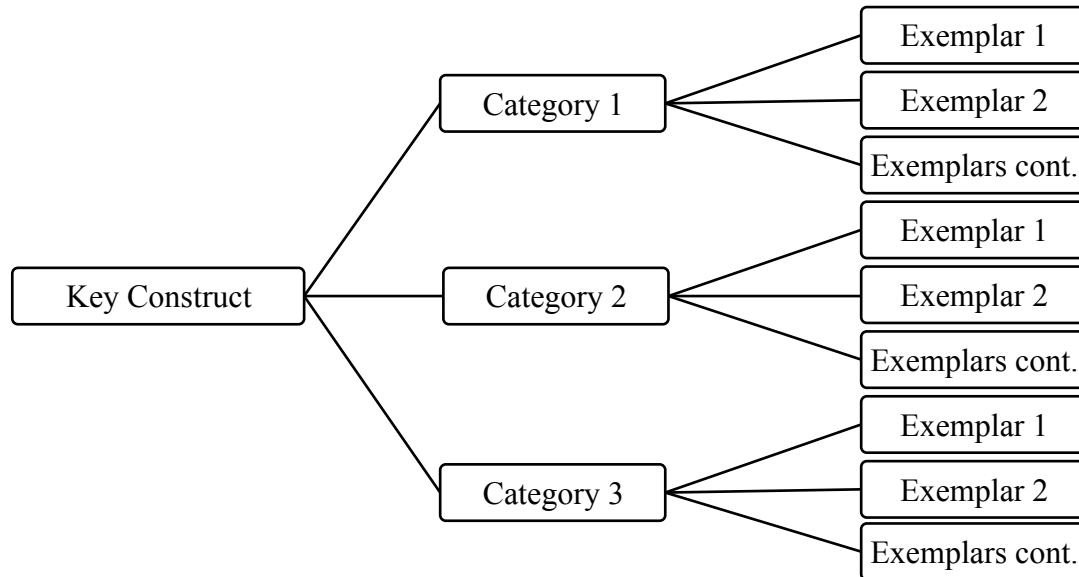


Figure 3.3. Example of taxonomy displayed graphically.

Table 3.6

Example of taxonomy displayed in tabular form.

Key Construct	Category	Exemplars
Construct	Category 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exemplar 1 • Exemplar 2 • Exemplars continued
	Category 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exemplar 1 • Exemplar 2 • Exemplars continued
	Category 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exemplar 1 • Exemplar 2 • Exemplars continued

Following the data collection using the unfolding matrices, taxonomies were designed based on the key constructs and corresponding exemplars for each focus group. Data reduction

were accomplished by developing taxonomies around four parameters: barriers to participant success, successful participant's knowledge base, the action repertoire of successful participants, and recommended changes to improve success outcomes.

In preparation for analysis, each barrier was scripted on individual post-it notes. Then a 5' (h) x 12' (w) sticky wall was attached to a compatible surface. As the analyst became immersed in the data, barriers were inductively and interpretively differentiated into categories on the wall. These categories specified a distinction among what otherwise would have been undifferentiated meanings (Padilla, 2009). The taxonomic analysis resulted in a set of categories including exemplars given in the barrier data column for each program. Because of the manner in which data were collected in the unfolding matrices, taxonomies for knowledge, actions, and changes were also contingently constructed based on the categorical barriers.

Thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes or patterns within raw data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Boyatzis (1998) it also interprets various aspects of the research topic. Thematic analysis, specifically the step-by-step process by Braun and Clarke (2006) and described below, was applied to the data collected by interviews.

Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with your data. A primary strategy to analyzing interview data is to become very familiar with the data (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). To do so the researcher listens to audio recordings and constantly reads and rereads the interview transcripts until an overall sense of the data emerges or becomes apparent (Griffie, 2005). In order to be immersed in the data accordingly, the researcher began the thematic analysis process by listening to each interview, and reading through its corresponding transcript twice.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes. This phase begins when the analyst has familiarized

themselves with the data and produces an initial list of ideas about what is in the data and what is interesting about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This initial process of coding is part of the analysis as data is organized into meaningful groups (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher performed this preliminary coding process utilizing ATLAS.ti, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). Interview transcripts were imported into ATLAS.ti and stored in a project file. After initially exploring the data through extensive reading, the researcher created what ATLAS.ti refers to as quotations, which are segments of the interview data that are considered interesting or important to the research, by conducting a close, line-by-line analysis.

Phase 3: Searching for themes. The third phase begins after preliminarily codes have been identified across the data set and sorting them into potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher created some initial analytic codes, color-coding them to help narrow the data to form an overarching theme. An initial thematic map was developed thinking about the relationship between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes. Refinement of themes takes place during phase four (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this point, the researcher began assessing whether or not initial themes were really themes based on whether or not there was enough data to support them. The researcher also began to assess whether or not themes could collapse into each other or be broken down into separate themes or sub-themes. This process of re-coding was to be expected since coding is an ongoing organic process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes. Next, the analyst defines and continues refining themes to present for analysis and analyzes the data within (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For each individual theme the researcher wrote a detailed analysis to describe how each connected to the research question and/or sub-questions for this study.

Phase 6: Producing the report. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest the final step is writing the report based on a set of fully worked-out themes that involve final analysis. Accordingly, the researcher did this and included the final report of each interview's thematic analysis in the following chapter.

Concept modeling.

A concept model can be thought of as a set of concepts that have been inductively generated from multiple sources of data and subsequently assembled into a larger meaningful whole through a set of relationships between them that have been identified interpretively (Padilla, 2009). The concept model therefore, presents an insightful interpretation of the social situation regarding participant success in a program.

The researcher used two primary sources to develop the concept models for each of the three cases, as well as the practitioner's model – the various taxonomies and the thematic analyses of the interviews already described. This process began with integrating the two analyses per program, and then following up with data reduction and data interpretation. Data reduction as described by Padilla (2009), occurred when the researcher organized and summarized the details of the data into categories and subcategories of meanings that synthesized barriers faced by participants within each of the out-of-school youth workforce development programs, knowledge that participants possessed to overcome the barriers, actions the participants took to navigate the barriers, and changes they proposed might mitigate the barriers for future participants.

The categories implied a conceptual structure that was utilized to reflect relationships between the categories and subcategories resulting from the taxonomic analysis and incorporating additional evidence through the interviews. The result was an empirically based

interpretation of the experiences from the participant's viewpoint, concluding with the identification of specific concepts in the data (Padilla, 1999). These individual portraits of the case contributed to the understanding of common and unique barriers participants experienced in each program.

Cross-case analysis.

To understand the phenomenon from a broader perspective, Lapan and Armfield (2009) and Yin (2009) agree a cross-analysis probes whether different cases appear to share similarities and/or differences. To accomplish this, and to address the research questions, the researcher designed a concept model based on a comparison and contrast of the three programs. The researcher then compared this hybrid out-of-school youth conceptual model of participant success to the practitioner's perceived conceptual model of success for purposes of further triangulation. The cross-case analysis and its results are the focus of chapter five. The following section discusses the elements of quality for this research design.

Design Quality

Being able to trust the research results of this study are especially important since practitioners and policymakers in the field of youth workforce development intervene in people's lives to produce positive placement outcomes and implement effective policies and practices. It was the researcher's aim to therefore present insights and conclusions that were valid and reliable. To do so, the researcher implemented strategies to establish credibility, consistency, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility.

Credibility addresses the issue of whether or not research findings match reality (Merriam, 2009). In other words, are the claims that this research report puts forward believable?

Do the findings capture what was actually there? Are the results useful for the questions this study was concerned with? To address these and other potentially related questions this study utilized the following strategies to increase the credibility of its findings.

Denzin (1978) and Johnson (1997) proposed triangulation strategies as one of the most effective approaches to reinforce credibility in qualitative research. One primary strategy for this study was member-checking, or otherwise known as respondent validation, in which participants were invited to confirm and provide feedback regarding data collection, preliminary analysis, interpretations and conclusions (Merriam, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Accordingly, the researcher provided copies of unfolding matrices and drafts of initial taxonomies from the focus groups to the individual interviewees and inquired whether or not the data and interpretations accurately represented their experiences. Maxwell (2005) suggests these member-checks are “the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on” (p. 111).

A second strategy to enhance credibility is methods triangulation. According to Johnson (1997), the word “methods” should be used more broadly here, and refers to using different types of data collection procedures in a single research study. For example, the researcher collected data from focus groups and individual interviews. This dual data collection approach was combined to provide improved evidence for the research and enhance insights about participant experiences.

A third strategy is data triangulation, which uses multiple data sources within a method to help understand a phenomenon. In other words, “data sources” does not mean using different methods as noted above, but rather refers to the use of multiple data sources exercising a single method (Johnson, 1997). Another important component of data triangulation involves collecting

data at different times, different places and with different people (Johnson, 1997).

The researcher gathered data from four focus groups on different dates and various locations. Three represented different youth workforce development programs in Southern Nevada, and one represented practitioners from each of the three programs. Data were also acquired through eight separate individual interviews on different dates and multiple locations, with six participants and two practitioners representing various programs. This type of triangulation collected the views of more than one set of informants within a method to enhance credibility.

A final strategy was the use of inference descriptors where the researcher used verbatim participant phrases to describe their experiences (Johnson, 1997). Accordingly, the data collection instrument, the unfolding matrix, captures verbatim exemplars as expressed by the research subjects during the focus groups. Moreover, the following chapter also incorporates participants' own words in direct quotations from interviews to describe their personal experiences. By reading verbatim, readers of this report can experience for themselves insights into participants' perspectives.

Combined, these strategies provided valid credibility for the design quality of this study. Thus, making the report believable, capturing what was actually experienced, and making the findings applicable to the research questions.

Consistency.

In qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) were the pioneers in conceptualizing reliability as consistency within its philosophical structure. Rather than demanding the replication of results, qualitative researchers are concerned with whether the results are consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 2009). In other words, given the data collected in

this study, do the findings make sense to outsiders? Are they consistent and dependable?

Strategies for addressing the concern of consistency were similar to those of credibility (e.g., member-checks, triangulations, etc.). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested data collection and analysis be consistent for supporting a study's reliability. Consistency, "describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" (Merriam, 2009, p. 223). For this study, the data collection and analyses were uniform and consistent across each dialogical grouping and interview. Each focus group lasted 90 minutes, whereas the individual interviews were scheduled for 60 minutes.

The data collection process for both methods followed similar procedures as outlined in Appendices C and E. Analyses of the focus groups consisted of taxonomies derived from unfolding matrices. These items were triangulated during individual interviews with research subjects. In addition to interview member-checks, thematic maps were designed based on the use of ATLAS.ti for analyzing interview data. Combining these analyses consequently led to conceptual models of participant success. These sequential processes and procedures for collecting and analyzing the data enhanced the consistency and dependability of this research and its subsequent outcomes.

Transferability.

As with credibility and consistency, Merriam (2009) recommended thinking of generalizability in accordance with the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research, which corresponded with external validity within the quantitative paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative research, the investigator needs to provide sufficient descriptive data to make transferability possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

There were two strategies applied for employing adequate transferability. One was what

Merriam (2009) referred to as “rich thick description” (p. 227) of the case’s embedded units of analyses (i.e., successful participants). Accordingly, demographic characteristics of research subjects are noted in the following chapter. These include ethnicity, WIA’s targeted population backgrounds (e.g., foster care, youth offender, etc.), and placement outcomes. Moreover, detailed and in-depth descriptions of the findings are presented with adequate evidence in the form of verbatim quotes from participant focus groups and interviews, along with taxonomies, thematic maps, and conceptual models of participant success.

Another strategy for enhancing transferability was naturalistic generalization, which refers to generalizing based on similarity (Stake, 1990). The more similar the participants and circumstances in a particular research study are to the ones that a researcher wants to generalize to, the more defensible the generalization will be. To accomplish this, Johnson (1997) suggests providing the following kinds of information: the number and kinds of people in the study, how they were selected, contextual information, the nature of the researcher’s role, information about research subjects, methods of data collection, and data analysis techniques used for the study. The majority of these items have been described in this chapter, with the remaining information being provided in the following chapter in order for the reader to make an informed decision about to whom the results may be generalized.

Strengths and Limitations of Study

One particular strength of this study stems from allowing the voices of those directly served by youth workforce development programs to be heard and utilized in influencing placement success outcomes. This is one of the primary strengths of qualitative research (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000 & 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 1990; Sofaer, 2009). Similarly, another strength of this research was the explanatory

approach that allowed for developing meaning based on participants' experiences, which were subjective and multiple (Creswell, 2009 & Schwandt, 2000). This was important because a primary goal of qualitative research is to rely as much as possible on insiders' experiences of the situation under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The research questions were therefore both broad and general so participants could construct meaning of their own circumstances (Creswell, 2009).

In turn, taxonomies and concept models were created to make sense of their experience while continually testing and modifying these constructions in light of new information (Schwandt, 2000). By basing the findings on the emic perspective of successful participants and co-creating meaning in tandem with the researcher, local models of participant success were developed that could be applied to other local out-of-school youth workforce development programs and serve as a stimulus for other programs.

In spite of the clear strengths of qualitative methods for this study, these methods did not address salience and scale. Salience had to do with the prevalence of barriers throughout the entire local youth workforce investment system. Although barriers were identified using the unfolding matrices, knowing how many youth throughout the system actually experience the specified barriers is unknown. This is perhaps a limitation of the study as quantitative methods would have been best suited for assessing the salience of barriers. However, such methods would not have accommodated the voices of participants beyond the information queried via quantitative surveys. New participant knowledge or that beyond the survey would have been blocked out.

It was also evident that the Expert Model of Student Success, which applied qualitative methods, was scale free. The strength of relationships between concepts was not expressed very

effectively using qualitative data alone. To create scaled models would also require the use of quantitative measures. On the other hand, one of the drawbacks of this approach was the investigator would have had to create a research instrument using knowledge and assumptions already available.

The advantage of the qualitative methods was to gain the perceptions of the participants untainted by the investigator's preconceived ideas. The EMSS provided the basis for the explanatory nature of the study, which implied participants viewed as the experts, "so it is necessary to extract the expert knowledge base that resides mostly in their heads" (Padilla, 2009, p. 195). In addition, the EMSS outlined the process utilized to explain, uncover, and understand what lied behind the central phenomenon of this study for which little was yet known.

Besides the limitations to this study's methodology regarding salience and scale, another disadvantage included using relatively few participants to represent the views of a much larger group. There exists the possibility that the views of the sample may not reflect the views of all out-of-school youth and practitioners in WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs, especially those in the rural areas. While this study explored the purposeful perspective of successful participants, it incidentally neglected the perspective of unsuccessful participants, which may have provided unidentified insights into their experiences. Nonetheless, the literature review revealed a majority of traditional research on participant success that emphasizes a deficit perspective rather than an asset-oriented perspective. This study therefore had an asset-oriented approach for understanding successful participants.

Similar to the drawbacks of relatively few participants considered to be at-risk, the three programs may not mirror the overall representation of the entire participants enrolled in the local youth workforce development system. For example, Caucasians in the system represented

40.3%, whereas in the focus groups they represented 11%. The homeless/runaway participants within the system represented 9.9% as compared to 22.2% in the focus groups. Placement in postsecondary education was 12.1% for the system and 38.9% for the focus groups. For further comparisons, see table 3.1 for the system and table 3.3 for the focus groups.

Summary

Chapter Three described the rationale behind the qualitative research design for this study, more specifically, the explanatory embedded multiple-case study design. The chapter further elucidates the processes and procedures utilized to conduct the study where the main unit of analyses included three local Workforce Investment Act programs in Southern Nevada and their out-of-school youth participants and practitioners.

The EMSS provided the basis for the data collection and analyses. Initial data collection with focus groups included the use of the unfolding matrix as the main instrument, and individual interviews provided additional data, also used for triangulation. Subsequently, the chapter explained taxonomic analysis, thematic analysis, concept modeling, and cross-case analysis, for the eventual development of a conceptual local model of participant success for WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs in Southern Nevada. Issues regarding design quality and strategies were clarified. Finally, the strengths and limitations of the research design were presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

This research investigated how successful out-of-school youth navigated their geography of barriers while participating in WIA youth workforce development programs in Southern Nevada. The primary research question of this study was:

1. How did successful out-of-school youth navigate their geography of barriers while participating in WIA youth workforce development programs?
 - a. What barriers to success did completers experience in WIA youth workforce development programs?
 - b. What was the knowledge completers possessed in order to overcome the identified barriers?
 - c. What were the actions completers took that enabled them to overcome the identified barriers?
 - d. What changes did completers think would reduce or eliminate the barriers to success?

This chapter presents the descriptions of each case and the results of the analyses of data collected during four focus groups and eight individual interviews in which out-of-school youth and practitioners expressed their perspectives on participant success. Information obtained from the focus group participants and individual interviewees, on barriers, knowledge, actions, and changes for out-of-school youth WIA workforce development programs in Southern Nevada, provided the basis for taxonomic analyses, thematic analyses, and concept models. Those data will be presented in this chapter in accordance to Padilla's (2009) framework.

Goodwill of Southern Nevada

As a nonprofit entity, the mission of Goodwill of Southern Nevada, Inc. (GSN) is “to provide education, employment and training for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment, and to maximize the quality of life for each individual served” (“Our Mission Is To Get People Jobs”, 2017). The organization turns its donations of moderately used goods into employment opportunities for local residents. GSN also provides workforce development and community-based services for individuals with disabilities and people needing education, work experiences, or employment (“Our Mission Is To Get People Jobs”, 2017).

Goodwill of Southern Nevada’s WIA youth workforce development program is called the ELITE Youth Program, which stands for Education, Leadership, Independence, Training and Employment (“Youth Employment Program (ELITE)”, 2017). It offers education, training and employment services for at-risk youth and youth with disabilities, between the ages of 17 to 24 years old. Participants are encouraged to set goals for their future while being provided career coaching and supportive services.

The program offers skills training for job seekers, financial literacy, mentoring, introduction to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), and focuses on positive youth leadership development. College tours and opportunities to participate in paid work experiences with local businesses are also provided to eligible participants (“Youth Employment Program (ELITE)”, 2017).

Based on Workforce Connections’ data management system (i.e., One-Stop Operating System), GSN’s Elite Youth Program served 94 out-of-school youth during program year 2014 (see Table 3.2). Ethnic demographics reported 57% Caucasian, 43% African-American, 38% Biracial/Multiracial, 34% Hispanic/Latino, 3% Asian, and 2% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. WIA

population demographics indicated 99% were basic skills deficient at enrollment, 71% in need of additional assistance, 5% youth offenders, 4% pregnant or parenting, and 1% as homeless/runaway. Placement outcomes reported 73% in unsubsidized employment and 27% in postsecondary education. However, these outcomes may indicate some participants being in both and therefore are not necessarily unique.

Barriers Identified by GSN Participants

Participants for the GSN focus group included two Caucasians, one African-American, one Asian, and one Biracial/Multiracial, from the above cohort. Three participants were considered basic skills deficient and two in need of additional services in order to be WIA eligible for the program. During the GSN focus group, participants identified seventeen barriers in response to the initial question (see Appendix E). Accordingly, a taxonomy of the barriers (Figure 4.1) produced four categories and these were recognized as either external or internal barriers. The external barriers were categorized as circumstantial, educational, or occupational. Nine barriers were identified under circumstantial, five barriers as educational, and one barrier as occupational. Mental health was categorized as an internal barrier. Within that, two associated barriers appear.

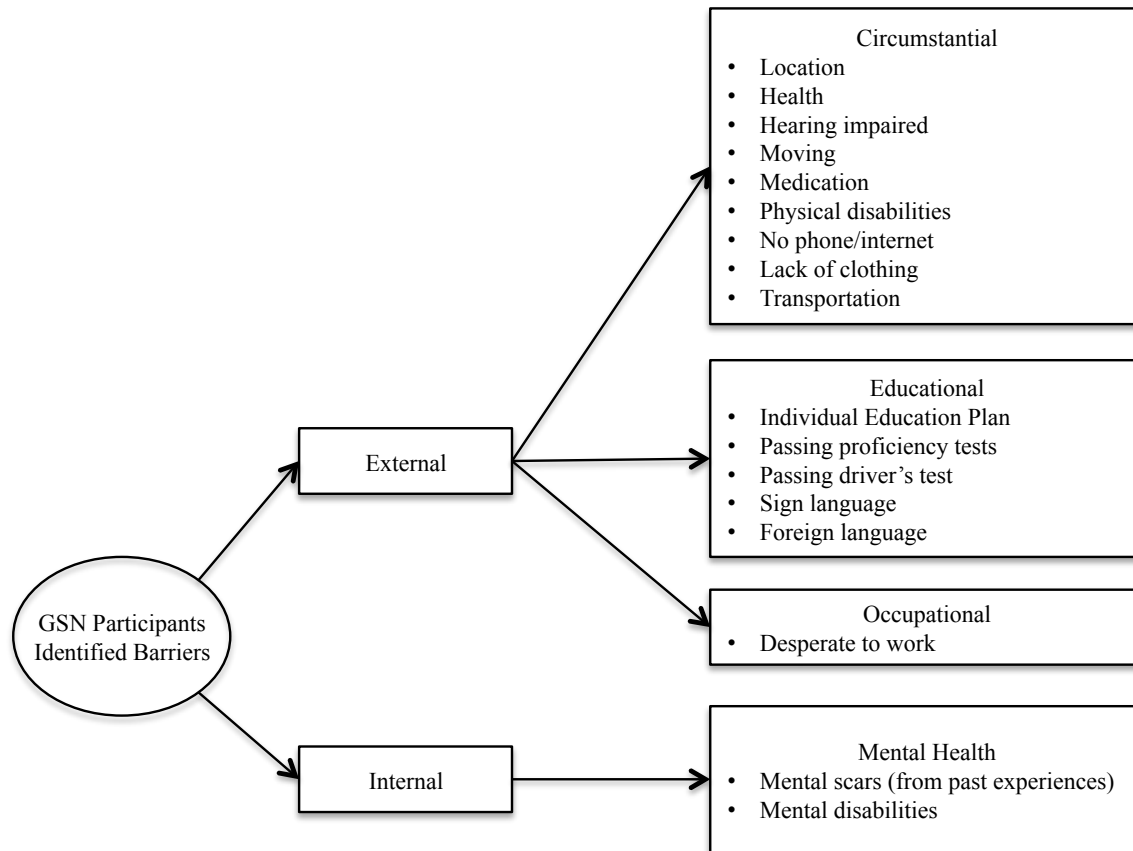


Figure 4.1. GSN Taxonomy of Barriers Identified by Participants

Circumstantial barriers.

Circumstantial barriers were the most frequently noted barriers, which included nine of the 17 identified. Participants indicated a lack of general physical health and well-being as impediments to success in GSN's Elite Youth Program. A lack of proximity to the program also presented challenges, as indicated by the barriers of *location*, *moving* during program participation, and lack of *transportation*. Lastly, participants with a lack of access to a *phone* or the *Internet* also struggled to succeed.

Educational barriers.

Five barriers related to education were identified by the focus group. *Tests*, in particular, were a challenge for participants, as well as needing to meet the demands of their *Individual*

Education Plans (IEPs) during their participation in education. Some GSN participants had difficulties learning due to their *foreign language* or needing to use *sign language*.

Occupational barriers.

Although the barrier *desperate to work* stood alone, it also stood apart from the other categories and therefore merited its own occupational category. Some participants came into the program anticipating immediate job placements and thus became impatient with a lack thereof. However, a primary objective of the GSN Elite Youth Program was to prepare participants with employability skills that would take them beyond initial placement and lead to retention in employment. The participants nonetheless recognized this barrier of desperation as one in the way of their success.

Mental health barriers.

As a program that specialized in employment and training services to individuals with disabilities, many of the GSN focus group participants recognized their own mental diagnoses as barriers to success. They also admitted *mental scars* from certain experiences in the past as barriers during participation.

Alignment of Subcategories for GSN Exemplars of Knowledge, Actions, and Changes for Overcoming Categorical Barriers

The following tabular representations originated from the alignment between the GSN categorical barriers and knowledge, actions, and changes exemplars. Throughout the following discussion, the numbers in parentheses refer to exemplars displayed in the tabular taxonomic tables.

Circumstantial barriers.

Knowledge. GSN knowledge exemplars revealed six subcategories of knowledge related to overcoming circumstantial barriers (Table 4.1). Successful participants with disabilities were

aware of them in order mitigate their influences during participation (exemplars 4.1.5-7). For example, some participants were hearing impaired and knew alternative ways to communicate in order to be successful (exemplars 4.1.8-10). In addition, others who faced barriers associated with medical issues knew the ongoing condition of their personal health (exemplars 4.1.1-4).

Knowledge about where to access communicative resources was valuable information for staying connected to staff, peers, etc. (exemplars 4.1.11-14). Successful participants were aware of schedules related to the public transportation system to get to and from the program (exemplars 4.1.16). Lastly, they understood the importance of expectations for themselves when it came to adjusting their lifestyle to accommodate their success in the program (exemplar 4.1.18).

Table 4.1

GSN participant's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming circumstantial barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars	
Circumstantial	Knowing condition of your personal health	4.1.1	Know about different medication to take
		4.1.2	Know your medical history
		4.1.3	Know to be mindful of what specifically to take
		4.1.4	Know that it makes you moody
	Knowing about your physical disabilities	4.1.5	Know what your physical disability challenges are
		4.1.6	Know how they might affect you in the program
		4.1.7	Understand them
	Knowing about various ways to communicate	4.1.8	Know to talk face-to-face
		4.1.9	Know how to read lips
		4.1.10	Know how to talk loud and clear
	Knowing about resources	4.1.11	Know that you need a phone
		4.1.12	Know about libraries
		4.1.13	Know about phone booths
		4.1.14	Know about service providers
	Knowing about schedules	4.1.15	Know the bus schedule
		4.1.16	Know your family's schedule
	Knowing which expectations to set for yourself	4.1.17	Know to be patient
		4.1.18	Know how to adjust

Actions. Table 4.2 shows exemplars of actions related to GSN circumstantial barriers. There were four subcategories of actions addressing these circumstantial barriers. Whether the circumstantial barrier was medication, physical disabilities, etc., the recurring action suggested by participants was to do research (exemplars 4.2.1-4). This involved researching their medical diagnoses, solutions for addressing their disabilities, sign language courses, etc.

Similarly, regardless of their circumstances, the action of planning their schedules, doctor visits, etc. became evident in order to successfully navigate their personal circumstantial barriers (exemplars 4.2.5-10). Besides simply knowing about potential resources for various needs, taking the action to pursue those resources provided participants with the opportunities to overcome circumstantial barriers (exemplars 4.2.11-18).

Table 4.2

GSN participant's subcategories of actions for overcoming circumstantial barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Circumstantial	Doing research	4.2.1 Do your research
		4.2.2 Do research for other alternatives
		4.2.3 Do research on them
		4.2.4 Do research
	Planning	4.2.5 Plan it out
		4.2.6 Figure it out
		4.2.7 Be disciplined... have good habits
		4.2.8 Inform people
		4.2.9 Have regular visits to doctor/hospital
		4.2.10 Do check-ups
	Pursuing resources	4.2.11 Look up deals
		4.2.12 Look up resources
		4.2.13 Go to local libraries
		4.2.14 Look up the bus schedule
	Finding alternative ways to communicate	4.2.15 Talk face-to-face
		4.2.16 Learn how to read lips
		4.2.17 Listen carefully
		4.2.18 Get hearing aides

Changes. Table 4.3 reflects exemplars of changes related to circumstantial barriers. There were three subcategories of changes for GSN that would help participants mitigate

circumstantial barriers, or eliminate them altogether. GSN could help mitigate or eliminate circumstantial barriers associated with medical issues or disabilities by providing financial assistance for such things as hearing equipment (exemplar 4.3.1) and medication (exemplar 4.3.2). Providing relevant information and resources electronically (exemplar 4.3.5), via collateral materials (exemplar 4.3.6), and/or through specific classes (exemplar 4.3.7) would also facilitate greater success in overcoming circumstantial barriers. Since the program already provided general supportive services, participants suggested it additionally provide assistance for unique needs beyond the status quo (exemplars 4.3.9-10).

Table 4.3

GSN participant's subcategories of changes for overcoming circumstantial barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars	
Circumstantial	Providing financial assistance	4.3.1	Assist with hearing equipment
		4.3.2	Assist with medication costs
	Providing relevant information/resources	4.3.3	Provide a schedule
		4.3.4	Provide bus route information
		4.3.5	Provide links on Goodwill website
		4.3.6	Provide a pamphlet with information about resources
		4.3.7	Provide a class about the certain kinds of physical disabilities
	Providing assistance for specific needs	4.3.8	Provide a shuttle bus
		4.3.9	Help with medical documentation
		4.3.10	Assist individuals with hearing impairments to find hearing impaired friendly employment

Educational barriers.

Knowledge. For educational barriers, the alignment of GSN knowledge exemplars revealed three subcategories of knowledge as reflected in Table 4.4. In order to address their educationally related barriers, participants needed to possess a high-level of personal awareness to succeed academically (exemplars 4.4.1-2). For instance, their capacity for managing stress

(exemplar 4.4.3) and time for classes, homework, etc. (exemplar 4.4.4) required personal introspection.

In addition, knowing their intellectual competencies determined whether or not they were ready for taking certain tests, certain courses, and other related academic demands (exemplars 4.4.7-9). Lastly, and because many GSN participants were faced with negotiating their IEPs, knowing as much as possible about the educational system was critical to their educational success (exemplars 4.4.10-11).

Table 4.4

GSN participant's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming educational barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars
Educational	Knowing yourself	4.4.1 Know your strengths & weaknesses
		4.4.2 Know what environments you're good in
		4.4.3 Know how much stress you can handle
		4.4.4 Know how to manage your time
		4.4.5 Know common sense
		4.4.6 Know to take them seriously
	Knowing intellectual competencies	4.4.7 Know how to do math
		4.4.8 Know the materials
		4.4.9 Know test taking skills
	Knowing the educational system	4.4.10 Know how to communicate about your IEP
		4.4.11 Know the school district you're in

Actions. Table 4.5 reflects exemplars of actions associated with GSN educational barriers. Participants suggested those who sought academic assistance tended to be more successful than those individuals who didn't (exemplars 4.5.1-3). In addition, participants who took initiative to find solutions and alternatives for their academic challenges (exemplars 4.5.4-4.5.5) were generally more successful than others educationally. Lastly, ongoing practice was a necessity for addressing a lack of academic proficiencies (exemplars 4.5.7-9).

Table 4.5

GSN participant's subcategories of actions for overcoming educational barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars	
Educational	Seeking assistance	4.5.1	Seek help
		4.5.2	Don't do things alone
		4.5.3	Get a tutor
	Doing research	4.5.4	Look for an alternative
		4.5.5	Do your research
		4.5.6	Learn the driving rules
	Practice	4.5.7	Don't be nervous
		4.5.8	Practice, practice, practice
		4.5.9	Take it seriously

Changes. Table 4.6 reflects subcategories of changes associated with GSN's educational barriers. GSN could mitigate the barriers of participants by providing educational information electronically on their website and/or on written materials (exemplars 4.6.1-2). Likewise, teaching participants stress coping skills and providing pre-test sessions would help ease the barriers associated with education (exemplars 4.6.3-4), especially since many of the participants were disengaged from traditional education systems before joining the program.

Table 4.6

GSN participant's subcategories of changes for overcoming educational barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars	
Educational	Providing information/resources	4.6.1	Provide links on the Goodwill website
		4.6.2	Provide a driver's book/pamphlet
	Providing specific courses	4.6.3	Provide an anxiety course
		4.6.4	Practice proficiency courses to help understand the challenges

Occupational barriers.

Knowledge. Participants expressed being *desperate to work* as an occupational barrier to success. The analysis for GSN knowledge exemplars thus revealed two subcategories of knowledge related to the barrier (Table 4.7). Knowing how to apply for work by filling out

applications, developing resumes, and where to look for jobs were knowledge successful participants possessed (exemplars 4.7.1-3). Successful participants also understood the importance of professionalism when it came to marketing themselves as competitive for employment (exemplar 4.7.4-5).

Table 4.7

GSN participant's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming occupational barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars	
Occupational	Knowing how to apply for work	4.7.1	Know how to fill out an application
		4.7.2	Know how to make a resume
		4.7.3	Know where to look
	Knowing how to be professional	4.7.4	Know basic professionalism
		4.7.5	Know how to market self

Actions. Table 4.8 reflects exemplars of actions related to overcoming occupational barriers. Although there was only one occupational barrier identified by GSN participants, three subcategories of knowledge were produced for overcoming the barrier. For instance, instead of getting discouraged with a lack of employment opportunities, successful participants were persistent with pursuing jobs (exemplars 4.8.1-2) and building their network (exemplar 4.8.3). However, their persistence with potential opportunities needed to be tempered with appropriate enthusiasm in order to avoid coming across overly zealous (exemplar 4.8.4).

Table 4.8

GSN participant's subcategories of actions for overcoming occupational barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars	
Occupational	Being persistent	4.8.1	Keep swimming – be persistent
		4.8.2	Apply a lot
	Networking	4.8.3	Build a network
	Managing your eagerness	4.8.4	Come in early, but not too early

Changes. As reflected in Table 4.9, there was only one subcategory of change addressing GSN’s occupational barrier *desperate to work*. Although policy set by the local workforce development board dictated the allowable amount of hours for work experiences, it would make a difference in overcoming a participant’s urgency for employment by increasing the hours allowed (exemplar 4.9.1).

Table 4.9

GSN participant’s subcategories of changes for overcoming occupational barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars
Occupational	Increasing hours of work experience	4.9.1 Make the work experience longer

Mental health barriers.

Knowledge. GSN knowledge exemplars revealed two subcategories of knowledge needed to confront mental health barriers (Table 4.10). Instead of viewing mental health barriers as hindrances, successful participants figured out how to confidently participate in the program in spite of them (exemplars 4.10.1-3). For instance, rather than dismissing their mental health issues or using them as an excuse, successful participants accepted their reality and persevered nonetheless (exemplar 4.10.4).

Table 4.10

GSN participant’s subcategories of knowledge for overcoming mental health barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars
Mental Health	Knowing how to adapt to mental health barriers	4.10.1 Know how to get through the program with your disabilities
		4.10.2 Know your disability & how to work with it
		4.10.3 Know how to adapt with the environment
		4.10.4 Know how to accept what happened & move on
	Knowing the impact of mental health barriers	4.10.5 Understand that they will be a challenge
		4.10.6 Know that there’s others with similar experiences

Actions. There were two subcategories of actions addressing GSN mental health barriers (Table 4.11). GSN participants who successfully dealt with mental scars from the past developed and practiced coping skills to overcome them by talking to others, listening to music, etc. (exemplars 4.11.1-3). Since participants also experienced feeling somewhat inadequate because of their mental disabilities, successful ones said overcoming that sentiment took understanding and accepting their reality in order to navigate their negative impacts (exemplars 4.11.4-5).

Table 4.11

GSN participant's subcategories of actions for overcoming mental health barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Mental Health	Practicing coping skills	4.11.1 Talk to someone
		4.11.2 Take steps around it
		4.11.3 Listen to music
	Seeking understanding and acceptance	4.11.4 Try to understand your disability
		4.11.5 Accept who you are
		4.11.6 Don't rule out Doctor's diagnosis, but be cautious

Changes. Table 4.12 reflects the exemplars of changes recommended for improving efforts towards overcoming GSN's mental health barriers. Participants believed GSN should offer courses helping individuals deal with their mental scars and disabilities (exemplar 4.12.1). Such courses should emphasize knowing how to adapt and cope with mental health barriers (exemplars 4.12.2-3). In addition, financial assistance for medication would be beneficial to those economically challenged to afford it on their own (exemplar 4.12.4).

Table 4.12

GSN participant's subcategories of changes for overcoming mental health barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Category	Changes Exemplars
Mental Health	Provide specific courses	4.12.1 Class for specific disabilities 4.12.2 Teach adaptability skills 4.12.3 Provide a course to help with troubled pasts – coping skills
	Provide financial assistance	4.12.4 Assist with medication costs

Individual Perceptions of GSN Barriers, Knowledge, Actions and Changes

For the purposes of triangulating the data for the Goodwill of Southern Nevada participant focus group, two individuals from the focus group participated in subsequent one-on-one interviews. Each interviewee was reminded about the purpose of the study and data acquisition process. Interviewees were then presented with the data collected and taxonomies based on their focus group's unfolding matrix. It presents individual thematic maps derived from the process of analysis for the interviews described in the previous chapter.

GSN participant one.

In response to the questions in the interview protocol listed in Appendix E and after review of the focus group taxonomy (see Figure 4.1), this participant (GP-1) referred to four categorical barriers during the discussion. These barriers were separated between external and internal. During the knowledge portion of the interview, GP-1 suggested it was important to know the need for special training and to possess a professional mentality and attitude.

With regards to actions, GP-1 made comments about collaborating with peers to address barriers and what was referred to as *system shock* experiences. Lastly, changes GP-1 suggested had to do with providing financial assistance, real-life experiences, and the breadth and depth of

courses. Figure 4.2 is a refined and final thematic map of these items per the interview with this GSN participant.

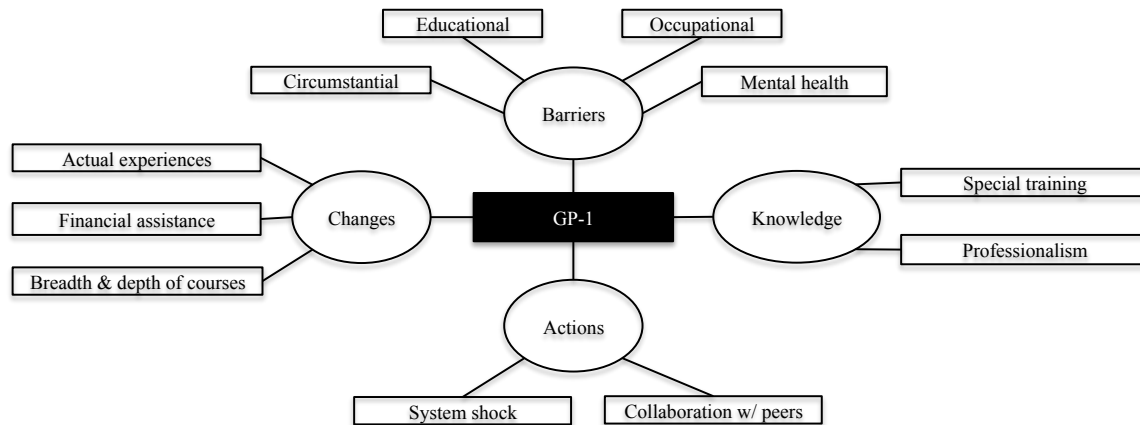


Figure 4.2. Final thematic map of interview with GSN participant one.

Barriers. After reviewing the data collected in the unfolding matrix, this participant expressed the information presented in the matrix *would be very helpful in a lot of cases* in understanding the barriers participants face and the expertise needed to successfully navigate them. GP-1 was then presented with a visual taxonomy of the barriers and asked to provide additional insights and comments regarding the alignment of the barriers provided by the researcher. GP-1 continued by suggesting, *I think this really does capture a lot*, confirming the researcher’s taxonomic analysis of thematic barriers.

Upon triangulating the graphical taxonomy of barriers, GP-1 was prompted to share specifically about the barriers GP-1 and/or other participants faced while in the GSN ELITE youth program. GP-1 initially made reference to an occupational barrier when stating, *I know that one very important area that we were all concerned with was **desperate to work. That was definitely a huge thing for us.*** This confirmed what was expressed during the GSN focus group regarding participants’ urgency for employment and that it was a noteworthy barrier to many

who participated in the program. Within the same context, GP-1 also shared an educational barrier when GP-1 commented, *even **foreign language** was something* with which participants were concerned.

Later in the discussion, GP-1 expressed curiosity about what the program was doing to address mental health and circumstantial barriers. GP-1 shared, *Really, I'm a little bit curious on how Goodwill does help people with some of these things, and things like **mental disabilities, hearing impaired - those things I'm really concerned about***. GP-1 also shared about having a ***very awful attention span*** and consequently being put on medication for it.

Knowledge. GP-1 was subsequently presented with a visual taxonomy of the knowledge participants needed to overcome the barriers noted by GSN focus group members and asked to provide additional comments and insights. GP-1 stated *there are some things around here that look like they can only be done with **special training***, suggesting that to overcome categorical obstacles such as circumstantial barriers (e.g., *physical disabilities*) and educational barriers (e.g., *passing proficiency test* and *passing driver's test*) participants needed to know they needed special training to overcome particular barriers.

When asked to share about personal knowledge GP-1 possessed to overcome a particular barrier, GP-1 spoke about a work experience at a warehouse. Knowing to possess a professional mentality and attitude allowed GP-1 to overcome the challenging working conditions. GP-1 said, *Let's just say that when I was training in the warehouse, **it really was a matter of treating the barriers like they weren't much of a barrier to begin with***. *That's just how I treated it*. In addition, knowing to keep a professional attitude about the work experience was evidenced by the comment, *we had **a very strong ethical feeling** that it has to be excellence, nothing less*.

In order for the GSN out-of-school youth program to provide better knowledge to participants, GP-1 mentioned, *I think that a big area of it is about really **putting them into the area rather than trying to make them understand it over and over again through another person's insights on the work field really is.*** Goodwill can provide greater knowledge to participants by exposing them to real-life work scenarios, instead of simply lecturing about the world of work. This way, participants can gain the knowledge via firsthand experience.

Knowing about special training, along with understanding the need to possess a positive work ethic and professional attitude, made a difference for GP-1 and others for overcoming the occupational barriers they experienced.

Actions. Following the discussion with GP-1 about the knowledge participants needed to overcome barriers and what the GSN program could do to improve that accordingly, the researcher presented GP-1 with a visual taxonomy of actions. When asked if the taxonomy captured an accurate representation of the themes related to the actions barriers, GP-1 expressed, *It really does. I'd say it really does.*

GP-1 was then asked to share about a time a specific action to navigate a particular barrier was taken. GP-1 mentioned a circumstantial barrier and said, *In a few occasions it was **transportation**, really it was.* However, to overcome the transportation barrier GP-1 established a mutual agreement with a peer to share rides to and from the program, as evidenced by the statement, *I was always **willing to help him out**, so that's how we went along.*

In order for the program to encourage more participants to take the necessary actions to overcome barriers, GP-1 suggested, *Make them **oriented towards action**.* When asked about how the program could facilitate this, GP-1 responded with, *Give them a **system shock**. I think that in a lot of cases, that can help a lot of people.* GP-1 believed the program could develop action-

oriented participants by placing individuals in situations where they're forced to **take action or fail**. On the other hand, GP-1 admitted, *I know that there are people in Goodwill who, **no matter how many times they do that, they probably won't be able to handle that***. So although a system shock would motivate some participants, it wouldn't necessarily be effective with all of them. Thus, staff needed to be discerning with whom they'd utilize this approach.

Changes. The final visual taxonomy GP-1 was presented with was recommended changes to the GSN youth workforce development program in order to facilitate increased participant success outcomes. After reviewing and confirming the analysis presented in the taxonomy, GP-1 said, *this looks pretty thorough*, and specifically pointed out monetary changes that could be made to address some of the barriers. For instance, GP-1 suggested financial assistance could alleviate multiple circumstantial barriers. *If Goodwill is able to **fund people with money** for that*, referring to Uber and the corresponding barriers of location and transportation, *that would be **very helpful***. With regards to participant's health as associated with medical needs, the program could make a greater difference if it would **assist with medication costs**.

Real experiences were another change GP-1 suggested. Since passing the driver's test was a challenge for many of the participants, GP-1 stated, *I think it would be very helpful in the area for passing a driver's test if Goodwill would be able to **provide participation courses** in some of our big facilities just on driving*. Later in the conversation, GP-1 added, *If Goodwill was able to afford vehicles and **give people in-person training**--that would be very helpful for a lot of people*. Providing driver's education that is not only informative, but also allows for real driving experiences would mitigate the challenges associated with transportation and participants obtaining their driver's licenses.

The breadth and depth of particular courses was a third recommended change. Referring to a financial literacy course within the program, GP-1 said, *I wish it was **a little more extensive**. I wish it was **a little more in depth***. Similarly, when sharing about the program's job readiness courses, GP-1 expressed, *Those courses were very helpful, but I think in a lot of cases they should be **a little more extensive and more in depth***.

GP-1 perceived the program could make significant improvements by providing financial assistance to participants based on their particular needs. It would also enhance the program by offering youth opportunities to experience real-life scenarios, as opposed to only providing instruction about them. Lastly, extending the courses offered within the program and providing richer information therein would make positive impact as well.

GSN participant two.

The same procedure was followed with a second GSN participant (GP-2). GP-2 spoke specifically about two categorical barriers, education and circumstances. When discussing the knowledge needed to overcome some of the barriers, GP-2 referred to understanding the importance of personal health. Correspondingly, the necessary actions were communication and personal healthcare. Changes GP-2 believed would make a difference were related to transportation and participant engagement. Figure 4.3 is a final thematic map of the interview with GP-2.

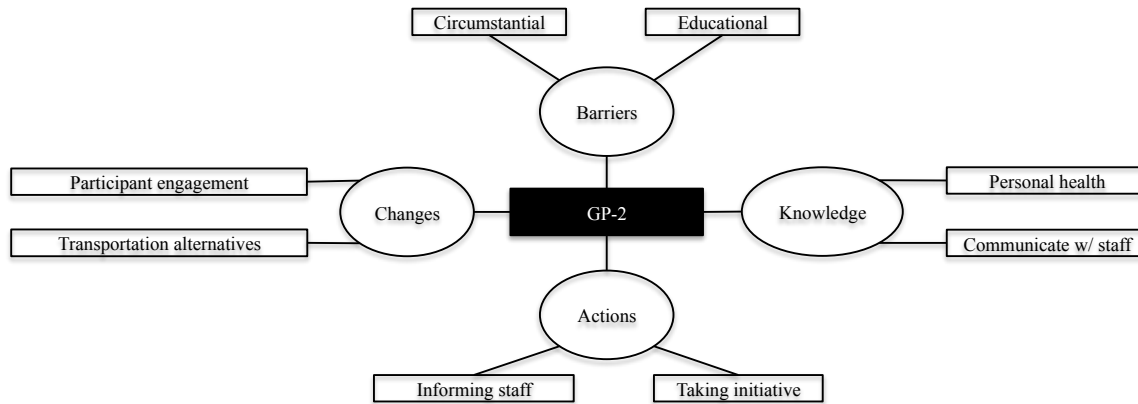


Figure 4.3. Final thematic map of interview with GSN participant two.

Barriers. After showing GP-2 the unfolding matrix (Appendix F) and the taxonomic analysis of barriers (Figure 4.1), GP-2 stated, *It looked good*. The participant was then prompted to share about personal barriers faced during GP-2’s experience in the program and accordingly shared, *Just me **being sick, that was the hardest one** and **missing school** and having to make that up in adult high school*. When it came to obstacles peers faced, GP-2 talked about moving and the challenges of adjusting to a new living environment, as evidenced by the comment, ***It’s just hard to adjust when you move. Getting used to a new place and meeting different people. It’s hard***. The circumstantial barriers associated with illness and transition, along with the educational barrier of adjusting academically, were noteworthy challenges GP-2 and others faced.

Knowledge. GP-2 was subsequently presented with the visual taxonomy of knowledge and asked to share about the information GP-2 possessed to overcome a particular barrier. GP-2 shared, *Definitely **knowing my medical history** and actually **taking care of myself** and all that. That was a hard time for me*. This suggested it was imperative that individuals coming into the program be knowledgeable of their own personal well-being in order to overcome challenges related to their health.

In order for staff to provide participants increased knowledge for navigating their barriers, GP-2 said, *If you **tell them the problems that you have**, if there's a way that they can help you out in some sort of way.* GP-2 believed *it would be a lot easier for them* if participants communicated openly with staff about their personal challenges. In turn, staff could understand their individual obstacles and with that knowledge, staff could either address the issue and/or make a referral for appropriate services, which address the participant's needs.

Actions. After reviewing and confirming the actions taxonomic analysis, GP-2 shared about taking action to address personal medical issues. GP-2 said, *Definitely **going to the hospital and finding out what was going on with me and getting more knowledge and researching on how it happened and what I could do to keep it stable**, in a way.* Without disclosing the personal health issue, GP-2 suggested taking the initiative to see a physician and doing research was paramount to overcoming health related barriers.

GP-2 believed GSN could motivate more and more youth to take the necessary actions to overcome barriers by having them ***write down what happened to them and their barriers, and when people in the ELITE program read it... they can give you ideas and people to talk too.*** Doing so would allow staff to possess the necessary knowledge about unique barriers individual's experience. Staff could then determine whether they were qualified to assist the participant or inform them of resources available to them.

Changes. A final review for the interviewee included a taxonomy of changes the program could make to increase participant success. Observing the noted recommendation within the taxonomy related to the barrier of transportation, GP-2 confirmed, *The **shuttle bus** would be nice.* When asked a follow-up question about what else GSN could implement beyond what was already captured in the taxonomy, GP-2 stated, *That's kind of hard, because Goodwill does a lot.*

Nonetheless, the researcher encouraged the interviewee to consider what additional changes the program could make to facilitate success for participants. GP-2 then recommended, ***Check-up more on the people that they help.***

Although GP-2 suggested GSN provided ample services to participants, following up on participants who experience setbacks would make a positive difference. From GP-2's perspective, ongoing participant engagement and providing a shuttle bus for transporting participants would increase participant success rates.

A Conceptual Model of Participant Success for GSN

The data, which emerged from the focus group and interviews, is reflected in the conceptual model of participant success for GSN (Figure 4.4). The OSY (out-of-school youth) arrow reflects a participant entering the GSN program. The squares represent the geography of categorical barriers confronting participants throughout participation. The sizes of the squares reflect the scale of each categorical barrier. In other words, the least amount of barriers confronting GSN participants were associated with occupational barriers. There were two mental health barriers; five educational; and nine circumstantial identified by GSN participants and represented by the largest square.

The squares are divided in half by a dashed line; plus (+) and minus (-) signs represent the positive and negative experiences encountered during the program. The subsequent ovals represent the varying levels of knowledge, actions, and changes that increase or decrease based on the individual participant and whether or not modifications are implemented. For instance, possessing the appropriate level of knowledge and taking the necessary actions to overcome barriers leads to successful outcomes. Similarly, changes to the program can also influence positive exits.

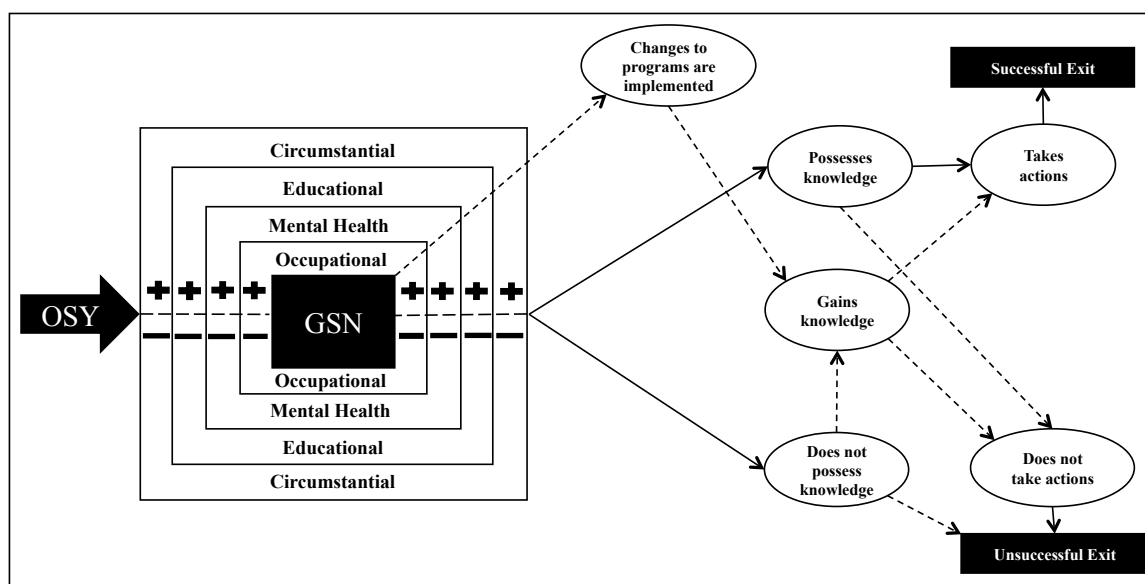


Figure 4.4. Conceptual model of participant success for GSN WIA out-of-school youth workforce development program.

On the other hand, a participant may not possess the necessary knowledge to navigate a particular barrier and is thus faced with one of two options. One option is to unsuccessfully exit the program; the other option is to obtain the necessary knowledge for overcoming the barrier via interaction with other peers, staff, and/or the way changes are implemented to provide information. However, once obtained, the participant must take the necessary actions for overcoming the barrier or otherwise exit unsuccessfully due to a lack of action. In addition, minimal to no changes to the program can lead to unsuccessful exits.

HELP of Southern Nevada

HELP, which stands for Housing, Emergency Services, Life Skills and Prevention, of Southern Nevada (HSN) is a local non-profit organization providing a myriad of services to over 100,000 unduplicated individuals year-after-year (“Welcome,” 2017). These populations include the economically disadvantaged, individuals facing homelessness, and people in crisis (“Welcome,” 2017). Their support for these youth and adults involve direct services, a variety of

trainings, and referrals to community resources designed to assist those seeking self-sufficiency within the local community (“Our Mission,” 2017).

The HSN WIA youth workforce development program is delivered through the organization’s Work Opportunities Readiness Center (W.O.R.C.), which provides employment and training services to low-income, at-risk youth, between the ages of 17-21 years old (“W.O.R.C.,” 2017). Services include, but are not limited to, case management, vocational counseling, supportive services, occupational skills training, work experiences, and personal development. Accordingly, the program’s goals for participants involve work readiness, attainment of educational and occupational certificates, and placement in unsubsidized employment, postsecondary education, and/or advanced training (“W.O.R.C.,” 2017).

Workforce Connections’ data management system provided the following information for HSN’s youth program. During program year 2014, HSN served a total of 103 WIA out-of-school youth (see Table 3.2). Of those, the data system reported 52% African-American, 40% Hispanic/Latino, 40% Caucasian, 37% Biracial/Multiracial, 3% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 3% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 1% Asian. Ethnic demographics were self-reported, resulting in an overlap among ethnic representation. In other words, a participant may have indicated they were African-American, Caucasian, and Biracial/Multiracial. Similarly, the data management system also indicated participants coming from multiple backgrounds as determined by the WIA. Ninety-nine percent were identified as basic skills deficient, 25% were homeless/runaway, 15% were youth offenders, 13% were pregnant/parenting, and 1% were foster youth. HSN’s placement outcomes reported 76% in unsubsidized employment and 9% in postsecondary education.

Barriers Identified By HSN Participants

Seven youth participated in the HSN focus group. Five labeled themselves as African-American and two as Biracial/Multiracial. All seven were considered basic skills deficient. Three also reported being homeless/runaway, one had a youth offender background, and four were in need of additional assistance. Three were placed in unsubsidized employment and three were placed in postsecondary education following program participation. One participant was placed in both employment and postsecondary education upon completion.

These seven HSN participants identified nineteen barriers in response to the initial question (see Appendix F), which were also separated as external versus internal barriers. The former included four circumstantial barriers, one educational barrier, six social barriers, and three delinquency barriers. Mental health, the only internal barrier, included five particular barriers. Figure 4.5 specifies the particular barriers related to each categorical barrier.

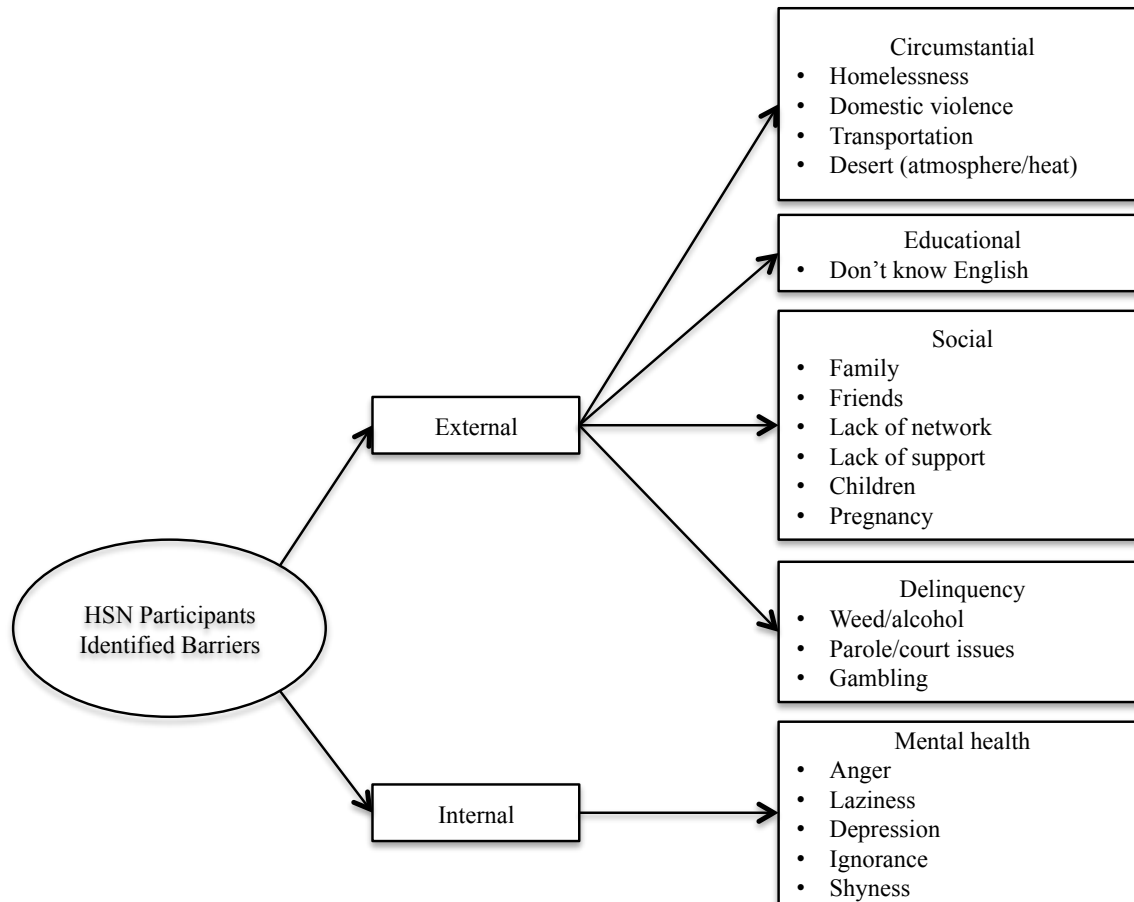


Figure 4.5. HSN Taxonomy of Barriers Identified by Participants.

Circumstantial barriers.

Lack of stable housing arrangements and/or threatening living environments were barriers confronting HSN participants. Lack of transportation was another circumstantial barrier for those in the program. A final challenging circumstance they faced during participation was living in the *desert* and having to deal with the Las Vegas temperatures, especially during the summer months.

Educational barriers.

The barrier of not knowing English stood alone as the only noted educational impediment to success. However, it also stood apart from the other groupings and therefore warranted its own

educational category. Although the members of the focus group all knew English, they recognized the academic challenges faced by their peers who were English language learners.

Social barriers.

About a third of the barriers, six of the 19, were socially related. Participants encountered negative influences from *family* and *friends*, and the *lack of support* therein. A *lack of* [having a] *network* also posed obstacles since many of them admitted the need for support during their involvement in the HSN program. Beyond that, familial obligations such as taking care of their children or being pregnant during participation posed its share of difficulties as well.

Delinquency barriers.

Substance abuse with *weed and alcohol* was the very first barrier mentioned by the focus group members. The participant with a criminal background also suggested dealing with *parole and court issues* as an inconvenience during participation. The others confirmed likewise for their peers that had similar backgrounds. Living in Las Vegas also presented challenges with regard to *gambling* for some of the participants.

Mental health barriers.

Many of the participants mentioned struggling with *anger* when it came to interpersonal dynamics. Although they suggested *laziness* and *depression* as two separate barriers, they shared the view that the latter bred the former. Many participants also expressed overcoming *ignorance* and *shyness* in order for individuals to progress. Otherwise, they believed a lack of soliciting varying viewpoints and speaking up would hold them back from successfully completing the program and experiencing what it had to offer.

Alignment of Subcategories for HSN Exemplars of Knowledge, Actions, and Changes for Overcoming Categorical Barriers

The following alignment stems from relationships between HSN categorical barriers and knowledge, actions, and changes exemplars. It demonstrates the knowledge and actions of participants for overcoming barriers. This also illustrates the changes HSN should make to increase success outcomes. Numbers in the parentheses refer to exemplars revealed in the tabular taxonomic tables in the following section.

Circumstantial barriers.

Knowledge. HSN knowledge exemplars revealed five subcategories of knowledge for overcoming circumstantial barriers (Table 4.13). As noted earlier, HSN had a particular focus on serving homeless youth. As a result, participants believed such individuals, including those dealing with domestic violence, struggled with a sense of positive self-worth and therefore needed to know they were still valuable human beings (exemplars 4.13.1-2). In addition, participants who overcame their circumstantial barriers knew they needed to take advantage of the programmatic assistance available during participation (exemplars 4.13.3-6). Furthermore, and as much as possible, they avoided situations which hindered their progress during participation (exemplars 4.13.7-11 and 4.13.14-15)

Table 4.13

HSN participant's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming circumstantial barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars	
Circumstantial	Knowing to have a positive self-worth	4.13.1	They are still human beings
		4.13.2	You're not a bum
	Knowing assistance is available	4.13.3	You can ask for help... there is help
		4.13.4	There are safe havens to get away to
		4.13.5	There is counseling
		4.13.6	There are places to go for bus passes
	Knowing to avoid certain situations	4.13.7	You don't have to be homeless
		4.13.8	Avoid it
		4.13.9	It's not OK
		4.13.10	To get out
		4.13.11	It's a life choice
	Knowing to be prepared	4.13.12	Time management
		4.13.13	To be prepared for heat – water/food
	Knowing the impact of certain circumstances	4.13.14	Can lead to laziness/depression
		4.13.15	Aware of surroundings

Actions. Table 4.14 shows four subcategories of actions based on exemplars for overcoming circumstantial barriers. Successful HSN participants possessed and pursued a positive picture of their future to overcome their negative circumstances (exemplars 4.14.1-3). This oftentimes included, setting appropriate boundaries and seeking assistance/resources to avoid or mitigate harmful influences (exemplars 4.14.4-12).

Table 4.14

HSN participant's subcategories of actions for overcoming circumstantial barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Circumstantial	Developing and pursuing a vision for your life	4.14.1 Get a job
		4.14.2 Get self out of homeless mindset
		4.14.3 Make steps towards success
	Setting boundaries	4.14.4 Stay to self
		4.14.5 Get away
		4.14.6 Stay away from person
	Seeking assistance/resources	4.14.7 Call resources
		4.14.8 Seek help
		4.14.9 Call 911
		4.14.10 Go to safe haven
		4.14.11 Ask case manager for bus passes
		4.14.12 Ask friend/family for ride
	Being prepared	4.14.13 Carry extra water
		4.14.14 Be covered up – clothes

Changes. There were three subcategories of changes, which would help HSN participants with overcoming their circumstantial barriers (Table 4.15). Providing relevant real-time resources (exemplars 4.15.1-3) and specific courses/groups (exemplars 4.15.4-5) to address the unique circumstances of participants would help alleviate some of the circumstantial barriers they face. Also, staff needed to be available and accessible beyond the traditional hours of 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to assist participants dealing with circumstantial issues outside the designated hours of the program (exemplar 4.15.6).

Table 4.15

HSN participant's subcategories of changes for overcoming circumstantial barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars
Circumstantial	Providing relevant resources	4.15.1 Have a list of resources
		4.15.2 Have a shelter
		4.15.3 Provide bus books – i.e., transit guide
	Providing specific courses/groups	4.15.4 Provide domestic violence programs/classes
		4.15.5 Women's groups
	Staff availability	4.15.6 Be available

Educational barriers.

Knowledge, Actions and Changes. *Don't know English* was the only educational barrier mentioned by the participants. However, due to time constraints there were no exemplars captured for knowledge, actions, and changes, during the HSN dialogical grouping. Therefore, no subcategories were developed for addressing this barrier for HSN participants.

Social barriers.

Knowledge. With regard to HSN social barriers, analysis for knowledge exemplars revealed four subcategories displayed in Table 4.16. Successful HSN participants knew they needed to set healthy boundaries and possess a positive vision for their social lives, especially when it came to mitigating the negative influences of family and friends (exemplars 4.16.1-3, 9-10). As a result, participants knew they needed to seek out support from peers and staff within the program and/or positive influences outside the program (exemplars 4.16.4-8). Participants also understood the value of having realistic expectations about relationships during their participation (exemplars 4.16.11-18).

Table 4.16

HSN participant's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming social barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars	
Social	Knowing to set healthy social boundaries	4.16.1	Love from a distance
		4.16.2	It's OK to let people go
		4.16.3	It's alright to say no
	Knowing to pursue assistance	4.16.4	Hard to get through without others
		4.16.5	You deserve help
		4.16.6	Library is a good resource
		4.16.7	Someone will help
		4.16.8	There is program assistance
	Knowing to have a positive vision for your life	4.16.9	You can do it on your own... you are capable
		4.16.10	Door will open
	Knowing to be realistic about relationships	4.16.11	Cannot do work for you
		4.16.12	Can't rely on family
		4.16.13	Not always a positive outlet
		4.16.14	Family isn't always blood
		4.16.15	Some people are only in your life for a season
		4.16.16	Will not hold you back
		4.16.17	You're children are learning from you
		4.16.18	You will help your children

Actions. Table 4.17 reflects four subcategories of actions associated with social barriers.

In order to overcome the negative social influences from friends and family, successful HSN participants decided to set healthy boundaries regarding their social relationships (exemplars 4.17.1-5). Moreover, to avoid succumbing to those destructive influences, participants also pursued positive visions for their own futures (exemplars 4.17.6-9) and sought out support systems to reinforce them (exemplars 4.17.10-15).

Table 4.17

HSN participant's subcategories of actions for overcoming social barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Social	Setting healthy social boundaries	4.17.1 Separate self if you have to
		4.17.2 Don't always rely on them
		4.17.3 Keep/let go friends
		4.17.4 Change your number
		4.17.5 Don't care about what others think
	Developing a vision for your life	4.17.6 Spread your wings
		4.17.7 Motivate self
		4.17.8 Think about your future
		4.17.9 Find new solutions
	Seeking positive support systems	4.17.10 Find a caring friend
		4.17.11 Find a new group
		4.17.12 Join club/group
		4.17.13 Always ask/express self
		4.17.14 Seek help
		4.17.15 Bring kids with you
	Being persistent	4.17.16 Do research
		4.17.17 Be persistent
		4.17.18 Be dedicated

Changes. The changes associated with HSN's social barriers included three subcategories based on exemplars provided by participants (Table 4.18). Since participation in the program had the potential to negatively impact their external relationships, providing social activities for participants to develop healthy support systems within the program, would make a positive difference (exemplars 4.18.1-8). Beyond providing social activities and resources, the program could also mandate one-on-one meetings between staff and participants in order to address premature exits due to social barriers (exemplar 4.18.11).

Table 4.18

HSN participant's subcategories of changes for overcoming social barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars
Social	Providing social activities	4.18.1 Become a family
		4.18.2 Potlucks
		4.18.3 Opportunities to meet new friends
		4.18.4 Create opportunities for people to become friends with people in program
		4.18.5 Summer camp
		4.18.6 Hold get-togethers
		4.18.7 Network parties
		4.18.8 Encourage clients to speak to other clients
	Providing resources	4.18.9 Provide a play center/daycare center
		4.18.10 Guide for resources
	Expecting mandatory participant check-ins	4.18.11 Mandatory check-in meetings... if you need to

Delinquency barriers.

Knowledge. The analysis for HSN knowledge exemplars (Table 4.19) revealed four subcategories related to delinquency barriers. Successful HSN participants understood there were potential consequences associated with substance abuse and/or delinquent behaviors (exemplars 4.19.1-2). Rather than continuing to do either, they knew the importance of seeking assistance/alternatives to avoid the temptations (exemplars 4.19.3-4). Furthermore, participants knew possessing a positive vision about their futures (exemplar 4.19.5) and setting boundaries with regard to negative influences (exemplar 4.19.6) also helped mitigate the barriers associated with delinquency.

Table 4.19

HSN participant's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming delinquency barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars
Delinquency	Knowing their consequences	4.19.1 Can't get job if dirty 4.19.2 Easy to get arrested in Las Vegas
	Knowing to seek assistance/alternatives	4.19.3 Seek help 4.19.4 Not go to jail – fine
	Knowing to have a vision for your life	4.19.5 Can get through it
	Knowing to set boundaries	4.19.6 Cut people off

Actions. Table 4.20 shows ten action exemplars related to delinquency barriers. As a result, there were three subcategories of actions addressing these barriers. Whether the barrier to success was substance abuse and/or judicial issues, pursuing a positive vision for their lives (4.20.5-6) was the impetus behind seeking assistance/alternatives (exemplars 4.20.1-4) and/or avoiding delinquent behavior altogether (exemplars 4.20.7-10).

Table 4.20

HSN participant's subcategories of actions for overcoming delinquency barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Delinquency	Seeking assistance/alternatives	4.20.1 See a therapist/ counselor 4.20.2 Find a hobby 4.20.3 Ongoing communication w/ PO 4.20.4 Ask for community service instead of fine
	Pursuing a positive vision for your life	4.20.5 Think of long-term 4.20.6 Persistent
	Avoiding temptations	4.20.7 Stay away from bottle 4.20.8 Stop 4.20.9 Stay out of trouble 4.20.10 Stay in own lane

Changes. Table 4.21 reflects two subcategories of changes that could impact HSN participants overcoming their delinquency barriers. Participants with criminal backgrounds consequently face an uphill struggle seeking employment. Therefore, the program should pursue

resources particularly useful for ex-offenders (exemplars 4.21.1-4), instead of bunching them in with the general population of participants with no such backgrounds. Participants also recommended the program take on more of a developmental approach, as opposed to a regulatory and punitive approach, when dealing with the delinquency barriers of participants (exemplar 4.21.5).

Table 4.21

HSN participant's subcategories of changes for overcoming delinquency barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars
Delinquency	Providing ex-offender friendly resources	4.21.1 Links/connections with different organizations
		4.21.2 Provide list of employers that hire parolees
		4.21.3 Find legal services
		4.21.4 Group therapy
	Being lenient	4.21.5 Be lenient

Mental health barriers.

Knowledge. There were four subcategories derived from 30 exemplars of knowledge addressing mental health barriers (Table 4.22). Successful HSN participants realized there were negative consequences associated with mental health barriers going unaddressed (exemplars 4.22.1-9). These included effects on the present (exemplars 4.22.4, 7, and 9) and future (4.22.3, 5, and 8) well-being of participants.

However, instead of responding with despair, successful participants accepted their personal mental health problems (exemplars 4.22.10-13) and involved the support of others (exemplars 4.22.14-15). Furthermore, to avoid succumbing to the potential pitfalls of mental health barriers, successful participants understood the importance of personal growth and development (exemplars 4.22.20-30).

Table 4.22

HSN participant's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming mental health barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars
Mental Health	Knowing their consequences	4.22.1 Consequences are rarely positive
		4.22.2 Going to affect you more than other persons
		4.22.3 Serious consequences... escalates
		4.22.4 It's crippling
		4.22.5 Not get anywhere
		4.22.6 Lead to negative effects
		4.22.7 It's a serious problem
		4.22.8 Things won't change if you stay the same
		4.22.9 Takes a lot of energy
	Knowing to accept yourself	4.22.10 Things won't always go your way
		4.22.11 It's okay to be shy
		4.22.12 It's okay to be wrong
		4.22.13 Doesn't define you
	Knowing your not alone	4.22.14 Everyone is here for the same thing
		4.22.15 You're not alone
		4.22.16 Everyone goes through things
		4.22.17 You're not the only one
		4.22.18 Others are in the same position
		4.22.19 HELP cares
	Knowing the need for personal growth & development	4.22.20 To be open-minded
		4.22.21 Don't know everything
		4.22.22 To be open to learning
		4.22.23 It's a growing process... takes time
		4.22.24 You can overcome
		4.22.25 Nothing is going to be handed to you
		4.22.26 It's a mental thing
		4.22.27 It's a personal problem
		4.22.28 Program will help you if you help yourself
		4.22.29 There will be constructive criticism
		4.22.30 You might need help

Actions. Table 4.23 reflects four subcategories of actions addressing mental health barriers. Successful participants had a positive vision about their futures regardless of their mental health barriers (exemplars 4.23.25-28). This inspired them to set mental boundaries to avoid being psychologically paralyzed by the barriers (exemplars 4.23.1-7). It also encouraged them to seek alternative outlets to replace any potentially destructive behaviors associated with their mental health issues. Lastly, successful participants made sure to communicate with their peers and/or staff when they were struggling internally (exemplars 4.23.29-32).

Table 4.23

HSN participant's subcategories of actions for overcoming mental health barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Mental Health	Setting mental boundaries	4.23.1 Think self into positive mood
		4.23.2 See good in everything
		4.23.3 Be real with self
		4.23.4 Be tolerant... have respect
		4.23.5 Think positive
		4.23.6 Don't jump to conclusions
		4.23.7 Don't worry about what others think
	Seeking alternative outlets	4.23.8 Find positive outlet
		4.23.9 Find stress reducer
		4.23.10 Go to classes
		4.23.11 Go to gym/workout/exercise
		4.23.12 Get a hobby
		4.23.13 A person to look up to
		4.23.14 Stay away from lazy people
		4.23.15 See a therapist
		4.23.16 Talk to family
		4.23.17 Get a pet
		4.23.18 Find an outlet
		4.23.19 Go out more
		4.23.20 Hobby
		4.23.21 Get active
		4.23.22 Seek counseling
		4.23.23 Go to school
		4.23.24 Be a guest speaker
	Having a positive vision about your future	4.23.25 Think about future
		4.23.26 Have something to strive for
		4.23.27 Set goals
		4.23.28 Think outside the box
	Communicating with others	4.23.29 Let people know what makes you upset
		4.23.30 Listen
		4.23.31 Open your mouth
		4.23.32 Be open to criticism

Changes. Table 4.24 reveals two subcategories of changes HSN could implement to increase efforts with helping participants overcome mental health barriers. Providing courses and doing activities that specifically address certain mental health barriers would make a positive difference for participants in overcoming them (exemplars 4.24.1-5). In addition, staff could increase its breadth and depth of engagement with participants by being available beyond the typical work day (exemplars 4.24.6-10).

Table 4.24

HSN participant's subcategories of changes for overcoming mental health barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars
Mental Health	Providing specific courses/activities	4.24.1 Offer anger management courses/program
		4.24.2 Exciting activities/events – Don't make things boring
		4.24.3 Provide outlets
		4.24.4 Encourage interaction
		4.24.5 Provide volunteer opportunities for growth
	Engaging the participants	4.24.6 Phone calls
		4.24.7 Give suggestions/ideas
		4.24.8 Case managers/staff express they care
		4.24.9 Hold their hand – Parent figures
		4.24.10 Mentors

Individual Perceptions of HSN Barriers, Knowledge, Actions and Changes

For the purposes of triangulating the data collected and analyzed for the HELP of Southern Nevada youth workforce development program, two focus group participants participated in individual interviews. Each interviewee was reminded about the purpose of the study, the process of collecting data, and then presented with the data collected within the focus group's unfolding matrix. The following HSN interviews reflected their additional perspectives about navigating the geography of barriers faced during participation in HSN's program. This section also presents final thematic maps derived from the process of analysis described in chapter three.

HSN participant one.

In response to the questions in the interview protocol listed in Appendix E and after review of the focus group taxonomy (see Figure 4.5), this participant (HP-1) referred to three categorical barriers during the discussion. During the knowledge portion of the interview, HP-1 suggested it was important to know the need for a personal vision. Actions included personal growth and development. Lastly, HP-1 suggested a supportive culture as a change. Figure 4.6 is

a final thematic map, which incorporates the participant's views on barriers, knowledge, actions and changes.

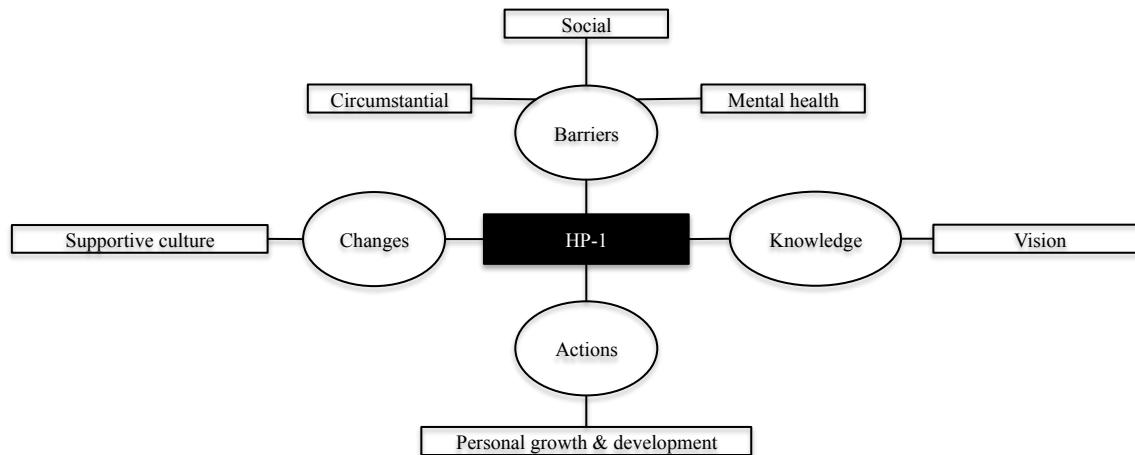


Figure 4.6. Final thematic map of interview with HSN participant one.

Barriers. HP-1 was initially presented with a visual taxonomy of the five categorical barriers, which included 19 particular barriers. After reviewing the taxonomy, HP-1 expressed, *Seems about right. There's a few things that I'd like to mix into each other.* When asked to provide an example, HP-1 said, *Weed and alcohol can go under social, because it's glorified. It's something that if you don't do this then you're not normal. You're not like everybody else.* Similarly, HP-1 expressed, *Domestic violence can also be grouped into social.*

Although the researcher had categorized *weed and alcohol* under the delinquency category and *domestic violence* within the circumstantial category, from HP-1's perspective, both these barriers were also considered social barriers. This input suggested some barriers could be considered cross-categorical and should not be relegated to one particular category of barriers.

HP-1 was then asked to share about a specific barrier HP-1 and/or other participants in the program had faced during participation. HP-1 discussed a circumstantial barrier that was shared by another participant as well.

*The one with me at first was **homelessness**. It's hard finding job when you don't have access to a shower, or stuff like that. I've seen a few other people, like a friend of mine who was at the shelter I'm staying at. **We were on the streets together at the same time.** We didn't meet each other, but we were still both out there.*

HP-1 also faced substance abuse, and shared, *This was a small issue with me; **addiction**, stuff like that. I managed to stop before I got too out of control.* HP-1 also struggled with excessive drinking during participation and said, ***I did mess up with alcohol a couple of times...** That was the mess up I needed to do before I actually finally managed to focus.*

Besides the barriers of addiction and alcohol, HP-1 also mentioned, ***I'm not exactly ready for adulthood.*** Whether the participant had implied being equipped mentally, emotionally, and/or professionally, it was not further explored. Regardless, HP-1 suggested this lack of preparation for adulthood as an additional barrier not mentioned during the focus group.

Knowledge. After reviewing the taxonomy of barriers and sharing about personal barriers experienced, HP-1 reviewed the taxonomic analysis of knowledge exemplars. Thereafter, the researcher asked HP-1 to share about knowledge the participant possessed to overcome a certain barrier. HP-1 referred to the circumstance of being homeless and said, *What really helped me with overcoming homelessness is **I knew my own potential. I knew I could find a better life for myself.*** This participant suggested the importance of knowing to have a personal vision regardless of challenging circumstances, and in particular, while being homeless. When asked to elaborate, HP-1 expressed:

Honestly, I just got tired of eating out of trashcans. I'm not much for fancy things like really expensive things, or going out and treating myself. I'd be perfectly fine just a nice

apartment, being able to eat 3 times a day. I was getting tired of having to lie, cheat and steal to do that, and so I went out and I tried to find any type of help I could.

With regard to the discussion of knowledge, HP-1 was then asked what the program could do to provide increased knowledge to individuals in order to help them overcome their myriad of barriers. In response, HP-1 said, *I really don't know*. Nonetheless, HP-1 was encouraged to revisit the question if anything came to mind as the interview continued.

Actions. HP-1 examined the actions taxonomy and was provided the opportunity to offer inputs, comments, etc. In response to whether or not there were any suggested changes for the taxonomic analysis, HP-1 said, *Nothing that stands out right now*. The interviewee was encouraged to revisit the taxonomy if anything eventually stood out as the discussion about the actions continued.

HP-1 was asked to speak to an example of actions personally taken to overcome a particular barrier. The participant responded with:

*Another barrier of mine, a major one was **depression**. That one I actively sought out help. It was getting to the point where I was thinking of ending my life, stuff like that. I went to a mental hospital and checked myself in, got myself on medication, and I've been leveled out ever since.*

To overcome the mental health barrier of addiction, HP-1 conveyed, *I separated myself from the people who were around me who were constantly getting high, getting drunk. If I couldn't physically separate myself, I mentally separated myself*. The commitment to ongoing personal growth and development took physically and/or mentally separating self from the negative influences surrounding the participant in order to overcome the barrier of substance abuse.

When asked about what else HSN could do to facilitate participants' actions to overcoming their respective barriers, HP-1 suggested, ***Put more information out there that there's programs that can help you get over it. That's all I can think of.*** According to HP-1, providing additional information about programmatic resources beyond what HSN had to offer would increase participant success outcomes.

Changes. HP-1 reviewed the changes taxonomy and commented, ***Maybe on depression, add provide resources, like the different organizations.*** In view of that, it would be increasingly beneficial to participants if HSN provided a list of referable organizations that can provide resources assisting individuals dealing with the various barriers, and in particular, depression. HP-1 also confirmed the recommendation that the program provide *get-togethers and network parties*. HP-1 elaborated with the following personal example:

This job I have now, it's really a good job. I'm in it because someone I met at the shelter. If somebody hears about a job that's not for them, and they tell you, Oh, this place is hiring. Maybe that's your dream job. Things like that.

HP-1 believed the emphasis on a supportive culture would significantly influence participant success outcomes. The interviewee's concluding comments were:

It requires a bit of a support system of your peers as well, because if you're seeing them being successful then that's how you get into a positive environment. That's how you get surrounded by positive people, because they're striving for the same thing you are. They're striving to be successful. Even if they have different barriers ... If you meet these people then you understand they're going through the same stuff you are, and if they can do it you can do it.

A supportive culture that bred positive reinforcement helped HP-1 navigate the geography of barriers experienced during participation. Moreover, HP-1 suggested such a culture would perpetuate an increasing amount of participants in overcoming their distinctive barriers as well.

HSN participant two.

The second interview with another HSN participant (HP-2) was conducted. HP-2 reviewed the unfolding matrix based on the data collected from the HSN participant focus group and after being asked whether or not the qualitative survey captured the information discussed, HP-2 expressed, *I think it does*.

HP-2 referred to barriers associated with delinquency, education, occupation, and mental health. Awareness and vision were themes derived from the discussion about knowledge needed to overcome barriers. Similar to HP-1, actions associated with personal growth and development led to overcoming barriers. Changes recommended by HP-2 related to setting boundaries and encouraging participant engagement.

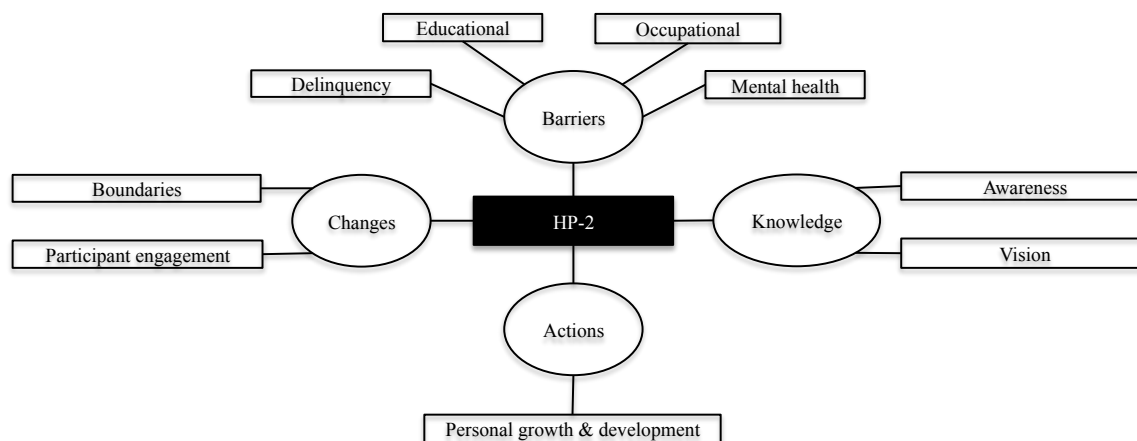


Figure 4.7. Final thematic map of interview with HSN participant two.

Barriers. HP-2 took time to reflect on the barriers taxonomy and was asked whether or not the categorical barriers seemed accurate or should be modified in any way. HP-2 responded with, *I think it's a nice graph put together... I think it does*, referring to it accurately capturing what was discussed during the focus group.

HP-2 was subsequently asked to share about barriers personally experienced during participation in the program. HP-2 shared, *Probably **education**. I'm going to go with education*. In reference to personal challenges with education, the participant indicated a mental health barrier. HP-2 admitted, ***Laziness**... Yeah, I'm just lazy*. Continuing, the interviewee illustrated how laziness was a barrier:

*You always have those people around you that tell you to get up and further your education. You're lazy to the fact that you can go to school and find out more information about what it is that you want, what course you want to study or whatever it is you want to do. **Me, not getting up and taking that effort to go to school and to find out something to further my education and my well-being, my life. That's just lazy.***

HP-2 was asked to share about significant barriers peers encountered as they went through the program. *Probably **drugs***, HP-2 responded. The participant followed up with saying, *I think it's a **big challenge for a lot of people***. HP-2 also said *unemployment*, but did not initially elaborate. Instead HP-2 mentioned *education* and persisted with sharing:

***Basic things that are going to help you in the future to succeed.** Because you don't want to be 20 years old and then you look... then later on five or ten years later, you're still working at a minimum wage odd job.*

Laziness and education were barriers HP-2 perceived as vital to experiencing economic stability, and in turn, a moderate quality of life following program participation.

Knowledge. HP-2 reviewed the researcher's taxonomic analysis of knowledge and commented, *I think you did a good job.* Affirming the analysis, the participant added:

*It's very overwhelming looking at this stuff because **a lot of it pertains to probably everything people look at this graph and some of this, most of this, pertains to them.** It's like, what do you call it. **It just makes you think about where you are in life.***

HP-2 suggested that although overwhelming, the overall analysis was beneficial to getting individuals to think introspectively and develop awareness.

Along those lines, HP-2 was probed to share about a specific example of knowledge the participant possessed to overcome a certain barrier. Referring to laziness, HP-2 said, *You have to look at yourself and **you have to want to do better for yourself.*** Additionally, HP-2 expressed:

No matter what situation you're in, you can get out of it... There is resources. Just resources, just take advantage of resources and looking at opportunities. If there's a door open, take advantage. If somebody offers you money to go to school, take advantage of that, they have all these huge programs out here and stuff. Take advantage of that. Don't be lazy or something.

According to HP-2, an awareness of self and resources, along with knowing to have a personal vision, were knowledge themes implied during the discussion that would help participants overcome their multitude of personal barriers.

As far as what HELP could do to enhance participants' knowledge, HP-2 suggested, *You have to realize **you can't baby people.** If you offer someone help and they don't take it, then that's their problem.* In other words, staff needed to understand and accept there was only so much knowledge they could provide and only so much they could do for participants. The onus

should be upon participants for taking initiative to gain the necessary knowledge to overcome their particular barriers. Otherwise, they consequently limit themselves.

Actions. The second taxonomy HP-2 reviewed was regarded actions. After taking a few moments to assess the taxonomy of actions, the interviewee stated, *I think it's great, I don't think you need to change anything.* When prompted to discuss a time when the participant took a certain action to overcome a personal barrier to success, HP-2 shared:

*I'm going to go back to school because education is important. So what I did was I got up and I said hey, I don't want to work a 9:00 to 5:00 job in the future so I'm just going to go down to the school and see how I can better myself, my situation... **I stopped being lazy and I stopped making excuses for myself. Once you stop having excuses, you'll do better for yourself. You just have to get up and do it.***

It was evident from this participant's perspective that in order to overcome personal challenges, a commitment to personal growth and development was a necessity.

In order for HSN to assist more young adults with taking the necessary actions to overcome their barriers, participant engagement was critical. For instance, HP-2 conveyed:

*People hate confrontation so I think **confronting a person about the problem. If you confront a person about a problem, then that's when they can really sit down and think about it and take action.***

Although HP-2 was suggesting the program be more confrontational regarding participant's barriers to success, it was important the staff also set boundaries. As an example, and when member-checking about the staff being confrontational, HP-2 said, *But **not getting too personal, personally involved.** Of course, you have to **keep everything professional** but you're not going to ask somebody about their life story.* HP-2 proposed a balance between staff being too personable

and keeping confrontation about barriers professional with participants. HP-2 finished the conversation about participant engagement with what HSN could do to stimulate participants taking action and suggested, *When you confront a person... I think that's when they start realizing it and you start changing.*

Changes. HP-2 assessed the taxonomy of changes concerning what the program could do to improve participant success outcomes. After review, and with the goal of participant success in mind, HP-2 was asked to suggest any additional changes. Once again, participant engagement came up. More specifically, HP-2 expressed, *Not give up on its clients. **Continuously contact and keep in touch.** Contact that person. **See how they're doing and just not to give up.***

Elaborating on the concepts of participant engagement and boundaries, HP-2 said:

*A lot of people face a lot of problems and sometimes it might be hard to contact someone, get through to someone that you're trying to help them. Basically, what **I was saying not give up is continuously, not personally get involved, but continuously try to help that person.** Because you don't know what they're dealing with.*

In concluding the interview HP-2 was asked to provide final comments prior to completing the interview. HP-2 shared, *I think **education is very important** and without education, you can't go far.* Once again, the interviewee emphasized the need for the program to reinforce the importance of education.

A Conceptual Model of Participant Success for HSN

The data from the HSN focus group and interviews provided information leading to the development of a HSN conceptual model of participant success, which includes five categorical barriers. The HSN model (not pictured) shares three of the same categorical barriers, which includes mental health (5 barriers), circumstantial (4 barriers), and educational (1 barrier), as the

GSN model (see Figure 4.4). The HSN model additionally includes social (6 barriers) and delinquency (3 barriers) categorical barriers. The subsequent explanation of the HSN conceptual model of participant success follows suit with that of the GSN model (explained on pps. 96-97).

YouthBuild Las Vegas

Funding for YouthBuild comes from the United States Department of Labor (DOL), which receives an annual appropriation from Congress for YouthBuild programs nationwide (“U.S. Department of Labor Youthbuild,” 2017). Local programs are funded through a competitive process that emphasizes performance and places a priority on serving low-income communities (“U.S. Department of Labor Youthbuild,” 2017).

YouthBuild Las Vegas (YBLV) was established when the Southern Nevada local workforce development board received its initial DOL YouthBuild funding in 2009. It has since received three consecutive funding awards, totaling \$1.1 million per award. The grant covers two years of programming with nine-twelve months of follow-up support for approximately 30 eligible youth (e.g., foster youth, homeless youth, adjudicated youth, etc.).

In alignment with the U.S. Department of Labor objectives, YBLV is a comprehensive youth and community development program (“Division of Youth Services – YouthBuild Information,” 2017). It simultaneously addresses several core issues facing low-income communities: education, housing, and jobs. The local program also addresses the status of unemployed young men and women between the ages of 18-24 years old, who have dropped out of school and facing barriers to employment and/or education. Participants in the program work towards their high school diploma or its equivalency, while learning vocational skills by building or refurbishing low-income houses. Furthermore, individuals are provided hands-on training,

classroom instruction, opportunities to improve the community, supportive services, assistance in finding and maintaining employment, and developing leadership skills and abilities.

For program year 2014, the Department of Labor's YouthBuild Management Information System reported that YBLV served a total of 31 disconnected youth (see Table 3.2). The data system indicated the following participant demographic characteristics: 45% were African-American; 36% were Hispanic/Latino; 10% were Biracial/Multiracial; 7% were Caucasian; and 3% were Asian. As determined by the WIA, 87% were basic skills deficient, 32.3% pregnant and/or having children, 26% homeless/runaway, and 23% youth offenders. These percentages may reflect duplication in the reporting. Moreover, 100% of YBLV participants were considered in need of additional assistance as determined by WIA. The cohort had a placement of 65% in unsubsidized employment and 16% in postsecondary education.

Barriers Identified by YBLV Participants

From among the 31 YBLV participants described above, six participated in a focus group; three were African-American and three were Hispanic/Latino. Three were basic skills deficient, one was homeless/runaway, and two were parents. Following participation in YBLV, four were successfully placed in unsubsidized employment, one in postsecondary education, and one participant was placed in both.

These six participants identified eighteen barriers faced by the participants in the YouthBuild Las Vegas program (see Appendix G). External categorical barriers included circumstantial, educational, occupational, social, and delinquency. The only internal categorical barrier was mental health. Each categorical barrier associated with corresponding exemplars are reflected in Figure 4.8.

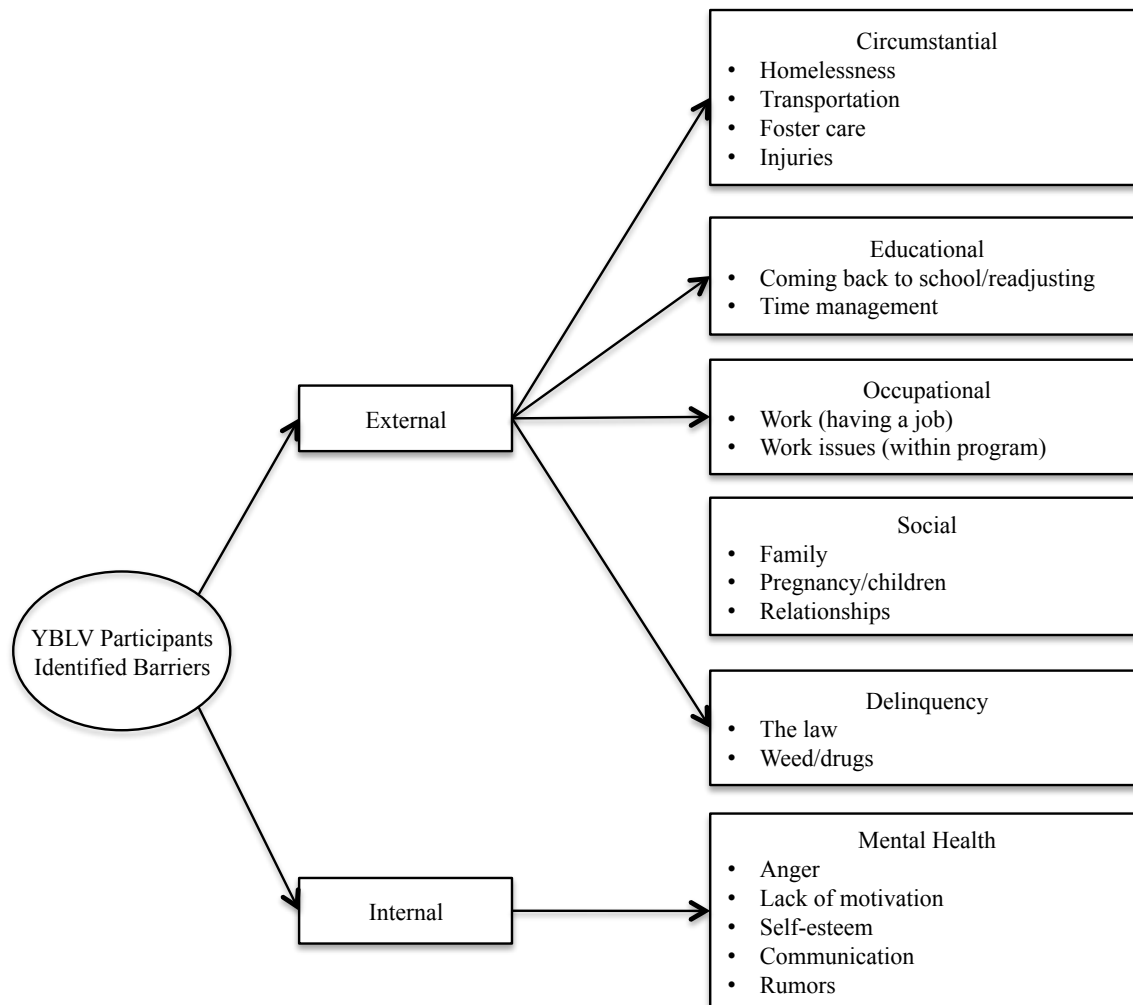


Figure 4.8. YBLV Taxonomy of Barriers Identified by Participants.

Circumstantial barriers.

A lack of permanent residency, whether via homelessness or as a result of being a foster care youth, were circumstantial barriers threatening YBLV participant success. Getting to and from program participation were also barriers. During participation, injuries effected whether or not participants could successfully complete the required work experience component.

Educational barriers.

Since all the participants were high school dropouts prior to enrollment, reengaging in their education and adjusting to its rigor were notable educational barriers. Although time

management was in and of itself a challenge, YBLV participants also specifically related it to their educational barriers. So whether it was returning to school or managing their lifestyles while in school, participants were faced with educational barriers.

Occupational barriers.

The YBLV program offered participants a stipend while participating in its vocational training component. However, in some cases, the stipend was insufficient for participants to fulfill their financial obligations. Therefore, some participants worked part-time jobs in addition to program participation, a barrier to success.

Another occupational barrier was interpersonal conflicts at the program's training worksite. In other words, some participants didn't get along with each other and consequently faced challenging working dynamics.

Social barriers.

Unhealthy relationships caused social barriers for participants, which included those with friends and/or family members. Specifically, the negative influences of personal friendships caused barriers during participation. Some participants had children and/or were pregnant during participation, which often times disrupted their successful completion in the program.

Delinquency barriers.

Substance abuse was an obstacle before and during participation for some participants. In some cases, this was compounded with judicial issues. For others, trouble with *the law* had to do with other delinquent behaviors and not necessarily related to *weed and/or alcohol*. However, no specific details related these legal issues were provided.

Mental health barriers.

Five barriers identified during the focus group had to do with a participant's mental health. Anger was the first barrier mentioned and a lack of motivation, especially after the "honeymoon" stage of initial participation, was a barrier shared by all. Others faced barriers associated with self-esteem. The lack of communication with peers and/or staff about their mental health struggles also influenced how participants navigated through the program. Rumors spread around the program about participants also impacted the mental well-being of some according to the focus group members.

Alignment of Subcategories for YBLV Exemplars of Knowledge, Actions, and Changes for Overcoming Categorical Barriers

The following alignment was developed from relationships between YBLV categorical barriers and knowledge, actions, and changes exemplars. The alignment demonstrates the navigational expertise participants needed to successfully overcome the barriers, along with recommended changes that would influence success outcomes. As with previous tabular taxonomic tables, the numbers in parentheses refer to exemplars related to the particular subcategory.

Circumstantial barriers.

Knowledge. The taxonomic analysis for YBLV knowledge exemplars revealed four subcategories of knowledge related to circumstantial barriers (Table 4.25). Knowledge about available resources (e.g., supportive services for clothing, housing, etc.) throughout participation in the program allowed successful YBLV participants to overcome barriers related to homelessness and a lack of clothing (exemplars 4.25.1-2). In addition, knowing staff's willingness to support participants going through these difficulties made a difference for them (exemplars 4.25.3-4). Since transportation was also a circumstantial barrier for most, successful

participants knew how to utilize the public transportation system and manage their bus cards provided by YBLV (exemplars 4.25.6-9).

Table 4.25

YBLV participant's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming circumstantial barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars	
Circumstantial	Knowing about available resources	4.25.1	Has info about resources – transitional housing
		4.25.2	Provides clothing voucher
	Knowing support is available	4.25.3	Help will be provided
		4.25.4	Provides support
		4.25.5	Can call in about emergencies
	Knowing about public/personal transportation	4.25.6	Know bus routes
		4.25.7	Know time, locations, drop-offs
		4.25.8	Know how to manage gas
		4.25.9	Remember bus pass/gas card
	Knowing the consequences	4.25.10	Don't do anything illegal

Actions. Table 4.26 reflects exemplars of actions associated with three subcategories addressing circumstantial barriers. Whether it was overcoming homelessness or a lack of transportation, planning was a key action for successful participants. For instance, planning a strategy to find and finance stable housing led to overcoming the former (exemplars 4.26.1-2). It also necessitated the initiative to seek resources beyond what YBLV had to offer (exemplar 4.26.6). Similarly, addressing the barrier of transportation required efficiently managing gas usage and public transportation (exemplars 4.26.3-5).

To circumvent setbacks influenced by circumstantial barriers, successful participants also decided to avoid delinquent behaviors (exemplar 4.26.7) and giving into any sense of hopelessness (exemplar 4.26.8). Instead, participants reached out to staff about emergencies (exemplar 4.26.10).

Table 4.26

YBLV participant's subcategories of actions for overcoming circumstantial barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Circumstantial	Planning	4.26.1 Game plan to not be homeless
		4.26.2 Save up money
		4.26.3 Plan bus routes
		4.26.4 Manage gas
		4.26.5 Use bus pass/gas card wisely
	Finding resources	4.26.6 Look for shelters... go to programs
	Avoiding setbacks	4.26.7 Don't get in trouble
		4.26.8 Don't get depressed
		4.26.9 Don't sell bus pass
		4.26.10 Call about emergencies

Changes. Table 4.27 reflects two subcategories of changes related to YBLV's circumstantial barriers based on changes exemplars. Although participants recognized YBLV provided supportive services in general, they believed more could be done to address the specific needs of participants associated with hunger and public assistance (exemplars 4.27.2-3). Participants also believed incorporating an incentive for driver's licenses would motivate those lacking it, to get it, and thus help mitigate transportation barriers (exemplars 4.27.5).

Table 4.27

YBLV participant's subcategories of changes for overcoming circumstantial barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars
Circumstantial	Providing assistance/resources for specific needs	4.27.1 Provide information
		4.27.2 Food vouchers (e.g., 3-Square)
		4.27.3 Help w/ welfare/SNAP paperwork
		4.27.4 Carpooling planning
	Providing specific incentives	4.27.5 Driver's license incentive – beginning to end of program

Educational barriers.

Knowledge. YBLV knowledge exemplars revealed two subcategories of knowledge for overcoming educational barriers (Table 4.28). Successful participants understood the importance of persistence knowing the reengagement of their education was going to be difficult (exemplars 4.28.1-6). Therefore, in order to maintain a high level of persistence, participants kept in mind the difference an education would make for their future earnings and sense of personal accomplishment (exemplar 4.28.7-8).

Table 4.28

YBLV participant's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming educational barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars
Educational	Knowing to be persistence	4.28.1 It will be boring
		4.28.2 It's not going to be easy
		4.28.3 Need to study – twice as hard
		4.28.4 Keep self-motivated
		4.28.5 Hard to adjust
		4.28.6 It will be over eventually
	Knowing education makes a difference	4.28.7 Open doors
		4.28.8 Feeling of accomplishment

Actions. Table 4.29 depicts the connection between exemplars and subcategories of actions for overcoming educational barriers. For instance, reengaging their education was a major barrier for participants. Therefore, successful participants took initiative to seek assistance from tutors, academic counselors, and teachers (exemplars 4.29.1-4). Overcoming their educational barriers also required keeping themselves focused and motivated (exemplars 4.29.5, 7), while making adjustments to their schedules, courses, etc., when necessary (exemplar 4.29.9), to avoid academic setbacks.

Table 4.29

YBLV participant's subcategories of actions for overcoming educational barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Educational	Seeking assistance	4.29.1 Ask for help
		4.29.2 Take tutoring
		4.29.3 Talk to counselor
		4.29.4 Express concerns when not learning
	Managing self	4.29.5 Stay focused
		4.29.6 Use time wisely
		4.29.7 Stay motivated
		4.29.8 Don't go to sleep
	Making adjustments	4.29.9 Make adjustments

Changes. One subcategory of change was associated with educational barriers (Table 4.30). If the program offered alternative learning opportunities, more participants would be successful educationally. For instance, offering classes during nontraditional hours (i.e., evenings) (exemplar 4.30.1) solely for YBLV participants would increase educational outcomes (exemplars 4.30.1-2).

Table 4.30

YBLV participant's subcategories of changes for overcoming educational barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars
Educational	Offer alternative learning opportunities	4.30.1 Offer late/evening classes
		4.30.2 Individual YBLV classes
		4.30.3 Multiple tests/assessments on Fridays

Occupational barriers.

Knowledge. Table 4.31 reflects the sub-categorical knowledge needed to overcome occupational barriers during participation in YBLV. For those needing to work outside the program for supplemental income, knowing to manage their time was essential (exemplars 4.31.1 and 3). In many cases, and in varying degrees, the demands of an outside job would disrupt successful participation in YBLV and vice versa (exemplar 4.30.1).

Successful participants realized interpersonal conflicts with others in the program were inevitable. They accepted the reality of not getting along with everyone during participation (exemplar 4.31.4). They were also aware the vocational training component of the program required strenuous physical activities and often times in hot weather (exemplar 4.31.5).

Table 4.31

YBLV participant's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming occupational barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars
Occupational	Knowing importance of time management	4.31.1 YBLV will get in the way and vice versa 4.31.2 To set schedule between work & YBLV 4.31.3 Long distance traveling
	Knowing conflict is inevitable	4.31.4 Won't get along with certain participants
	Knowing about the physical demands	4.31.5 Requires a lot of physical activities & work in heat/weather

Actions. As reflected in Table 4.32, successful participants communicated both with their outside employers about the demands of participating in YBLV and likewise, with program staff about their employer's expectations (exemplars 4.32.1-2). They also overcame the challenges by taking the time to plan their schedules (exemplar 4.32.3), for adequate rest (4.32.4), and preparing themselves for days at the worksite (4.32.5-7).

Table 4.32

YBLV participant's subcategories of actions for overcoming occupational barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Occupational	Communicating with external employer & staff	4.32.1 Communicate with supervisor at work 4.32.2 Communicate with both – work & YBLV
	Planning	4.32.3 Make schedule 4.32.4 Get enough sleep 4.32.5 Be prepared 4.32.6 Dress appropriately 4.32.7 Bring equipment

Changes. Table 4.33 reflects two changes that could be made to assist participants in overcoming their occupational barriers. First, collaborating with the participant’s employer would lessen conflicts if staff reached out to the participant’s employer and communicated the expectations of participating in YBLV without minimizing the importance of their expectations (exemplar 4.32.1-2).

Facilitating unity program-wide by mixing participants up on teams and/or periodically changing the teams was another programmatic change that would address occupational barriers (exemplars 4.33.3-4). Furthermore, providing counseling to address interpersonal conflicts would also alleviate issues between participants (exemplar 4.33.6)

Table 4.33

YBLV participant’s subcategories of changes for overcoming occupational barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars	
Occupational	Collaborating with employer	4.33.1	Find out work schedule
		4.33.2	Communicate with other job
	Facilitating unity amongst participants	4.33.3	Not be two teams
		4.33.4	Swap teammates
		4.33.5	Be understanding
		4.33.6	Counseling

Social barriers.

Knowledge. Overcoming social barriers required five subcategories of knowledge (Table 4.34). Interpersonal skills were a necessity for overcoming conflicts with people within and without the program (4.34.1-4). In order to maintain healthy relationships with peers, friends, and family members, successful participants understood the importance of managing their time between external social activities and program participation (exemplar 4.34.5-6).

Success in the program also required knowledge of emotional and mental boundaries. Participation in YBLV was demanding and stressful (exemplar 4.34.6). It caused tensions with

external relationships. Therefore, it was important to have a support system within the program (exemplar 4.34.10). It also required having and maintaining a positive vision about their lives in order to persevere through social hardships (exemplars 4.34.14-18).

Table 4.34

YBLV participant's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming social barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars
Social	Knowing interpersonal skills	4.34.1 Need to communicate w/ staff... they will help
		4.34.2 Will work on it as a team
		4.34.3 It's a requirement
		4.34.4 Highly used area of worksite
	Knowing time management	4.34.5 Time management – family/YBLV
		4.34.6 Won't have enough time w/ relationships
	Knowing to set emotional/mental boundaries	4.34.7 It's hard work – stress
		4.34.8 Couples check issues at the door
		4.34.9 Leave problems at home
	Knowing it's a support system	4.34.10 Family will become YBLV
		4.34.11 Won't always have family support
		4.34.12 YBLV will work with you
		4.34.13 Join YBLV together
	Knowing to have a vision for your life	4.34.14 What to expect
		4.34.15 Future is more important
		4.34.16 Focus on self before family
		4.34.17 You can do anything everyone else does
		4.34.18 In long-run it's worth it
		4.34.19 Money to support child

Actions. Table 4.35 reveals three sub-categorical actions for overcoming social barriers. Whether with staff, peers, family, friends, etc., communication was one key for mitigating social conflicts (exemplars 4.35.1-5). For instance, informing significant others about the demands of participation helped alleviate relational conflicts for successful participants (exemplar 4.35.9). Another example was ongoing communication with staff about social issues they were facing (exemplar 4.35.8).

Taking initiative was a second sub-categorical action for overcoming social barriers. Instead of allowing preconceived notions about a person, successful participants took initiative to get to know their peers (exemplar 4.35.13).

Planning and prioritizing was a third action successful participants took to mitigate social barriers. For example, they planned out their schedules with family members to avoid misunderstandings about their commitments to the program (exemplar 4.35.15, 17).

Table 4.35

YBLV participant's subcategories of actions for overcoming social barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Social	Communicating	4.35.1 Speak up
		4.35.2 Call
		4.35.3 If you have a question, ask... don't be shy
		4.35.4 Use body language
		4.35.5 Tell family "No"
		4.35.6 Let doctor know – Dr. appointments
		4.35.7 Talk to counselor about childcare
		4.35.8 Let YBLV know your situation
		4.35.9 Let partner know about amount of time w/ YBLV
	Taking initiative	4.35.10 Come out of shell
		4.35.11 Push others to make effort
		4.35.12 Slowly adjust
		4.35.13 Get to know person... start fresh
		4.35.14 Find babysitters
	Planning/prioritizing	4.35.15 Plan time management
		4.35.16 Prioritize
		4.35.17 Workout schedule with family
		4.35.18 Organize Dr. appointments with YBLV
		4.35.19 Don't let relationships distract
		4.35.20 Don't get pregnant
		4.35.21 Don't hook-up in YBLV

Changes. Table 4.36 reveals changes the program could make to improve efforts towards overcoming social barriers. A change included a training facilitating healthy relationship dynamics with and between participants. This involved one-on-one meetings with participants (exemplars 4.36.3-4) and group discussions (4.36.5-6). Providing information about outside

resources (exemplar 4.36.10-11) and sex education courses would also provide participants with better insight regarding healthy relationship practices (exemplar 4.36.12)

Table 4.36

YBLV participant's subcategories of changes for overcoming social barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars
Social	Facilitating positive relationships	4.36.1 Reach out more often
		4.36.2 Talk to others/participants
		4.36.3 Pull aside to encourage
		4.36.4 Partner/mentor
		4.36.5 More leadership meetings – open up; involve everyone
		4.36.6 Team/individual pow-wows
		4.36.7 Be more straight about relationships
		4.36.8 Classes about relationships
		4.36.9 Relationship counseling
	Providing specific information/resources	4.36.10 Inform about other programs that offer assistance
		4.36.11 Offer sex protection/ contraception's
		4.36.12 Sex education class – longer than 2 days and sooner

Delinquency barriers.

Knowledge. Three subcategories of knowledge were addressing delinquency barriers related to substance abuse and judicial issues (Table 4.37). Individuals with delinquent backgrounds were aware of the supportive culture within the program. They did not experience discrimination (exemplar 4.37.2) or teasing (exemplar 4.37.3), but acknowledged the opportunity to overcome their delinquent past (exemplar 4.37.5). These opportunities included alternatives such as community service (exemplar 4.37.6) and participating in the program's detox workout (4.37.7). On the other hand, participants also realized remaining unrepentant with substance abuse after being provided multiple chances (exemplar 4.37.9) could lead to dismissal from the program (exemplar 4.37.8).

Table 4.37

YBLV participant's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming delinquency barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars
Delinquency	Knowing there's support	4.37.1 YBLV can work around it
		4.37.2 YBLV don't discriminate
		4.37.3 Don't get teased
		4.37.4 Others have similar/worse backgrounds
		4.37.5 Give you a chance to be clean
	Knowing you have alternatives	4.37.6 YBLV community service
		4.37.7 Have detox workout
	Knowing the consequences	4.37.8 Get you kicked out
		4.37.9 2 strikes
		4.37.10 Drug test

Actions. Table 4.38 reflects two sub-categorical actions participants took to overcome delinquency barriers. First, participants needed to take personal responsibility for resolving any pending legal matters that would keep them from successful participation in the program (exemplars 4.38.1 and 3). Furthermore, it also required keeping themselves out of any future trouble with the law (exemplar 4.38.2).

Secondly, a specifically for participants on parole, ongoing communication with their parole officer about their participation in YBLV was paramount (exemplar 4.35.7). This kept them in good standing with the judicial system.

Table 4.38

YBLV participant's subcategories of actions for overcoming delinquency barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Delinquency	Taking personal responsibility	4.38.1 Make sure it's taken care of
		4.38.2 Stay out of trouble
		4.38.3 Pay tickets, warrants, etc.
		4.38.4 Stay clean
		4.38.5 Moderation
		4.38.6 Go to detox workout
	Communicating	4.38.7 Let P.O. know about YBLV
		4.38.8 Give note if on prescription

Changes. There were three changes the YBLV program could make to assist participants with overcoming delinquency barriers (Table 4.39). One was promoting awareness about YBLV to the local judicial system (exemplars 4.39.1-3). This would help offenders within the program gain greater external support to succeed.

To address substance abuse in particular, the program should mandate certain consequences such as random drug tests and detox workouts (exemplars 4.39.4-5). It could also invite professionals within the field to provide drug awareness courses (exemplar 4.39.6).

Table 4.39

YBLV participant's subcategories of changes for overcoming delinquency barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars
Delinquency	Promoting program to law enforcement	4.39.1 Inform courts about YBLV – how it works
		4.39.2 Spread word about YBLV – promote
		4.39.3 Promote YBLV to law enforcement – community service
	Mandating consequences	4.39.4 More random drug tests for just the suspicious... after everyone else does initial test
		4.39.5 Mandatory detox workout
	Providing specific course	4.39.6 Drug awareness

Mental health barriers.

Knowledge. Overcoming mental health barriers required four subcategories of knowledge (Table 4.40). For instance, successful participants understood the importance of setting emotional and mental boundaries in order to overcome unproductive interactions with others (exemplars 4.40.1-2) and unhealthy views about themselves (exemplars 4.40.3-6). They also realized self-reflection (exemplars 4.40.7-10) and subsequent personal growth and development (exemplars 4.40.10-14) was critical to understanding and overcoming personal struggles with their anger, past, sexual orientation, etc. (exemplars 4.40.7-10).

Table 4.40

YBLV participant's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming mental health barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars
Mental Health	Knowing to set emotional/mental boundaries	4.40.1 Don't mind & don't listen... let it roll off
		4.40.2 Don't let people get to you
		4.40.3 No one will judge you
		4.40.4 No need to "dress to impress"
		4.40.5 Can be yourself
		4.40.6 No judgment
	Knowing yourself	4.40.7 Know what you're angry about
		4.40.8 Know their back story
		4.40.9 Know the root
		4.40.10 About sexual orientation
	Knowing need for personal growth and development	4.40.11 It's gonna get hard
		4.40.12 It will be tough/hard
		4.40.13 Different from daily routine
		4.40.14 At times may not seem worth it
		4.40.15 Know your "why"
	Knowing the need for physical supplements	4.40.16 Need coffee, 5-hour energy drink, etc.
		4.40.17 Cold shower

Actions. Table 4.41 reflects sub-categorical actions for overcoming mental health barriers. One required the participant's ability to process their thoughts and feelings constructively. This involved taking the time to reflect introspectively (exemplars 4.41.1-5) and making incremental positive mental adjustments accordingly (exemplar 4.41.6 and 9-10). Physical outlets such as working out, journaling, and walking away, also improved their mental well-being (exemplar 4.41.11-14). A final action for overcoming mental health barriers included communicating with mature adults, friends, etc., and working through them together (exemplars 4.41.16-17).

Table 4.41

YBLV participant's subcategories of actions for overcoming mental health barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Mental Health	Processing mentally	4.41.1 Work through it
		4.41.2 Change your mindset
		4.41.3 Work on root
		4.41.4 Believe in self
		4.41.5 Find your “why”
		4.41.6 Slowly adjust
		4.41.7 Motivational videos
		4.41.8 Be yourself
		4.41.9 Don’t let it get to you
		4.41.10 Try to breakdown wall
	Processing physically	4.41.11 Release through gym/workout instead of fight
		4.41.12 Workout
		4.41.13 Journal – “write it off”
		4.41.14 Walk away
		4.41.15 You can grind
	Communicating	4.41.16 Call someone... adult
		4.41.17 Talk it out with YBLV, family, friends

Changes. YBLV could make three changes for helping participants successfully overcome their mental health barriers (Table 4.42). It could provide specific courses and activities for anger management, self-esteem building, encouragement building, etc. (exemplars 4.42.1, 4, and 5). Instituting a mentoring component within the program in which participants receive mutual encouragement from each other and/or the staff would also be beneficial (exemplars 4.42.7-8). Lastly, providing for material needs would alleviate barriers associated with self-esteem (exemplar 4.42.9).

Table 4.42

YBLV participant's subcategories of changes for overcoming mental health barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars
Mental Health	Providing specific course/activities	4.42.1 Anger management classes
		4.42.2 Counseling sessions
		4.42.3 YB family meetings w/ participants (e.g., pow-wows, lemon squeezes, roundtables)
		4.42.4 Self-esteem building classes/projects
		4.42.5 Encouragement building
		4.42.6 Interactive activities w/ different groups
	Providing mentoring	4.42.7 Balance of participant/ staff – push/encourage
	Providing resources	4.42.8 Partner/mentor calling each other
		4.42.9 Clothing vouchers

Individual Perceptions of YBLV Barriers, Knowledge, Actions and Changes

For the purposes of triangulating the data for YouthBuild Las Vegas, two successful out-of-school youth participants from the focus group participated in individual interviews. Each interviewee was reminded about the purpose of the study and data acquisition process. Interviewees were then presented with the data collected and taxonomies based on their focus group's unfolding matrix. It presents individual thematic maps derived from the process of analysis for the interviews described in the previous chapter.

YBLV participant one.

Initially, the first interviewee (YP-1) reviewed what was captured during the focus group, the YBLV unfolding matrix and stated, *I think it looks good*. Throughout the interview YP-1 also validated for the taxonomies of barriers, knowledge, actions, and changes. Four external categorical barriers were derived from the discussion, which included circumstantial, educational, social and delinquency barriers. The only internal categorical barrier was mental health.

The knowledge subcategories included personal awareness and interpersonal skills. Subcategories of actions were support and personal growth and development. The subcategories

of changes included transportation and participant engagement. Figure 4.9 reflects a final thematic map based on the interview with YP-1.

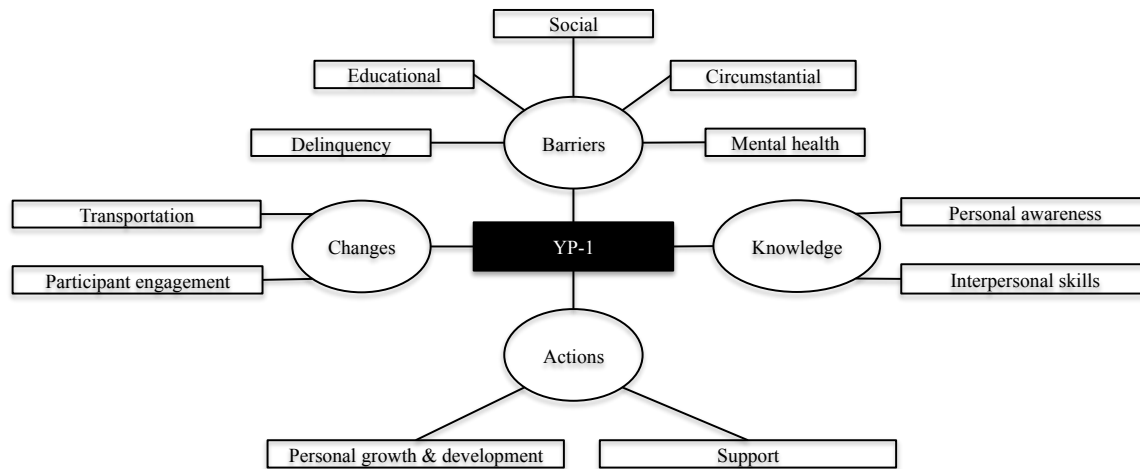


Figure 4.9. Final thematic map of interview with YBLV participant one.

Barriers. After confirming the data within the unfolding matrix, YP-1 was presented with the barriers taxonomy and asked to comment on whether or not it reflected an appropriate analysis of the categorical groupings. YP-1 expressed, *Yeah, it actually captured it very well... I see where like some people are struggling like, to basically like, be successful in life*. Providing this visual taxonomy of barriers to YP-1 confirmed the researcher’s analysis accordingly.

YP-1 was then encouraged to discuss personal barriers faced during participation in YBLV. YP-1 referred to personal barriers and said, *I think my top two I should say was **childcare** and... my **anger** period*. Elaborating on the former barrier, YP-1 expressed, *I had to overcome that barrier and **save up more money so I can have childcare***. With regards to anger, YP-1 shared, *I basically have to **step out of trying to attack people** a lot. I basically have to either **walk away or just cool it down***. Specifically referring to the anger personally experienced at the program’s worksite, Y P- added, *You just have to **control it***.

After sharing about personal barriers, YP-1 was asked to expound on barriers that peers in the program faced. From YP-1's perspective, *Everyone came in with either a **law issue or a drug issue or family issue, relationships... Transportation issues, a lot of time management with us and little bit of anger issues... Most of all of our issues were family.*** As YP-1 specified, the greatest barriers YBLV participants faced had to do with family. YP-1 continued:

*Our **family** is the one that basically helps us most but **they can also hurt us... they** (referring to participants) **were going through a lot with their family.** They want them to succeed or **they wanted them to leave** so I think that's like, with my group, **that was our number one issue, like family.***

According to YP-1's point of view, the social issues with family were primary amongst impediments to success in YBLV. In addition, the circumstantial barrier of transportation, delinquency barriers of troubles with the law and substance abuse, educational barriers associated with time management, and the mental health barrier of anger, were all challenges participants needed overcome to successfully complete YBLV.

Knowledge. The second taxonomy presented to YP-1 was concerning the knowledge needed to overcome these barriers and others noted in the unfolding matrix. After being asked to review the knowledge taxonomic analysis, YP-1 interjected and expressed, *I wish we had this case study during YouthBuild.* This statement confirmed the value of the study and YP-1 was told that the purpose of the research was to ultimately facilitate increased participant success outcomes for YBLV and other youth workforce development programs.

Drawing YP-1's attention back to the knowledge topic, YP-1 was asked to provide an example of knowledge YP-1 possessed to overcome a particular barrier. Reflecting on the barrier

of childcare, YP-1 believed it was essential to know the importance of saving money, as evidenced by the comments, *That was like the number one thing, **saving up**.*

With regards to overcoming the personal barrier of anger during interpersonal conflicts, YP-1 believed knowledge of interpersonal skills was paramount. YP-1 shared:

*Just **be cordial with people**. Because you just never know what they're going through and whatever they're going through, it may not even be about you, they may just have an attitude because of what happened last night.*

Earlier, YP-1 also expressed the importance of possessing the personal awareness to *let it go and move on* regarding unresolved conflicts with others.

When asked what the program could do to provide participants with the necessary knowledge to overcome barriers, YP-1 suggested finding out *what participants have been saying over the past years of **what they think are issues**... getting the input of a participant saying, **These are some of the things that I feel we have problems with***. In other words, YP-1 was implying the importance of staff engaging participants to solicit insights and better understand their daily struggles. Possessing awareness from the participant's perspective would allow staff the opportunities to gain and subsequently provide the necessary knowledge to overcome recurring participant barriers.

Actions. YP-1 examined the actions taxonomy and was asked to provide inputs. *I like it*, YP-1 said. Thereafter YP-1 was prompted to share about a time when YP-1 took action to overcome a barrier, whether it was one previously mentioned or a different barrier altogether. YP-1 opted to give an example regarding a circumstantial barrier and said, *Like **transportation**, that was kind of one of my barriers too... especially going all the way to Henderson and coming back*. For YP-1, this distance was approximately 20 miles to and from the program site and

required about 90-120 minutes of travel time utilizing public transportation. Nonetheless, YP-1 was aware bus passes were available as a supportive service via the program and took the initiative to get a buss pass in order to overcome the barriers associated with transportation.

YP-1 was then asked to share a perception about what the program could do to encourage participants to take actions to overcome barriers. The concept of participant engagement came up once again as evidence by the comments, *I think **checking in with people... Keeping their eye on them and seeing what's going on, what's happening in their life. Having like a little sit down one-on-one. I think that would be good.*** The importance of checking in with the participants to gain awareness of their life circumstances would provide staff the opportunities to encourage participants to take certain actions based on the issues they were dealing with. YP-1 believed this could be accomplished most effectively by having individual meetings between staff members and participants.

Changes. The final taxonomy YP-1 reviewed was about recommended changes to the YBLV program. Accordingly, YP-1 referred to the social barrier of anger and the circumstantial barrier of transportation. YP-1 expressed, *I think **anger management classes** would be good... Transportation-wise, **carpooling** would be good if all the participants, half the participants had a car.* Elaborating on the latter, and referring back the challenges of traveling to and from the program, YP-1 continued with:

*I think if YouthBuild had the money they could have **a bus and to take us to wherever we had to go** instead of carpooling because I know in my group, most of us had cars but also most of us, **there was wear and tear on some of our cars** from going to Henderson and up here, Cheyenne and some of them lived in Henderson.*

Although some of the participants had their own vehicles and were able to workout carpooling with one another, YP-1 preferred the program purchase its own passenger van to transport participants. In turn, this would alleviate the financial challenges associated with their personal vehicle maintenance.

Besides transportation, and from YP-1's perspective, many of the participants struggled with a low self-esteem. YP-1 therefore suggested the program incorporate practices to address the mental health barrier of self-esteem. For instance, YP-1 specifically shared:

*I think of more like **team building**. Like team building, **getting together stuff**. That's what I think. **To bring your self-esteem up. So you won't feel like no one understand you and you're not the only one** and as far as like, you know.*

YP-1 believed implementing activities that would create opportunities for healthy interactions would assist in helping individuals overcome struggles with low self-esteem. Providing an experience within the program, YP-1 later added:

*I met this one guy... His self-esteem was really low and ever since then, that's been in my mind, like, oh my goodness, if he would have made it, **we could have built him up** saying 'Hey, it's okay, we're all going back to school. We're all doing this. We're all trying to get our education. We're all trying to do something better in life.'*

Building a sense of community among the participants would lead to more participants overcoming socially related barriers.

Another recommendation YP-1 suggested to increase success outcomes was having former successful participants visit and speak to current members about the program on an ongoing basis. YP-1 believed alumni would encourage them to persevere via their personal examples of success. In conclusion to this recommendation, YP-1 shared, *I'm out of the program*

and ***I'm successful from the program, I've got a job, I'm working, I'm taking care of my daughter, I'm doing everything I've got to do. I'm a prime example of this is what you could be like.*** Accordingly, bringing in alumni to share about their success of overcoming barriers would provide inspiration and motivation to those struggling to navigate their own geography of barriers.

YBLV Participant Two.

Figure 4.10 portrays a final thematic map based on the one-on-one interview with the second YBLV participant (YP-2). As with the previous YBLV interviewee, the only internal barrier was mental health. The external categories included circumstantial, social, occupational, and delinquency barriers. Knowing to have a positive personal vision was the only subcategory of knowledge. Action subcategories were associated with taking care of personal health and personal growth and development. Recommended changes revolved around engagement with participants, family, and employers. Exemplars related to each of these aforementioned subcategories are mentioned throughout the interview.

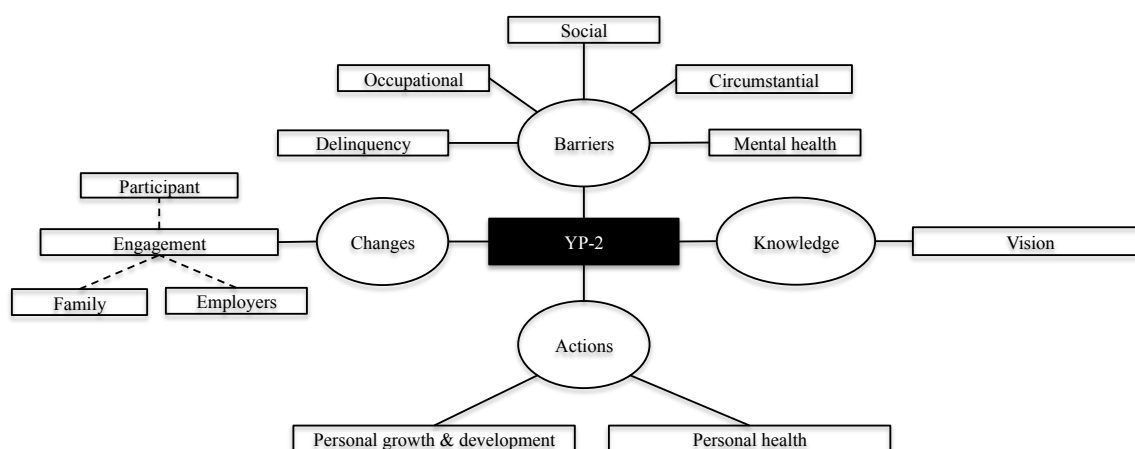


Figure 4.10. Final thematic map of interview with YBLV participant two.

Barriers. Upon review of the YBLV unfolding matrix and the data collected, this interviewee impulsively shared about the personal occupational barrier experienced during participation. YP-2 shared:

*My biggest issue was definitely **working while I was going to YouthBuild**. That was my biggest one because I had to work overnight and right after I would get off of work from doing security, I would have to go right to YouthBuild. That was probably my biggest issue **trying to figure out how to fit in my sleep, and then just continue on with school**.*

Due to certain financial obligations, YP-2 expressed needing to work while participating in the program. Managing the demands of participation after working overnight consequently presented challenges with physical rest and the ability to mentally focus.

Nonetheless, YP-2 expressed the need to obtain an educational certificate in order to pursue a higher paying job with a livable wage. Being a part of YBLV would provide YP-2 that opportunity and gain the vocational skills needed to be more marketable and competitive in the workforce.

After being encouraged to share about additional barriers, YP-2 went on to say: *With me, probably a big one... I'll probably go back to **self-esteem**. But **I was very much an introverted person**. Like **I was very shy**. I didn't want to be around or talk to people that much. If I did, **I would just go into my own shell**.*

Even though self-esteem was a personal struggle, YP-2 overcame that mental health barrier as a result of the program's interactive activities. For example, YP-2 shared:

*There was group activities when we first started YouthBuild. **It like opened me up** to not be so nervous and just actually want to jump in and want to get to know the people that I was in the program with.*

Besides the positive interactions with peers, YP-2 also expressed feeling accepted by the program's staff as evidenced by the following comments:

*I actually felt like the teachers, the counselors, **they actually do the care**. They wanted us to first get to know each other and try to build ourselves like that little team or family to say. **That's what pretty much got me to want to stay in the program as well.***

The interpersonal experiences with peers and staff helped YP-2 overcome the mental health and social impediments that may have otherwise caused YP-2 to leave the program prematurely.

Knowledge. After reviewing the taxonomic analysis of knowledge, the interviewee was prompted to share about knowledge YP-2 possessed to overcome a particular barrier, whether it was one already mentioned and/or a different one altogether. YP-2 responded with the importance of knowing to have a vision for yourself. Referring to barriers in general, YP-2 said:

*Pretty much, the only thing that I had to keep in my mind to overcome all the barriers and obstacles of the program was just **keep faith in yourself, have faith in yourself**. If you don't believe in yourself, then there's really no point to want to try to even start the program because it's a lot of stuff that you've actually got to do... **I just had to keep a strong mindset and strong faith in myself to just rely on it to get myself through the program.***

Since the scale of barriers varies from participant to participant, knowing to possess a strong sense of vision was critical to success.

YP-2 also added the importance of knowing staff was invested in the success of each participant as well. Referring to staff and instructors, YP-2 said, **They also have a good faith in you and just believe in you, that will get you through a whole lot**. Believing in yourself, coupled with staff's encouragement for the participant, was paramount to overcoming barriers.

In order to enhance participant knowledge for overcoming barriers, YP-2 recommended the staff increase its efforts to engage participants via group discussions and individual meetings. YP-2 believed the former would provide collective perspective regarding what participants need to know to overcome mutual obstacles. On the other hand, one-on-one meetings between participants and staff would allow staff to more appropriately understand their individual struggles. YP-2 expressed, *Meet with the kids and one-on-one a little bit more just to **find out what each individual needs** more than the other one because **everybody had different needs**.*

Actions. YP-2 was asked to review the taxonomic analysis of actions. AYP-2 shared about a delinquency barrier about a personal struggle with substance abuse and admittedly expressed, *When I first started the program, **I was a heavy weed smoker**.* YP-2 added:

*When I gave the ultimatum that we had a certain timeframe to actually stop smoking or we were going to get kicked out of the program, I was like this is about to be a tough cookie because at that point, **I had not went without marijuana for ... I'm saying, a good six or seven years straight.** I'm like, okay, snap, **how am I supposed to do this when I haven't really lived life at this point without marijuana or anything like that in my system.***

Although the interviewee confessed being a longtime habitual marijuana smoker, YP-2 took the initiative to participate in YBLV's detox program. This action eventually led YP-2 to overcoming the habit. YP-2 continued:

*I'm like okay, just let me put this focus hat on and just get through this month and focus like that. I got there the month, **did the workouts** with [staff member]. I want to say, that's like **after doing that, it really just cleared my system, it cleared my mindset, cleared my mind frame for a while and ended up passing the drug test.***

YP-2 was then asked to provide perspective regarding what additional practices YBLV could implement to assist participants in overcoming the aforementioned barriers. Alluding to barriers in general, YP-2 suggested the program make a greater effort to engage family members of participants. For instance, YP-2 explained,

*It would be probably cool to have like a little **YouthBuild family night**... It's where all the YouthBuild participants and their families and that type of thing could just get to meet everybody because you do spend a lot of your time with other YouthBuild participants. **I think it will be like cool if everybody gets to all meet together**, probably like at the beginning of the YouthBuild and just chop it up and **get to really know each other's families and the backgrounds and that type of thing**... **I think in some situations you'll probably get some real life scenarios to go on**. Okay, so that's why this person acts the way they do or that's the reason, this person is late all the time or something like that. **You just never know what may come out of it.***

YP-2 assumed that staff hearing about real-life challenges that participants encountered within their familial situations would provide them with heightened understanding of their circumstances. Subsequently, staff could assess which appropriate actions would be necessary for participants to overcome the barriers revealed.

Changes. The final visual taxonomy YP-2 reviewed was concerning changes the YBLV focus group recommended for increasing participant success outcomes. YP-2 initially responded with the concept of participants engaging one another and suggested, ***Have all the participants to say sitting like circles**... Have this little thing called '**lemon squeezes**' or something like that.*

When asked to elaborate, YP-2 explained by sharing:

*They can just have **little group session with each other. Everybody gets out what's bothering them ... Everybody can get out their issues** that they have with one another or how they're feeling about a particular incident that's going on at that time and that way everything is just out in the open. **Nobody has nothing to hide from one another. You just sit around the table and you come up with things that they think at that time could also make the program better themselves or as a group as a whole.***

YP-2 was confident the program would experience greater successes having participants talk openly about their thoughts and feelings in group settings on a consistent basis. Similarly, this would provide participants the opportunities to express what they believed would improve the program. YP-2 presumed implementing this change would educate participants with *productive ways just to deal with things* such as mental health barriers (e.g., anger) and social barriers (e.g., communication). Moreover, YP-2 added, *I think that will just cause a lot of decrease on the stress and tension YouthBuild has within its peers and all that.*

After summarizing the interview, the participant was asked if there was anything else, from a personal perspective, which would enhance successful participation in the YBLV program. Reflecting on the occupational barrier mentioned earlier, YP-2 concluded by sharing:

*I think it's also just important to get as much information as you can about where they can find like **more information on where to get jobs and how to get jobs.** Say if they have a ... even just go to job fairs because I know those can be like intimidating too like give a little bit more ... **Training on how to approach people, approach managers or business type people as far as getting jobs and all that. It's just definitely put more resources out there as far as where to go and how to apply.***

Although the program already provided job readiness training, YP-2 expressed YBLV could improve its efforts regarding employer engagement. This included supplying increased labor market information, guidance on business acumen, and employment resources.

A Conceptual Model of Participant Success for YBLV

The data from the YBLV focus group and interviews provided information leading to the development of an YBLV conceptual model of participant success, which includes six categorical barriers. The YBLV model (not pictured) shares three of the same categorical barriers in common with GSN and HSN, which include circumstantial (4 barriers), educational (2 barriers), and mental health (5 barriers). The YBLV model also shares the occupational categorical barrier (2 barriers) in common with GSN, but not HSN. On the other hand, the YBLV model shares the delinquency (2 barriers) and social (3 barriers) categorical barriers in common with HSN, but not GSN. The subsequent explanation of the YBLV conceptual model of participant success follows suit with that of the GSN and HSN models (explained on pps. 96-97).

Out-of-School Youth Workforce Development Programs

The local workforce development board, Workforce Connections, oversaw 13 WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs throughout Southern Nevada. Eleven of these programs provided WIA services to out-of-school youth in Clark County. The others provided services in the counties of Nye, Esmeralda, and Lincoln respectively. Combined, these WIA youth programs provided services to a total of 533 out-of-school youth during program year 2014. Participant demographics and outcomes are noted in Table 3.1.

As WIA youth service providers, the WIA mandated ten program elements for each youth service provider, which were arranged across four core themes (United States Department of Labor, 2001). One theme was improving educational achievement (e.g., tutoring, study skills

training and instruction leading to secondary school completion, drop out prevention strategies, and alternative secondary school offerings.

Another theme was preparing for and succeeding in employment, which included summer employment opportunities, paid and unpaid work experience, and occupational skills training. A third theme was supporting youth with supportive services, adult mentoring, follow-up services, and comprehensive guidance and counseling. A final theme was offering services intended to develop the potential of young people as citizens and leaders through leadership development opportunities.

The six practitioners involved in this study were familiar with these services and made up the practitioners focus group, two from each case (i.e., Goodwill of Southern Nevada, HELP of Southern Nevada, and YouthBuild Las Vegas). There were three African Americans, one Hispanic, one Caucasian and one Bi-Racial participant. Two were male and four were female. They had varying years of experience in working for WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs. Four had less than two years, and the other two had between 3-5 years of experience. As such, this focus group provided their perceived views of the barriers facing out-of-school youth participants and the navigational expertise needed to successfully navigate their geography of barriers, along with their recommendations of changes for programs.

Participant Barriers Perceived by Out-of-School Youth Program Practitioners

The six practitioners were prompted with the same initial question, “What were the barriers participants had to overcome in order to be successful?” in order to identify the barriers they perceived successful participants experienced during participation. In all, practitioners identified eighteen barriers (see Appendix H). The practitioner’s five external categorical barriers included circumstantial, educational, social, delinquency, and sexual. The only internal

categorical barrier was mental health. These, along with their related exemplars, are reflected in Figure 4.11.

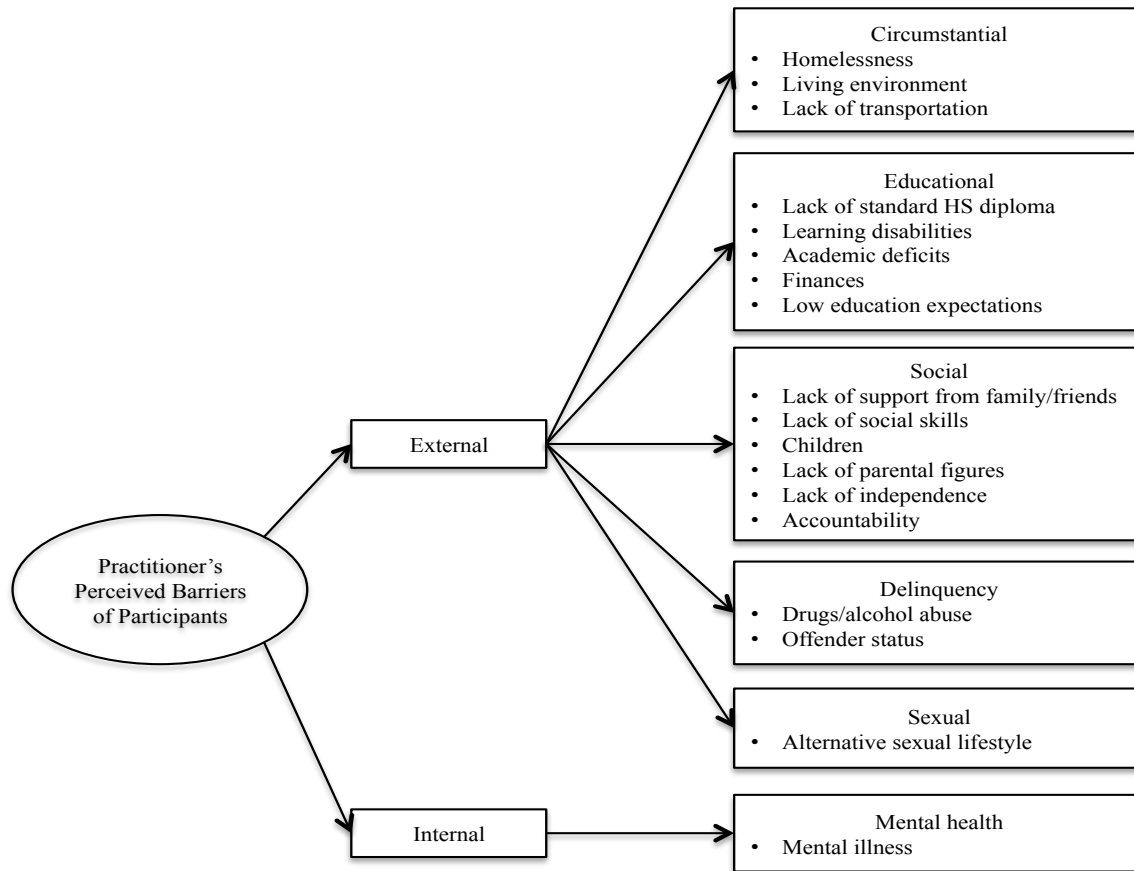


Figure 4.11. Taxonomy of Perceived Participant's Barriers Identified by Out-of-School Youth Program Practitioners.

Circumstantial barriers.

From the staffs' point of view, one circumstantial barrier participants faced was a lack of permanent residency. Similarly, they perceived some of the participant's lived in circumstances that were not conducive to experiencing success in the program. Lastly, practitioners suggested a lack of transportation was also a circumstantial barrier confronting participants.

Educational barriers.

Since the out-of-school youth were enrolled as high school dropouts, they lacked the academic credits to obtain a standard high school diploma. In some cases, this was compounded by their learning disabilities. Having low educational expectations also caused barriers for participants in the various programs. A final barrier hampering their success was a lack of financial education.

Social barriers.

Practitioners suggested certain participants lacked positive parental role models and encouragement from family and friends. Moreover, they believed some of these key relationships were negative influences for participants. In other instances, not allowing them to be independent, but instead creating codependency dynamics, which manifested in certain social barriers. Lastly, practitioners perceived a participant's lack of social skills and misunderstanding of accountability hindered their sociability.

Delinquency barriers.

All the programs were required by WIA to serve youth offenders. As a result, participants with criminal backgrounds were viewed as facing barriers to successful participation. Struggles with substance abuse, whether drugs and/or alcohol, also caused setbacks for them.

Sexual barriers.

Some practitioners shared the difficulties experienced by those who disclosed they were LGBTQ. Practitioners witnessed from some of the participants confusion processing their sexual orientations, whereas others faced discrimination from their peers.

Mental health barriers.

Practitioners perceived some individuals within their programs had legitimate battles with psychological disorders. As a result, their success was hampered because they had not sought a professional mental health diagnosis during participation. From the practitioner's perspective, an expert evaluation could have provided insights addressing problems related to the diagnosis.

Alignment of Subcategories for Practitioner's Exemplars of Knowledge, Actions, and Changes for Overcoming Categorical Barriers

The following analysis reflects relationships between the practitioner's categorical barriers and exemplars of knowledge, actions, and changes. The analysis demonstrates the perception practitioners had about the navigational expertise participants needed to successfully overcome the categorical barriers. It also suggests the changes practitioners believed would influence increased success outcomes. As with previous tabular taxonomic tables, the numbers in parentheses refer to exemplars related to the particular subcategory.

Circumstantial barriers.

Knowledge. Table 4.43 reflects three knowledge subcategories for overcoming circumstantial barriers as perceived by practitioners. From their perception, successful participants knew about the available resources (e.g., buss passes) the programs offered on an as-needed basis (exemplars 4.43.1-3). They were also aware their problematic environments were based on choices they made about their circumstances (exemplars 4.43.4-6). Furthermore, successful participants realized the importance of planning their schedules and finances to overcome transportation barriers in particular (exemplars 4.43.8-9)

Table 4.43

Practitioner's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming circumstantial barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars
Circumstantial	Knowing about resources	4.43.1 Know about immediate resources
		4.43.2 Know resources are available
		4.43.3 Know about public transportation
	Knowing you have choices	4.43.4 Know you don't have to remain that way
		4.43.5 Know that you don't have to be a product of your environment
		4.43.6 Know you have choices
		4.43.7 Know what's appropriate/inappropriate
	Knowing to plan	4.43.8 Know to schedule
		4.43.9 Know about costs

Actions. Overcoming circumstantial barriers included three subcategories of actions (Table 4.44). According to practitioners, whether it was unstable housing, detrimental living arrangements, or a lack of transportation, successful participants took initiative to address their circumstances. This included following up on leads (exemplar 4.44.2), making appointments to obtain necessary resources (exemplar 4.44.4), and budgeting for basic needs (exemplar 4.44.6). Participants that experienced success also sought support through counseling and positive influences (exemplars 4.44.8-9). Lastly, successful participants envisioned a better life for themselves, rather than one encumbered with one barrier after another (exemplar 4.44.10-11).

Table 4.44

Practitioner's subcategories of actions for overcoming circumstantial barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Circumstantial	Taking initiative	4.44.1 Follow the rules
		4.44.2 Follow-up on leads
		4.44.3 Work on getting out
		4.44.4 Make an appointment with organizations providing resources
		4.44.5 Look up public transportation schedules
		4.44.6 Start budgeting for it
		4.44.7 Be responsible
	Seeking support	4.44.8 Associate self with positive people
		4.44.9 Seek counseling
	Developing a vision	4.44.10 Make action plan
		4.44.11 Think beyond/above your environment

Changes. Staff perceived certain changes to programs overall would lessen or altogether eliminate the barriers participants faced circumstantially. Table 4.45 reflects three subcategories of changes, which would facilitate participant successes. For instance, although federal, state, and/or local policy restricted allowable expenditures for participants, practitioners admitted the need to think outside the box regarding their program's abilities to provide resources for participant's fundamental necessities (exemplars 4.45.1-5) and lack of transportation. With regard to the latter, purchasing a passenger van to transport participants to and from the program would also make a positive difference on successful participation (4.45.6). Finally, providing specialized counseling and workshops to address specific circumstantial barriers would provide participants the know-how and accountability for overcoming challenges.

Table 4.45

Practitioner's subcategories of changes for overcoming circumstantial barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars	
Circumstantial	Providing resources for basic necessities	4.45.1	Provide housing immediately
		4.45.2	Emergency food supply
		4.45.3	Provide hygiene kits
		4.45.4	Provide housing options
		4.45.5	Provide petty cash
	Providing transportation resources	4.45.6	Purchase transportation for program (e.g., van)
		4.45.7	Assistance for driver's education
		4.45.8	Provide a practice car/vehicle
	Providing counseling	4.45.9	Provide professional counseling
		4.45.10	Provide awareness workshops

Educational barriers.

Knowledge. Overcoming educational barriers included four subcategories of knowledge (Table 4.46). Practitioners perceived successful participants understood the importance of pursuing their education. They were not only aware of its impact on future job opportunities (exemplar 4.46.1), but the difference it made in earnable wages (exemplar 4.46.3).

From the practitioner's viewpoint, successful participants also knew how to improve their academic status (exemplar 4.46.8) based on available educational services (e.g., tutoring) and resources available to them via the program (exemplars 4.46.10-11). Moreover, in order to overcome the stigma of societal labels because of their lack of education (exemplar 4.46.12) and fears associated with reengaging it (exemplar 4.46.14), they understood the importance of setting mental boundaries.

Table 4.46

Practitioner's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming educational barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars	
Educational	Knowing education's impact	4.46.1	Know its impact on the future
		4.46.2	Know the difference between standard diploma versus option 2
		4.46.3	Know the difference in wages
		4.46.4	Know what it is – awareness
		4.46.5	Know they won't go away
		4.46.6	Know your academic reality
	Knowing about support/resources	4.46.7	Know that someone cares
		4.46.8	Know steps to take to improve
		4.46.9	Know options available to resolve
		4.46.10	Know that services are available
		4.46.11	Know that resources are available
	Knowing to set mental boundaries	4.46.12	Know you don't have to accept the "label"
		4.46.13	Know it's not always your fault
		4.46.14	Know not to be scared
	Knowing financial education	4.46.15	Know about financial literacy
		4.46.16	Know impact on the future

Actions. Table 4.47 reflects practitioners' exemplars associated with four educational subcategories of actions. According to practitioners, successful participants took personal responsibility for addressing their educational barriers. For instance, besides exercising the discipline of going to every class (exemplars 4.47.4-5), participants also set achievable educational goals (exemplar 4.47.6).

Practitioners also expressed many participants experienced failure with their initial attempts to pass certain proficiency exams. However, successful participants set emotional and mental boundaries for overcoming the potential discouragement or fear of retaking the tests (exemplars 4.47.7-8). In addition, they sought assistance from school counselors, tutors, etc. to overcome the barriers associated with academic disappointments (exemplars 4.47.9-10).

Besides academic setbacks, a lack of financial education also hindered participants, according to the perception of practitioners. However, successful participants prioritized their

expenditures (exemplar 4.47.16) by making budgets (exemplar 4.47.15) and setting up saving accounts (exemplar 4.48.14).

Table 4.47

Practitioner's subcategories of actions for overcoming educational barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Educational	Taking personal responsibility	4.47.1 Take education more serious
		4.47.2 Do research
		4.47.3 Advocate for yourself
		4.47.4 Go to class
		4.47.5 Attend all classes
		4.47.6 Set appropriate goals
	Setting emotional/mental boundaries	4.47.7 Get over the fear
		4.47.8 Don't accept feeling ashamed
	Seeking assistance/resources	4.47.9 Hear it from school counselor
		4.47.10 Embrace tutoring
		4.47.11 Ask questions
		4.47.12 Acknowledge need
		4.47.13 Seek resources
	Financial planning	4.47.14 Start saving
		4.47.15 Budget
		4.47.16 Prioritize

Changes. The changes needed to confront educational barriers contained two subcategories as perceived by practitioners (Table 4.48). One was providing flexibility with regard to local policy. For instance, the local workforce development board imposed regulations regarding allowable career paths based on regional in-demand sectors. However, practitioners believed allowing for flexibility outside those approved would provide broader employment opportunities for participants and thus lead to their successful placements following participation in the program (exemplar 4.48.1-2).

Practitioners perceived their programs were not effective at everything, and in particular education, since their emphasis was primarily on workforce development. Therefore pursuing educational resources beyond what their programs could offer was another change they would implement (exemplar 4.48.4). Similarly, practitioners believed they needed to make a greater

effort to improve awareness amongst themselves and school district personnel involved with the program regarding each individual's educational abilities or lack thereof (exemplars 4.48.7-9).

Table 4.48

Practitioner's subcategories of changes for overcoming educational barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars
Educational	Providing alternatives	4.48.1 Alternative career paths
		4.48.2 Flexibility for vocational training placement
		4.48.3 Call it something different
		4.48.4 Provide petty cash (i.e., misc. cash)
	Providing supplemental assistance	4.48.5 Seek outside help
		4.48.6 1-on-1 tutoring
	Creating awareness	4.48.7 Better communication with CCSD
		4.48.8 Make employee sensitivity mandatory
		4.48.9 Staff/community awareness
		4.48.10 More tours (e.g., college) – “see it”
		4.48.11 Have class/ course/ training on “respect for money”

Social barriers.

Knowledge. Table 4.49 reflects subcategories of knowledge for overcoming social barriers as perceived by practitioners. From their perspective, successful participants were aware of the support and resources available through the program (exemplars 4.49.1-2) and therefore, understood the importance of asking for assistance (exemplar 4.49.3). They likewise realized the need for personal growth and development. For example, successful participants knew they lacked social skills (exemplar 4.49.7) and understood the need to work on and improve them (exemplar 4.49.8-9).

Practitioners also assumed participants who succeeded, possessed self-efficacy regardless of their social barriers (4.49.17-19). They understood the impact of family, having more children, etc. and set familial expectations for themselves accordingly in order to complete the program (exemplars 4.49.20-23).

Table 4.49

Practitioner's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming social barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars	
Social	Knowing about available support/resources	4.49.1	Know you can receive support from program
		4.49.2	Know about resources
		4.49.3	Know it's OK to ask for help
		4.49.4	Know someone cares
	Knowing need for personal growth & development	4.49.5	Know it's OK to be different
		4.49.6	Know to love yourself
		4.49.7	Awareness of lack of social skills
		4.49.8	Know they can be improved
		4.49.9	Know to work on them and it will take time
		4.49.10	Know it's OK to be independent
		4.49.11	Know steps to be independent
		4.49.12	Know that it doesn't have to be a crutch
		4.49.13	Know it's necessary/mandatory
		4.49.14	Know it's not all bad
		4.49.15	Know understanding of it
		4.49.16	Know it can be relieving
	Knowing to have a vision	4.49.17	Know that success is still an option
		4.49.18	Know you can still be successful
		4.49.19	Know you're responsible for your own success
	Knowing to have familial expectations	4.49.20	Know the impact/understanding of having more kids
		4.49.21	Know they are not your income source
		4.49.22	Know your parents aren't bad
		4.49.23	Know not to emulate parents behavior

Actions. There were four subcategories of actions associated with overcoming social barriers (Table 4.50). When it came to facing these barriers during participation, successful participants communicated and reached out about their needs (exemplars 4.50.1-4). Furthermore, they talked about their social barriers and sought advice and feedback for overcoming them (exemplars 4.50.3-6).

Secondly, whether it was social barriers related to family and/or friends, practitioners believed successful participants committed themselves to learning new social habits (exemplars 4.50.7-8) by attending workshops, training, etc. (exemplar 4.50. 9). With regard to avoiding the barriers associated with having more children, participants practiced abstinence or safe sex (exemplars 4.50.10-13).

Successful participants also took responsibility for their social choices (exemplar 4.50.14). They reinforced these choices by surrounding themselves with positive influences and worked at being a positive example to others (exemplars 4.50.17-18).

Table 4.50

Practitioner's subcategories of actions for overcoming social barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Social	Communicating/ reaching out	4.50.1 Reach out for help
		4.50.2 Communicate
		4.50.3 Seek counseling – include your parents/family
		4.50.4 Talk about it
		4.50.5 Seek advice
		4.50.6 Be open to feedback
	Practicing	4.50.7 Practice appropriate social skills
		4.50.8 Commit to new skills
		4.50.9 Go to workshops, trainings, etc.
		4.50.10 Practice abstinence
		4.50.11 Practice safe sex
		4.50.12 Embrace it
		4.50.13 Practice it
	Taking personal responsibility	4.50.14 Take responsibility/ ownership
		4.50.15 Do things independently
		4.50.16 Self-advocate
	Being a positive example	4.50.17 Surround yourself with successful people
		4.50.18 Emulate positive role model
		4.50.19 Love self

Changes. Subcategories of changes for social barriers as perceived by practitioners are displayed in Table 4.51. Practitioners believed they could do a better job influencing participant's social skills development by taking the time to address their specific social barriers (exemplar 4.51.2) and providing constructive feedback accordingly (exemplar 4.51.3). This could be accomplished individually (exemplar (4.51.1) or via group settings (exemplars 4.51.4-5). However, practitioners also realized the need for their own training and development to do so effectively (exemplar 4.51.6-7) Trainings could also involve parents so they're made aware of their children's social struggles within the familial context (exemplar 4.51.8).

Addressing the barrier of having more children could be mitigated by providing resources such as birth control and partnering with health and human services (exemplars 4.51.9-10). Besides these changes, practitioners assumed emphasizing success stories would also assist participants in overcoming socially related barriers (exemplar 4.51.11). In other words, seeing and hearing about the success of others would reinforce their own attempts to succeed likewise (exemplar 4.51.12).

Table 4.51

Practitioner's subcategories of changes for overcoming social barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars	
Social	Staff engagement	4.51.1	Reach out to “under the radar” youth
		4.51.2	Staff point out
		4.51.3	Provide counseling
	Specific training/ courses	4.51.4	Form more specific groups
		4.51.5	Provide social skills classes/curriculum – real world/role play
		4.51.6	Staff training & development
		4.51.7	Staff & youth training
		4.51.8	Parent training about barrier
	Providing resources	4.51.9	Provide different forms of birth control
		4.51.10	Partner with a health facility
	Emphasizing success	4.51.11	Emphasize success stories
		4.51.12	Mentorship program with successful people
		4.51.13	Model it

Delinquency barriers.

Knowledge. Overcoming delinquency barriers included four subcategories of knowledge (Table 4.52). For instance, although practitioners believed participants in general were aware of the legal consequences regarding use of illegal substances, they perceived successful participants understood the physical and physiological ramifications of using drugs (exemplars 4.52.1-3). In addition, these participants understood overcoming these bad habits required having a positive vision about their futures (exemplars 4.52.4-5). They were also aware of the available resources offered within and beyond the program and the ways to obtain them (4.52.12-13).

For those particularly struggling with the effects of their criminal backgrounds, familiarity with the judiciary system and their rights as returning citizens was fundamental knowledge possessed by successful participants (exemplars 4.52.8-10). Furthermore, they knew how to disclose their criminal history when pursuing employment (exemplar 4.52.11).

Table 4.52

Practitioner's subcategories of knowledge for overcoming delinquency barriers.

Barrier Category	Knowledge Subcategory	Knowledge Exemplars
Delinquency	Knowing about the consequences	4.52.1 Know how drug/substance abuse affects them
		4.52.2 Know impact on the future
		4.52.3 Know about biological/physical effects
	Knowing to have a vision	4.52.4 Know you can recover from negative behavior
		4.52.5 Know you still have a future
		4.52.6 Know it's not the norm
		4.52.7 Know it's not an excuse
	Knowing about legal matters	4.52.8 Know your record
		4.52.9 Know the law
		4.52.10 Know your rights
		4.52.11 Know how to disclose
	Knowing about resources	4.52.12 Know steps to overcome
		4.52.13 Know about resources

Actions. Table 4.53 reflects subcategories of actions exemplars related to overcoming delinquency barriers. Taking personal responsibility for overcoming their substance abuse was a key action of successful participants. They were willing to admit their struggles and accept accountability for dealing with them (exemplars 4.53.1-3).

Successful participants also changed their perspectives and planned for progress. With regard to the former, they surrounded themselves with successful and positive influences (exemplar 4.53.5) that would reinforce their own positive outlook (exemplar 4.53.4). They also welcomed accountability for making the right choices, such as participating in substance abuse classes (exemplar 4.53.6). Those with criminal backgrounds worked towards expunging their records (exemplar 4.53.7) instead of using them as an excuse not to succeed (exemplar 4.53.7).

Table 4.53

Practitioner's subcategories of actions for overcoming delinquency barriers.

Barrier Category	Actions Subcategory	Action Exemplars
Delinquency	Taking personal responsibility	4.53.1 Admit problem and make immediate changes
		4.53.2 Accept accountability
		4.53.3 Be willing to take drug test
	Changing perspective	4.53.4 Change train of thought/outlook
		4.53.5 Surround self with successful/positive people
	Planning for progress	4.53.6 Participate in substance abuse classes
		4.53.7 Work towards expungement

Changes. There were two subcategories of changes for assisting participants with overcoming delinquency barriers (Table 4.54). First, the programs needed to improve efforts towards creating a more supportive culture for offenders and participants dealing with substance abuse. Thus, creating a culture of acceptance regardless of an individual's struggles was paramount to influencing their ongoing efforts (exemplar 4.54.1). To reinforce participant progress practitioners also suggested establishing supportive peer-to-peer relationships between participants (exemplar 4.54.2).

Secondly, providing offenders in the program with adequate resources and information to address their legally related obstacles would strengthen this culture of support (exemplars 4.54.4-5). If possible, programs should provide resources for expungement costs (exemplar 4.54.6). Moreover, programs needed to make a concentrated effort at reaching out to businesses that would welcome returning citizens as employees without holding their criminal backgrounds against them (exemplar 4.54.3).

Table 4.54

Practitioner's subcategories of changes for overcoming delinquency barriers.

Barrier Category	Changes Subcategory	Changes Exemplars	
Delinquency	Providing a supportive culture	4.54.1	Emphasize nonjudgmental environment
		4.54.2	Peer-to-peer support
		4.54.3	Ex-offender employer friendly opportunities
	Providing resources/ information	4.54.6	More internal resources
		4.54.7	Provide this information
		4.54.8	Expungement funds

Sexual barriers.

Knowledge, Actions and Changes. The only sexual barrier perceived by practitioners was the *alternative sexual lifestyle* of some participants. However, due to time constraints there were no exemplars captured for knowledge, actions, and changes, during the practitioner's focus group. Therefore, no subcategories were developed for addressing this categorical barrier.

Mental health barriers.

Knowledge, Actions and Changes. *Mental illness* was the sole mental health barrier perceived by practitioners. Time constraints did not allow for identifying any exemplars for knowledge, actions, and changes, during the practitioner focus group. Therefore, subcategories are also nonexistent for this categorical barrier.

Individual Perceptions of Practitioners Perceived Barriers, Knowledge, Actions and Changes

For the purposes of triangulating the data collected and analyzed for the out-of-school youth programs practitioner's focus group, two ensuing separate interviews took place. Similar to the participant interviews, each practitioner was reminded about the purpose of the study, data acquisition process, and then presented with the data collected within the focus group's unfolding matrix.

Practitioner one.

This interviewee (P-1) referred to five external barriers and one internal barrier. These, along with subcategories for knowledge, actions, and changes, based on the interview, are reflected in Figure 4.12 below.

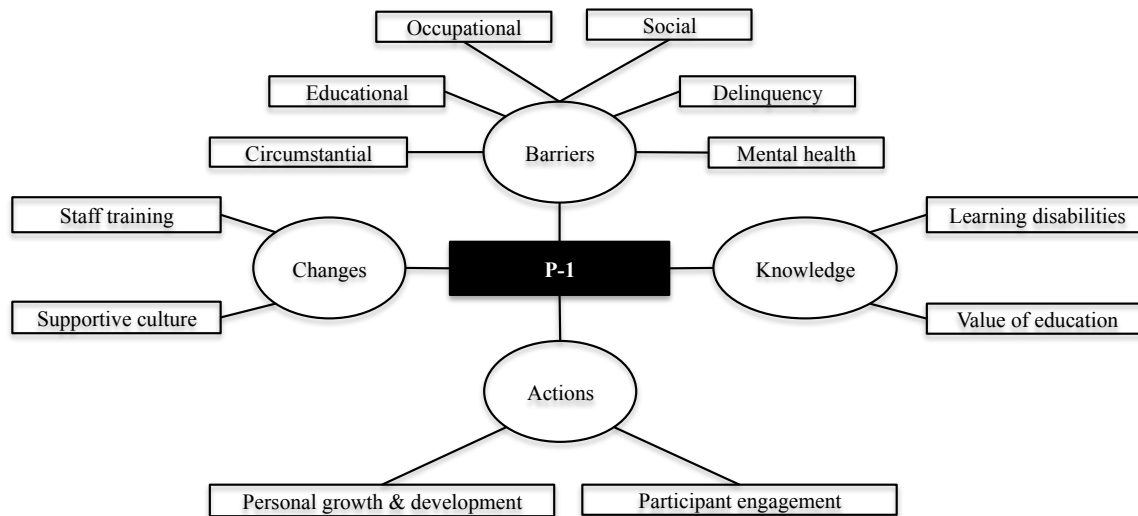


Figure 4.12. Final thematic map of interview with practitioner one.

Barriers. P-1 was first presented with the unfolding matrix data collected during the practitioner's focus group. After confirming the acquisition of recorded information, a discussion ensued about the taxonomic analysis of participant barriers as perceived by practitioners.

Referring to the taxonomy of barriers, P-1 expressed:

I think that where you have them grouped is absolutely pretty accurate. Yeah, I agree.

Yeah, I think it makes sense. I can't think of anything that we discussed that's outlined there that isn't addressed on this.

However, P-1 did share some of the barriers could be included in *multiple categories*. When prompted to provide an example, P-1 said:

I think there's a lot of them that tie in both educationally and socially that go hand in hand. Some of the things like the lack of independence. A lot of that is social for sure, but some of it is the culture of the education programs... I guess with social skills, I could see that going back and forth depending on what kind of education. Because a lot of the individuals that I exactly work with are sometimes put into classrooms that don't allow for the development of these social skills and things. I know that for sure that does belong with the social aspect of it. But I think that there is something educational relation with that too.

As P-1 mentioned, some of the barriers could exist within multiple categories. This initial feedback provided the researcher with further insight and P-1 was therefore encouraged to continue assessing where this would also be applicable as the interview ensued.

The interviewee was then asked to consider any additional perceived participant barriers that were not identified during the focus group. The response was:

No. I thought about that a lot too. The ones that we see pretty consistently have been addressed on here for sure. The ones that really, that I think stand out for sure are really in the social and educational aspects for the most part. A little bit with things that circumstantial as well but those are really the main ones that we face a lot with our program. I think that those are pretty well addressed. I took some time afterwards too to speak with [another staff member], who attended it with me, just to see if there's anything that we thought was maybe not mentioned in there. I tried to get [another staff member] feedback as well. I think that we covered everything that we talked about.

Accordingly, P-1 confirmed the majority of perceived barriers facing participants during participation were mentioned during the practitioner's focus group. From P-1's perspective the

most prevalent participant challenges were associated with social, educational, and circumstantial barriers.

Knowledge. After the discussion of barriers, P-1 reviewed the knowledge taxonomy and was asked to comment. In reference to educational barriers, P-1 shared:

*I think with **learning disabilities** too, one of the big issues that we ran into is with the awareness portion of it, not only that sometimes that people are unaware of what their learning disability is or how to adjust, but really how to speak about it to an employer and know when to disclose it, when not to disclose it, those things, too. That's a big portion of it because a lot of times people were either have either been told their whole lives not to say anything about it or they may have been told, no, you have to tell an employer about it. I think that a lot of what we go through is trying to coach when you should disclose it, if you should disclose it at all. I think that that's a big part of the awareness, too.*

P-1 believed knowing how and when participants should disclose or not disclose their learning disabilities was pertinent knowledge for youth to possess when engaging employers for job opportunities. Participants needed the knowledge to determine timing of disclosure, if at all. P-1 added, *They probably do have some learning disability that **they don't know how to talk about.***

When asked to provide an example about what the program could do to provide increased knowledge to participants for overcoming their multitude of barriers, P-1 continued to reflect on learning disabilities. P-1 said, *Unfortunately, there's a lot of services that they're missing out on or just resources that they're not utilizing. **A lot of it is us informing them.*** As suggested by P-1, more could be done to provide participants with knowledge about services and resources that are available for participants facing particular educational barriers.

Similarly, P-1 admitted the need for on-site subject matter expertise as evidenced by the following comments:

*A lot of what we're doing too sometimes is sending our participants to different locations to get those kind of services. **I think that ideally if we could have a say, somebody that can be certified to evaluate people and maybe give a diagnosis on-site, that's going to help our population I think if we had that on-site, that would be probably the biggest.***

Rather than referring participants to off-site locations for needed knowledge, P-1 suggested programs have personnel that are certified experts for addressing certain needs. Although programs are limited with their personnel budgets to hire such specialists, P-1 recommended **additional training** for incumbent staff in order to gain a better understanding of addressing predominant participant barriers. *If we started incorporating that a little bit more **instead of relying on others to give that information**, I think that's probably a big disconnect that we're losing out on*, P-1 shared.

Upon checking in with the interviewee about staff being provided the necessary training to possess the knowledge for addressing particular obstacles, P-1 added, *If we can do that, personally, pass that knowledge to them to help them instead of just referring them elsewhere, **if we could do that then that would ideally be the best suited for the youth.***

Actions. P-1 was presented with a third taxonomy about the actions participants needed to take to overcome their barriers. After taking a moment to assess the taxonomic analysis of actions, P-1 expressed, *I think it's pretty well covered*. Referring to staff's lack of communication with participants, P-1 mentioned, *I think one of the things too that **we don't really focus on enough is informing our participants***. Rather than considering the actions of

participants, P-1 reflected on what action the programs needed to take to improve assistance to youth.

Being redirected to the actions of participants, P-1 alluded to the educational barrier of academic deficits. Besides their engagement with educational institutions, P-1 suggested participants reach out to program staff for additional support.

*A lot of times I feel like **they still need that additional encouragement.** Although they're doing those things, **I think maybe even coming back to us because the ones that we've seen to be successful are constantly reporting to us,** how they're doing and things that are going well, things that aren't going well. Because if we know what's not going well, we can also provide that tutoring to them. I think that's part of what they need to do as well. **We see a lot of people go to the classes that unfortunately still aren't successful.** I think that that's what I've realized is a lot of it is, **they'll go to the classes but not really express themselves to us** to say, 'Although I'm doing this, this is what I'm still falling behind on.*

Confirming this perspective, P-1 added, *It's a pretty common thing, **the ones that aren't successful are typically the ones that we don't really hear from.***

P-1 also discussed a lack of independence as a significant social barrier impeding participant success in programs, as demonstrated by the following perspective:

*The **independence one is a tough one for us a lot of times too** because we'll have youth and young adults that really, **they want to be independent and they try to be independent but no matter what they do, it seems mom or dad decides or whoever is caring for them wants to take that independence away from them** and speak on their behalf and do things.*

Parents not empowering their children to make their own choices consequently prevented participants from experiencing personal growth.

P-1 was then asked to share a success story in which a participant took the necessary action to overcome a particular barrier, whether it was a lack of independence or a different one altogether. One successful youth P-1 recalled, *Got into some bad habits with **drug abuse** and with **homelessness** and a few things like that too.* Nonetheless, the youth reached out to staff and experienced the following:

*The first thing that we made him do was to really do some **self-evaluation and identify what his barriers were.** He had to be **completely honest** with us or else we really couldn't help him. **He told us really his whole story.***

After sharing his situation with the staff, the participant was provided with available services from the program. For addressing the youth's needs outside the scope of the program's abilities, staff provided him with referrals to agencies that could address certain necessities. The participant took action accordingly. Commenting about why P-1 believed the youth overcame his barriers and eventually got employed, P-1 said, *All the great things happened I think because of the fact that **the first step was him just deciding that he wanted to do something about the barriers and identify it.*** Accordingly, the actions of taking initiative, disclosing personal barriers with honesty, and following up with guidance provided by staff, led this particular participant to success.

Subsequently, the researcher asked the interviewee about what out-of-school youth workforce development programs could do to enhance these types of successes based on participant actions. P-1 responded with:

I think that the biggest thing that we have to do program-wise is to break that... I think that we should be a little bit more strict of what we offer initially as opposed to saying, when the youth comes in and says, 'Oh, I don't have transportation.' Our immediate response typically is, 'Well we can provide you with transportation to get here, to get here, to get here or whatever.' I think that we'd probably need to have a more firm policy by saying, 'Let's see what you can come up with. Let's see if you can... let's see what you would do in your situation if you don't have any, if we didn't have funding or whatever the case is.' Because I think that breaking that mold is going to help a lot too.

P-1 suggested the program not be so haste in providing services without first expecting participants to take their own initiative. This expectation of personal growth and development was perceived a beneficial action the program could take to assist participants in their efforts towards success.

Changes. Lastly, P-1 reviewed the taxonomy of recommended changes to out-of-school youth workforce development programs. *Peer-to-peer support* between staff from other programs was the first recommendation of changes proposed. Referring to P-1's program in particular, the interviewee shared, *I think that's something that we as an organization that [program] have not done in the capacity that we really should be doing because it's such a powerful way to help.* Later, P-1 added:

We're all working for the same goal. It's not that there's any competitive nature against each other. But I feel like we always need to do a little bit better where we're working together a little bit more. I know it's always encouraged, but for whatever reason we all just stay in our bubble sometimes.

Reinforcing a supportive culture by establishing mutually beneficial relationships between practitioners would influence the system at-large in producing success outcomes for the various programs. Adversely, silos within the system that avoid sharing best practices with one another hinder the system from experiencing overall success outcomes.

Staff training was another change P-1 suggested. As mentioned earlier, P-1 often times felt staff were unequipped to address certain participant barriers. For example, P-1 shared:

*I like that with the staff training and development because a lot of times, we as staff will notice social skills that are inappropriate. But **a lot of times, we may not know how to talk about it, or how to coach on that.** I think that's absolutely something that we should implement a little bit more.*

This practitioner believed enhancing staff's abilities was critical for helping participants navigate their geography of barriers. Affirming the significance of providing this training to staff, P-1 expressed:

I think a lot of the changes that I typically think about are more training aspects... I feel like a lot of the things that I think about are probably like, I wish I knew how to do this or I wish I knew somebody on our staff that could do this a little bit more effectively.

In summary, and from P-1's perspective, changes that would facilitate greater success outcomes include peer-to-peer relationships between practitioners from the various programs and additional trainings to develop subject matter expertise. These two practices in particular would provide the out-of-school youth workforce development system with increased placement rates in employment and/or postsecondary education.

Practitioner two.

Figure 4.13 reflects a final thematic map based on an interview with a second practitioner (P-2). P-2 referred to circumstantial, social, educational, and delinquent barriers throughout the discussion. The only internal barrier mentioned was associated with mental health. Overcoming these categorical barriers included subcategories of knowledge as related to social and legal awareness and understanding the value of education. Subcategories of actions involved staff engagement and the personal growth and development of participants. Recommended subcategories of changes revolved around staffing, suitability of participants, and a supportive culture.

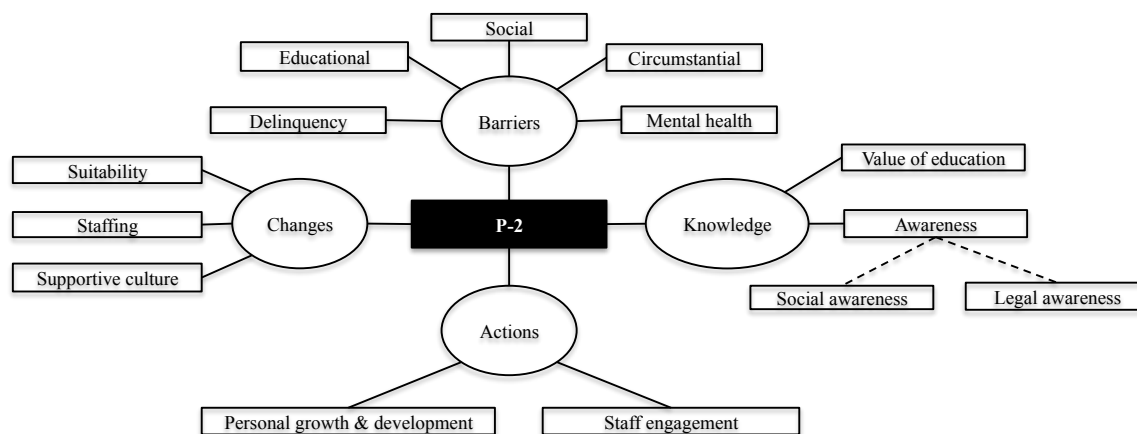


Figure 4.13. Final thematic map of interview with practitioner two.

Barriers. As with previous interviews, P-2 was initially shown the data collected during the staff's focus group. Thereafter, P-2 was presented with the taxonomy of barriers. Similar to P-1's input, P-2 also suggested some of the barriers could be included in multiple categories as evidenced by the comment, *I think a few of them could maybe just be in more than one category,*

but other than that, it looks good to me. Discussing it further, the researcher continued to realize particular barriers could be dually categorized based on their impact on participants.

After confirming this point, P-2 continued with assessing the taxonomy of barriers and specifically drew attention to the barriers for which knowledge, actions, and change exemplars were not captured due to time constraints. Although the focus group had mentioned exemplars for all the other *main key barriers*, P-2 stated:

*Definitely, even though we didn't get a chance to go more in depth about it, but these last three are also really important, especially the **mental illness**. I think we've had quite a few come through that are just unable to get the help or be diagnosed because they didn't have the resources or the people in their lives that cared.*

Undiagnosed mental illness was evidently a major impediment for participants from P-2's point of view. According to P-2, this was compounded by the dearth of resources and support systems available to participants.

Knowledge. Following the discussion about barriers, P-2 evaluated the graphical taxonomy of knowledge as related to overcoming barriers. Referencing participants' understanding of the value of their education, P-2 mentioned:

Some of them don't realize, or question the importance of this piece of paper... I don't want a piece of paper to define me, is how they kind of explain it, which is interesting. I would have thought that they all would know. I thought that's why they're part of the program, to get this high school diploma or GED, but yet they have problems with it defining them.

P-2 assumed participants would understand the importance of an educational certificate (i.e., high school diploma or its general equivalency). P-2's perception was that many, if not all, of the

participants joined the programs with a primary goal of completing their secondary education. Moreover, P-2 attributed their lack of educational motivation to how participants defined themselves.

P-2 also perceived circumstantial barriers as substantial obstacles for some participants. In particular, P-2 stated, *I think with the living environment and similar surroundings, the biggest concern with this subject matter is that **so many of these young people don't know what the norm is, and what not the norm is.*** P-2 believed the participants needed to become increasingly aware of societal norms in order to overcome a lack thereof.

Similarly, P-2 perceived a lack of paying attention to their criminal backgrounds prevented some participants from being successful in the programs. P-2 shared, *So many of them have no idea what their record is... I think a lot of times **they ignore what has happened in the past. They think it's just disappeared and gone away, when it hasn't.*** Ignorance and/or denial of their delinquent backgrounds kept some participants from dealing with their past. According to P-2, it was necessary participants be aware of their criminal histories in order to address them proactively before they inevitably impacted successful participation in the programs.

Continuing on the topic of knowledge, P-2 was asked to provide an example of witnessing a participant(s) overcoming a particular barrier based on knowledge they possessed. Referring to the barrier of substance abuse, P-2 shared:

*We've had three young men that come to mind, who have done really well... I think just **knowing that it's important to be drug and alcohol free, in order to work.** I think a lot of them just don't understand, or a lot of them think, *Oh, it's just alcohol, or It's just marijuana, it's not a big deal, but **just really realizing, it is.*** You can't be drunk or high on a work site, in order to be employed or maintain being employed. They have to be*

sober. ***I think that's not common knowledge to everyone. I think that they've really learned, This is important, and if I want to be part of this program, and I want to stay employed, I need to maintain a drug- and alcohol-free life.***

P-2 suggested participants who possessed *common knowledge* about being drug-free, were generally more successful at gaining and maintaining employment.

In efforts to improve the knowledge-base of out-of-school youth participating in workforce development programs, ongoing staff engagement was critical, according to P-2. Alluding back to the aforementioned delinquent, educational, and social barriers, P-2 expressed, *You can't just like the first day talk about drug and alcohol... **It has to be something that we do constantly, throughout the program,** as well as talking about the importance of high school diploma or GED, the support of family and friends.* Consistently checking-in with participants about their barriers and the progress being made to overcome them, or lack thereof, was considered a key practice for improving outcomes.

Actions. During the actions taxonomy review, P-2 once again expressed concern about participants' lack of valuing education. This required personal growth and development on the behalf of participants as students. For example, P-2 stated:

*I'm just going to put it out there, because **this is a serious problem with all our participants,** with the action that they need to take in order to receive the GED or high school diploma, is **learn study habits.** None of them know how to study... **Learning how to study,** that would be an action.*

Developing study habits and using them was vital for a participant's educational success. A lack of earnest effort on the other hand, resulted in premature dropouts from the programs, based on P-2's perspective.

Regarding the circumstantial barrier of homelessness, learning how to communicate their needs was also a matter of personal growth and development. *I think a lot of times **they don't speak up and communicate and ask for help***, P-2 said. Without knowing what their needs were, staff were limited with which services and resources they could provide to participants.

From an action-oriented perspective, P-2 was asked to provide an example of a successful participant. Since the program served pregnant and/or parenting participants, P-2 shared about an individual who became pregnant during participation.

*One young lady a few years ago **got pregnant in our program**. She did not have a supportive, or **wasn't in a good household**. She was really looking to move, to get out of her situation, with her baby that was coming. **Because she shared and was open and communicated with us what was going on in her personal situation**, we were able to look up resources... In this case with her, because she was already in our program, she was able to get her own apartment, shared with another young lady in a similar situation. We actually got her in one of these apartments, with another young lady. **If she hadn't taken action and communicated with us what was going on in her life, we wouldn't have been able to seek out those resources and help her get out of the situation that she was in, and into a better situation.***

Because the participant communicated her needs, staff members were able to provide resources accordingly. She was therefore, able to continue successfully in the program instead of dropping out because of her circumstances.

As far as what the program could do to develop action-oriented participants P-2 suggested emphasizing a supportive culture within the program.

*I think the most important thing, I think, for any program to help these young people get over these barriers is **just making sure that they really trust you**. I think that's just **building your own personal relationship with your clientele, so that they can communicate and ask for help when it's needed**. You can't really help them get over these barriers if you don't know what's going ... What kind of barriers they have, so just **lots of communication and earning that trust**.*

In working with these disconnected youth, a genuine human connection was of utmost importance. Without it, participants wouldn't be inclined to open up and be honest about their struggles. P-2 continued sharing:

*The population that we're working with, **they're not going to ask for help or let you in in their personal life**. ... They don't like to talk about their personal selves, the majority of them. It's, I think, the staff's duty to really do that, **focus on that one-on-one counseling, and building those relationships, so that we can help figure out what it is that's their main barrier**.*

These trust and rapport factors were essential for the program staff to encourage and sustain action-oriented participants.

Changes. The final taxonomy P-2 reviewed was regarding changes the program could make to assist out-of-school youth in navigating their geography of barriers while participating in workforce development programs. To begin with, P-2 referred back to educational barriers and mentioned the importance of programs staffing effective academic instructors. Specifically, SM-2 shared:

*One thing that [program] or any other program can do to make it that much better for the youth is obviously, **if they have the ability to make sure that they have a teacher that***

really obviously can teach the young people, but maybe there are teachers that just have a better training or ability to work with different types of youth. Making sure that, if a program can, that's not always so easy, find someone that really sparks, makes that connection with that ... For example, our youth 18 to 24, so someone that has background in working with young adults, and especially those who are on a different pathway, that have dropped out in the past. They just need a different kind of attention and help. I think if you can find that teacher, that would definitely help with overcoming that barrier of no GED or high school diploma.

P-2 perceived certain educational instructors were better equipped and more effective teaching out-of-school youth. As such, the practitioner believed instructors familiar with these populations would make a difference regarding their educational attainments. *I think different populations of people maybe need something different when it comes to the teachers*, P-2 said. Later, P-2 confirmed this belief when adding, *The biggest thing would be finding that dynamic teacher that would really touch them... really ignite a fire of education and wanting to learn.*

Regarding the lack of support from family and friends and what changes the program could make to increase the number of participants overcoming social barriers, P-2 said, *I think something that programs can do, and maybe we don't do enough, is connecting with some of these family members... I don't think we communicate enough... I think having more communication with those family and friends.* Accordingly, increasing communication with participant's family and friends would reinforce our goals of having a supportive culture. When there's parental engagement in particular, *We just find that they do better in the program.*

In concluding the interview, P-2 was asked to consider a primary practice that would significantly influence greater participant successes in out-of-school youth workforce development programs. Implying suitability, SM-2 expressed:

*The one thing that's really important... is making sure when you're going through applications and the orientation and the challenge, **who is really ready to make a change, and to make it happen... Is this client going to be suitable for this program? Is this program really going to help them?***

Consequently, it was important to take into consideration that not all youth were suitable for the program and vice versa. Due to limited funds, programs could only enroll a designated number of youth. Therefore, the participant selection process was key in influencing positive outcomes.

A Conceptual Model of Participant Success from Perceptions of Practitioners

The practitioner's focus group and interviews provided data leading to the development of the practitioner's conceptual model of participant success, which included six categorical barriers. The categorical barriers the practitioners model has in common with all three programs includes educational (5 barriers), circumstantial (3 barriers), and mental health (1 barrier). With the exception of GSN, it also shared social (6 barriers) and delinquency (2 barriers) categorical barriers in common with HSN and YBLV. However, the practitioner's model does not include an occupational categorical barrier, whereas the models for GSN and YBLV do. Furthermore, it's the only model that includes a sexual category (1 barrier). Nonetheless, the practitioner's conceptual model of participant success also replicates the similar explanation to that of the programmatic models. Chapter 5 will focus on an in-depth cross-case analysis of the categorical barriers and subcategories of knowledge, actions, and changes between participants and practitioners.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings on participant success from the perspective of WIA out-of-school youth workforce development program participants and practitioners. It provided answers to the research question of how successful out-of-school youth navigated their geography of barriers while participating in specific WIA youth workforce development programs. For each of the categorical barriers, participants and practitioners revealed the knowledge and actions required for overcoming the barriers, along with changes that would positively influence greater participant successes. Subsequently, conceptual models of participant success per program were discussed. An additional conceptual model of participant success was also discussed based on the perspectives of practitioners. In the following chapter, a cross-case analysis among the three programs is discussed in-depth, along with the similarities and differences between the programs and practitioners. This provides the opportunity to reflect on the data so a broader interpretation of the overall study can emerge.

CHAPTER 5

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

Introduction

This research investigated how successful out-of-school youth navigated their geography of barriers while participating in WIA youth workforce development programs in Southern Nevada. The primary research question of this study was:

1. How did successful out-of-school youth navigate their geography of barriers while participating in WIA youth workforce development programs?
 - a. What barriers to success did completers experience in WIA youth workforce development programs?
 - b. What was the knowledge completers possessed in order to overcome the identified barriers?
 - c. What were the actions completers took that enabled them to overcome the identified barriers?
 - d. What changes did completers think would reduce or eliminate the barriers to success?

Yin (2009) and Lapan and Armfield (2009) agree that a cross-case analysis probes whether different cases appear to share similarities and/or differences. Accordingly, this chapter begins by presenting a cross-case analysis between each of the program's categorical barriers and subcategories of knowledge, actions, and changes. Then, the researcher compares and contrasts the program's categorical barriers and subcategories of knowledge, actions, and changes, with those of the practitioners.

Cross-Case Analysis Among Programs

As a multiple-case study, three WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs served as cases for this study, which included Goodwill of Southern Nevada (GSN), HELP of Southern Nevada (HSN), and YouthBuild Las Vegas (YBLV). Yin (2009), suggests a cross-case analysis among cases can be developed utilizing tables to display data from individual cases rendering a uniform framework. Accordingly, Padilla's (2009) conceptual framework, along with its methods and procedures, was applied to this study as described in Chapter 3. Table 5.1 displays the categorical barriers pertaining to each program in alphabetical order.

Table 5.1

Categorical barriers associated with program year 2014 WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs from the perspective of participants.

Categorical Barrier	GSN	HSN	YBLV
Circumstantial	✓	✓	✓
Delinquency		✓	✓
Educational	✓	✓	✓
Mental health	✓	✓	✓
Occupational	✓		✓
Social		✓	✓

Comparisons and Contrasts of Categorical Barriers Among Programs

Six categorical barriers were combined across the three cases, with three mutual categories among the programs. These included circumstantial, educational, and mental health categorical barriers. On the other hand, HSN had two in common with YBLV, which were delinquency and social categorical barriers. In addition, GSN had the occupational categorical barrier in common with YBLV.

Although programs had either all three or just two categorical barriers in common, each category represented multiple barriers therein. As such, the majority of unique barriers within a

category varied among programs. However, the data noted specific similar barriers between them. The following is a comparison and contrast within each categorical barrier among the three programs.

Circumstantial barriers.

The study resulted in 17 total circumstantial barriers among the three programs. GSN had a subtotal of nine, HSN had four, and YBLV had four. In particular, transportation was a circumstantial barrier confronting all three programs. Homelessness was a shared circumstantial barrier between HSN and YBLV. Beyond transportation and homelessness, circumstantial barriers were unique to individual programs. For instance, GSN faced specific barriers associated with *health, hearing impaired, moving*, etc. (see Figure 4.1 for a complete list). HSN was the only program to identify *domestic violence* and living in the *desert* as circumstantial barriers; *Foster care* and *injuries* were unique to YBLV

Delinquency barriers.

Since GSN did not identify any delinquency barriers, there were a combined total of five such barriers between HSN and YBLV, two of which were similar. These included substance abuse, which included *weed, alcohol*, and *drugs* as one combined barrier, and judicial barriers, which were separated as *parole, court issues*, and *the law*. *Gambling* was a specific delinquency barrier mentioned solely by HSN.

Educational barriers.

A total of eight educational barriers were noted for GSN, HSN, and YBLV. Amongst the eight, no consistent educational barrier was found among the three programs. However, language barriers were mutual for GSN (e.g., *sign language* and *foreign language*) and HSN (e.g., *don't know English*). Besides not knowing English, HSN did not have any additional educational

barriers. In addition, GSN's educational barriers were more affiliated with their academic challenges as current students, such as passing tests and negotiating their IEPs. YBLV participants on the other hand, struggled with reengaging their education and managing its demands accordingly.

Mental health barriers.

Overall, the programs identified 11 mental health barriers, with no singular mutual mental health barrier noted among the three programs. However, *anger* was a common barrier between HSN and YBLV. Beyond *anger*, each program faced unique mental health barriers. GSN for instance, faced *mental disabilities* and *mental scars from past experiences* as barriers. HSN distinctly dealt with *laziness*, *depression*, *ignorance*, and *shyness*. YBLV on the other hand, faced mental health barriers associated with *lack of motivation*, *self-esteem*, and the impact of *rumors*.

Occupational barriers.

HSN did not recognize any occupational barriers. However, between GSN and YBLV three such barriers were identified, none of which were mutual. Instead, GSN's sole occupational barrier was *desperate to work*. YBLV's two unique barriers were related to working during program participation and conflicts between participants during the program's work experiences.

Social barriers.

No social barriers were identified for GSN. Nevertheless, a total of 10 were identified by HSN and YBLV, with three in common. These were *family*, *pregnancy*, and *children*. The unique barriers for HSN also included *friends*, *lack of network*, and *lack of support*. For YBLV, unique social barriers involved *communication* and *relationships*.

Comparisons and Contrasts of Subcategories for Knowledge, Actions, and Changes Among Programs

The following section reflects similarities and differences for subcategories of knowledge, actions, and changes, among the three programs. The analysis was based on the categorical barriers identified above and illustrates the navigational expertise for overcoming them.

Circumstantial barriers.

Knowledge. The three programs did not share a common subcategory of knowledge for addressing circumstantial barriers. However, a couple of common knowledge subcategories were noted between two programs. For instance, both GSN and HSN shared knowing to be aware and prepared as mutual subcategories of knowledge. Similarly, GSN and YBLV shared knowing about resources for addressing circumstantial barriers. With HSN, YBLV had knowing about available assistance and support as a common subcategory of knowledge for navigating barriers related to circumstances.

As distinct subcategories of knowledge, GSN had knowing about personal disabilities, various ways to communicate, special training to address specific circumstantial barriers, and communicating with staff about your circumstances. HSN had knowing about positive self-worth and unacceptable situations for its participants to address their circumstantially related barriers. Lastly, the unique knowledge subcategories needed for YBLV participants were associated with knowing the consequences associated with certain circumstances and knowledge about public/private transportation.

Actions. Two actions subcategories were found in common amongst the three programs. These included planning/preparing and seeking resources to successfully address circumstantial barriers. Doing research and finding alternative ways to communicate were unique actions

subcategories to GSN. Likewise, developing a vision for your life and setting boundaries were distinctive to HSN. Avoiding setbacks was exclusive to YBLV.

Changes. Providing information/resources was the only common subcategory of change among all three programs addressing circumstantial barriers; each program having unique subcategories of changes to address the barriers. There were two for GSN, which included providing financial assistance and assistance in general for addressing specific circumstantial needs. Providing specific courses/groups to address certain circumstantial barriers and availability of staff were unique subcategories to HSN. For YBLV it was providing specific incentives to assist participants in overcoming particular circumstantial barriers.

Delinquency barriers.

Knowledge. Since delinquency related barriers were absent for GSN, all three programs did not share a subcategory of knowledge in common addressing delinquency barriers. On the other hand, HSN and YBLV shared two mutual subcategories of knowledge. These included knowing to seek alternatives and knowing about consequences as associated with delinquency barriers. Knowing to have a vision for yourself and knowing to set boundaries were unique to HSN, where as knowing about a program's supportive atmosphere was exclusive to YBLV in addressing the barriers.

Actions. No consistent actions subcategories addressing delinquency barriers were noted across the programs, since GSN did not identify any such barriers. On the other hand, HSN and YBLV did, but they were unique to each program respectively. HSN for example, included subcategories of actions with regard to seeking assistance/alternatives, developing a vision for yourself, and avoiding delinquent behaviors. YBLV's subcategories of actions involved taking personal responsibility and communicating with staff about delinquent related barriers.

Changes. No common subcategories of changes were found amongst all three programs since GSN did not identify any delinquency barriers. Although HSN and YBLV did have subcategories addressing such barriers, they did not share any in common. For HSN, changes included providing delinquent friendly resources and being lenient with regard to delinquent behaviors. YBLV on the other hand, involved mandating consequences for delinquent behaviors, providing specific courses for addressing delinquent barriers, and promoting the program to the law enforcement community.

Educational barriers.

Knowledge. Besides HSN not identifying any educational subcategories of knowledge, there were also no common subcategories between GSN and YBLV. Those unique to GSN included educational self-awareness, institutional awareness and knowledge about personal educational competencies. For YBLV, the subcategories were comprised of knowing to have a personal vision for your education and knowing to be persistent with its associated goals in order to overcome personal educational barriers.

Actions. The only common educational subcategory of actions were between GSN and YBLV, which included seeking assistance to address educational barriers. GSN's subcategories exclusively included doing research and ongoing practice as actions to overcome barriers associated with a participant's education. Subcategories unique to YBLV were related to self-management and making adjustments to navigate educational barriers. There were no subcategories of actions for HSN.

Changes. GSN and YBLV were the only programs with subcategories of changes addressing educational barriers, but these were unique to each respectively. The former included providing information/resources and specific courses for mitigating educational barriers. The

only subcategory of change for YBLV was offering alternative learning opportunities for participants.

Mental health barriers.

Knowledge. No common knowledge subcategories were found among the three programs addressing mental health barriers. However, YBLV shared one common subcategory of knowledge with GSN and another with HSN. With regard to the former, self-awareness/reflection was a mutual subcategory. In common with HSN, YBLV had knowing the need for personal growth and development as a common subcategory of knowledge addressing mental health barriers.

Beyond those, each knowledge subcategory was unique to individual programs. GSN for instance, and because of its unique barriers with disabilities, it was important to know the need for being adaptable in order to overcome them. Important knowledge for HSN on the other hand, had to do with knowing about consequences as associated with mental health barriers, knowing to accept yourself regardless of mental health issues, and knowing you don't have to deal with personal mental health barriers on your own. A particular subcategory of knowledge for YBLV was knowing to set emotional and mental boundaries for yourself.

Actions. No common actions subcategories addressing mental health barriers were noted among the three programs. Nonetheless, HSN shared one subcategory in common with GSN and another one in common with YBLV. With regard to the former, both programs shared seeking alternative outlets as actions addressing mental health barriers. In common with YBLV, HSN shared the subcategory of communication as an action for overcoming the barriers. An exclusive actions subcategory for GSN was seeking understanding and acceptance about mental health barriers faced by participants. Setting boundaries and developing a vision for yourself were

unique to HSN, whereas processing mental health barriers mentally and physically were exclusive subcategories of actions for YBLV.

Changes. The only common subcategory of changes for all three programs was providing specific courses/activities to address mental health barriers. GSN's subcategories also included providing financial assistance for addressing such barriers. For HSN, changes involved greater staff engagement with participants. In addition to the common subcategory of providing specific courses/activities, YBLV's subcategories of changes included providing mentoring and additional resources to participants for overcoming mental health barriers.

Occupational barriers.

Knowledge. HSN did not identify any occupational barriers. Thus no consistent subcategory of knowledge addressing occupational barriers occurred amongst the three programs. Although GSN and YBLV did recognize such barriers, no mutual knowledge subcategories were noted between the two. Instead, knowledge for overcoming their respective occupational barriers, were unique to each program. For instance, knowledge about job readiness and professionalism were specific to HSN, whereas knowledge about time management and interpersonal/environmental awareness were particular subcategories for YBLV for successfully navigating occupational barriers.

Actions. Since HSN did not identify any actions addressing occupational barriers, no mutual subcategories were shared across the programs. Although GSN and YBLV did recognize occupational barriers, they shared no common subcategory of actions for navigating them. GSN's unique subcategories included being persistent, networking, and time management as actions addressing the barriers. Communicating and planning were specific to YBLV for overcoming occupational barriers.

Changes. The three programs shared no joint subcategory of change addressing occupational barriers. Only GSN and YBLV had changes subcategories addressing the barrier. For GSN it was solely increasing the hours allowed for work experiences. Collaborating with employers of participants was one subcategory of change for YBLV. Another involved facilitating unity between participants while on the worksite.

Social barriers.

Knowledge. No joint subcategories of knowledge were shared among the three programs addressing social barriers, since GSN did not recognize any such barriers. However, HSN and YBLV shared two subcategories in common, which included knowing to set social boundaries and knowing to have a vision for yourself regarding your social life.

With regard to distinctive subcategories, knowing about available assistance to address social issues and knowing what expectations to set for yourself socially were exclusive to HSN. Separately, knowing about interpersonal skills, knowing how to manage your time regarding social activities, and knowing the need for a support system, were all unique to YBLV.

Actions. Actions subcategories were not consistent among the programs because GSN did not identify any such barriers. Moreover, no common social subcategories of actions were shared between HSN and YBLV. Instead, those unique to HSN included setting boundaries, developing a vision, seeking alternative support systems, and being persistent for overcoming social barriers. For YBLV subcategories were comprised of taking the action to communicate, taking initiative, and planning/prioritizing in order to navigate socially related barriers.

Changes. GSN did not identify any social barriers, thus any subcategories addressing changes for social barriers were absent. However, amongst the three subcategories of changes between HSN and YBLV, they shared one in common, which was providing resources to address

social barriers. Subcategories for HSN also included providing social activities and mandatory check-ins for participants. YBLV's subcategories of changes also involved facilitating relationships in order to assist participants in navigating their social barriers.

Cross-Case Analysis Between Perspectives of Participants and Practitioners

The following section reflects the similarities and differences between the participant's and practitioner's categorical barriers. It also compares and contrasts the subcategories of knowledge and actions to overcome categorical barriers between the two, along with recommended changes to improve successful exits. To begin this segment of cross-case analysis, Table 5.2 displays the categorical barriers pertaining to each program, including those of the staff, in alphabetical order.

Table 5.2

Categorical barriers associated with program year 2014 WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs from the perspectives of participants and practitioners.

Categorical Barrier	GSN	HSN	YBLV	Staff
Circumstantial	✓	✓	✓	✓
Delinquency		✓	✓	✓
Educational	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mental health	✓	✓	✓	✓
Occupational	✓		✓	
Sexual				✓
Social		✓	✓	✓

Comparisons and Contrasts of Categorical Barriers Between Participants and Practitioners

Amongst the seven categorical barriers above, practitioners shared three in common with all three youth workforce development programs. These included circumstantial barriers, educational barriers, and mental health barriers. On the other hand, practitioners did not identify

any occupational barriers, which were present for GSN and YBLV in particular. Practitioners also added a sexual categorical barrier, which was nonexistent among the three programs.

Nonetheless, each category represented multiple barriers. Although the majority of specific barriers within a category differed, there were specific similarities between the programs barriers and those of practitioners. Following is a comparison and contrast within each categorical barrier between them.

Circumstantial barriers.

Practitioners identified three circumstantial barriers, two of which were also identified by participants. The only barrier it had in common with all three programs was *lack of transportation*. However, practitioners also identified *homelessness* as a circumstantial barrier, which was in common with HSN and YBLV, but not GSN. The *living environment* of participants was the only unique circumstantial barrier identified by practitioners.

Delinquency barriers.

Since GSN did not recognize any delinquency barriers, practitioners did not share a consistent barrier with all three programs. However, the two barriers practitioners did identify were in common with HSN and YBLV. These included *drug and alcohol abuse* and a participant's *offender status*.

Educational barriers.

No common educational barriers were shared between the programs and practitioners. Instead, the latter identified five distinct barriers based on their perspective of participant's educational barriers. These included a *lack of standard high school diploma*, *learning disabilities*, *academic deficits*, *lack of financial education*, and *low education expectations*.

Mental health barriers.

The only mental health barrier practitioners identified was *mental illness*, which was not explicitly common amongst any of the programs. In other words, rather than specifying any particular mental health barriers, practitioners identified *mental illness* in general as a barrier. With the exception of GSN, HSN and YBLV listed specific mental health barriers (e.g., *anger*, *depression*, etc.). GSN on the other hand, referred to *mental scars from past experiences* and *mental disabilities* in general, without indicating any in specifics therein.

Occupational barriers.

Practitioners did not identify any occupational barriers. Therefore, there was nothing in common with the programs regarding this categorical barrier, other than HSN not recognizing any such barriers as well.

Sexual barriers.

Practitioners identified a participant's *alternative sexual lifestyle* as a sexual barrier. However, this was the only categorical barrier that was absent amongst all three programs.

Social barriers.

Practitioners identified six social barriers, two of which were in common with HSN and YBLV, but not GSN, since its participants did not identify any such barriers. Those in common with HSN and YBLV were a *lack of support* and *children*. Besides those, a *lack of social skills*, *lack of a parental figure*, *lack of independence* and *lack of accountability*, were uniquely identified by practitioners as social barriers confronting participants.

Comparisons and Contrasts of Subcategories for Knowledge, Actions, and Changes Between Participants and Practitioners

The following section reflects similarities and differences of knowledge, actions, and changes subcategories between the programs and practitioners. The analysis was based on the

categorical barriers identified by participants and practitioners. It compares and contrasts the navigational expertise for overcoming the categorical barriers.

Circumstantial barriers.

Knowledge. Among the three practitioner's subcategories of knowledge, two were in common with separate programs. In other words, knowing about resources was a mutual subcategory between practitioners, GSN and YBLV. Similarly, knowing to be prepared was a common knowledge subcategory practitioners shared with GSN and HSN. The only subcategory of knowledge for practitioners was participants knowing they have choices regarding their circumstantial barriers.

Actions. Practitioners had three subcategories of actions addressing circumstantial barriers. Seeking resources was the only common subcategory among practitioners and all three programs. Developing a personal vision was an actions subcategory it shared with HSN. Practitioner's only unique subcategory of actions not mentioned by any of the programs was taking initiative to confront circumstantial barriers.

Changes. Providing information/resources to address circumstantial barriers was the only mutual subcategory of changes among all three programs and practitioners. However, practitioners also shared providing assistance for specific needs in common with GSN. The only distinct subcategory of changes from practitioners was providing participants counseling to address certain circumstantial barriers.

Delinquency barriers.

Knowledge. Four practitioner's subcategories of knowledge were found to address delinquency barriers. Although GSN did not identify any such barriers, a common subcategory among practitioners, HSN, and YBLV, was knowing about consequences as related to

delinquency. Knowing to have a personal vision for overcoming these barriers was mutual between HSN and practitioners. Knowing the legal system and about resources therein, were unique subcategories for practitioners with regard to confronting delinquency barriers.

Actions. The only subcategory of actions practitioners shared with any of the programs, and particularly with YBLV, was taking personal responsibility for addressing delinquency barriers. Besides that, the unique subcategories of practitioners included changing your perspective and planning for progress for overcoming delinquency associated barriers.

Changes. The only subcategory of changes practitioners shared in common with any of the programs, and particularly with HSN, was providing resources/information to participants for addressing delinquency barriers. Unique subcategories of changes for practitioners also included providing a supportive culture to the participants specifically facing delinquent barriers.

Educational barriers.

Knowledge. No specific common knowledge subcategories were addressing educational barriers between practitioners and the programs. Although awareness was common between GSN and practitioners, the types of awareness between the two differentiated them. The former referred to self-awareness (e.g., *know your strengths and weaknesses, know how much stress you can handle*, etc.), whereas the practitioners' subcategory of academic awareness was associated with *knowing your academic reality, knowing the difference between a standard diploma versus an Option 2*, etc. Similarly, the practitioner's financial awareness subcategory referred to *knowing about financial literacy* and *knowing education's impact on the future* with regard to economic stability. Furthermore, the practitioner's subcategories of knowledge also uniquely included *knowing about support/resources* and *knowing about setting mental boundaries*, which were not identified by any of the programs.

Actions. Since no educational subcategories of actions were developed for HSN due to a lack of actions exemplars, seeking assistance was the only subcategory practitioners had in common with GSN and YBLV. Aside from that, the practitioner's additional unique subcategories of actions were taking personal responsibility for your education, setting emotional and mental boundaries, and financial planning, in order to successfully navigate the barriers associated with education.

Changes. Providing educational alternatives to navigate barriers associated with education was the only mutual subcategory of change practitioners shared specifically with YBLV. An additional changes subcategory from practitioners also included creating greater awareness about the programs in order to garner increased support for participants facing educational barriers.

Mental health barriers.

Knowledge, actions, and changes. Although practitioners identified mental illness as a mental health barrier, no subcategories of knowledge, actions, and changes, developed as a result of nonexistent exemplars from practitioners for each construct. Therefore, it did not share any mutual subcategories with the programs for addressing mental health barriers.

Occupational barriers.

Knowledge, actions, and changes. As with HSN, practitioners did not identify any occupational barriers. Hence, there was nothing in common with the programs regarding subcategories of knowledge, actions, and changes for overcoming these barriers.

Sexual barriers

Knowledge, actions, and changes. Practitioners identified a participant's *alternative sexual lifestyle* as a sexual barrier. However, due to time constraints for capturing knowledge,

actions, and changes exemplars, there were no subcategories developed for addressing this barrier. Moreover, this was the only categorical barrier that was nonexistent for all three programs. Making any comparisons between programs and practitioners was therefore non-applicable.

Social barriers.

Knowledge. Four practitioner's subcategories of knowledge were found addressing social barriers. Knowing to have a personal vision was in common with HSN and YBLV. Another mutual subcategory practitioners shared with HSN was knowing what expectations to set for yourself in order to navigate these barriers. Practitioners and YBLV shared knowing about the need for support in common. Besides those common subcategories, the practitioner's unique subcategories also included knowing about available resources and the need for personal growth and development to overcome social barriers.

Actions. No consistent subcategory of actions were noted in common among all programs and practitioners for navigating social barriers. However, the subcategory of being persistent to address these barriers was mutual between practitioners and HSN. Communicating about their social barriers was a common subcategory between YBLV and practitioners. Two unique subcategories of actions for practitioners included taking personal responsibility and being a positive example for navigating social barriers.

Changes. Although GSN did not identify any social barriers, staff had two separate subcategories of changes for addressing social barriers in common with the other two programs. A mutual subcategory among practitioners, HSN, and YBLV, was providing resources to participants so they could overcome social barriers. Practitioners and HSN also had increased staff engagement and/or mandatory check-ins with participants as a common subcategory of

change. Two unique subcategories for the practitioners also included providing specific training/courses to address certain social barriers and emphasizing success stories for participants.

Summary

This chapter presented a cross-case analysis among the three programs involved in this study. It included the similarities and differences among categorical barriers and subcategories of knowledge, actions, and changes, from each of the programs. Following the cross-case analysis among the three programs, the researcher compared and contrasted the program's categorical barriers and subcategories of knowledge, actions, and changes, with those of practitioners.

The concluding chapter will present a local conceptual model of participant success for WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs based on the integrated perspectives of participants and practitioners. It will also discuss recommendations as related to policy and practice based on the model. In addition, it will offer recommendations for how programs can be designed to more effectively serve out-of-school youth and provide them with the expertise to successfully navigate their geography of barriers. Lastly, the concluding chapter will discuss implications for future research concerning the success of participants in WIA workforce development programs.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This research investigated how successful out-of-school youth navigated their geography of barriers while participating in WIA youth workforce development programs in Southern Nevada. The primary research question of this study was:

1. How did successful out-of-school youth navigate their geography of barriers while participating in WIA youth workforce development programs?
 - a. What barriers to success did completers experience in WIA youth workforce development programs?
 - b. What was the knowledge completers possessed in order to overcome the identified barriers?
 - c. What were the actions completers took that enabled them to overcome the identified barriers?
 - d. What changes did completers think would reduce or eliminate the barriers to success?

Accordingly, three local WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs were identified as cases: Goodwill of Southern Nevada; HELP of Southern Nevada; and YouthBuild Las Vegas. Participants and practitioners from these programs participated in focus groups and interviews. Both were familiar with the barriers participants experienced during participation. They were also aware of the knowledge and actions needed to successfully navigate the identified barriers within the “black box” (Padilla, 2009) in order to reach placement in unsubsidized employment or postsecondary education. Furthermore, participants and

practitioners from each of the programs recommended changes to increase participant success outcomes.

Data were collected via the unfolding matrix and interviews and analyzed using taxonomies and thematic analysis, which subsequently developed conceptual models of participant success. The individual conceptual models of participant success provided the basis for a cross-case analysis for WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs in Southern Nevada. Moreover, the analysis also revealed the importance of individualizing programmatic models of participant success. This chapter begins with a presentation and discussion of the local model of participant success derived from this study. Then it presents implications for policy, practice, and further research as related to participant success.

Discussion

There is no single outstanding barrier responsible for impeding the success of participants (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2012), but rather a confluence of barriers (Swanson & Tokar, 1991; Ladany, Melincoff, Constantine, & Love, 1997; Albert & Luzzo, 1999; Deluca, Hutchinson, DeLugt, Beyer, Thornton, Versnel, Chin & Munby, 2010). Accordingly, Gray and Grace (1997) suggested a student success model, which generates local outcomes data, could be developed to address the myriad of barriers participants face and subsequently inform local institutional planning and improvement. Therefore, the importance of developing a local participant success model is that policy, practice, and programmatic initiatives intended to improve participant success will be driven by data that are current, provided by participants and practitioners, and from a local situation (Padilla, 2009). In turn, local data can facilitate local improvements in policy and practice that reduce or eliminate participant success barriers.

Local Conceptual Model of Participant Success

The result of this research offers a specific model that explains the phenomenon of participant success for WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs and can be used as a tool for improving participant success in Southern Nevada (Figure 6.1). The model reflects the integrated views of successful participants and practitioners concerning categorical barriers facing participants and the navigational expertise needed to overcome them while participating in these types of programs.

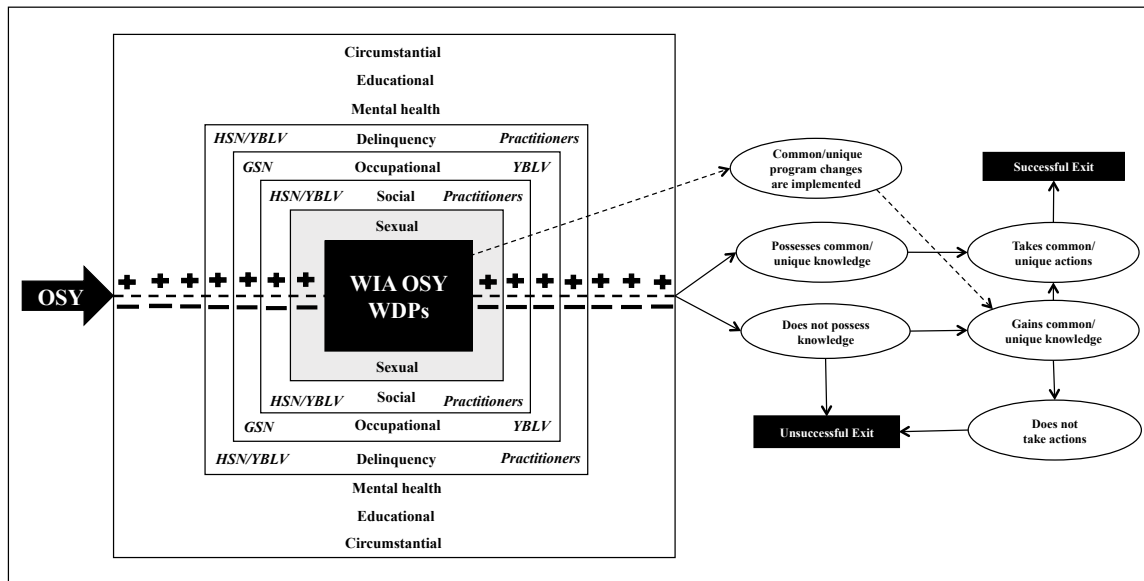


Figure 6.1. Conceptual local model of participant success for WIA out-of-school youth workforce development program in Southern NV.

Barriers.

An out-of-school youth enters the “black box” (Padilla, 2009) of a WIA out-of-school youth workforce development program facing a geography of barriers. Across all programs, and from the perspectives of both participants and practitioners, these included circumstantial, educational, and mental health categorical barriers. Some categorical barriers were program specific and included the views of practitioners, such as delinquency and social categorical

barriers. Occupational barriers only included the experiences of GSN and YBLV participants. On the other hand, the only category absent of any participant perspective was the sexual categorical barrier, which was a perception of practitioners (gray box).

This implies some categorical barriers are consistent across programs, regardless of the populations served, whereas others are program specific and may only impact particular populations. Accordingly, the squares in Figure 6.1 are divided in half by a dashed line to reflect the positive and negative experiences participants encounter during participation, which are represented by plusses (+) and minuses (-). The goals of programs should therefore, include addressing common barriers regardless of population served, but also involve addressing the unique barriers of particular populations. Moreover, since practitioners perceive certain participants face personal unique barriers (e.g., sexual), they should incorporate personalized efforts towards addressing those barriers per participant. In other words, barriers vary population-to-population and participant-to-participant. Some may be addressed as a whole, whereas others need to be addressed individually. Regardless, the aim of programs should be facilitating the positive experiences of every population and every participant.

Knowledge, Actions, and Changes.

Overcoming the barriers and facilitating participant success takes navigational expertise. Accordingly, the subsequent ovals in Figure 6.1 represent the varying levels of common and/or unique knowledge and actions, which increase or decrease based on the individual participant and whether or not changes are implemented. In some cases, participants possess the necessary knowledge for overcoming a particular barrier. On the other hand, those lacking the knowledge need to obtain it via interaction with peers and/or staff. In addition, programs need to make the

necessary changes to provide participants with opportunities to gain the needed knowledge. Once implemented the participant must pursue the knowledge or may otherwise exit unsuccessfully.

Possessing the knowledge alone however, will not suffice for a successful exit. In addition, participants need to take the common and/or unique actions to overcome the barriers once the necessary knowledge is obtained. Doing so results in a successful outcome, whereas inaction may lead to an unsuccessful exit.

Recommendations

Participant Success: Recommendations for Policy.

During this research, there was a transition of the federal workforce legislation from the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA). Nonetheless, the recommendations for federal policy remain applicable to serving out-of-school. Even more so due to the expectation of funding programs based on an out-of-school youth majority (75%).

At the federal level, WIOA section 129(c)(1)(A) mandates that programs receiving funds to serve eligible youth provide an objective assessment of the academic levels, skills levels, and service needs of each participant. The assessment is required to include a review of basic skills, occupational skills, supportive service needs, etc., for the purpose of identifying appropriate services and career pathways for participants. Correspondingly, the Training and Employment Guidance Letter 5-12 (2012) states assessments should include, “identifying and documenting challenges in the youth’s life... in order to determine if the youth needs supportive services” (pp. 4-5).

Unfortunately, the federal legislation only suggests this as an important consideration and thus lacks the emphasis of making it a mandated and prioritized practice. Consequently,

programs may default to a status quo approach when it comes to identifying common and/or unique barriers of participants, which ends up being ineffective. Not to mention addressing them successfully.

As a result of this study, it is recommended that programs not only identify and record the barriers of youth, but mandate the assessment be initiated with a discussion of the participant's unique barriers during the intake process. Subsequently, the participant's Individual Service Strategy (ISS), which is also legislatively mandated, can be developed to provide the participant with the navigational expertise necessary for overcoming their respective barriers. Otherwise, this lack of priority may continue to perpetuate the broad-based approach for designing the ISS in order to simply comply with general federal guidelines.

Where federal policy fails, state policy has the opportunity to address, but not supersede, policies accordingly. Unfortunately however, Nevada's Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR) Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act State Compliance Policy Number 2.2 (2016), which addresses WIOA youth program design, also lacks an emphasis on identifying and addressing participant barriers. The language is generic and generally replicates the verbiage from the federal policy. Moreover, when it comes to the participant's Individual Service Strategy, the emphasis is placed on services directly linked to performance indicators. Once again, perpetuating an insufficient intake process, which ultimately aims to comply with federal policy while failing to address the unique barriers of participants.

To avoid this broad-based inefficient practice, the state is provided the flexibility to incorporate policies addressing its youth residents. As mentioned earlier, the only caveat is it cannot supersede federal policy. The state therefore, has an opportunity to mandate services addressing federal shortcomings, which are in the best interest of participants. With regard to the

intake process needed for an objective assessment of youths in these programs, state policy should require and prioritize an assessment of a participant's unique barriers and corresponding Individual Service Strategy for overcoming them. The state should also offer training for all staff required to complete the intake of program participants and the Individual Service Strategy.

As state policy is provided the opportunity to address the shortcomings of federal policy, WIOA local workforce policy can do likewise with state policy. Similarly, as long as local policy does not supplant state policy, it is allowed flexibility in providing services to participants.

At the local level, the workforce development board (Workforce Connections) developed a specific policy to provide guidance for developing an objective assessment and individual service strategy (Workforce Connections Programs, Services and Activities – Assessment/Individual Service Strategy, 2016). As part of the objective assessment process the policy states:

Working together with the youth participant the career coach must identify and document barriers that will prevent the youth from fully participating and achieving planned objectives... The career coach must identify and record those available resources and proper program elements that will assist the youth participant in removing identified barriers. (p. 2)

Although the local policy is more comprehensive than the federal and state policies, the results of this research suggest it evidently falls short in being implemented effectively. The policies at every level should be revised to not only prioritize identifying participant barriers, but also emphasize the expectation to provide participants the navigational expertise for overcoming their geography of barriers during the intake process and throughout participation.

Participant Success: Implications for Practice

Programs. An objective of this research was to inform local programmatic planning and improvements by getting programs in touch with their participants' experiences. For example, the local conceptual model of participant success (Figure 6.1) revealed local programs in general should design services that assist participants in successfully navigating the common categorical barriers across the local youth workforce development system. In addition, since unique categorical barriers may vary program-to-program, WIA funded youth service providers should also individualize their programs based on the specific needs of their participants. Programs should be required to pay attention to their "black box" in order to address common barriers while also localizing their services to address unique ones (Padilla, 2009).

To accomplish the alignment of services with the actual needs of participants, programs need to prioritize addressing the participant's barriers identified during the intake process. This would entail three distinct but related strategies. First, it would require a comprehensive assessment of each programmatic service. The program assessment can be used as a mapping tool for how services address or fail to address participant barriers. Second, and given a comprehensive assessment, a programmatic action plan can be subsequently developed. The focus would be linking continuing and new services to relevant participant barriers and allocating resources accordingly. Furthermore, each service can be designed to address any of the barriers as part of its objective. Finally, programs should leverage resources and partnerships for addressing participant barriers. Since federal funding often times comes with restrictions for allowable expenses, programs need to design asset-mapping strategies for pursuing unrestricted funds. Where such funds are not available, programs need to pursue partnerships with agencies providing services beyond their scope and expertise.

Practitioners. At an individual level, practitioners play a pivotal role in the process of developing the navigational expertise of participants (Meeker et al., 2008). Programs should therefore, be selective with whom they hire to work with out-of-school youth. They need to consider the subject matter expertise of potential hires as related to the categorical barriers. Moreover, those hired should be required to attend certain training courses to enhance their capacity for effectively working with out-of-school youth and the barriers they experience.

Workforce development practitioners in particular, generally attend national (e.g., National Association of Workforce Development Professionals) and regional (e.g., California Workforce Association) workforce development conferences related to delivering career services, business and economic development, leveraging partnerships, etc. Although such conferences provide professional development opportunities for these practitioners, they do not provide them with the skills to address the myriad of barriers revealed in this study. Therefore, and in addition to these types of conferences, practitioners should also be required to participate in trainings relevant to their program's prominent barriers. These trainings should conclude with recognized credentials and equip practitioners with the tools and resources for developing the navigational expertise of out-of-school youth participants. Suffice it to say, not every practitioner will be a subject matter expert for each categorical barrier. Nonetheless, practitioners should pursue and participate in relevant training opportunities that address the salient barriers for their respective programs.

Participant Success: Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study provides insight into participant success at three local WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs in Southern Nevada, it cannot be interpreted as representative of the entire WIA youth workforce development system. Each program has its

own local model of participant success. Therefore, developing additional local models of participant success for other programs in various locations would contribute toward a more thorough understanding of participant success within the broader workforce development system. In particular, programs experiencing low participant success outcomes would benefit.

Research addressing the needs of disconnected youth outside the scope of WIA is also merited due to the number of youth not involved in these programs. Replication of this study at other programs within and beyond WIA would provide a more thorough examination of the barriers to participant success and the strategies participants use to overcome these barriers.

Conclusion

It was the researcher's goal, through this study, to provide a meaningful interpretation of participant success for local WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs in Southern Nevada. The perceptions of participants and practitioners provided a wealth of information about the barriers, knowledge, and actions necessary for success. Programs that understand the navigational expertise of participant success can empower participants to overcome the barriers they experience during participation. Thus, knowing how successful participants navigate their geography of barriers while participating in WIA out-of-school youth workforce development programs is instrumental for developing better policy and increasingly effective practices which enhance participant success.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FOR FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPATION



INFORMED CONSENT

Department of School of Environmental & Public Affairs

TITLE OF STUDY: Focus on Success: An Embedded Multiple-Case Study On How Youth Successfully Navigate Workforce Development Programs

INVESTIGATOR(S): Cecilia Maldonado, Ph.D. and Ricardo Villalobos

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Cecilia Maldonado at 702-895-3410 or ceciliam@unlv.nevada.edu **OR** Ricardo Villalobos at 702-772-1550 or villal43@unlv.nevada.edu.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact the **UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects** at 702-895-2794, toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to investigate how successful participants navigate their geography of barriers while participating in youth workforce development programs.

Participants

You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit these criteria:

- You are an individual that participated in a selected Workforce Investment Act youth workforce development program in Las Vegas, NV; and
- You are an individual that was successfully placed in employment and/or postsecondary education following participation in one of these programs.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in a 90-minute focus group with 10 other similar participants

Benefits of Participation

There will be no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn how you successfully navigated the challenges of participating in a youth workforce development program and reached placement in employment and/or postsecondary education in order to help others succeed in similar programs.

Risks of Participation

There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks.

- You may become uncomfortable when answering some questions;
- You may experience awkwardness being around individuals you may or may not know;
- You may feel insecure being unable to answer certain questions being asked; and/or

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TITLE OF STUDY:

- You may feel frustrated trying to articulate past experiences.

Cost /Compensation

There will be no financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take 90 minutes of your time. You will not be compensated for your time.

Confidentiality

All information gathered in this study will be kept as confidential as possible. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for at least 5 years after completion of the study. After the five-year storage period, paper documents will be shredded using university approved shredding services. Digital data, including any documents resulting from the transcription, will be saved on a flash drive and destroyed at the conclusion of the five-year period. All emails will be deleted and all data will be de-identified and no names will be identified on the recordings.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with UNLV. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Participant Consent:

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have been able to ask questions about the research study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Signature of Participant

Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

Audio/Video Taping:

I agree to be audio or video taped for the purpose of this research study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

IRBNet #: 749702-1 Exempted: 05-12-15

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INFORMED CONSENT

Department of School of Environmental & Public Affairs

TITLE OF STUDY: Focus on Success: An Embedded Multiple-Case Study On How Youth Successfully Navigate Workforce Development Programs

INVESTIGATOR(S): Cecilia Maldonado, Ph.D. and Ricardo Villalobos

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Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to investigate how successful participants navigate their geography of barriers while participating in youth workforce development programs.

Participants

You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit these criteria:

- You are an individual that is serving as staff for a selected Workforce Investment Act youth workforce development program in Las Vegas, NV.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in a 90-minute focus group with 10 other similar participants

Benefits of Participation

There will be no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn how youth successfully navigate the challenges of completing a youth workforce development program to help future youth participants succeed in similar programs.

Risks of Participation

There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks.

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- You may feel insecure being unable to answer certain questions being asked; and/or
- You may feel frustrated trying to articulate past experiences.

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TITLE OF STUDY: Focus on Success: An Embedded Multiple-Case Study On How Youth Successfully Navigate Workforce Development Programs

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Signature of Participant

Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

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APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PARTICIPATION



INFORMED CONSENT

Department of School of Environmental & Public Affairs

TITLE OF STUDY: Focus on Success: An Embedded Multiple-Case Study On How Youth Successfully Navigate Workforce Development Programs

INVESTIGATOR(S): Ricardo Villalobos

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Cecilia Maldonado at 702-895-3410 or ceciliam@unlv.nevada.edu OR Ricardo Villalobos at 702-772-1550 or villal43@unlv.nevada.edu.

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Participants

You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit these criteria:

- You are an individual that participated in a Workforce Investment Act youth workforce development program in Las Vegas, NV; and
- You are an individual that was successfully placed in employment and/or postsecondary education following participation in one of these programs; and
- You are an individual that participated in a prior focus group for this study.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in a 60-minute individual interview with the investigator.

Benefits of Participation

There will be no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn how you successfully navigated the challenges of participating in a youth workforce development program and reached placement in employment and/or postsecondary education in order to help other participants succeed in the future.

Risks of Participation

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TITLE OF STUDY: Focus on Success: An Embedded Multiple-Case Study On How Youth Successfully Navigate Workforce Development Programs

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Participant Consent:

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Signature of Participant

Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

Audio/Video Taping:

I agree to be audio or video taped for the purpose of this research study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

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Participants

You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit these criteria:

- You are an individual that is serving as staff for a Workforce Investment Act youth workforce development program in Las Vegas, NV; and
- You are an individual that participated in a prior staff focus group for this study.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in a 60-minute individual interview with the investigator.

Benefits of Participation

There will be no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn how youth successfully navigated the challenges of participating in a youth workforce development program and reached placement in employment and/or postsecondary education in order to help other youth participants succeed in the future.

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Signature of Participant

Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

Audio/Video Taping:

I agree to be audio or video taped for the purpose of this research study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

IRBNet #: 749702-1 Exempted: 05-12-15

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APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND PROCEDURES

The following primer was used to initiate dialogue with each of the focus groups:

1. *“You are a successful participant of this program, someone who completed the program and is employed or attending college. What were some of the barriers that you had to overcome in order to be successful?”*

Interviewees were given a moment to think about this. Any questions that arose were answered.

As soon as someone volunteered a barrier it was recorded in the matrix and additional barriers were solicited. Whenever there was extended silence, the primer was repeated and participants were encouraged to keep identifying barriers. After the barriers had been identified, focus group members were primed for the knowledge exemplars with the following:

2. *“You have done a great job identifying the barriers that you faced and overcame while participating in this program. Now let’s think about what knowledge you had that allowed you to overcome each barrier. What was the knowledge you needed to have in order to overcome each of the barriers?”*

Interviewees were given a moment to think about this. Starting with the initial barrier from the top of the matrix, participants were asked to give exemplars of what successful participants knew that allowed them to overcome the specific barrier. This continued for each barrier. After all the knowledge exemplars had been entered in the matrix the interviewees were primed for the action exemplars.

3. *“You have done a great job identifying the knowledge you possessed to be successful participants. Let’s go back to the top and for each barrier, think about what actions you took to overcome the barrier. We have identified what you knew to be successful, now let’s identify what you actually did to be successful. What was the action you took to overcome each of the barriers?”*

Interviewees were given a moment to think about this. The facilitator briefly summarized the first identified barrier, what successful participants knew to overcome the barrier, and invited the participants to identify what actions they took to overcome the barrier. This continued for each

barrier. After all the action exemplars had been entered in the matrix the interviewees were primed for change exemplars.

4. *“You have done a great job identifying the barriers you faced and the knowledge and actions to overcome them. Finally, let’s identify what changes you would make to the program to lessen or eliminate each of the barriers in order for other participants to be successful. What changes would you make to the program for other participants to be successful in overcoming each barrier?”*

Interviewees were given a moment to think about this. The facilitator briefly summarized the first identified barrier, what successful participants knew to overcome the barrier, what action participants took to overcome the barrier, and asked what changes they would make to the program for other participants to be successful in overcoming the barrier. This process continued for each barrier. Upon filling out the matrix with exemplars for each of the cover terms, the facilitator provided a brief overview of the completed matrix and asked if any additional exemplars could be added.

Interviewees were thanked for their participation and dismissed.

APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIBER'S CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT



TITLE OF STUDY: Focus on Success: An Embedded Multiple-Case Study On How Youth Successfully Navigate Workforce Development Programs

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Ricardo Villalobos

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: (702) 772-1550

As a transcribing typist of this research study, I understand that I will be hearing tapes of confidential interviews. The information on these tapes has been revealed by research participants who participated in this project on good faith that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement.

I hereby agree not to share any information on these tapes with anyone except the principal investigator of this project. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

This acknowledgement is governed by HIPAA as well as other applicable federal, state, university and local laws, rules and regulations.

Cheryl Brown
Signature of Transcribing Typist

November 7, 2016
Date

Cheryl Brown - Account Manager
Printed Name of Transcribing Typist

Version 2 - 02-2015

APPENDIX E

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND PROCEDURES

The following primer was used to initiate dialogue with each of the individual interviewees:

1. *“Thank you for agreeing to participate in an individual interview about overcoming barriers in order to complete your program to gain employment or enter college. Please review the information collected in the unfolding matrix during your focus group and provide any additional information, comments, or clarity regarding what was shared during your focus group.”*

Interviewees were initially provided a spreadsheet that contained all the information collected in the unfolding matrix during their focus group. They were then given a moment to reflect on the data, ask questions and provide feedback. Afterwards, interviewees were primed with the following question to continue the discussion about barriers.

2. *“When you review this picture, what do you think about it visually capturing what your group shared about barriers?”*

Interviewees were then provided a preliminary graphical taxonomy of barriers and given a moment to review the categorical barriers as determined by exemplars collected during the dialogical groupings. Any questions that arose were answered. After the interviewee had been provided sufficient time to review, comment, and ask questions about the preliminary taxonomy of categorical barriers, the interviewee was asked follow-up questions.

3. *After reviewing the picture, what would you suggest adding or clarifying about the barriers you and other successful participants experienced?*

After the barriers taxonomy had been discussed, interviewees were primed for the knowledge taxonomy with the following comment.

4. *“Thanks for sharing more about the barriers and helping me better understand the things shared during the focus group meeting. Now let’s look at the picture about knowledge.”*

Interviewees were provided a preliminary graphical taxonomy of the knowledge needed to overcome identified barriers and given a moment to review the subcategories of knowledge as determined by exemplars collected during the focus group. Any questions that arose were answered. After the interviewee had been provided sufficient time to ask questions and review the preliminary taxonomy of knowledge, the interviewee was asked follow-up questions.

5. *After reviewing this picture what would you suggest adding or clarifying about the knowledge participants need to overcome the barriers?*
6. *What can the program do to provide better knowledge to participants for overcoming the barriers?*

After the knowledge taxonomy had been discussed, interviewees were subsequently primed for the action taxonomy with the following.

7. *“Thanks for sharing more about the knowledge that’s needed to overcome barriers. Now let’s look at the picture about actions that participants need to take.”*

Interviewees were provided a preliminary graphical taxonomy of the actions to overcome identified barriers and given a moment to review the subcategories as determined by exemplars collected during the focus groups. Any questions that arose were answered. After the interviewee had been provided sufficient time to review the preliminary taxonomy of actions, ask questions, and provide feedback, the interviewee was asked follow-up questions.

8. *After reviewing this picture what would you suggest adding or clarifying about the actions participants need to take to overcome the barriers?*
9. *What can the program do to encourage participants to take the necessary actions to overcome barriers?*

After these questions had been discussed, interviewees were primed for the change taxonomy with the following.

10. *“You’ve done such a great job helping me better understand the things everyone talked about during the focus group session. The final picture I want you to look it is about the changes the group suggested making to programs to help more participants be successful.”*

Interviewees were provided a preliminary graphical taxonomy of recommended changes for the program and given a moment to review the subcategories of changes as determined by exemplars collected during the focus group. Any questions that arose were answered. After the interviewee had been provided sufficient time to review, ask questions, and provide feedback to the preliminary taxonomy of changes, the interviewee was asked follow-up questions.

11. *After reviewing this picture what would you suggest adding or clarifying about the changes participants recommended?*

12. *What else can the program change to increase participant success?*

After the changes taxonomy had been discussed, the facilitator summarized the notes recorded during the interview and provided a brief overview. The facilitator then asked a concluding question.

13. *Does my summary seem to capture what we’ve discussed? If not, what would you like to add and/or clarify?*

The interviewee was thanked for their time for participating in the individual interview and their willingness to elaborate on overcoming barriers.

APPENDIX F

COMPLETED UNFOLDING MATRIX FOR GOODWILL OF SOUTHERN NEVADA FOCUS GROUP

Barriers	Knowledge	Actions	Changes
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know the bus schedule • Know your family's schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan it out • Figure it out • Look up the bus schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a schedule • Provide bus route information • Provide a shuttle bus
Mental disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to get through the program with your disabilities • Understand that they will be a challenge • Know your disability and how to work with it • Know how to adapt with the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to understand your disability • Talk to someone • Accept who you are • Don't rule out Doctor's diagnosis, but be cautious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class for specific disabilities • Teach adaptability skills • Assist with medication costs
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know about different medication to take • Know your medical history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do your research • Have regular visits to doctor/hospital • Do check-ups • Be disciplined... have good habits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide links on GW website • Help with medical documentation
Hearing impaired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know to talk face-to-face • Know how to read lips • Know how to talk loud and clear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk face-to-face • Learn how to read lips • Listen carefully • Get hearing aides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with hearing equipment • Assist individuals with hearing impairments to find hearing impaired friendly employment
Individual Education Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know your strengths & weaknesses • Know what environments you're good in • Know how much stress you can handle • Know how to communicate about your IEP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't be nervous • Seek help • Don't things alone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an anxiety course
Passing proficiency tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to do math • Know the school district you're in • Know the materials • Know to take them seriously 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for an alternative • Practice, practice, practice • Take it seriously • Get a tutor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice proficiency courses to help understand the challenges
Desperate to work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know where to look • Know how to market self • Know how to fill out an application • Know how to make a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Keep swimming" – be persistent • Apply a lot • Build a network • Come in early, but not to early 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the work experience longer

	resume • Know basic professionalism		
Passing the driver's test	• Know test taking skills • Know how to manage your time • Know common sense	• Do your research • Get a tutor • Learn the driving rules	• Provide links on the GW website • Provide a driver's book/pamphlet
Moving	• Know how to adjust	• Inform people	• N/A
Medication	• Know to be mindful of what specifically to take • Know to be patient • Know that it makes you moody	• Be patient • Do research for other alternatives	• Assist with medication costs
Mental scars (from past experiences)	• Know how to accept what happened and move on • Know that there's others with similar experiences	• Take steps around it • Listen to music	• Provide a course to help with troubled pasts – coping skills
Physical disabilities	• Know what your physical disability challenges are • Know how they might affect you in the program • Understand them	• Do research on them	• Provide a class about the certain kinds of physical disabilities
No phone/internet	• Know that you need a phone • Know about libraries • Know about phone booths • Know about service providers	• Go to local libraries • Do research • Look up deals • Look up resources	• Provide a pamphlet with information about resources • Provide computers
Lack of clothing			
Transportation			
Sign language			
Foreign language			

APPENDIX G

Completed Unfolding Matrix for HELP of Southern Nevada Focus Group

Barriers	Knowledge	Actions	Changes
Weed/alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't get job if dirty • Seek help • Cut people off • Can get through it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay away from bottle • See a therapist/counselor • Find a hobby • Stop • Think of long-term • Persistent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links/connections with different organizations • Be lenient • Group therapy
Laziness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's crippling • Not get anywhere • Program will help you if you help yourself • It's a mental thing • Lead to negative effects • It's a personal problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a hobby • A person to look up to • Stay away from lazy people • Think about future • Have something to strive for • Set goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone calls • Exciting activities/events – Don't make things boring
Depression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's a serious problem • Its crippling • Take a lot of energy • Doesn't define you • You're not alone • HELP cares 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See a therapist • Think positive • Talk to family • Get a pet • Find an outlet • Go out more • Hobby • Get active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide outlets • Give suggestions/ideas • Case managers/staff express they care
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot do work for you • Can't rely on family • Not always a positive outlet • Love from a distance • Family isn't always blood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate self if you have to • Don't always rely on them • Spread your wings • Find a caring friend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become a family • Potlucks • Opportunities to meet new friends
Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people are only in your life for a season • Its OK to let people go • Its alright to say no 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep/let go friends • Change your number • Find a new group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities for people to become friends with people in program • "Summer camp"
Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are still human beings • You're not a bum • You can ask for help... there is help • You don't have to be homeless • It's a life choice • Can lead to laziness/depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a job • Get self out of homeless mindset • Make steps towards success • Call resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a list of resources • Have a shelter
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are places to go for bus passes (e.g., HELP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask case manager for bus passes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide bus books – i.e., transit guide

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time management • To be prepared for heat – water/food • Aware of surroundings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry extra water • Be covered up – clothes • Ask friend/family for ride 	
Parole/court issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can get through it • Easy to get arrested in Las Vegas (e.g., jaywalking) • Not go to jail – fine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing communication w/ PO • Ask for community service instead of fine • Stay out of trouble • Stay in own lane 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide list of employers that hire parolees • Find legal services
Lack of network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to get through without others • You deserve help • Library is a good resource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join club/group • Always ask/express self • Do research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold get-togethers • Network parties
Anger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things won't always go your way • Consequences are rarely positive • Going to effect you more than other persons • Serious consequences... escalates • You might need help • Everyone goes through things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think self into positive mood • See good in everything • Find positive outlet • Find stress reducer • Go to classes • Go to gym/workout/exercise • Be real with self • Let people know what makes you upset • Be tolerant... have respect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer anger management courses/program
Lack of support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can do it on your won... you are capable • Someone will help • Door will open 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be persistent • Be dedicated • Motivate self • Don't care about what others think • Think about your future • Find new solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage clients to speak to other clients • Mandatory check-in meetings... if you need to
Domestic violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid it • It's not OK • There are safe havens to get away to • There is counseling • To get out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay to self • Get away • Stay away from person • Seek help • Call 911 • Go to safe haven 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide domestic violence programs/classes • Be available • Women's groups
Ignorance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be open-minded • Don't know everything • To be open to learning • Others are in the same position • Things won't change if you stay the same 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen • Think outside the box • Don't jump to conclusions • Seek counseling • Go to school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold their hand – Parent figures • Mentors
Shyness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's a growing process... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open your mouth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage interaction

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> takes time You're not the only one You can overcome It's OK to be shy Nothing is going to be handed to you It's OK to be wrong Everyone is here for the same thing There will be constructive criticism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be a guest speaker Don't worry about what others think Be open to criticism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide volunteer opportunities for growth
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will not hold you back You're children are learning from you You will help your children There is program assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek help Bring kids with you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a play center/daycare center Guide for resources
Desert (atmosphere/heat)			
Pregnancy			
Don't know English			
Gambling			

APPENDIX H

COMPLETED UNFOLDING MATRIX FOR YOUTHBUILD LAS VEGAS FOCUS GROUP

Barriers	Knowledge	Actions	Changes
Anger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't mind & don't listen... let it roll off • Know what you're angry about • Don't let people get to you • Know their back story • Know the root 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk away • Work through it • Change your mindset • Release through gym/workout instead of fight • Work on root • Call someone... adult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger mgt. classes • Counseling sessions • YB family meetings w/ participants (e.g., pow-wows, lemon squeezes, roundtables)
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time mgt. – family/YBLV • What to expect • Future is more important • Family will become YBLV • Won't always have family support • Focus on self before family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan time mgt. • Tell family “No” • Prioritize • Workout schedule with family • Get to know person... start fresh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More leadership mtgs. – open up; involve everyone • Team/individual pow-wows
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know bus routes • Know time, locations, drop-offs • Know how to manage gas • Remember bus pass/gas card • Can call in about emergencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan bus routes • Manage gas • Use bus pass/gas card wisely • Don't sell bus pass • Call about emergencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carpooling planning • Driver's license incentive – beginning to end of program
The law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YBLV can work around it • YBLV don't discriminate • Don't get teased • Others have similar/worse backgrounds • YBLV community service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure it's taken care of • Stay out of trouble • Let P.O. know about YBLV • Pay tickets , warrants, etc. • Use YBLV as community service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform courts about YBLV – how it works • Spread word about YBLV – promote • Promote YBLV to law enforcement – community service
Pregnancy/children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's hard work – stress • You can do anything everyone else does • In long-run it's worth it • Money to support child • YBLV will work with you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let doctor know – Dr. appts. • Organize Dr. appts. with YBLV • Find babysitters • Talk to counselor about childcare • Let YBLV know your situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform about other programs that offer assistance • Offer sex protection/contraception's • Sex ed class – longer than 2 days and sooner

Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couples check issues at the door • Won't have enough time w/ relationships • Leave problems at home • Join YBLV together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let partner know about amount of time w/ YBLV • Don't let relationships distract • Don't get pregnant • Don't hook-up in YBLV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be more straight about relationships • Classes about relationships • Relationship counseling
Work (having a job)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YBLV will get in the way and vice versa • To set schedule between work & YBLV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with supervisor at work • Communicate with both – work & YBLV • Make schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out work schedule • Communicate with other job
Work issues (w/in program)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Won't get along with certain participants • Requires a lot of physical activities & work in heat/weather • Long distance traveling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get enough sleep • Be prepared • Dress appropriately • Bring equipment • Make schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not be two teams • Counseling • Be understanding • Swap teammates
Lack of motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's gonna get hard • It will be tough/hard • Different from daily routine • At times may not seem worth it • Need coffee, 5-hour energy drink, etc. • Cold shower • Know your "why" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe in self • You can grind • Slowly adjust • Motivational videos • Find your "why" • Workout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance of participant/staff – push/encourage • Partner/mentor calling each other
Self-esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one will judge you • No need to "dress to impress" • Can be yourself • About sex orientation • No judgment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't let it get to you • Be yourself • Talk it out with YBLV, family, friends • Try to breakdown wall • Journal – "write it off" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem building classes/projects • Encouragement building • Interactive activities w/ different groups • Clothing vouchers
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to communicate w/ staff... they will help • Will work on it as a team • It's a requirement • Highly used area of worksite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak up • Call • Come out of shell • Push others to make effort • If you have a question, ask... don't be shy • Slowly adjust • Use body language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out more often • Talk to others/participants • Pull aside to encourage • Partner/mentor
Weed/drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get you kicked out • 2 strikes • Drug test • Give you a chance to be clean • Have workout detox 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay clean • Moderation (alcohol) • Give note if on prescription • Go to detox workout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More random drug tests for just the suspicious... after everyone else does initial test • Mandatory detox workout • Drug awareness

Coming back to school/readjusting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will be boring • It's not going to be easy • Need to study – twice as hard • Keep self-motivated • Hard to adjust • It will be over eventually • Open doors • Feeling of accomplishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for help • Take tutoring • Talk to counselor • Express concerns when not learning • Change classes • Stay focused • Use time wisely • Stay motivated • Don't go to sleep 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer late/evening classes • Individual YBLV classes • Multiple tests/assessments on Fridays
Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help will be provided • Has info about resources – transitional housing • Provides clothing voucher • Don't do anything illegal • Provides support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Game plan to not be homeless • Save up money • Look for shelters... go to programs • Don't get in trouble • Don't get depressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information • Food vouchers (e.g., 3-Square) • Help w/ welfare/SNAP paperwork
Rumors			
Injuries			
Time management			
Foster care			

APPENDIX I

COMPLETED UNFOLDING MATRIX FOR PRACTITIONERS FOCUS GROUP

Barriers	Knowledge	Actions	Changes
Drugs/alcohol abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how drug/substance abuse affects them • Know it's not the norm • Know steps to overcome • Know about resources • Know impact on the future • Know about biological/physical effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admit problem and make immediate changes • Accept accountability • Be willing to take drug test • Participate in substance abuse classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize nonjudgmental environment • Peer-to-peer support • More internal resources
Lack of standard high school diploma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know its impact on the future • Know the difference between standard diploma versus option 2 • Know the difference in wages • Know not to be scared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take education more serious • Get over the fear • Hear it from school counselor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative career paths • Better communication with CCSD • Flexibility for vocational training placement
Lack of support from family/friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know it's OK to be different • Know you can receive support from program • Know to love yourself • Know it's OK to ask for help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out for help • Communicate • Surround yourself with successful people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to "under the radar" youth • Form more specific groups
Learning disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know what it is – awareness • Know that someone cares • Know you don't have to accept the "label" • Know it's not always your fault 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embrace tutoring • Do research • Advocate for yourself • Don't accept feeling ashamed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call it something different • Seek outside help • Make employee sensitivity mandatory • Staff/community awareness
Lack of social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of lack of social skills • Know they can be improved • Know to work on them and it will take time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice appropriate social skills • Commit to new skills • Go to workshops, trainings, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide social skills classes/curriculum – real world/role play • Staff point out • Staff training & development
Academic deficits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know steps to take to improve • Know options available to resolve • Know they won't go away • Know impact on the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to class • Attend all classes • Ask questions • Set appropriate goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-on-1 tutoring • More tours (e.g., college) – "see it"

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know your academic reality 		
Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know you don't have to remain that way • Know about immediate resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make action plan • Follow the rules • Follow-up on leads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide housing immediately • Emergency food supply • Provide hygiene kits
Finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know about financial literacy • Know that services are available • Know that resources are available • Know impact on the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start saving • Budget • Seek resources • Prioritize • Acknowledge need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide petty cash (i.e., misc. cash) • Have class/ course/ training on "respect for money" •
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know it's necessary/mandatory • Know it's not all bad • Know understanding of it • Know it can be relieving • Know someone cares 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embrace it • Practice it • Talk about it • Seek advice • Be open to feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff & youth training • Model it
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know the impact/understanding of having more kids • Know that success is still an option • Know they are not your income source • Know about resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice abstinence • Practice safe sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide different forms of birth control • Emphasize success stories • Partner with a health facility
Living environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know that you don't have to be a product of your environment • Know you have choices • Know what's appropriate/inappropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on getting out • Think beyond/above your environment • Associate self with positive people • Seek counseling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide professional counseling • Provide housing options • Provide awareness workshops
Lack of transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know resources are available • Know to schedule • Know about public transportation • Know about costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make an appointment with organizations providing resources • Look up public transportation schedules • Start budgeting for it • Be responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide petty cash • Purchase transportation for program (e.g., van) • Assistance for driver's education • Provide a practice car/vehicle
Lack of parental figures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know your parents aren't bad • Know not to emulate parents behavior • Know you can still be successful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek counseling – include your parents/family • Love self • Emulate positive role model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentorship program with successful people • Provide counseling
Lack of independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know it's OK to be independent • Know steps to be independent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take responsibility/ ownership • Do things independently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent training about barrier

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know you're responsible for your own success • Know that it doesn't have to be a crutch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-advocate 	
Offender status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know your record • Know the law • Know your rights • Know you can recover from negative behavior • Know you still have a future • Know it's not an excuse • Know how to disclose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change train of thought/outlook • Surround self with successful/positive people • Work towards expungement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expungement funds • Ex-offender employer friendly opportunities • Provide this information
Low education expectations			
Mental illness			
Alternative sexual lifestyle			

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