

Renee Castillo, BS, Thomas Sease, PhD & Kevin Knight, PhD  
Institute of Behavioral Research, Texas Christian University

### Background

- Research on reducing recidivism has largely focused on psychoeducational and psychological interventions targeting high-risk behaviors (Latessa & Lowenkamp, 2006), often overlooking psychological strengths.
- There is a gap in research, as interventions emphasize behavior modification rather than promoting resilience and other personal factors that contribute to long-term success post-release (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005).
- The present study aimed to explore the first-person narratives of people with a history of incarceration to identify personal factors that support post-incarceration success, emphasizing the role of personal beliefs and psychological strengths in shaping long-term outcomes (Maxwell, 2021).

### Methods

- Participants ( $N = 11$ ) were recruited from a larger study examining HIV risk behaviors and substance use in justice populations.
- Participants completed a 15-question interview, asking questions related to their personal values, how these values supported them in times of crisis, and what personal qualities contributed to their success post incarceration.
- After all interviews are complete ( $N = 15$ ), the data will be coded using AI to extract key themes and guide the development of a mobile-app based intervention.

### Demographics

	$N = 11$	Total	Percent
Sex			
Female	2		18%
Males	9		82%
Age			
20-30	2		18.18%
30-40	1		9.09%
40-50	2		18.18%
50-60	5		45.45%
60-70	1		9.09%

### What areas of your life do you find most meaningful?

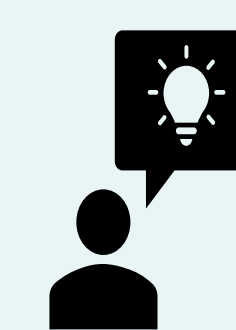
#### Social Support

"Making the most of the time of what makes you happy. For example, family and figuring out what you want to do with life. I didn't get to do that because of the choices I've made, but now, I am a lot more appreciative of who has stuck by me".



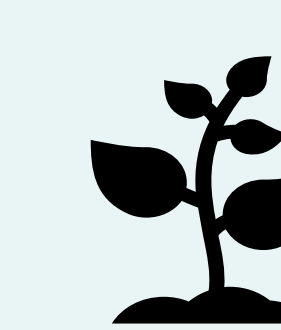
#### Therapeutic Activities

"I'm doing this hobby thing with leather. I find it to be meaningful, it's like therapy. It keeps me outside of the monotony of daily stuff. It's therapeutic! Focusing on something distracts you, it takes you away from negative situations".



#### Religion / Spirituality

"What's most meaningful is my religion, work life, and my family...my spirituality is what got me to stay sober...which has helped me to lead my life in a positivity way, which actually helped with other categories".



### What personal qualities or strengths do you believe helped you succeed after incarceration?

#### Strong Mindset

"You have to have a strong mind to be in prison. I've been through so much, that you just deal with it. Life is going to have challenges. I have to walk with my head up".



#### Determination

"I would say that I am willing to do better. I wanted it. I was willing to change. That's what made this difference in this incarceration compared to the last time".



#### Self-awareness

"Not being on drugs no more, being as truthful as God would want me to be, and saying positive things about myself...using words of affirmation for myself".

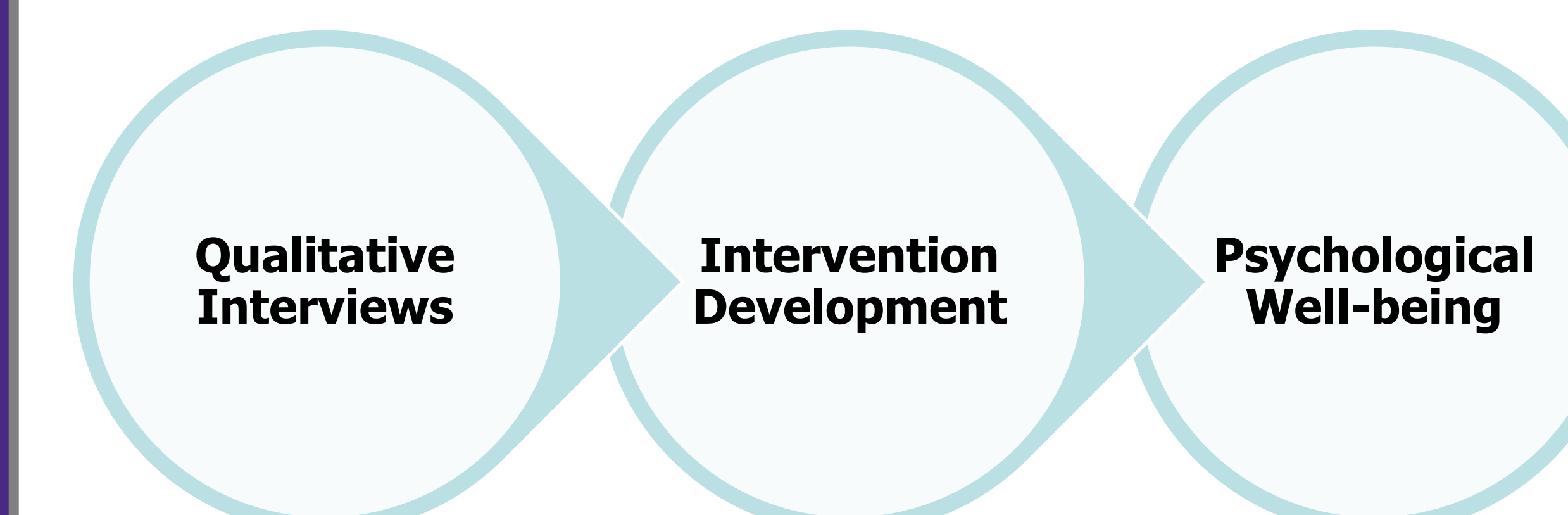


### Discussion

- The variety of personal values mentioned—such as social support, determination, and religion—suggests that there is no universal approach to what justice-involved individuals find meaningful in life. However, a common trend across these diverse values is the need for active psychological engagement, highlighting the importance of nurturing personal involvement in meaningful pursuits.
- Capturing these first-person narratives that highlight key factors influencing the well-being of individuals on community supervision will be crucial in developing an app that provides meaningful, targeted support.
- These results may empower research and clinicians working with justice populations, focusing on interventions that incorporate their unique values and needs, ultimately improving their chances of an effective reintegration into society.

### Future Directions

- Going forward, our research team will be using these results to create a personalized values intervention, testing participants' responsiveness to values intervention designed to enhance resilience and psychological strength.



### References

- Latessa, E. J., & Lowenkamp, C. T. (2006). What works in reducing recidivism. *St. Thomas Law Journal*, 3, 521–534.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2021). The importance of qualitative research for Investigating causation. *Qualitative Psychology*, 8(3), 378–388.
- Lyubomirsky, S., King, L., & Diener, E. (2005). The benefits of frequent positive affect: Does happiness lead to success? *Psychological Bulletin*, 131(6), 803–855.

### Acknowledgments

This study has been funded by the TCU CSE Dean's Opportunity Fund; MPIs Sease & Knight.