

Personal and Social Identity among Estonian Male Juvenile Delinquents: Descriptive Analysis

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Abstract

A qualitative study was conducted among 14 - 17-year-old male adolescents (N = 16) in Estonian juvenile correctional institutions with individual semi-structured interviews. For a description of the content structure how male juvenile delinquents describe the two aspects of identity—personal and social, was used. First, males were asked to describe themselves as a measure of personal identity; and second, social identity was defined as how the respondents perceived that friend to see them. Quantitative content analysis was based on an inductive analysis of responses to two general open-ended interview questions. Research results reflected that male juvenile offenders in the correctional institutions had a predominantly negative, mixed, and contradictory personal and social identity both in terms of personal traits, basic (academic, athletic, and work-related) skills, prosociality and emotional aspects, as well as positive around the physical appearance, whereas some of the respondents had mentioned that their personal and social identity has not been formed. In addition, institutionalized juvenile offenders' descriptions of their stigmatized delinquent personal and social identity did not coincide with their involvement in delinquent behavior and corresponding attitudes.

Keywords

Male Juvenile Adolescents, Personal Identity, Social Identity, Juvenile Correctional Institution

1. Introduction

The literature on identity development in adolescence has focused on the role of personal identity and less on the role of social identity, with these aspects of adolescent identity being studied as separate two branches (Branje, de Moor, Spitzer, & Becht, 2021; Crocetti, Prati, & Rubini, 2018; Crocetti, Albarello,

Meeus, & Rubini, 2023): identity theories and research on developmental psychology frameworks conceptualize personal identity based mainly on Erikson's (1968) identity status development in the processes through which individuals commit themselves to meaningful life domains; and identity theories and research in social psychology frameworks conceptualize social identity based mainly on Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory regarding belonging to a social group(s) and the emotional meaning of that membership. Nowadays, there are theoretical (review: Crocetti et al., 2018; Crocetti et al., 2023) and empirical attempts (e.g., Albarello, Crocetti, & Rubini, 2018 in the Italian sample; Chen, 2019 in the Taiwan (China) samples) to integrate this focus by revealing commonalities between personal and social identity, outlining how these processes interact and influence each another among adolescents as a multi-faced meaning of identity development.

On the one hand, a body of evidence shows that female and male adolescent identity and internalizing problems are related, suggesting that the presence of these issues hinders identity formation: a longitudinal large-sample Dutch and/or Belgian studies suggested a role for identity uncertainty in the development of anxiety and depressive symptoms in adolescence over time (Becht et al., 2016, 2019) with the clarification that as they grow older, anxious adolescents became less certain about their identity commitments, revealing difficulty in making relevant identity choices (Crocetti et al., 2009); large sample studies of Dutch early and middle adolescents showed that identity commitment was negatively related to depressive and anxiety symptoms (Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008); and adolescents with an achievement and foreclosure identity status had less depressive and school anxiety symptoms (Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx, & Meeus, 2008), whereas adolescents with an identity moratorium showed high levels of depressive symptoms in early to late adolescence (Meeus, van de Schoot, Keijsers, & Branje, 2012). The same tendencies emerged in a large Japanese sample, with adolescents (junior and high school students) in low identity commitment statuses or trajectories reported more internalizing problems as measured by parental reports, compared to other identity statuses (Hatano, Sugimura, & Schwartz, 2018).

On the other hand, several quantitative studies of the relationship between identity and externalizing problems in male and female adolescents have been conducted among normative school samples, focusing on the broad concept of externalizing problem behavior, or otherwise examining specific types of externalizing problems, such as aggression, substance use, and delinquency: longitudinal studies of Hispanic immigrant adolescents in the United States (Schwartz et al., 2017), Japan (Hatano, Sugimura, & Schwartz, 2018), and the Netherland (Crocetti et al., 2013) among adolescents have provided evidence for directional relationships between identity and externalizing symptoms and found that trajectories of identity confusion predict externalizing problems during adolescence, while the first two studies above also measured adolescents self-reported internalizing problems. Specifically, studies have revealed that Dutch adolescents

with a weaker sense of identity and rethinking of identity alternatives were at high risk of self-reported aggressive behavior (Becht et al., 2016), while adolescents in the moratorium status reported higher levels of direct aggression than their peers in any other identity status (Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx, & Meeus, 2008); and identity exploration processes increased levels of self-reported aggression in Turkish high school and university students (Morsünbül, 2015).

Research has examined the relationship between identity statuses and substance use among adolescents without a constant trend pattern and it was found negative associations between alcohol, marijuana, cigarette, and energy drink use and identity commitment, showing some support for a longitudinal relation between identity statuses and substance use among Dutch high school students—adolescents who experienced regressive change during adolescence were more likely to use alcohol later compared to adolescents who remained in the same identity status (De Moor, Sijtsema, Weller, & Klimstra, 2020).

Studies with the three-factor identity model, which posits that identity development is a dynamic process, has provided evidence to interconnections between male and female adolescents (normative school samples) identities and their delinquent behaviors based on large-scale Dutch samples. Namely, in terms of identity processes, it was suggested that reconsideration of commitment as troublesome formation of identity formation was related to self-reported delinquency in early and middle adolescence (Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008); and adolescent self-reported and parent-reported delinquency predicted decreased identity commitment and increased reconsideration of commitment over the time during adolescence (Mercer et al., 2017). Regarding identity statuses, early and middle adolescents in identity moratorium and diffusion reported higher levels of self-reported delinquency than peers for identity attainment and early closure statuses (Meeus, van de Schoot, Keijsers, & Branje, 2012).

The self-reported delinquent identity among male and female Canadian high school students has been examined using measurement data based on three criminological theories (control, labelling, and interactionist theory) principles (Brownfield & Thompson, 2008) identifying factors influencing identity development: low levels of self-control were positively correlated with delinquent identity; the stigmatizing label was positively linked to a delinquent identity; and a group nature of peer judgements of delinquency (based on interactionist theory) was correlated with delinquent identity.

A limited number of studies have been addressed to explore identity formation among juvenile offenders in correctional institutions focusing on identity processes and examining identity statuses in different conceptual terms. Grier (1997) examined the identity status of African American male juvenile delinquents in a US juvenile detention institution and classified majority of offenders as having diffused identity status, also suggesting that ideological diffusion (like areas of occupation, religion, politics, and philosophical lifestyle) may be an integral part of delinquent behavior. Habibzadeh, Khazaili and Assarnia (2016) have investigated the relationship between identity styles and attitude toward

delinquency among male adolescents in the correctional and rehabilitation centers in Iran. The results showed that all identity styles in terms of informational, normative, diffuse/avoidant, and commitment identity styles, but not normative, had a negative relationship with delinquent behavior. However, most juvenile delinquents had a positive attitude toward the delinquent behavior; positive attitude toward delinquent behavior positively predicts delinquent behavior and negative attitude negatively predicts adolescent delinquent behavior. Also, results indicated a relation between criminal social identity and criminal thinking style among male juvenile delinquents in prison in Pakistan (Sana, Rafiq, & Iqbal, 2021).

Barbot and Hein (2021) examined identity distress as a mediator of the relationship between parenting and externalizing (delinquent and conduct behavior) problems among sample of male adolescents in a US juvenile detention facility, finding that offenders' identity distress was directly related to self-reported externalized behaviors, and parental support in response to adolescents identity distress was associated with a reduction in this problems, whereas parents' self-focused response was related to increase in youth externalized problems. Klimstra et al. (2011) examined identity formation among male juvenile delinquents in a penitentiary youth institution, clinically referred male adolescents in residential care, and male adolescents from the general population, who were matched to a sample of delinquents with background characteristics in the Netherlands. Results of the comparison of the three youth groups indicated that male offenders differed from both male clinically referred adolescents and male adolescents in the general population in terms of identity processes and statuses, reporting lower identity commitment with higher reconsideration of identity commitment and were overrepresented in maladaptive moratorium status compared with other groups.

A combined mixed method (interviews and surveys) was used to construct the social identity formation of Indonesian female adolescent motorcycle gang members, which found that social identity has a significant positive impact on juvenile delinquent behavior through social motivation (Armayatia, Iskandar, Gimmy, & Abidin, 2019). A qualitative study of their personal and social identities among convicted young female adults in the United States with individual interviews using quantitative and qualitative analysis revealed that personal identity descriptions of respondents were mostly positive, but also consisted negative and mixed views about themselves. Descriptions of social identity among first-time female felons with no prior record were generally positive without perceiving themselves as criminals, but for repeat offenders these descriptions were negative with stigmatizing labels (Alarid & Vega, 2010). Based on the thematic analysis of interview data, a qualitative study was conducted to investigate the self-concept of female adolescents in an Indonesian juvenile correctional institution and results showed that respondents tended to express a negative self-concept due to physical appearance, moral perception, social interaction, academic achievement, and emotional aspects in which a gap between the ideal self and the actual

self was appeared (Juliana & Zhooriyati, 2020). These results are parallel to the quantitative results among Estonian male and female juvenile offenders in the juvenile correctional institution, that negative emotions characterized dominantly all three—actual, ideal, social, aspects of self-concepts of juvenile delinquents compared with non-delinquents (Kõiv, 2016).

Thus, identity formation issues had been studied mainly with adolescent normative samples of boys and girls in the school context at different age levels, explaining adolescents delinquency and adolescent identity formation as a result of developmental challenge (e.g., the maturity gap by Moffitt, 1993; Mercer et al., 2017) using antisocial (delinquent) behavior as a tool to explore the development potential of one's identity, and little is known about how adolescents in other institutions—such as juvenile correctional institutions, perceive their identity. Identity formation during adolescence can be complex in both a normative sample and among institutionalized young offenders as followers of life-long persistent delinquent development (Moffitt, 1993; Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter, & Silva, 2001). Although it has previously shown (Barbot & Hein, 2021; Grier, 1997; Habibzadeh, Khazaili, & Assarnia, 2016; Klimstra et al., 2011; Sana, Rafiq, & Iqbal, 2021) that male adolescents involved in the juvenile correctional institution system are not exempt from identity challenges common in adolescence in terms of a weaker sense of identity and continued consideration of identity alternatives, indicating that the emerging question about how institutionalized juvenile delinquents handle with the developmental task of identity formation remains relevant to the study juvenile delinquents' personal and social identity perspectives.

The research question was evoked: how male juvenile delinquents in Estonian juvenile correctional institution view themselves in terms of personal and social identity.

The aim for this research was to describe the personal and social identity of male adolescents in juvenile correctional institutions.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants and Data Collection

A qualitative design with individual semi-structured interviews was chosen to capture the experiences of adolescents who were in two closed correctional juvenile institutions in Estonia. These two correctional institutions for boys and girls are a part of the educational system in Estonia, which are used for the custody and re-education of juvenile offenders. The youth in these facilities were there because of court orders and could not leave until they were released. A variety of services and programs are offered to youth incarcerated in these facilities, including educational and skill development programs, psychological and family counselling, and recreational activities.

Every fourth offender was randomly selected (to increase the variability of respondents' social hierarchy) and the sample consisted of 16 male adolescents aged 14 - 17 years in (all) two closed juvenile correctional institutions in Estonia.

The duration of the participants' stay in the institution was more than half a year, and their previous criminal background was a varied combination of drug, property, public and violent offenses. To ensure participant anonymity, no additional information was collected that could potentially identify participants.

This qualitative study was based on in-depth individual semi-structured interviews with juvenile delinquents conducted by a researcher with practical competence in the field. The face-to-face interview methodology, consisting of open-ended questions that allowed participants to deepen their opinions and experience, was based on adapted [Alarid and Vega \(2010\)](#) interview methodology. Offenders were initially asked to describe themselves as a measure of personal identity by asking an open-ended (general) question "How do you define yourself?". Second, young offenders were asked how their friends would define them: "How do your friends saw you?" as a measure of social identity. The semi-structured interview included topic-specific open-ended interview questions (for example, characteristics, actions, and feelings characteristic/not characteristic for two aspects of identity) based on the research question, guiding the researcher during the interview session.

The individual interviews were conducted at the correctional institutions after school hours in a private and quiet room located in a residential area, providing an atmosphere in which the participant felt comfortable speaking. Each interview averaged less than one hour, with an average of half an hour. Audio recordings of the individual interviews were made after the prior permission of the participants and their parents, which ensures their anonymity and confidentiality in accordance with the ethical standards of education researchers.

2.2. Data Analysis

Inductive quantitative content analysis was used for data processing to schematically describe, classify, and compare the numerous responses of respondents. The data underlying the study come from the respondents' answers to the open-ended questions of a semi-structured interview using content analysis to reduce, condense, group the content, and calculate frequency of codes comparing the structure of responses quantitatively.

A content analysis was conducted on the answers to the two general interview questions as descriptions of personal and social identity. First, responses to the two general open-ended questions were transcribed as a separate set. The researcher read the interviews several times to become empathically acquainted with the interviewees' perspectives. Secondly, a researcher as a coder segmented transcribed responses into coding units representing a total thought as a single word, clause, or a complete sentence, with the data being coded using codes generated from the data itself. These segmenting procedures were found to be highly reliable (97% inter-rater agreement from double-coded data at different time-points), with disagreements resolved by a second independent reviewer. Next, frequently repeated coding units were then grouped into mutually exclu-

sive subcategories and the subcategories were merged into categories. Finally, the frequency of codes in (sub)categories and the frequency of (sub)categories were calculated separately for each general open-ended question. A series of pairwise χ^2 -tests were conducted to examine the coding frame association from a data-driven perspective.

3. Results

Seven categories with 14 subcategories emerged from the data of inductive quantitative content analysis across personal and social identity descriptions (**Table 1**): no identity; antisocial and delinquent behavior; personal traits: negative versus positive; emotions: negative versus positive; features of prosocial behavior: prosocial skills versus missing of prosocial skills; basic skills: hard skills versus negative attitudes towards hard skills; and appearance: positive evaluation. Across these seven categories, the most recurring coding units from the participants' point of view were as follows: 260 cases for personal identity, and 203 cases for social identity. In total, 463 coding units were extracted, of which most codes being negative—171 (65.77%) and 115 (56.65%) for personal identity and social identity, respectively, and the rest positive. More than quarter of youth personal and social identity descriptions included descriptions of antisocial and delinquent (physical and verbal aggressiveness; smoking, narcotics, hanging out; oppositional behavior, property crimes, violent offences, public order crimes etc.) behavior in antisocial peer network that reflected dominant criminal identity descriptions, with small number of descriptions (around 3% - 4%) included signs of that personal or social identity had not been formed.

Based on the interview data analysis, male adolescents in juvenile correctional institutions predominantly experienced a negative and mixed personal identity in a number of ways, such as (categories listed in order of frequency of occurrence): 1) in the descriptions, on the one hand, there was predominantly involvement in antisocial and delinquent behavior with antisocial peers, and at the other hand, a negative attitude towards antisocial and delinquent behavior; 2) negative feelings about themselves were mostly described as anger, sadness, apathy and indifference, but also as happiness, joy and satisfaction related to friends and peers in a social context; 3) the inconsistency of the descriptions was manifested in the fact that they included good academic, sports and work skills, but at the same time a negative attitude towards these skills; 4) descriptions of personal traits were predominantly negative (impulsivity, irritability, laziness), but at the same time positive traits such as humorousness were mentioned; 5) the inconsistencies in the descriptions reflected, on the one hand, features of prosocial skills such as helpfulness, kindness, trustable, goodness, but at the same time their absence; 6) the descriptions of physical appearance were highly positive in comparing themselves with peers and related to achieving high status among peers; and 7) some descriptions were about a lack of personal identity.

The interview data analysis show that institutionalized male adolescent

Table 1. Coding categories used for quantitative content analysis of juvenile delinquents (N = 16).

Category/Subcategory/Subcategory components	Personal identity <i>f</i> (%)	Social identity <i>f</i> (%)	χ^2
No identity	8 (3.08)	9 (4.43)	ns
Antisocial and delinquent behavior	75 (28.84)	43 (21.93)	ns
Antisocial and delinquent (physical and verbal aggressiveness; smoking, narcotics, hanging out; oppositional behavior, property crimes, violent offences, public order crimes etc.) behavior in antisocial peer network	59 (22.69)	43 (21.18)	ns
Negative perception from the public about the stigmatized (criminal, deviant) status	0	12 (5.91)	7.36*
Peer rejection and isolation; exclusion from peer network connection and conformity with delinquent peers	0	11 (5.42)	6.44*
Negative attitude towards antisocial and delinquent behavior	16 (6.15)	0	10.39*
Personal traits: negative versus positive	33 (12.69)	0	22.68**
Impulsivity, irritability, laziness	24 (9.23)	0	17.36**
Humor, a sense of humor	9 (3.36)	0	4.86*
Emotions: negative versus positive	48 (18.46)	33 (16.26)	ns
Anger, sadness, apathy and indifference, dissatisfaction	39 (15.00)	22 (10.84)	ns
Happiness, joy, satisfaction connected with friends/peers,	9 (3.46)	11 (5.42)	ns
Features of prosocial behavior: prosocial skills versus missing of prosocial skills	28 (10.77)	25 (12.31)	ns
Helpfulness, kindness, trustable, goodness	17 (6.54)	19 (9.35)	ns
Missing of helpfulness, kindness, trustable, goodness	11 (4.23)	6 (2.96)	ns
Basic skills: hard skills versus negative attitudes towards hard skills	45 (17.31)	41 (20.21)	ns
Academic skills, athletic skills, work-related skills	31 (11.92)	29 (14.30)	ns
Negative attitude toward academic skills, athletic skills, work-related skills	14 (5.38)	12 (5.91)	ns
Appearance: positive evaluation	23 (8.85)	29 (14.28)	ns
Positive physical appearance compared with peers	13 (5.00)	16 (7.88)	ns
Positive physical appearance in connection with the achievement of a high status among peers	10 (3.85)	13 (6.40)	ns
<i>Total frequency of coding units</i>	260 (100)	203 (100)	

Notes: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$.

offenders experienced predominantly negative and mixed social identity in different ways (categories listed in order of frequency): 1) the descriptions dominantly conveyed involvement in antisocial and delinquent behavior as well as negative general public attitudes towards their stigmatized (criminal, delinquent) status and rejection from nondelinquent peers; 2) conflicting descriptions reflected having good basic (academic, athletic and work-related) skills but negative attitudes towards these skills; 3) the descriptions included predominantly

negative feelings about themselves in relation to other people as such as anger, sadness, apathy and indifference, as well as happiness, joy and satisfaction in relation to friends and peers; 4) the descriptions of physical appearance were highly positive and related to achieving high status among peers; 5) mixed descriptions indicated good prosocial skills such as helpfulness, kindness, trustable, and goodness, but at the same time lack of these skills; and 6) some pointed out that they lacked a social identity.

Several statistically significant differences, measured by pairwise χ^2 tests between frequencies of (sub)categories identified in the quantitative content analysis, occurred at the level of $p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.001$ as a function of two aspects of identity of juvenile delinquents (Table 1). In the following text, only statistically significant differences are presented. Namely, the analysis of juvenile delinquents' descriptions provided insights into the comparison of their personal and social identity attributes: 1) social identity, but not personal identity, was characterized by two features—negative social identity from societal stigmatization and delinquent peer network connections with signs of rejection from normative peers; and 2) personal, but not social identity, was described as conflicting in terms of personal (negative versus positive) traits and delinquent (connected with antisocial and delinquent acts versus negative attitude towards this acts) behaviors.

4. Discussion

Theoretical conceptualizations (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Moffitt, 1993) suggest that delinquency and identity formation in adolescence are developmentally intertwined. The formation of identity has been studied primarily with adolescents in the school context at different age levels, and there is relatively little empirical research on how adolescents in other institutions—such as juvenile correctional institutions, perceive themselves. This study followed descriptive research to gain insights into the analysis of descriptions that male institutionalized juvenile offenders had about themselves (personal identity) and that they perceived others had about them (social identity), which were studied at a time during adolescence illustrate the central role of identity formation in the context of juvenile correctional institutions.

Firstly, it was revealed that male juvenile offenders in correctional institutions had predominantly negative, mixed, and controversial personal identity in descriptive terms of personal traits, basic hard (academic, athletic, and work-related) skills characteristics, prosociality and emotional aspects. Mixed and controversial personal identity was also connected with behavioral aspects and attitudes, that did not coincide in the area of antisocial and delinquent acts. Positive personal identity was described in the area of physical appearance. Thus, institutionalized male juvenile delinquents tended to define their personal identity in negative, rather than positive terms—participants of the study defined themselves not by the emotions, traits, and skills they possessed and exhibited but ra-

ther by the emotions, traits, and prosocial skills that they lacked.

Secondly, the study has argued that male juvenile offenders had negative social identity in descriptive terms of societal stigmatization and delinquent peer network interaction. Mixed and controversial social identity reflected prosociality, basic hard (academic, athletic, and work-related) skills, and emotional aspects of identity. Positive social identity was related to the area of physical appearance. Therefore, male juvenile delinquents in correctional institutions tended to define their social identity in negative, rather than positive terms expressing rather the behavioral characteristic that they lacked, or more precisely, those characteristics which they rejected.

These findings speak to the importance of considering the content of juvenile adolescents' identity—institutionalized male youth had developed a negative identity in which they identified with roles opposed to societal expectations and roles consistent with delinquency peer network that had become the content of personal and social identity, whereby some recognized that personal and social identity has not been formed. Prior studies also revealed that male (Barbot & Hein, 2021; Grier, 1997; Habibzadeh, Khazaili, & Assarnia, 2016; Klimstra et al., 2011; Sana, Rafiq, & Iqbal, 2021) institutionalized juveniles and incarnated female adults (Alarid & Vega, 2010) had more difficulties in defining a coherent and stable identity.

On the one hand, male institutionalized juvenile delinquents held generally mixed perceptions of themselves in terms of personal identity with viewing themselves as criminals, but had negative attitude toward delinquent behavior, whereas these contradictions between delinquent behavior and corresponding attitudes did not appear in descriptions of social identity when the criminal identity included peer social exclusion and stigmatization at the societal level. Previously, it was also revealed, that most male delinquent adolescents in correctional institutions had a positive attitude toward delinquent behavior, but negative attitudes were also evident (Habibzadeh, Khazaili, & Assarnia, 2016). On the other hand, this study found that interpersonal excluded relationships within the delinquent group and at the community level were central to the social identity of young offenders—institutionalized male youngsters perceived themselves as criminals and tended to be associated with groups that viewed themselves as delinquent with stigmatized status from the general public's perspective. These findings were consistent with previous research among increased woman (Alarid & Vega, 2010) and juvenile delinquents in the correctional institutions (Lanskey, 2010), and parallel with the results about the direct relationship between criminal social identity and criminal thinking styles among male institutionalized juvenile delinquents (Sana, Rafiq, & Iqbal, 2021).

The third area reflecting the gap between the personal and social identity among male juvenile delinquents was recognition of mixed and controversial personal traits like impulsivity, irritability, laziness versus sense of humor as a part of personal identity but not part of social identity.

The only positive area of personal and social identity for male juvenile delinquents in correctional institutions was related to good physical appearance compared to peers and achieving high social status. This finding is consistent with developmental tendency that superficial domains (e.g., physical appearance, athletic competence) were more important components of personal identity for young adolescents compared to older male and female youth (Chen, Lay, & Wu, 2005), and parallels can be drawn with research findings among male institutionalized adolescents who rated their physical self highly among other domains of self-concept (Eyo, 1981), but suggested opposite tendencies among female institutionalized adolescents to have a negative physical self-concept (Juliana & Zhoo-riyati, 2020). The research result, that the personal and social identity of male institutionalized delinquents reflected a high position in the social peer network in connection with a high assessment of their physical appearance needs further clarification.

Consequently, there was a gap between the personal and social identity among male juvenile delinquents in terms of contradicting personal traits, contradictions between delinquent behavior and attitudes, and contradiction between social status as rejection in peer group and conformity with delinquent peers with stigmatization at society level. Based on the framework of criminal social identity (Boduszek & Hyland, 2011) inconsistencies between self-views and perceptions of others' views of self are considered stressors that can compromise well-being. We may speculate that this condition may make juvenile delinquents vulnerable in the area of understanding themselves and their personal future as formation of identity.

The current qualitative study was based on a sample of juveniles in a closed correctional institution, which was a rather small sample (about 1/4 of all inmates) and was limited to males, indicating limitations of the study. It is recommended that future identity research be conducted with different genders at different timepoints during adolescence in juvenile correctional institutions.

Despite the limitations, this exploratory study showed potential for further work identifying the need to develop a positive personal and social identity as one of the key assets that help institutionalized young people reintegrate back into the community. Namely, this study points to the importance of creating positive ways of understanding oneself in the development of personal identity and to the effective ways in which others around (e. g. peers, staff in institutions, parents) can influence the ways youngsters in closed institutions see themselves without negative labelling and with an emphasis on development of prosocial behavior and basic (academic, athletic, and work-related) skills via collaboration with local communities. Preparing young people for reentry in juvenile correctional institutions begins with understanding the interplay of basic skills, prosociality, and personal and social identity issues in order to design and implement programs that produce successful outcomes, whereby previous interventions targeting adolescent identity in classrooms (Umaña-Taylor, Kornienko, Bayless,

& Updegraff, 2018) and youth cognitive and noncognitive development in correctional institutions (Coker, 2021) have shown promising effects on adolescent identity and adjustment in society. Secure institutions present a structural challenge to the re-socialization of youth as a vehicle for social inclusion to prevent stigmatizing of youth, enhancing the development of a positive personal and social identity as one of the main factors that help youth reintegrate into society.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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