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**PERSPECTIVES OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES IN AN AFTER SCHOOL
PROGRAM**

A Thesis in
Criminal Justice

by

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Abstract

The juvenile justice system is dynamic and ever-changing; the "tough on crime" era slowly yielding to the expansion of more rehabilitative and therapeutic services being offered. In particular, many youth services programs are moving toward evidence-based practices for their assistance in deterring youth from recidivating. This idea of changing the impulsivity of split moment decisions is the basis for most programs. Recently, Lancaster County Youth Intervention Center opened up an after school program based on evidence-based philosophy. The present study draws from analysis from interviews with graduated program participants to examine its implementation and outcomes. From the observations program structure and staff buy-in are indicators of success. Interviews mirror these observations along with elements such as fatherless homes and impressions of peer group.

Key Words: Juvenile Delinquency

Evidence-Based Practices

After-School Program

Behavior Modification

Qualitative Research

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Children are raised and told they could do or be anything they want to be. Sadly, that is not always the case. Every year, there are juveniles who join the justice system and become another statistic for youth crime. Historically, the answer to this problem has been on a pendulum that is slowly swinging back and forth. Early on, youth were looked at the same as adults. If they committed a crime, they were facing very punitive sanctions. It was not until we understood the psychological aspect of the juvenile mind that we would start to look at juveniles as their own group of people. This led to the pendulum swinging the other way, giving way for new programs focusing on helping rather than punishing. This continued for decades, back and forth. Currently, we are in the rehabilitative side of the swing. New ideas and programs are constantly coming out and one of the more successful ideas has been the introduction of evidence-based practices (EBP). Evidence-based practices are the current trend in not only juvenile justice but throughout the social sciences and have been gaining support (Hay, Widdowson, and Young, 2017). In 2017, in a proposal to the governor of Pennsylvania, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee call for an increase in funding of programs with foundation in EBP. This policy recommendation is a part of a two year plan to make adjustments to the Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Plan (PAJJDPP). Calling EBP a success for the state and wanting to bring EBP in all phases of the system, this thesis is arranged to interpret one program with an EBP foundation that is winning awards and making a name throughout Pennsylvania.

Lancaster County Youth Intervention Center (LCYIC) strives to be progressive and push the limits of what can be done to reduce juvenile recidivism. They serve a diverse population of youth and are always researching the newest methods to assist the decline. A few years ago, they implemented a program called Providing Uplifting Learning Services to Excel (PULSE). This program is a five week long, weekend program, which houses the juveniles at LCYIC for the duration of the weekend. LCYIC scaled this program into a weekday after school program called the Evening Treatment Center (ETC). The criteria for selection into this program are later explained. This program, using core EBP principles with an intensive outpatient style, is winning awards and having success in curbing recidivism, despite only working with the youth a for at most 20 weeks a year, and with the youth remaining in their home environment during this time.

This study is designed to investigate the implementation and effectiveness of the ETC by using observation and interviews. By interviewing juveniles who successfully completed the program, the goal is to gain an understanding of what individuals are getting out of the program and how this growth in development can be sustained and applied. The following chapter will examine the events leading up to today's use of EBP. First, I look at the history of juvenile justice and EBP. Then EBP will be further defined, followed by an overview of ETC and a literature review. The following chapter will discuss the research methods used. Chapter 3 is an in-depth look the format of the ETC and chapter 4 contains the findings. I conclude with a discussion of the policy implications of this research.

Historical Background

Juvenile Justice

Historically, the views on juveniles have been ever changing. In the 19th century children were view much like adults (Platt, 2009). Adults at the time believed the criminality in youth behavior was the same as adults so they were punished like adults. Much of this had to do with the times and the views on family. We start to see the separation of this mentality with the birth of the industrial revolution (Ainsworth, 1995). The equipment was becoming more difficult to comprehend and soon it was discovered that if a child was able to work the equipment, they were often getting hurt (Horrell, 1995). Due to the workplace not being the ideal environment for a child, public perception started to change and youth began to be viewed differently from adults (Platt, 2009).

Eventually, as children were phased out of the workplace, viewing them as their own sub-group would make its way into the criminal justice system. Youth would take to the streets and exhibit anti-social behavior. Their actions would lead a group of women to form training schools or house of refuge for their placement (Platt, 2009). The Child Savers worked with youth that they deemed a risk to society. Between the changing the working class standard and immigration, these wayward youth were coming from homes with poor parenting and terrible living conditions (Platt, 2009). This change in opinion on youth would lead to the development of the juvenile justice system.

Up until the progressive era (1890 - 1920), we saw laws that classed juvenile offenders the same as adults. They did not consider the things we know today such as

impulse control, learned behaviors, and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD). As public opinion of both the workforce and society were changing the laws manifested change (Platt, 2009). This era gave us the first round of juvenile laws. The courts of this time started to take into consideration legal competency creating the legal defense of infancy through age 7 (Melon, Petriola, Poythress, & Slobogin, 2007) and not being able to form criminal intent until age 14 (Kaban, & Orlando, 2008). The first juvenile court opened in Cook County, Illinois in 1899 and focused strictly on juveniles (Meng, Segal, & Boden, 2013). The courts wanted to focus on developing treatment, rather than sanction delinquent youth (Steinburg, 2009).

This swing from a punitive punishment system to a rehabilitative system led to the development of “status offenses.” These are actions that if an adult would commit there is no punishment but for youth, they are deemed anti-social behavior therefore considered a crime. These status offenses include laws against underage drinking, school truancy, and consensual sexual intercourse between minors. By 1974 the development of a formalized juvenile justice system was in full effect (Meng, Segal, & Boden, 2013). In 1974, the National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Act passed. Congress wanted the juvenile system to focus on four core ideas that were plaguing youth in the juvenile justice system (Meng, Segal, & Boden, 2013).

First, they wanted the deinstitutionalization of youthful offenders (Meng, Segal, & Boden, 2013). They found that juveniles who were in the system were learning to mimic prison culture and in turn more likely to go to prison as adults. Another core principal was the sight and sound separation from adults. If, in the event that youth were

going to be placed in a jail type setting, they needed to be separated from the adults and in their own unit. Similarly, the third core was to prevent juveniles from ending up co-existing with adults in adult prisons. These two core ideas were to make sure that juveniles did not feel like adults and to make sure they did not see themselves as prisoners. It was also for their protection from adults who would abuse the youth in prison. The last idea that they needed to investigate was why there was an over representation of youth in jail. They wanted to determine why juveniles were being jailed and develop plans to intercept the child before incarceration. While this time is deemed a softening on youth it did not last long (Meng, Segal, & Boden, 2013).

In the 1970s' and 1980s' rehabilitative movement recedes and was replaced with the Tough on Crime campaign. This, along with the War on Drugs policies, came to a head in urban youth culture and rising crime rates, with teen homicides having doubled by 1994 (Meng, Segal, & Boden, 2013) and public opinion changing to support more punitive sanctions toward delinquent youth with a broadening of age limits on select crimes to include more juveniles to be sent to adult courts, with the sway of the juvenile justice a punitive direction (Meng, Segal, & Boden. 2013). However, the pendulum swung back around. While studies show juvenile delinquency is currently in decline, there are still youth who commit crime (Brochard & Wong, 2017). In a 2003 report by U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), four major core reasons for juvenile offending were identified: individual, family, peer, and community (Shader, 2004). These reasons were echoed in a study by Tanner-Smith, Wilson, and Lipsey (2013), when looking into what factors are high-risk in juvenile delinquency. The

next section is an overview of EBP implementation, and perspectives, before stating the research questions.

Literature Review: Evidence-Based Programs

The start of EBP began in the 1970s and 1980s to assist in curbing healthcare costs (Yates, 2013). These efforts were found to be effective for cutting the cost of healthcare that in 1995 the American Psychological Association (APA) declared that EBP were the future of mental health (Chambless & Ollendick, 2001). The APA defines EBP as “...*the integration of the best available research with clinical expertise in the context of patient characteristics, culture, and preferences.*” (APA Presidential Task Force, 2006, p. 273). This means that these programs are formulated by using the best research available and the clinician’s decision on application for the individual (Bloom, Fisher, & Orme, 2009). By comparing the factors from the 2003 OJJDP report to the goals of EBP, the allure of EBP have for deterring youth crime is clear. Up to this point, many punishments handed out focused on teaching a lesson to a group. They focused on hard sanctions as a hope to deter crime but EBP would go against this logic. EBP use what the individual issues are to establish a plan of action, as defined above.

EBP focuses on the individual, not just the crime that person had committed. It considers the individual’s upbringing, their background, and the way they perceive their existence. An example of this is Multisystemic Therapy (MST). MST is a program that uses family therapy along with examining the peer group to develop a plan to break antisocial behavior (Kaur, Pote, Fox, & Paradisopoulos, 2017). EBP is focused on giving people another tool in their toolkit to better understand how to react in situations

and try to have them think externally about their reactions and how they handle situations. Goals of these types of programs are to try and reach offenders to change their decision making abilities (Yates, 2013). Weighing the pros and cons may seem like a natural part of the decision-making process but not everyone uses logic the same way (Yates, 2013).

Yates (2013) was able to establish a few pros and cons of EBP. The pros were the aid in decision making. Establishing a treatment for an individual is not an easy task, by using the guidelines associated with EBP there is a formulated path that creates the best success rate. Another pro is the treatment is centered on the person's life and experience. By coming up with a treatment plan catered to the individual's life, see a better relatability level. The draw-backs of EBP are the time demands. Due to trying to use the latest data, training for counselors is never-ending. In order to stay on top, they must learn all the new information that is available. Although many expect overnight results, EBP requires time to work (Yates, 2013). These pros and cons are echoed throughout the research on EBP; especially those studies that examine the necessary funding for these programs and why support is so important, especially when scaling up these programs (Klinger, 2014; Welsh & Greenwood, 2014; Henggeler & Sohoenwald, 2011). However, when compared to the way things have always done things, EBP have yielded results.

EBP are the current trend in juvenile justice, but how do they compare with older programs? In a study conducted by DeSwart and colleagues (2012), they examined many different types of juvenile placements. They compared EBP, non-EBP, and care as usual (CAU) programs. CAU programs are the standard detention and secure settings that are

throughout the juvenile justice system. The researcher's goal of the study was to take other empirical works that were published, then cross reference their findings to establish whether EBPs were any more effective than programs that were CAU. They also found that youth reacted well to being in a type of treatment; mainly due to providing a structure that may be lacking in their home environment. The main finding was that EBP are effective and all types of placements should offer these services. Youth that were determined high risk and on advance supervision were shown to have positive effects from these programs as well (DeSwart, 2012). The CAU plan is deemed not successful by the means of rehabilitation; but what about EBP is showing these signs of growth and development? To understand what makes these programs, briefly there should be mention of the standard test that programs are compared against.

Implementing Programs

In 2016, Fagan and Buchanan attempted to gain insight on which database carried the best safe measure of success: Blue Prints for Healthy Youth Development, Crime Solutions, or National Registry of Evidence Based Practice Programs (NREPP). Their conclusion was Blue Prints was the most rigorous of the groups. Blue Prints rated programs based on four categories for effectiveness. First is intervention specificity; programs should identify their goals, model, and implementation. Secondly, programs are then evaluated for quality, studying attrition rates and group equivalence. The more high-quality evaluations successfully completed the higher the rating. Third is to test the program impact; programs need to show effective outcomes throughout every test. Finally, these findings need to be easily replicated (Fagan & Buchanan, 2016)

Using Blue Prints as the standard was behind the development for an article by

Henggeler and Sohoenwald (2011). Assessing EBP through Blue Prints, they establish EBP as a program that addresses the key issues. They pointed out the issues that EBP would indeed have in the current budget climate. They identify funding, target reach, and time and scale as the issues that EBP are currently faced with. Starting an EBP is expensive. Buying a program or developing your own is costly. Furthermore, hiring counselors for both teaching the program to the juveniles as well as training others within the criminal justice and psychology fields can be time consuming. Moreover, since EBP is based on research, every time there is a new contribution to the field, staff may need to learn a new skill. Additionally, tailoring a program to just one person vs a generic therapeutic approach can be costly. Ultimately, there needs to be buy-in from all actors involved. The consumer receiving the programs needs to be just as engaged as the staff that teach the programs. These programs also take time to develop due to political influences always changing. If newly elected politicians don't believe in what EBP can accomplish, they may not approve budgets (Henggeler & Sohoenwald, 2011). Using these articles and based on the notion that PULSE is the parent program of ETC, there should mention of how the scaling and implementation functions.

Jeanette Klinger (2013) studied what it would take for successful replication of a program in an article about "scaling up". This refers to the act of running the program at a test site, observing, and then upon a positive result, find other willing organizations to implement the program. In order to have a successful scaling up, there are four components: depth, sustainability, spread, and shifts in ownership. For a program to have depth they must go beyond the surface. It needs to reach for lasting changes. The program also needs to be sustainable. The issue with sustainability is general funding for

these types of programs tend to run out before completion of the program. For spread, you need all the staff to buy in to the program. Staff are the ones who are teaching the methods and they need to whole heartedly sell the program to enact effectiveness. Finally, shift in ownership is essential. Most changes in a facility start from the top down so when you have ownership engaged and invested, staff will follow suit (Klinger, 2013). This result is replicated in a case study of a juvenile facility in Maine (Welsh & Greenwood, 2014).

Staff and Juvenile Perspectives

Maine is one of the leading states for EBP (Welsh & Greenwood, 2014). During a case study on practicing EBP location, researchers interviewed 14 professionals who were working in the program. They triangulated the information with reports and publications. They asked the staff what made this program successful. As echoed in the Welsh and Greenwood (2014) article, the staff gave 4 major reasons why they thought the program worked; first the leadership did not experience turnover. The people in charge had been in charge for a duration of time. Secondly, they were allowed to experiment and develop a program of depth. Then, departments and the agencies that all had a hand in developing the program worked together and collaborated on what they believed were good ideas for the program. Finally, they had support. The willingness and motivation from staff were believed to be what truly was behind the effectiveness of the program (Roque, Welsh, Greenwood, & King, 2013).

In a study of 35 states that have active EBPs, Welsh and Greenwood (2014) conducted interviews with practitioners in Connecticut, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maine, and New Mexico, to gain a perspective as to why these programs were successful. A key

reason identified was buy-in from anyone with resources. Through a system of trial and error, they allowed the team to be creative and come up with reasonably effective programs using the data from their experiment and create special budgets to fund these programs. Establishing their own budget solves the issue presented by Henggeler and Sohoenwald (2011) and it gives other counties something to look into when thinking about scaling up their own program. Along with allowing staff to be creative and develop, they also allow them to assist other programs with their start-up of programs. Staff and management worked together cohesively as one unit to establish programs for growth (Welsh &, Greenwood, 2014). While staff perspectives on EBP has been the topic of multiple studies (see, for example Tuchman & Sarasohn, 2010; Roque, Welsh, Greenwood, & King, 2013; Yates, Coldiron, Schurer, & Williams, 2015; Akin, Brooks, Byers, & Lloyd, 2016), juvenile perspective conducted by interviews are not as readily available. However in 2013, a qualitative study on incarcerated youth was conducted.

Barnert and colleagues (2015), was granted access to conduct semi-structured interviews on incarcerated youth. These interviews focused on the juvenile's life, their trajectory into the justice system, and risk factors of juvenile crime. With a sample of 20 participants, 12 males and 8 females, the interviews were conducted in a private clinical exam room. Their findings shed light on perspectives juveniles have about the world that surrounds them. When discussing home and school they expressed an unsafe feeling. Unstructured chaos and fighting were how the youth described their home. Feelings of neglect from parents and financial difficulties led to criminal behavior. Moreover, their schools were full of gang violence, negative peer influences, as well as teachers giving up on them, eventually leading to them dropping out. While discussing their neighborhood,

they described their area as ghetto with lots of murder and promotion of crime. Jail was mentioned to be an extension of the neighborhood. Many youth coming in and out of the system, just marked it as a pipeline (Barnert, et al., 2015). When asking their participants what they felt they needed for success, it was identified that love and attention, discipline and control, and role models and perspective would provide a better chance for development (Barnert, et al., 2015). Receiving love from parental figures motivates youth to please their parents. Discipline and control for parents is being “strict, but not too strict.” Providing rules and structure allowed for the feeling of caring and appreciating the enforcement. Finally, surrounding youth with prosocial peers and eliminating negative influences, would place the youth in better situations to make better decisions. Overall, while commenting on what effects their environment would have, the juveniles felt that detention and jail gave them structure, however also served as a member of the recidivism cycle. If able to correct all presented factors, youth would be given a stable environment to ensure positive growth (Barnert et al, 2015).

Family, Friends, and Peers

In a meta-analysis by Tanner-Smith, Wilson, and Lipsey (2013), they identified that research would suggest four risk factors that have a high correlation with criminal activity in adolescence would be the individual, family, school, and peers. Youth who display impulsive behavior or have violent tendencies, may benefit from earlier intervention. Families who lack warmth or overly strict parents are believed to carry poor skills as a parent. If a youth is not receiving encouragement in school, they tend to not perform well. In regards to peer group, peers’ attitudes toward crime and relationships with these peers can lead to high criminal behavior (Tanner-Smith, Wilson

& Lipsey, 2013). The EBP used by ETC is attempting to touch on each of these factors. With the variety of programs that are offered, as covered later in this thesis, the basis of these intervention programs are to challenge the current way a youth analyzes their life and relationships, and pushes them to develop better impulse reactions and positive relationships, especially focusing on family and friends.

Relationships with parents are perceived to be a main contributor to juvenile delinquency. Hoeve and colleagues (2008), attempted to explain trajectories of delinquency. Using longitudinal information from Pittsburgh Youth Service (PYS), they measured risk factors as identified by self-reported data. The sample during the first test was 849 at the first wave and 503 at the second iteration. By taking variables such as parental warmth, communication, reinforcement, and supervision, they formed a profile of the youth. In addition to this information, they asked 22 questions about delinquency and compared this with official court records. From this, they identified that three styles of parenting have an effect on delinquency: authoritative, authoritarian, and neglectful. Authoritative parents are positive, listening to their children, and making the child feel warmth. This was a predictor for low delinquency. Alternatively, authoritarian and neglect styles were high predictors of delinquency. Authoritarian, due to the strict nature, often had a higher impact on minor offenses whereas, neglectful had a high impact on more serious offenses. The reason for the latter was the lower supervision level put the risk at encountering friends with a more antisocial disposition (Hoeve et al, 2008). This shows the association between parental guidance and peer influence.

As teenagers progress and peer relationships become increasingly influential, relationships with their family remain paramount (Laursen & Collins, 2009) In a study

by Smith and Ecob (2013), after following waves of youth through adolescence, they saw a higher potential of criminal activity in a youth if their friends were engaged in antisocial behaviors. ETC's answer to this problem is by allowing for unstructured free time. The idea of this free time is to allow youth to build solidarity, form prosocial peer groups, and to grow and develop together. By building these relationships, it is supposed to show that some of your old relationships may be hurtful or damaging to the progression of being a new you. Having better groups of people whose nature is more prosocial can lead to more prosocial decisions (Hoorn et al., 2014). This idea of prosocial behavior is the driving force behind ETC's methods.

The Evening Treatment Center

Lancaster County is home to one of the first state regulated after school children and youth referral and court mandated programs: Lancaster County's ETC. The program runs after school from 03:30 P.M. – 08:30 P.M. every night, however not all youth are required to participate to come on nights without their assigned programs. All program placements are individualized, meaning if the program does not meet that day, you are not required to come. Due to the attempt to develop critical thinking skills on a particular topic, individual programs are not all the same. Most common are lesson plans built on understanding the anger continuum, all the way to a night where families can come and experience a therapy session. Staff are not certified or licensed therapist or counselors, and you only need a high school diploma to be employed at the program; however, they offer in-house training. There is a mandatory one-month training for all LCYIC employees. Once completed the ETC staff will observe other ETC staff. Finally, when comfortable, they will start interacting with the youth. As part of Pennsylvania

Department of Public Welfare, all employees must have at minimum 40 hours of training time throughout a calendar year. In addition to this training, senior ETC staff will train new employees on all the programs. Most times they are required to complete a program the same as a youth. After this time, they will test on the program and upon completion, will be allowed to lead sessions. There is also a variety of trainings they can attend outside of the building. For example, if the company that established one of the EBP they use has a seminar, ETC will send staff to attend. This staff will then come back and lead a training session on the updates to the EBP.

Research Questions

The program is built to work at both an individual and family level. They meet peers who are working through similar issues and build solidarity amongst themselves. Finally, for up to five hours a night, a couple of days a week, throughout a few weeks a year, the ETC teaches the youth coping skills to aid in surviving within their community. Is that enough time for evidence-based program to be reinforced enough to alter the impulsive nature of a teenager?

The purpose of this study is to examine just that. Are juveniles aware of internal changes post-program? The aim of this thesis is to gain insight into how youth evaluate their life pre, during, and post-program. In association with interviews, direct observations purpose for this thesis is to recant eye witness accounts of implementation of the program.

Using the above information and the previous literature review, this thesis aims towards examining the following questions:

1. How does a homegrown EBP program implement lesson plans?

2. What differences exist between the program's unstructured and structured times?
3. What are the Staff and Juveniles' views during the program?
4. How are graduates of the ETC functioning post-program?
5. Do the juveniles feel ETC was successful for them?

Chapter 2

Data and Methods

The data for this study was provided from interviews and observations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five graduates of the ETC. In addition to these interviews, direct observations of juvenile and staff interactions during ETC's operational hours were also completed. The study received University IRB approval in August 2018 and data was collected in September and October of 2018. For analysis in this thesis, I syllogize the stories of these graduates to understand their perspective post-ETC. The direct observation data was collected to gain insight on implementation and application of the EBP used by ETC. The observations were also conducted to monitor the relationship of staff and juvenile and current participants' perspective.

Study Site

Lancaster County is located in south-eastern Pennsylvania and is comprised primarily of agricultural land with small suburban clusters and metropolitan city in the center,. According to the United States Census Bureau (2017) the estimated population of Lancaster County in 2017 was 542,903, with the inner city accounting for 59,708. Racially, the county make-up is approximately 90% White, 5 %, Black, and 10.5% Hispanic/Latino. These numbers change drastically when compared to the city which identifies as 58.7% White, 38.5%, Hispanic/Latino, and 17.1% Black. The average household income for someone living in the county compared to living in the city also varies. Using the most current data available, the mean household income from 2012-

2016 for people living outside of city limits was \$59,237; whereas for city residents it was \$36,233.

As addressed in the PAJJDPP, efforts are being made to combat juvenile delinquency. As of the latest report available from the National Center for Juvenile Justice in 2014, juveniles accounted for 14.9% of all arrests in Lancaster. This is similar to nearby counties who share similar demographics: York (14.3%) and Berks (14.1%). This same report indicates that juveniles account for 18% motor vehicle theft, 17.4% aggravated assault, 16.8% burglary, and 15.1% property crime in Lancaster County. Thirty-nine percent of weapons charges within the county, which is defined as “All violations of regulations or statutes controlling the carrying, using, possessing, furnishing, concealing, and manufacturing of firearms, cutting instruments, explosives, incendiary devices, or other deadly weapons or silencers”, were perpetrated by juveniles (Puzzanchera & Kang, 2017).

Recruitment

When identifying potential interviewees for this study, the process of chain sampling was used to identify the sample. By using an eligibility checklist, I had created, the ETC director reached out to juvenile probation officers (JPO) and children and youth caseworkers (CYA) to ask for their assistance in identifying youth. To have been included in this study, the juveniles must have met the following: (a) 12-17 years of age while participating in the program, (b) successful completion of the ETC program,(c) must live in home with parent/guardian, (d) currently not court mandated to a restrictive placement (rehab, detention, shelter), (e) are fluent in English, enough to speak and read,

(f) under 18 years of age, at the time of the interview, and (g) graduated from the program before May 2018.

The juveniles who met the above criteria were deemed eligible for the study. The ETC/JPO/CYA identified potential candidates and contacted the parents of those individuals. Using a script, they asked families if they would be interested in taking part in this study. If they wished to participate, they would provide verbal consent for me to receive their phone number for contact. That information was compiled into a file and sent via an encrypted email from the ETC director. I then called families and gave a brief description about the study and requested to meet with them and interview their children about their time in ETC.

Interviews

All interviews were conducted in the residences of the youth. Before all interviews, parents signed a consent form. Juveniles would then also initial and sign this form, giving assent to be interviewed. All participants were promised confidentiality and it was explained that they could skip any question during the interview. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour and a half, with the average interview lasting an hour. I brought a notebook along to take notes as I was not permitted to tape record, per IRB. Many of the notes are short hand symbols, yes/no's, and phrases to remind me of stories and body language the interviewees were using.

The interview guide started by asking demographic questions. These answers were used to form the background information associated with the juvenile's family, socioeconomic status and brief delinquency history. The next series of questions pertained to their school history. This line of questioning examined their history of

behavior and activities while in school. School was followed up with questions about home and peers. As outlined in the literature review, family and peers are an integral part of delinquency and its prevention so using what I learned about the individual's home life and friend group allowed me to build a picture around what is going on in this youth's life. Finally, I asked about the perceived effects of the program. Questions about the programs completed while in the ETC, retrospection before program and if changes post-program are identifiable. Here the youth were asked questions about the ETC and whether the mission and staff are being relayed to the youth they serve. I concluded this section by inquiring as to how reentry and life is different post program. IRB would not allow for follow up interview, as I would have had to collect some type of personal identifier.

The use of the interview guide, allowed for the youth to speak on related topics throughout an interview, while still providing me with a roadmap, thereby ensuring all my questions were addressed. When these moments occurred, they were encouraged to speak freely. Probing questions, not on the interview guide, would come from the interviewer as to address concepts and ideas the juveniles had. This format of an open-ended structure, allowed the participants to recant sensitive subject matter in their own language (Kavanaugh, 2013).

Sample Characteristics

All five participants were in biological mother homes, with one juvenile having a step-father in a home. Similar to the county's racial make-up, two were Hispanic and identified their surroundings as urban, while three were white and lived in more rural

places in the county. All self-identify as being mid-low to low income. None of them were ever in any type of restrictive placement setting before starting at the ETC, which follows ETC principles as a deterrent before further restrictive placements. All five were enrolled in school at the times the interviews were scheduled. At the time the interviews were conducted, one participant had recently been expelled from school, with the other four were still presently enrolled. Two of participants required assistance in school, including one youth being on the spectrum for Autism. Of the programs available, selection for the programs broke down as described in Table 1.

Table 1: Juveniles Self-Reported Programs and Duration of Participation.

Name, Age	Programs Participated	Days Per Week	Length of Weeks
Ray, 13	Coping Skills Life Skills	1 Day	12 weeks
Dorris ,17	Girls Circle Life Skills ART	5 days	20 Weeks
Anna, 16	ART Girls Circle	1 Day	8 Weeks
Tom, 14	ART Social Skills	3 Days	4 Weeks
Rita, 15	Girls Circle	2 Days	8 Weeks

*All identified as being at ETC for the entire day 03:30 P.M. – 08:30 P.M.

Observation

After conducting the interviews, I completed 5 days of observation in October 2018. These observations lasted from 3:30 P.M. to 7:30 P.M. – 8:15 P.M. My goal was

to arrive before the youth and depart without causing disruption. While conducting observations, I would use the information provided from the interviews to key in on what the juveniles identified as working and not working. In addition to this, I drew comparisons from research, such as how staff conducted themselves and buy-in to teaching the EBP lesson (Roque et al., 2013), trying to infer if the effects from upper level management were felt (Henggeler & Schoenwald, 2011; Welsh, & Greenwood, 2014). Moreso, I aimed to inquire about how youth seemed to be conducting themselves while in the ETC.

When conducting observations, I wore regular street clothes, often in khaki shorts and a black sweatshirt; this is the attire of someone who works in LCYIC's detention unit. This choice was made for two reasons. One, due to my position as a youth care worker with the detention unit within the building, I wanted to provide the residents with a type of normalcy in an attempt to reduce the observer effect they may experience. As they go throughout the building they see detention staff regularly. For instance, when detention staff are contemplating switching departments, they will "shadow" ETC staff before determining to make the switch. Secondly, this was for staff as well. While if asked, I told them I was there as a researcher and not a county employee, by seeing me in my work attire, they would feel more comfortable in acting and addressing youth how they normally would. This was to my benefit additionally for the purpose of discussion. Staff would approach me and speak freely in conversation. They were informed of my role as a researcher, but they would speak openly anyway. When conducting these observations I would sit at a table off to the side, as to try and not be a visible distraction

but still keep awareness that I was there. I openly took notes in a note book later that were transcribed, by me, to my laptop, in a more interpretive version.

Chapter 3

Evening Treatment Center

A Normal Day

While observing the program, the structure of each day was laid out and followed rigorously. The youth's school day would end around 3:00 P.M. Before they are let out of school, ETC staff load into vans and drive to predetermined meeting points. At this point they get into the van and are driven to the ETC center. Most juveniles arrive at the center between 3:30 P.M. and 4:15 P.M., depending on the distance of their school. Once they arrive, they sign a book logging that they are officially at program for the day and then are given a snack and juice. Once they are done with snack they leave a little dining area and move into the day room. The dayroom is carpeted with words of positivity painted on the walls—leadership, empathy, and purpose. Mixed in are logos for those words and other core values that ETC preaches; logos for, and phrases such as, respect, courage, and forgiveness. There are chairs and tables set up for games, along with beanbag chairs to sit on and rest. Adjacent to the beanbags is a small home-styled arcade basketball net. The other half of the day room is wide open for tossing footballs, frisbees, and even playing handball. There is tape on the floor mapping out other games that are played also there. This time is known as free time. While waiting for others to arrive those who are there will play games and converse. At 4:20 P.M. the staff request the juveniles back over to the dining area for shift briefing.

Shift briefing is where the events of that evening are laid out. After an overview of the structure of the day, staff will end the talk with a positive message. They will ask

some of the youth what their goals are for the day, along with asking fellow staff members. The main focus of these shift briefings are to assign the youth to their sessions for that evening. There are two separate times that lesson plans are covered. Lesson plans are the sessions that the youth are assigned to for the evening. The first session is 4:30 P.M. – 5:30 P.M., the second session is 7:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M. During these sessions there will be three groups running simultaneously. Dinnertime is after the first session, 5:30 P.M. – 6:30 P.M. They are served the food prepared by the LCYIC kitchen staff; the same food is also served to the detention and shelter program within the building. The food is not meant to taste good but to allow the residents of all programs to hit their required calorie count for that meal.

After dinner is free time again from 6:00 P.M. – 6:30 P.M. Youth will play games and talk amongst themselves and with staff about anything and everything. From 6:30 P.M. – 07:00 P.M., the games continue in the form of team building. Every youth is assigned to a supervisor and that is their team or group. Named after superheroes or super groups, there are three: X-Men, Avengers, and Justice League. The supervisor or staff will set up a structured game and have everyone participate by discussing how they are doing in program and in the community. Many questions about family, school, and friends arise, along with the juveniles asking questions about handling certain conflicts they are currently facing. When team building ends, they go to their second session for the evening until 8:00 P.M. After second session, they return to the dining area for a snack and juice, a debriefing, and finally sent to their vans which take them home.

Placement into Sessions

Youth can be placed into ETC for a multitude of reasons. Again, you can be placed by Juvenile Probation Officer (JPO), Children and Youth Agency (CYA) or electively through their parents. Once referral has been made however, the intake process is virtually the same. At some point in the process, after contact has been made, the youth and their families will fill out a questionnaire. This questionnaire looks into the juvenile's personality type and how they currently process and handle situations. Once they complete this form, the supervisors will score the sheet. From that score the director of the program, recommends to the JPO/CYA/parent, what programs would be beneficial for the youth to take part in. Along with the director's recommendation, the JPO/CYA/parent can also make recommendations for programs. Lastly, after given a detailed description of programs, the youth may suggest programs they would be interested in participating in. There are 2 types of groups: closed and open. Closed groups are your assigned groups from the first day. When placed in a closed group, you and your cohort will start and finish the program together. No one new is added in the middle, as these groups build upon previous week's works. In an open group you can be assigned during any point of the program. Open groups are not as lesson plan oriented as closed groups, but still focus on the ETC core values and establishing prosocial ideologies.

Program Synopsis

ETC's programs are selected carefully and poised to set the youth up for the best possible position to succeed. As previously mentioned, there are two sessions, for three groups every day. Of the programs, there are open and closed groups. The closed groups

have a set time of days and length that is required to complete them. In order to understand what benefits these youth are attaining from the programs, we should learn specifics of the programs they are completing.

Aggression Replacement Training (ART) is a co-ed three day a week 10-week program. Set up in a classroom structure, staff will write down notes on a white board while the youth observe. The function of ART is to better manage anger and replace it as the impulse reaction (Brannstrom et al., 2016). ART focuses on understanding how a person becomes angry and what to do when you experience anger. They do this by using the three day structure to cover different points of the lesson plan. Day 1 is spent working on social skills. Day 2 is used to work on anger control training. Day 3 is strictly role playing different scenarios. Half of the session for days 1 and 2 are spent teaching the goals for that week's lesson plan, such as how to address conflict. The second half is spent role playing. Staff will then start the role play by engaging one another to provide an example. They give real life scenarios they have encountered and met with success or failure. They then ask the youth to do the same. When experiencing a negative reaction, the staff will ask about alternative solutions and when expressing a positive reaction provide positive reinforcement in the form of tickets for special treats or just the show of respect that the youth has earned. The main thing the staff strived for is total honesty and transparency. They do this by "not judging" the person for their choice of action.

Another popular program that is offered is the Change Companies', Forward Thinking (FT). FT meets two days a week for seven weeks and is coed. Youth are

placed in FT if they have exhibited poor decision making and impulsive behavior. Their goal is to teach youth to “not let a moment define you.” It shows them everyone makes mistakes and the consequences for those actions. Through booklets, youth engage in interactive journaling. Journaling thoughts and feelings, engages the youth to write about meaning and how this effects them (Mee-Lee, 2014). This group meets in a more relaxed environment than ART. Youth sit on couches and are encouraged to provide examples of times their actions have harmed themselves or others. Again, staff will also provide personal examples. The emphasis of ETC’s FT is to promote positive changes.

There are a few non-coed closed groups simply named Girls Circle and The Council for Boys and Young Men, established by the One Circle Foundation. These groups meet once a week for 8-12 weeks. They focus on the relationships with internal and external struggles specifically related to identifying as male or female. Hoping that by providing all sex-similar groups, voices would be heard without opposite sex’s opinion to interfere with the freedom to speak. It builds the notion that by addressing stereotypes and sex-specific behavior, they can navigate youth through teen years into adulthood. Specifically, Girls Circle addresses and promotes coping mechanisms and positive behaviors (Hossfield, 2015). Both programs are built on similar foundations.

The final closed group, Alternatives, describes itself not as drug and alcohol therapy group, but does address drug and alcohol related decisions. Alternatives program meets once a week for 10 weeks. The alternatives program looks at the facts and statistics of what happens when becoming involved with drugs and alcohol. Goals

include learning to be responsible for your actions and trying to make a change for the betterment of life.

Open groups are not as intensive as the closed groups but still touch on core ideas of success as defined by ETC. These “skills” programs are broken down by which part of a prosocial lifestyle they wish to address. Programs include life and employment development, coping, relationship, and social skills. Life development teaches how to thrive within one’s skill-set, highlighting everyday things a person can do, like money-management and self-care. Employment development explores career options. Once a path has been identified, youth will research the field and even complete mock interviews to ready themselves. Coping skills focuses more on how we perceive our actions and accepting our reaction. Using an external viewpoint to understand the decision-making process and how not to self-implode. Relationship skills examines how one treats those around them. Building on the notion of understanding how we develop relationships, this program goes further into the ways of establishing positive relationships for future success while walking away from negative relationships that harm us. Social skills program is called Prepare. Prepare is about establishing empathy for others along with a tandem of other prosocial skills such as; stress management, and problem solving.

Based on research from the ETC director, they identified themes they wanted the program to focus on, primarily antisocial behaviors. ETC’s open groups are homegrown, meaning that the director and staff developed these programs from the issues within the county, using the literature available for a foundation. While there is not empirical data

to support these programs, a meta-analysis of evaluation research shows support for the effectiveness of homegrown programs (Lipsey, 2009).

These programs and the daily structure provide the make-up of the ETC program and how their format allows for youth to learn and grow and take time to breath in between sessions. The programs that are offered are built to hit nerves and challenge the youth at every corner. By confronting these problems head on, youth have no choice but to reexamine their values and morals against what is deemed prosocial teen behavior as compared to the accepted societal standard for a healthy transition into adulthood.

Chapter 4

Findings

Gaining Access

Before touching on the findings in this research, I feel it is pertinent to discuss the process of gaining access to juveniles. I proposed my study to the directors of both ETC and LCYIC in December 2017. They both, at the time approved this study. The directors then asked their liaison at both the county and state level for their approval of the proposed research. There was a moment of apprehension on the part of the county. It is in county policy that research is not allowed to contain any documented juvenile information. The reason for this policy is fear of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) and losing protection over juvenile records. Due to the viewpoints on youth, their records are classified and not to be accessed by anyone from outside an organization. Due to my status as an employee with the county and educational background, they trusted me with parental information, after gaining consent from the parents. After reading the proposal and talking with the director of LCYIC, they officially approved the study in February 2018. I then submitted for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval in April 2018. Much like the county, the IRB deems juveniles as a vulnerable population needing protections from invasive research. Specifically, the IRB was primarily concerned with identifying information of the juveniles remaining confidential. The process for approval was onerous with multiple clarification requests in May, July, and August. Major changes that were requested were eliminating questions that would provide identifiers, not allowing for wards of the state or children in foster

care, and the use of key coding. My intention was to potentially use follow up interviews to clarify some of the observational pieces, but this was deemed a higher level of risk than needed for the study. The largest issue with my initial proposal was the use of audio recording for interviews. While this would have been preferable to notation, the process to get this approved was filling a Certificate of Confidentiality (CoC). My liaison at the IRB informed me this could take up to six months for approval but there was no guarantee. Finally, in August 2018, the IRB approved the study.

Program Assistance

After this process occurred, I worked with the ETC director to form my sample. Working through the eligibility process, 186 juveniles had participated in the ETC program from inauguration in October 2016 through April 2018 with 53 graduates (28.4%). Twenty graduates were eliminated for being over the age of 18. Eight were currently in a restrictive placement or placed outside of the home. 25 juveniles fit the construct of my eligibility. Of those 25, messages were left with nine families; those messages were never responded to. Another five's phone said their voicemail box was full or the line was disconnected. Two families took my information down as part of the prompt, but never communicated with me. Finally, one was not interested. This left me with a sample of eight. As to why these families did not wish to participate, I can only speculate. While my interviewees were overall left with positive memories of program, after witnessing some of the interactions, it can be reasoned that these youths experiences were not similar. Also when asking the ETC to reach out, I was informed, six months after leaving the program, they send out suggestion questionnaires, to which they rarely

receive any back. This may or may not be a reflection of the program or a reflection on parental participation in the process. Another potential issue, which I will address later, was the director serving as my liaison to the juveniles. From moments with staff, there is a belief that the director will protect the program. Having a researcher speaking with former participants, may receive negative feedback that could make the program seem questionable. Due to the nature in which they were working with me, and answering every question in a timely manner, I do not feel like this was the case, but it should nevertheless be mentioned.

After receiving the encrypted file from the ETC director, I called all of the families on the list. This sample included siblings that had attended the ETC. I spoke with two families that afternoon and left messages with four of them. After first contact there was interest but no one set up an interview at that initial call. Three days later, I called back three of the families, at this time two interviews were established. A week after initial contact, another two interviews were set, and messages left with the remaining participants. When reaching out to parents during initial contact they all expressed interest in the study and wanted to take part. A week after second contact, I had contacted families of seven potential participants and had six interviews scheduled. Of the two families who did not have interviews scheduled, one never answered when I or the program attempted to contact them. The other was very supportive of the study, however their child declined and therefore was eliminated leaving a sample of six. Times and dates were set for six interviews. Two interviews had to be rescheduled three times, and one interview was set to take place at a neutral location. While waiting, they never appeared at the location, and would not return calls attempting to reschedule. I felt that

this spoke to the nature of field research and it's unpredictability at time. After a week they were eliminated leaving a final sample of five interviews.

Research Question 1:

How does a homegrown EBP program implement lesson plans?

I arrived at the ETC at approximately 03:15 P.M. I from when the area was a detention facility would enter and report to the supervisor's office. Their office is an old central control office. The 5A/B unit they use was an old detention unit that was revamped for PULSE and ETC. The units have an office in the middle where a person would sit and monitor cameras for that individual unit. Central Control is now located between detention and shelter unit and has access to cameras all over the building. The unit 5 central control office is now filled with filing cabinets and lesson plans. There are two computers set up for the supervisors on a desk covered in more lesson plans and other paperwork. ETC uses both unit 5A and 5B for programs. 5A is also used by the LCYIC shelter unit. There are 12 green doors to rooms surrounded by plain white walls. In the middle of 5A, on top of white floors, sit couches. They are made of a blue rubber/plastic material for easy cleaning. This unit is to the left of the supervisor where unit 5B is to the right. 5B or the PULSE dayroom shares a similar layout as the 5A side. Again 12 doors along the walls, however these walls are purple. Instead of open florescent lighting like on 5A, these lights have colored sheet like covers on them that cast different colors throughout the 5B day room. The walls have words composed on them, matching those in the unit 4 or ETC dayroom; empathy, freedom, accountability. Centered on the 5B day room are couches like you would find in a home, set up in a

semicircle around a TV and game console. A fridge is on the unit with a sign for PULSE bucks: a reward system for good behavior that earns you snacks. Both of these units serve as an additional room for lesson plans. Every day I met with a supervisor in their office before starting observation. They would brief me on what the plan was for programs that day and asked if I had any questions. After the meeting, the days were redundant: arrive, free time, group one, eat, free time, team building, group two, snack, then departure.

As outlined earlier, there are two hours of lesson plans surrounded by two and a half hours of other time. Were these programs able to leave a lasting effect through these two hours alone? The interviews revealed it does, but not for everyone. When asked if they could recite lesson plans three were able to whereas two could not remember.

Dorris told me a story about a positivity box,

“During girls group we made boxes, and mine was the best [Laughs]...other girls wrote nice things like I’m funny and caring and put it in the box. I still use it. When I am having a good day I will write something and put it in the box and on a bad day, I’ll read it...”

Whereas Ray had forgot everything. *“I don’t really remember but I know it is there.”*

Anna said she does not remember much, but the mantra of *“pause for the cause”* stands out for her, *“..if I can get a moment to breathe before I react I am fine, but if not I explode.”* Rita who self-identified she has had previous therapy sessions, *“I remember it because it was a reminder of what I already learned.”* The reason for this uncertainty is during the lesson plans, it really depends on the staff and how they present the

information. This example is played out when there was positive and negative interactions observed.

Program Observations

During a session of FT, staff were unable to maintain control of the youth. While it started as a group discussion, side conversations about inappropriate wants and needs took over the program. One staff member actually contributed to the negative conversation, while the other one disregarded it and started paying attention to those who were still positively participating. They were engaging those who were making an effort listening to what they were saying and responding, much like when the supervisor, Ryan was de-escalating the juvenile. The second staff present was doing the same but again was contributing to this side bar. Their topics included items such as sex and drugs. Using no redirects, the staff was actually inquiring into drug use and sharing stories about nights out when younger. It appeared the structure of the program had been broken. When this collapse happened, the more experienced staff just focused on those who were taking program seriously. There were times when the senior staff attempted to redirect the other staff, in order to get back to teaching the lesson plan. Later in reflection with the supervisor, they asked me what I thought about the program. I questioned what I had seen, the supervisors answers became short and irritable with *“They’re new...they’re good.”*

Emotional Presentation

During a session of Relationship Skills, they were discussing the complexity of conversations and communications. The entire session was males except for staff. Leah 26, was explaining how talking and listening plays an active role in establishing

relationships. On a whiteboard, she wrote the residents' names and a scale of five points afterwards. *"I want you to mark on this scale where you think your relationship with...is?"* She covered friends, teachers, and siblings. She asked about their mom and dad last. All of the youth marked high relationship status with their mom, but for dad only one did. The rest put their father last or at the bottom. When she inquired why, one youth responded with his father is incarcerated, the rest either did not know their dad or he was not in their life. Leah, then changed from the lesson plan and focused on overcoming being raised in a fatherless home.

She listed prosocial traits that are usually shown from father to son. There were three: empathy, emotional validation, and consideration/civility. She said, *"These are traits that a father shows his son. Without having this in your life this contributes to your current situation."* Here she presented the boys a stat sheet called *The Father Absence Crisis in America* by the National Fatherhood Initiative. This stat sheet claims children from fatherless homes are more likely to have behavior problems, go to prison, and abuse drugs and alcohol. Information on this sheet was from data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau for children living without a biological, step, or adoptive father. She saw that this was really getting to these boys. One even read through the list saying *"That's me, and that's me, damn that's me."* Leah explained her upbringing. Very honestly in a modest tone, *"My father was absent from my life."* The boys sat staring. She talked about how she used to think about life with him and how despite her personal situation with her child's father, she was glad that he was at least a father to their child. She then moved the group to a table with a laptop.

Using YouTube, she showed a scene from *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*. In this particular scene, the main character, portrayed by actor Will Smith, watches as his father lies to him about a trip and abandons him. In this emotional scene, we watch as his character and his uncle, played by James Avery, try to make sense of it all. Will starts his monologue calling back to how his father was never in his life. The end of the scene is Will breaking down yelling, “Why doesn’t he want me?” For the boys in this group who never watched this scene before, their eyes were red and glossed over, as if tears would fall at any moment.

Leah concluded with discussing, how to interpret the stats, “...*these stats are just numbers, they do not represent what you have been through, and what you’re going to be.*” These are just a few of the moments during programs. Programs that provided a structure allowed for the staff to bring in as much detail as they needed, while still maintaining a lesson plan. According to DeSwart (2012), juveniles like the structure. However, during an evening, there was two and a half hours of essentially free time. This time had no lesson plan and was meant for engaging other youths in the program.

Staff Monitoring

There was a moment in which I had to leave the role of researcher and say something for my safety. A juvenile was walking around with his arm extended and his hand like they were holding a tea cup. Very slowly, they would put their hand in a person’s personal space. Residents addressed it, asking them to stop. Staff stood watching not addressing the situation. This behavior continued. During these observations I sat close enough to hear conversation but far enough away to not be directly involved in what was going on. This juvenile then started to approach me. As I

was sitting down writing notes, they closed in on me with their hand fully extended out. Staff stood watching as they crept in. Finally, when they were about two feet away from my face, staff turned and observed what was happening, but still did not address. I felt very uneasy about the situation. The juvenile was staring at me, hand extended, inching in closer each step. I then felt it was in my best interest to set a boundary and establish I was not okay with this behavior. I said to the youth *"I am going to say this as politely as I can, but you need to..."* before I could finish, another staff member turned around from the games area and told them to stop messing with me. With their hand still out, they backed away slowly and continued to creep around. These moments of lack of supervision on the part of staff, were frequent during free time.

During free time several youth were in a verbal dispute requiring a time out. One went with staff to the PULSE day room, two went to the ETC day room, and one with a supervisor in the hallway. After 10 minutes, they all were brought back together for team building and it worked for most of the remainder of the night. After the last program of the night all the youth were brought back into the ETC day room for snack. The confrontation resumed. Suddenly, two residents stood up and started cursing at each other, *"fuck you bitch...wait till tomorrow,"* implying about school. One then spit across the room at the other one while staff were standing watching what was happening, that was until they started to charge at each other. Then staff physically intervened grabbing one resident and pulling them away to the far side of the ETC dayroom, the other was pinned against a filing cabinet by staff and a supervisor. *"Code yellow ETC, code yellow ETC"*, screamed over the radio. Code yellow means there is physical intervention required, all available personnel respond. This was evident when members from

detention and shelter came running in while the supervisor and staff attempted to contain one juvenile.

At this point they were unable to get ahold of the resident as they began to climb up the filing cabinet. Most of the ETC staff who responded in the moment, were staff who worked in other departments of the building previously. The rest, stood looking around, much like “deer in the headlights.” Finally, they were able to get control of the youth and placed them on the ground. They remained on the floor, with staff holding them, until they became calm. When it came to de-escalation with these residents, the ETC supervisor left the unit to get other youth on their vans to go home. Senior ETC staff were working with one youth, while shelter staff and a detention supervisor were talking with the one who had to be physically managed. The ETC staff in this situation did not react and when determining what to do froze until staff from other units of the building took the lead.

This uncertainty from staff was clear. Unless educated through prior experience, the situations that were strenuous eluded staff, especially regarding how to address conflict and conduct their actions. The difference came down to whether or not there was a guide line in place. In interactions that were unstructured, there tended to be issues between residents with residents and residents with staff. Moments that were structured like lesson plans, did not have as many negative interactions. When there was conflict, staff were able to overcome the issues, and re-establish the lesson plan.

Research Question 2:

What differences exist between unstructured and structured time?

Unstructured Time

Anutnes and Ahlin (2017) suggest that unstructured time with youth can create more unwanted behaviors. This argument held true during the unstructured time of the program. Most instances of negative behavior came during free time. During free time, the idea was that residents, who normally would not, would interact with kids from different social groups or cliques. This came in the form of playing games like Uno or basketball, along with just hanging out and talking. This time is also designed to do homework but according to the supervisor, *“It has been about a year for anyone to do homework, except for one kid.”* I asked why free time made up a majority of time spent, including teambuilding and dinner, *“They’re all going through similar situations and working together shows that others are in vulnerable situations as well.”* While in good nature, this is not how free time was used.

The mixing of cliques did happen, but only when staff initiated the game and participated. More often than not, youth with similar interests stayed together; sports kids with sports kids, “nerds” with “nerds” and urban youth with other urban youth. During free time conversation topics were often on counter-cultural topics like sex and drugs. I observed a juvenile admitted to friends he was high in program, but when approached by staff, he denied. This conversation continued and led to issues between staff and residents. When asked to stop, a few would stop, however, there were a select few that would escalate to obscenities and tell staff to *“...fuck off”* and *“quit being a weirdo.”* This level of antagonizing was constant from these few youth. A staff

member, Kyle (28), said “ *you get a few kids who want to test the water. We try our best to deflect it, but it doesn’t always work.* ” While the majority of interactions observed were positive in nature, dealing with unruly participants was a constant struggle. This paradigm of staff-resident interaction and the lack of respect did not just take the form of fighting and launching obscenity-driven rants, but also just blatantly ignoring staff.

The sports kids were playing football on the open side of the ETC day room, which is allowed. They allow for one-hand touch football; this was not one-hand touch football. Tackling and checking each other into cinderblock walls was happening. When staff addressed it, the youth continued as if no one had said anything. It was not until a staff interrupted the game and forced them to relax, that the game became less violent. This was short lived however, as it went back to tackle in just a few minutes. This lasted until it was time for team building. On another night this was observed again in the form of shadow boxing. Shadow boxing is when you take a fighting stance against another person and fake fight. In a facility like LCYIC, there are cameras everywhere, and someone is watching those cameras. Even after staff explained that the person in central could mistake it for a real fight and call a code yellow, this behavior continued for five to six more redirects.

Structured Time

In an example of altering aggressive behavior during program, during ART, a resident was acting out from the start of program. Grabbing markers from a white board, walking around with a nylon pouch of pencils, they began to curse at staff. Karl (46) was in charge of program. “*Listen if you don’t want to be here, than let’s get this done so you can go.*” The resident ignored the request and started to push a desk out of the way.

Other residents were becoming agitated, started yelling at this resident with obscene name calling; the problem resident started name calling back, calling females in the program “*ugly whore...fat bitch.*” Staff then tried to place a chair between them. Angel sat in the middle while Karl started the lesson plan. Every time the residents would start to get at each other Angel would interfere and Karl would call on them to speak about what they were learning that moment. After five minutes of insults, Karl pulled a chair up to the youth who had started the conflict and addressed the behavior. “*When you speak with your mom, do you talk to her like this?*” The resident said “*fuck my mom.*” Angel then reminded the resident of when they had the family portion of the intake and how respectful they were towards their mom. Karl again, “*so really is this how you talk to someone?*” The resident sunk in their seat and just crossed their arms. The rest of program they were quiet. After program, Angel pulled the youth aside and talked to them. These were two experienced staff members, who read this situation and worked together to eliminate the negative behavior. As mentioned in Roque, Welsh, Greenwood, and King (2013), staff have to be committed to the lesson plans and achieving rapport with the youth, even when they are displaying increased negative reactions. This battle between being a friend to the youth and being authoritative, plays with staff and residence as seen by their views on each other and the program.

Research Question 3:

What are the Staff and Juveniles’ Views During Program?

Juveniles in the Program

Throughout a majority of the interactions observed, youth were overall very quiet and willingly participating with the program directives. While in lessons, there was the groaning of not wanting to do the work, but once the plan was rolling, usually there was full active participation. Programs would start rough but end with laughing and everyone smiling in real personal conversations. When role playing was required they went through the motions at times, but again completed the task. During free time, youth went with their cliques, played games and hung out. From what was observed, the youth did not want to be there. Juveniles, while at times seemed to be enjoying ETC, often said about having other places to be. They were upset about having to come to program instead of going home and doing “whatever they wanted.” Conversations would lead to what they were doing, if they were not in program. As mentioned in the above section about Angel’s ART moment, youth were blunt about their wanting to be there at times. This is speculated from observation notes, but in general youth did not want to be at ETC, but still did what was needed to be there. While this mentality was during program, those who graduated had a different perspective.

Interviews Perspective

There were a few variables that affected the interviewees during their time in program: friends, staff, and home life. When it comes to how their friends viewed them during their duration four said their friends did not care about it and did not treat them differently. Anna explained “...*my friends went through shit, so when I went through shit, we talked about it maybe twice and that’s it...*” On the opposite side, Tom actually

felt shame about being in the program, *“I didn’t tell my friends, I felt really embarrassed about being in the program...I didn’t want to be seen as different.”*

All of the interviewees were at least able to name or describe one person working there. Four discussed the supervisors and one was able to remember a staff member. When asked about what about the program helped them most, it was the staff that had the most impact. Anna explained, *“Staff sat and listened. Not just listened but heard.”* They felt like staff cared. Feedback that the staff provided was genuine and truthful. This disconnect between present and post program youth, I believe is implementation time.

Youth in the program, are currently dealing with the fallout from their actions; court process or incident, coming to program, and managing life under someone else’s terms. The interviewees expressed while they were in program, life was difficult for the same reasons. Yes, they were able to apply lesson plans in real time, but the burden placed on them from being in the program, was said to be intrusive with their normal life. Home life for three of my participants was not ideal as they identified issues with their family and peers had continued. Such as Tom (14), he explained his home life during program. Tom hesitated when answering and looked down into his lap, then saying, *“our house was frustrating...I felt as if everything was my fault...people were blaming me for everything...”*, when asked to elaborate he requested to skip the question and move on. By using Tom’s thoughts about life during program and using ETC’s platform of generalizing that everyone is experiencing issues, if youth feel this program is a burden, one can reason why they would not want to be there. Not understanding what to do with

this frustration, might have caused the youth to act differently. Coupling youth interaction with supervisor intervention, staff perspective was mixed.

Supervisor

ETC and PULSE has two acting supervisors that oversee both programs. In terms of management style, they are different. One has a “hands off” approach and allows for staff to handle issues themselves until intervention is required. The other will intervene at any given moment, and often. Sometimes the intervention was needed and positive, other times it was to gain control of not just residents but also staff.

During a program, one youth was annoyed with how another resident was acting. They were planning on confronting this other resident. The supervisor recognized they were escalating and pulled one into the PULSE day room to talk. As previously described, this area is meant to be peaceful and relaxing. When Ryan sat down, he requested the youth to sit. They declined with a small head nod looking to the ground. Not reacting but with a smirk, Ryan told them it was fine. Starting the conversation, Ryan asked what had happened and the youth continued to look at the table that was separating them. Once reading the body language of the youth, the supervisor just sat back in there chair, one leg folded over top of the other with one hand propping up his head on the arm of the chair and the other laying relaxed on the opposing arm. Ryan started talking about other stories of things going on. Ryan made reference to his time as a staff member over in LCYIC detention unit. He also acknowledged my presence and what I was doing. The youth stood, now staring at the wall they were leaning on. Ryan then changed the conversation to current issues that he was facing. Focusing around recent car troubles he had been having. After finishing his story, he asked the youth

about issues and troubles they had been facing. The youth who laid against the wall, a little more relaxed but still not looking up from the ground, started talking, mentioning problems at home and school they were facing. Ryan and the youth started engaging in eye contact and minor conversation, with the kid only giving short responses to questions. After a few minutes, the youth finally sat down in a chair across a small table from Ryan. His head would switch back and forth from Ryan to the table, his hands were folded over top of each other, placed in his lap and were bouncing up and down from the youth tapping their heels off the ground.

Over the period of this 35-40 minute interaction, the youth slowly matched the seated positioning of the supervisor. During this time the supervisor remained seated, speaking in a relaxed manner, reacting to what the youth was saying and repeating it before giving a response. Once the youth gave a little chuckle, Ryan tied all the stories together into the moral of dealing with problems head on and reacting is a part of life. This is where the supervisor switched back to what initially had triggered the youths anger. Ryan asked the “how” and “whys” of what happened. The youth cited that they were upset with this other resident for the way they were talking to staff. They also mentioned they are feeling the weight of falling behind in home and school work, due to being in the program. Ryan acknowledged their feelings and presented solutions for getting school work done. Ryan said *“people will always annoy us, but there is probably somebody you annoy and so on and so forth. We just learn to tune out their behavior and try our best to understand their position.”* Ryan complimented them on their ability to pull away and listen rather than fight. Also adding if they needed more incentive, that detention is right there, and it is no fun; during this statement he pointed across the

courtyard to the detention unit. At the conclusion of this interaction the youth was relaxed and in full conversation with the supervisor.

Supervisor-Staff Interaction

Not shying away, both supervisors were overly honest about their thoughts and feelings about the program. This honesty carried over into feelings about staff. I was given insight into who was better at certain programs and who was lackluster. After observing for a few hours, I was asked to monitor certain groups due to *“too many kids”* and because *“...it would be nice to have someone big and scary.”* I felt odd that this request happened. However, given my experience working in the field, I understand the request, especially when working with rowdier youth. This distrust of staff was seen in a few instances and echoed from staff afterwards.

In one incident, staff attempted to deploy the tactics they are trained to use like motivational interviewing, but it was not working. The resident was cursing and threatening staff. At this point, staff asked the youth to remove them self from the group. This resident continued to threaten staff saying *“I’ll fuck you up.”* While saying this, the resident did go sit where told, but continued cursing and screaming. Other staff outside the situation and the residents ignored this behavior. When asked, it was explained that, they do not want the youth to feel like they have an audience for their antics. This however, caused the youth to act out louder, still screaming. It was at this point the supervisor, Ryan, intervened and began talking with the resident. Ryan was able to get the situation under control and get the resident through the rest of program that evening. This staff-youth interaction was observed other times and ended with the supervisor

intervening. The same day, two other residents had exchanged words, which almost escalated to physical tension. Staff had ignored the situation until it rose to that point, and intervened only after the supervisor already had. Again, the supervisor removed the youth and talked to them. This was constant, any time there was a negative reaction, the supervisor took over the situation.

During team building, a resident refused to participate and went off on their own. Staff followed the resident and attempted to deploy their learned tactics. The resident began cursing at staff saying *“get the fuck outta my face...fuck you mister...you a bitch.”* Staff again tried, talking with the youth, but were met with resistance. While cursing at staff, the resident walked over to a table that had a game of “Knock Hockey” on it. Knock Hockey is set up like air hockey, but with a wooden board. It contains a small cork puck and two red sticks about 10 -12 inches in length. The resident picked up a stick and the puck and placed them in their pockets of their jacket. Staff requested the juvenile to place the items on the table, which again was met with *“fuck you.”* Trying to approach the youth, staff chased them around the table. Finally, after going around the table five or six times, the youth darted towards the mail boxes. Staff closed in and asked for the items one last time, before stating they would have to physically take them. The youth reached into their pocket and grabbed the stick in a threatening manner. When staff attempted to grab the stick, they were verbally threatened; *“Touch me and I’ll still [punch] you...I’ll fucking kill you...don’t touch me bitch.”* After screaming in the staff’s face, Mike, who was significantly larger than the juvenile, went belly to belly with the youth. Mike (28), *“Do it...you won’t do shit...you’re not about it.”* This transaction lasted for about five to six minutes, at this point, someone else other than Mike

contributed. Staff radioed for the supervisor. When Ryan arrived, he saw a group on the other side of the ETC dayroom ignoring what was going on and a staff nose to nose with a juvenile. During this time Ryan asked me to intervene and grab Mike; I said I was unable to due to my role as a researcher and not an employee, to which Ryan pleaded with me to get involved. While our side bar happened, the youth and the staff were still belly to belly, challenging each other, with other staff standing, looking for an order from Ryan. Ryan instead asked for me to assist in this issue, while I understand the confidence from having being in these situations before, with him, his staff was present at that time.

It was at this point, from the supervisor not being able to physically separate them, I was bumped by the youth being pushed by staff walking into them, that I felt I had no choice but to insert myself into the situation. I wrapped the staff up in a hug and started walking them away from the youth, as the supervisor did the same with the resident. Both continued to shout at each other, with the juvenile saying "*Fuck you...you pussy ass bitch*" and Mike responding "*told you...keep walking.*" After the incident had subsided the youth went to their program and the staff went to theirs. The supervisor then came to me for a detailed account of what had happened. Then they asked me write a report. Acting skeptical about what happened, they asked me if the reaction was justified. The supervisor then said the youth gave a different account of what had happen and would need to check the tape of the incident. While other staff members were around, who saw this incident, again, the supervisor was asking me for my side of the story. There is a clear distrust of staff in escalated confrontations on the part of the supervisor. Staff expressed they feel the distrust.

Staff Perspective

In the above story, the second the youth was removed from the area, the staff snapped out of their moment and regret and guilt riddled their face. On the verge of tears, they kept asking if they cursed, if they over reacted. Then realizing what had happened, he went to the break room. I then went to the break room to observe Mike. They were visible shaken up. He continued to ask if he had done anything wrong. After a discussion about that particular youth that contained staff using phrases like “*asshole...douchebag...fucking dick*”, staff opened up about issues they feel are prevalent.

Staff often felt singled out. Any time there is confrontation with residents, staff felt the “*powers to be*” always listen to the juveniles over the staff. No matter how they handle a situation, a supervisor will come and take over. This presents an issue because some of the youth do not respect the staff, which staff contributes to issues with certain residents. One incident led to a resident being placed on a “time out.” After being disrespectful towards staff, the youth was asked to remove themselves from free time. Losing free time is the only course of action with what staff refers to as “a problem child”, other than being sent home or kicked out of ETC. I attribute these instances to a lack of understanding from staff. In all of these stories, staff were unsure of what was the appropriate course of action to take. While just talking with a staff member who stated they have worked in the juvenile justice field for years, explained why these incidents happen. Karl added, “*These kids know there is no consequence, so they just don't give a damn.*” According to staff, these options are rarely used and looked down upon from the

director. Many times staff are fearful of reprimand for using punishment deemed negative to deter problematic behavior. I asked about potential solutions to behavior, which I was informed there is none. *“We have a time out and that’s it. We can send them home but that rarely happens. We can kick them out, but that never happens.”* After hearing this I asked why there is no recourse for negative behavior. The staff smirked and chuckled. They implied that I would know why. After a few moments of delaying the answer, they implied it was potentially related to the director and the reputation of the program,

“I am not saying that it is, or it isn’t, but we hold on to kids well after they should have been kicked out...and you know how it goes when people want to look good.”

While examining staff perspectives on the matter, they feel that management does not support their decisions, unless it benefits the program. Staff offer to go to trainings and will get awards like employee of the month, but when a decision has to be made, they look for the supervisor to make the decision. One, because they always interfere and, two, they are afraid of the consequence for their actions. While observing there were few praises for staff, such as comments about how well they run a program, or how they make a youth laugh, but the majority of interaction about staff was negative. However, staff felt pretty positive about the youth they serve.

Staff here, enjoy their job. They love the freedom that comes with being allowed to expand on lesson plans. With the exception of handling adverse situations, staff felt that management and above support what they are doing. The main takeaway from my

time observing was how open and honest the staff were during these programs. Staff gave intimate details about their life and sometimes being overzealous with antics to drive points home. After all that had happened, I asked Mike, why he chooses to stay in ETC,

“I love these kids...sometimes, yeah they piss me off, but I love my job. Unlike other departments, ETC allows me to be me. No matter how ridiculous, they let me do crazy things to get our point across.”

Mike demonstrated this in a Boys Council session. They were discussing how do you want to be remembered; specifically talking about leaving a legacy and establishing yourself for your family. A youth was looking off in the distance and not paying attention. Mike called on them several times for answers to which they replied with *“I got nothing.”* After a few more answers like this, Mike addressed that I have nothing would be their legacy. Mike asked if that was *“his truth.”* *“Do you really have nothing? Are you really nothing?”* The youth sat up in their chair getting ready to respond but before they had a chance, Mike cut them off, *“If you really think you got nothing, then you can’t speak but watching how you’re getting ready to respond makes me think you give a shit about something.”* The youth then started to participate for the rest of program.

During this program they also discussed the effects that anger has with establishing who you are. *“Sometimes my anger gets the best of me...I had a job that I loved, but I had to prove a point when I felt disrespected”* Mike was discussing an incident with an employer and how he felt when they accused him of something. *“I told him off and lost that job...that was my legacy, but it didn’t define who I was.”* They then

went around the room and discussed a time where they could have reacted different for the sake of building their legacy. Many discussed the incident that brought them to ETC. At the conclusion of program, Mike them shook hands with all the youth and hugged the one that “was nothing” from earlier. Mike apologized for his comments, but said he felt it was necessary to get that youth thinking “big picture” about life. This ability to discuss personal stories from the staff’s life was a constant. In almost every program witnessed, staff broke from the lesson plan and spoke about their life and real world occurrences they are dealing with. While all this uncertainty was constant, the dynamic of staff, supervisors, and juveniles allowed for interesting moments like above, both positive and negative.

Research Question 4:

How are Graduates Using the ETC Tools Post-Program?

Before attending ETC, when asked about peers, answers were almost unanimous for how the youth perceive their immediate peer group. This group was identified as others in their age group who are not their immediate friend. Without missing a beat, many described their peers as annoying, stubborn, weird, and mean. Rita wondered why it seems like they were all trying to grow up so fast “*Everyone is trying to be adults without being kids...I hate them..*” Anna phrased them “*as a new kind of dumb*”. When asked to elaborate, Anna said “*kids today act like they know it all, all the time; when really youth are just as lost as everyone else.*” However, when asked about their immediate friend group, which carries the same definition, just people you are friends with; answers were completely opposite. Rita “*..Unique, innocent, hardworking..*” These

answers are mirrored through out every one's responses. Ray told me his clique is *"weird and dynamic...we're not on the outside and we're not the inside...just our own thing."*

Anna paused when asked and looked away and laughed. She said she wanted to get this answer right, *"..we're outsiders...like we're loners, but really I am okay with that."*

I believe the programs that forced them to step outside their comfort of friends, taught them the skills to tolerate other people. Before program, there was little to no toleration for people, however post-program, while opinions remain negative, all show an increase in tolerating "annoying behavior" from other people. Other people's opinions and actions were what stood out as the main trigger, and all of the youth said their ability to tolerate others has increased; Anna *"I now try to take a breath. I tolerate people's bullshit a little better, and I bite my tongue now."* Dorris also expressed a high tolerance for people, *"I try to remember people aren't like me and don't know my crazy."* Because of high reported toleration levels, school life also grew to be better. While there were complaints about all the group work, four are experiencing success in school while one did get expelled the day of their interview, however it was not for a behavior related issue.

All of the interviewees expressed an ability to use the lesson plans, when they feel angered. The juveniles from the interviews agreed, when a situation arises, the lessons from the program do come back. They may not be able to discuss it in regular conversation, but all gave instances of when they were triggered by something, and that what they practiced during ETC came to mind and were able to overcome their impulse reaction. When asked about the decision making process and if they remember what they learned, even those who forgot were able to cite instances where they know it affected

them. Ray gave me the best response, *“I don’t know it until I know it. I can’t tell you here but when I get upset I know it is there.”* He was unable to elaborate any further.

This was the same for Rita, *“I am unsure how or in what way, but I know it helped me.”*

Relationships

Before the program, all of the youth expressed discomfort in the home. Ray and Dorris were constantly arguing with mom and their older sister. Anna was in fist fights with her mother, and was not open to having a relationship with her step-father. This not being the only case of physical violence; Tom took this to an extreme and said *“I guess you’re gonna make me talk about it.”* After reassuring him we could skip any questions and my intention was not to upset him, he informed me just how bad the fighting was in his home,

“My sister wouldn’t leave me alone so I hit her....she then hit me back with a belt...I am not sure what happened after that but all I remember was chasing her around with a knife in my hand...”

After thanking him for sharing this with me and confirming he did not mind me telling his response was it still upsets him, *“I just get upset and feel guilty about it.”* When asked about the guilt he responded with how his anger got the best of him, he asked to move on. Before ETC, these relationships were broken and all of them identify ETC has to have something to do with repairing them.

Relationships with parental figure also were expressed as positive post program. Ray and Dorris both felt closer with their mom. Dorris stated, *“we’re closer now and I am open to listening to her,”* where Ray make a joke about his feelings, *“I love her...but*

she is a clinger.” We laughed and he did state again that he really did love her. Anna’s impression of her relationships post-program was the most visible during her interview,

“Me and mom are better now. We haven’t fought for a while. Also me and my step-dad actually talk now. The program made me see that not everyone leaves and he is not my dad so we’re good.”

Fatherless

When discussing relationships, I asked about the roll their fathers play in their lives, to which they all responded no. A few had issues with their mother pre-program. This includes yelling and disrespect and a getting into a physical altercation with their mother. Again, no one has a relationship with their father. One of the participants does have a step-father living in home. Anna, 16, said *“I didn’t talk to him before program.”* When asked why not, *“...everyone leaves...that’s what dad taught me”*. Many of them faced adversity pre-program. In hearing their stories, they were unable to hide the emotion and the effects that these relationships had on them. Dorris, when speaking about her father began to cry, *“He’s off living his life with his new family, while we sit here and struggle.”* She explained how her father has another child and it upsets her, *“He acts like we do not exist, like we’re something he’s ashamed of.”* Ray explained that he had *“met him once at court”*, when speaking about his father. Rita, 14, cited the constant fighting at home over drug use, *“My dad was using...it caused my mom pain and that wasn’t fair to her.”* Tom was a little less angry when discussing his father, *“I don’t like him, but I hope he’s ok.”* This strain was expressed from all the interviewees. This speaks to the program narrative of Leah changing to focus on fatherless homes. As seen in Yoder,

Brisson, and Lopez (2016), not having a father in the home, is a strong predictor of antisocial and criminal behavior.

Research Question 5:

Do Juveniles Feel ETC was Successful for them?

Most importantly, they all felt as if this program helped them. My goal was to look at the juvenile's perspective on a program that uses EBPs as their foundation. Through these interviews, I found that, of those I interviewed, they directly correlate their behavior now, as a result of the program. Even if they cannot explain how, they know that something is at work from the program. When starting to feel anger, whether using mental pictures or breathing, they are not reacting on impulse and giving themselves a chance to think before formulating their reaction. When looking distinctively at the juvenile perspective on whether an evidence-based after school program was successful for them, all five said that they believed the program was successful for them, and had a positive impact on their life. Rita called the program "*inspiring.*" She went on further to say "*I had these lessons before, but the way it was retaught helped me remember.*" Anna was under the impression that "*Every week whatever we were learning, I was able to practice at home...that made it easy to relate.*" , who began to smile at this point, said "*It gave me ways to control my anger...which is good for what I need.*" They all recommend the program for other youth in similar situations. Since graduation, none of the participants received any new charges. One did admit to attending a rehab program almost a year after graduating for depression related issues. Dorris was adamant on her opinion of the ETC, "*If you did do something or you didn't do something, this will help.*"

Relationships

When I would leave these interviews, I stopped and thanked the parents for allowing me to interview their children, they would chat with me for a moment or two. Sue, mother of Tom and Rita, said she noticed a change almost instantly. *“They went there, and when they came out, it was two different kids. They now act as normal siblings.”*

How this change came about, I believe came from the relationships they had built with the staff. After seeing the positive interactions during the observation and watching the way my interviewees would smile when discussing the program, the effects that are felt can be contributed to how staff presented to them. The change had to come from within, but the delivery of lesson plans and the building of rapport reached and made the youth want to change. Dorris made a valid point when finishing her interview,

“I saw people go every day and not take it for real. These people [staff] work every day to be there with us. They can only do so much before you have to take it serious.”

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

After examining the notes from the observations and interviews, there is a complexity to the findings. While in the program, there is little satisfaction from the youth, however, after graduating, some experience success. When speaking of the implementation of the program, the effect that staff has on the program is tremendous. Willingness to give everything they have to the program and the kids is paramount for success after the program. As seen in the interviews conducted, staff interaction and the impression they give, still resonate with youth well after the program conclusion. In addition to the staff, the amount of support for the program was impressive.

From the moment you step into the ETC dayroom you can sense the pride that the county has for that program and the initiatives they are taking to curve and alter potential recidivism. While this positive nature is there, the fact still remains of these glaring antisocial interactions between staff and juveniles. When it came to the correcting of antisocial behavior, staff were afraid, due to fear of reprimand. Outside of these instances however, this pride and commitment ultimately proves, as identified by both staff and juveniles, that to have a positive result in this program one must have the ability to be willing to work.

Inter-weaving throughout the program, themes establish the groundwork for youth to succeed. Staff conduct, juveniles' participation, peer influences, and a direct approach led to successful interventions for the interviewees. What I have observed was how

troubled youth can overcome and adapt in a program that does not remove them from their home environment but teaches them how to grow while maintaining their current life. I watched as youth faced internal conflict from the challenges of these lesson plans and from what staff presented. One particular group was discussing the role of fatherless homes play in juvenile delinquency. Young men in this program opened up about their hatred of their father and how they would not let it affect them. This idea of fatherless homes carries over with the interviewees and their level of disdain towards their biological fathers, including hatred that one interviewee projected on to her step-father.

The ETC is not perfect, as they are still developing. They face issues like other alternative-type programs with issues such as staffing and training (Henggeler & Schoenwald, 2011). It appears when facing adverse situations, staff are unsure how to act. This creates a potential volatile situation. Policies need to be implemented that give a guideline for how to handle these situations in a way that staff will feel comfortable. Staff that had experience in addressing problematic behavior, were quicker to react and attempt de-escalation, but were unsure how to conduct procedure once it reached a point that physical intervention was immediate. Establishing a clear guideline for this process, would allow for a baseline to follow, without the fear of reprimand.

Staff are provided with lesson plans to teach during program, however when given the chance to break away from the plan, lessons became interesting. Of the 10 groups I witnessed, only one was unsuccessful at achieving their plan for the day. The rest were able to complete their plan, with the addition of bringing in elements of personal story. These stories create a human element to the staff and allow for better

open discussion. As seen in cases of Leah and Mike, when giving intimate details of their lives, the youth responded positively. After watching supervisor interactions, this style of teaching is encouraged. They are given the chance to use trial and error due to the massive support they are receiving. That trust is continuously seen, as staff are given chances to bring in as much personal information as they wish to show empathy for the youth and their scenario. They are practicing what they preach and for the most part, the youth are receptive. Through the interviews, they remembered certain moments due to what staff had brought to that lesson plan. When staff are versed in reading situations and given an environment to flourish in, they are making lasting connections to the plans they are teaching.

Of the interviews conducted, you could tell how broken these youth were feeling pre-program. Many explained situations of emotional, mental, and physical abuse they had experienced, experiences that the juveniles are still working on overcoming and accepting. All of them said that this program gave them tools that they still use. From their perspective, they had received respect from ETC and were actually heard and listened to. Finally, they improved on their relationships at home. Many just have “normal” fights with parents now. They understand themselves a little better along with where they fit in the “big picture.”

While research efforts on EBP should be continued, researchers should start to examine, what it is about these programs that are working, from the perspective of their consumers. It is easy to look at statics that say whether something is working or not working but they may not answer the “why.” This alternative diversion program

statistically is graduating 28.4% of their participants, but with further understanding of what is working for this percent, there is a chance we could establish what is not working for the rest.

Limitations

The use of EBP should continue to be researched. Research efforts should also be made into EBP as foundation for after school programs. While there is information available, not much focuses on the juveniles and how it had shaped their life. As these programs develop, research into post-program life could be beneficial to statistically draw conclusions of success or not. Limitations for this study include a small interview sample. While N=5, this study could have benefited from larger sample. However, the current study did have a diverse group in a sense of backgrounds, in that the participant pool included siblings. Due to the constraints on time established by IRB and thesis submission date, there was a very limited time to complete the observation and interviews. As well as, I acted both as interviewer and observer. By completing this alone, I was unable to triangulate my findings with another researcher.

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