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Social workers' perceptions regarding "at risk" and delinquent foster care youth

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SOCIAL WORKERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING "AT RISK"

AND DELINQUENT FOSTER CARE YOUTH

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A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

_____

by

Laura June DeLuca

Mallory Michelle Flores

June 2011

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Approved by:

Dr. Ray E. Liles, Faculty Supervisor   Date
Social Work
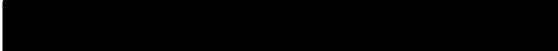
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County, Children and Family Services
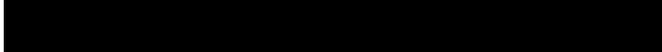
Dr. Rosemary McCaslin,
M.S.W. Research Coordinator

ABSTRACT

This research is qualitative in nature and sought to explore the experiences of social workers within San Bernardino County's Children and Family Services who are working with the population of dependent youth displaying delinquent or at-risk behaviors. Using an interview schedule based on the generalist model of social work practice eighteen social workers were interviewed about the experiences they had working with dependent youth who are at risk of delinquency in relation to the workers' use of engagement, assessment, planning, intervention, termination, and follow up. Questions were also asked about the kinds of services that were and were not available to this at risk population. A number of themes emerged from this study including the importance of early assessment and the use of a strengths-based approach throughout the provision of services.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to all the children and youth in foster care, who, despite the hardships and obstacles presented to them, manage to persevere. In addition, this is dedicated to the social workers of San Bernardino County who work endlessly to provide services and support to the children, youth, and families they work with.

This is also dedicated to my mother and father, Susan and Ray Flores. Thank you for your continued support, love, and guidance. You help me to be a better person everyday and to strive for my dreams. I would also like to dedicate and thank my brothers, Jeremy and Ray, and my sister, Erika. Thank you for your unconditional love. You all are the foundation on which my life is built on. Finally, I would like to thank my grandparents, Rose and Mingo Pena. You are my role models and my heart. Thank you for helping me to become the person I am today and for the love and support you provide to me every day.

This research paper is also dedicated to Christopher and Sandra DeLuca who loved, supported, and encouraged me in my studies and career; without the both of you I would not have been able to accomplish all that I have. I would

also like to thank my sister, Lisa, and my brothers,

David and Benson, for your influence and encouragement in

my life. Lastly, I want to thank God for the

opportunities He has given me and continuing to shape me

to be the person I hope to become.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Within the child welfare system there has been a
growing awareness of the correlation between maltreatment
of children and an increased likelihood of displaying
future delinquent behaviors. Many of those children and
youth who enter the system have experienced various, and
often multiple, forms of maltreatment. As a result, many
of these youth may become involved in delinquency. It is
therefore important to understand not only the dynamics
of these issues, but the scope of the problem as well.
According to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and
Reporting System (Children's Bureau, 2009), there were
423,773 children in foster care across the United States
in 2009. Of that number, 48% were living in non-relative
placements, 6% in group homes, and the remaining 46% of
dependent children in various form of kinship, or
relative, placement. During the same year, 29,471 youth
emancipated, or were released from the child welfare
system based upon turning eighteen years of age
(Children's Bureau, 2009). Of the number of youth placed

in foster care, parental rights were terminated in 69,497 of these cases (Children's Bureau, 2009). As the number of children who emancipate from the system or whose parental rights are terminated continues to increase, it has become vital that resources are provided to these youth in preparation for this transition from juvenile dependents to autonomous adults.

On a local scale, San Bernardino County, California continues to see an increase in the number of children and youth who experience maltreatment. The child maltreatment rate in San Bernardino County is comparable when looking at the state of California and the United States as a whole. The rate of child maltreatment in San Bernardino County is 9.8 per 1,000 children. While in California the rate of child maltreatment is 10.2 per 1,000 and in the United States it is 11.9 per 1,000 children (Children's Network Annual Report, 2006). In the year 2006, there were 4,820 children in out of home placement (County of San Bernardino, 2006). Of that number 2,709 were in placement for 18 months or longer and 269 youth emancipated from the child welfare system that same year (County of San Bernardino, 2006). More recently, in the year 2009, there were 18,096 referrals

made to the San Bernardino Department of Children and Family Services (CFS) for allegations of abuse and neglect (CFS San Bernardino County, 2009). Of the 18,096 referrals previously mentioned, 32,148 represented children and youth (CFS San Bernardino County, 2009).

For a substantial amount of children and youth, being involved in the child welfare system is a reality, as is the risk of being involved in juvenile delinquency. Although there is ample research on the correlation between maltreatment and the likelihood of engaging in delinquent behaviors, it is difficult to determine the exact numbers of offending youth who have had contact with the child welfare system because the information systems of child welfare and juvenile justice are not integrated (Herz, Ryan, & Bilchik, 2010). Furthermore, child welfare agencies are not mandated to identify whether children and youth have been involved in any other system (Herz, Ryan, & Bilchik, 2010). Within the state of California, there were a total of 84,153 delinquency filings in the year 2002 (Administrative Office of the Courts, 2003). In regards to arrests, nationwide, there were 229,634 arrests made on youth ages 10-17. Of those arrests made, 26% were female and 74%

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were male (Administrative Office of the Courts, 2003). It has been estimated that 1 in 4 of these cases will proceed to juvenile court hearings (Administrative Office of the Courts, 2003). Although little research exists, it has been estimated that 9-29% of youth in child welfare engage in delinquent behaviors (Herz, Ryan, & Bilchik, 2010).

Locally, San Bernardino County continues to not only have minors come into contact with juvenile detention centers. In the year 2005, there were 7,482 minors booked into various juvenile detention centers and assessment detention centers throughout San Bernardino County (Children's Network Annual Report, 2006). Furthermore, the arrest rate of minors within San Bernardino County is alarming when compared to the arrest rate within California and the United States. The San Bernardino County juvenile arrest rate is 29.3 per 1,000 children (Children's Network Annual Report, 2006). The juvenile arrest rate in California consists of being 19.6 per 1,000 and the arrest rate in the United States is 21.9 per 1,000 (Children's Network Annual Report, 2006). Research has shown that children experiencing abuse or neglect are at greater risk for delinquency, violence,

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self-destructive behaviors, post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, substance abuse and other diagnostic conditions (Children's Services Coordination Committee, 2009). Moreover, research has continually yielded results indicating that there is a direct correlation between juveniles in the dependency system and referrals to probation, juvenile arrests, gang membership, high school drop out rates, and substance abuse (Children's Services Coordination Committee, 2009). Without intervention, these behaviors usually continue into adulthood (Children's Services Coordination Committee, 2009).

Over the years, numerous national and state policies have been implemented in an attempt to address the challenges faced by foster care youth. These various policies promote mental health care, educational attainment, stable housing, extension of foster care, access and management of health care, and mentorship (Eyster & Oldmixon, 2007). One national policy, which is holistic in nature and facilitates services among foster care youth, is the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) of 1999.

This policy provided states with increased funding for foster care youth. Through this policy the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independent Living Program (CFCIP) was developed and the act broadened the amount of services states could provide to foster youth (Eyster & Oldmixon, 2007). States could now provide educational, employment, training, and financial services (Eyster & Oldmixon, 2007). Furthermore, this act provided for the provision of services to former foster care youth who have aged out of the system up to age 21 (Eyster & Oldmixon, 2007). This policy not only provided further assistance to foster care youth, but allowed states to tailor their services in order to meet individual needs (Eyster & Oldmixon, 2007). Although past national legislation exists which attempts to meet the challenges foster care youth face, services to address delinquency are still lacking. Services that prevent at risk adolescents from engaging in delinquency, as well as services that attempt to resolve delinquency issues for youth already engaging in such behaviors need to be emphasized among this population.

Over the years there has been an increasing awareness of the potential risk youth within the child

welfare system have of engaging in delinquent behaviors. There are a number of approaches and various services available to provide youth within the foster care system in order to address delinquency issues, as well as attempt to prevent it. Collaboration between service providers is often utilized to holistically serve children and families involved in the child welfare system. Such an approach facilitates the effectiveness of services provided and addresses both the micro and macro levels of practice. On the micro level, services which are offered to youth at-risk of delinquency, as well as those already engaging in such behaviors include transitional planning, independent living program, wrap-around, youth mentorship, therapeutic behavioral services (TBS), juvenile case management, multidimensional treatment foster care, and court appointed special advocates (County of San Bernardino, 2006). On the macro level, services which are provided to at-risk youth often involve advocacy activities on behalf of youth, as well as the collaboration and expertise of various service providers in determining appropriate services for adolescents.

Although there is a significant amount of research, which addresses the increased likelihood, maltreated children and youth have of engaging in delinquency, little is known about the dynamics of this population. Relatively little known about the specific needs of youth within the child welfare system who are at-risk of delinquency in terms of their characteristics, factors related to positive intervention outcomes, and the impact various approaches and services have in reducing delinquency. What is known is that at-risk youth within the child welfare system have had at one time, been provided with a social worker. It is therefore essential to discover and explore the perceptions and experiences of social workers who have worked with youth who engage in or are at risk for delinquency. It is important to examine workers perceptions of services, risk/protective factors, and to discover what approaches work best with this population. Examining worker perceptions will add to the small body of research which exists, as well as help to describe this population further in the hopes that the issue of delinquency among foster care youth will be better understood and will enable service providers to better meet the needs of this overlooked population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of social workers regarding their experiences in working with delinquent and high-risk youth within foster care, as well as to describe services that are available and the potential protective/risk factors that may exist. The correlation between maltreatment and the increased risk of engaging in juvenile delinquency is well known; however, what has not been a focus of study is describing the circumstances of delinquent and at-risk adolescents within the child welfare system.

It is imperative to understand this population and the services that exist in order to address this problem and better meet the needs of youth. It will also enable service providers to develop the ability to plan for preventative strategies to address delinquency issues within foster care. Social workers within CFS, San Bernardino County, were be interviewed in an attempt to explore the current dynamics of delinquency within the child welfare system there. This study provided a better understanding of the population, the services, which are available or lacking, and the protective/risk factors that may prevent or exacerbate the issue. Discussing this

issue with the social workers whom actually provide

services to this youth population not only provided

insight into the perceptions and experiences social

workers have in providing services, but it allowed for a

description of this population and the issues facing

them.

The research design for this project was qualitative

in nature. A non-probability sampling method was utilized

for this study as the participants were chosen based upon

availability. Therefore, there was no control group.

Social workers from CFS San Bernardino County were asked

to participate in this study. An internal e-mail was sent

to all social workers within CFS, San Bernardino County

in order to recruit volunteers. The e-mail detailed the

criteria necessary to take part in the study, as well as

the contact information of researchers. The specific

qualitative method of this study employed consisted of

having eighteen face-to-face interviews utilizing a

structured interview guide. Due to the sample size of the

study, statistical analysis of the data is somewhat

limited. Variables for the study were examined by asking

specific closed- and open-ended questions regarding the

dynamics of delinquency in foster care. Such variables

included social worker experiences in working with at-risk and delinquent youth, as well as their perceptions regarding services which are available and the protective and risk factors that exist among this population. Data was also collected on background information of participants. Such information reflected the participant's age, ethnicity, level of education, and years of experience as a social worker. The qualitative data produced by this study is relevant in that it adds to the existing body of knowledge regarding the dynamics and nature of juvenile delinquency among adolescents involved in the child welfare system. It also details the perceptions and experiences of social workers who provide services to these youth.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

This study contributes to the field of social work in various ways. Within the child welfare system there are numerous children and youth who reside in foster care and group homes throughout the nation. These children and youth have been victims of maltreatment. Research has yielded results of a correlation between being maltreated as a child and an increased likelihood of engagement in

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delinquent behaviors (Widom & Maxfield, 2001). Evaluating

the perceptions of social workers regarding behaviors

displayed by their clients, as well as what services

which are available and lacking will allow professionals

in the field of child welfare and social work in general,

to become aware of the most effective ways of serving

delinquent youth in foster care and identifying gaps in

treatment. This study allowed social workers the

opportunity to voice their concerns and opinions

regarding the services delinquent youth receive, what

existing protective/risk factors contribute to these

issues, as well as allowed them to identify what has been

beneficial, unhelpful, or currently needed in working

with this specific population.

Understanding the perspectives of social workers

could contribute policy changes that might affect youth

in child welfare. The outcome of the study may aid

professionals in understanding the services being

provided to delinquent and at-risk youth. Understanding

what services currently exist, which services are

beneficial or a hindrance, and what is needed in the

ability to address delinquency among clients may

influence what policies will be enacted in the future in

order to better meet the needs of adolescents in long term foster care.

In terms of social work research, this study contributes to the literature on the perceptions of social workers regarding delinquent and at-risk youth. This study adds to the small body of literature which attempts to ascertain the professional opinion of social workers regarding the dynamics of delinquency among foster care youth, as well as in examining the services which are provided to them. Having a better understanding of worker perceptions regarding the availability and effectiveness of services will contribute to future research by attempting to determine an effective model of service delivery for delinquent youth in foster care. The findings of the study may not be generalizable to the overall foster care youth population, but could aid in the development of future research questions and studies to be conducted on delinquency among youth in the child welfare system.

The present study sought to discover the perceptions of social workers on the dynamics and services involved in addressing delinquency among foster care youth. As such, Advanced Generalist Model of social work practice

(particularly engagement and assessment) was utilized in conducting this study. The study attempted to engage social workers in a discussion about the dynamics and various elements of at-risk and delinquent foster care youth. Furthermore, this study attempted to discover the perceptions of social workers, while simultaneously exploring what services are utilized to address delinquency among adolescents in child welfare. The study sought to answer such questions as: What services currently exist to address the problem of delinquency among foster care youth? What have social workers' experiences been in delivering services to at-risk and delinquent youth? What protective factors exist in preventing delinquency among foster care youth? What risk factors exist which increase the likelihood of adolescents engaging in risky and delinquent behaviors?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter two focuses on the relevant literature

related to this study. The subsections included in this

chapter are juvenile delinquency dynamics and child

welfare, risk/protective of delinquency, perceptions of

social workers, and theories guiding conceptualization.

Juvenile Delinquency Dynamics and
the Child Welfare System

A review of the research illustrates the existence

of studies, which attempt to examine the correlation

between maltreatment as a child and future development of

delinquent behaviors. A majority of the research, which

looks at the correlation, is dated, and very recent

research in this area is lacking. One of the most

extensive and ground breaking research studies was

conducted by Widom and Maxfield in 1988 and updated again

in 1996. The research, "The Cycle of Violence", continues

to be utilized as a foundation in research studies. The

study, which was longitudinal in nature, followed two

groups of children into their adulthood, while examining

juvenile and arrest records of each individual. The first group of children were those who had substantiated cases of abuse or neglect and the sample size was 908 (Widom & Maxfield, 2001). The second group of children had a sample size of 667 who did not have records of being maltreated (Widom & Maxfield, 2001).

The study found that being the victim of maltreatment as a child increased the risk of later arrest as a juvenile and adult. For juvenile arrests, the increase was found to be 59% and as an adult 28% (Widom & Maxfield, 2001). Also, children who were victims of abuse or neglect were found to commit offenses and be detained at earlier ages (Widom & Maxfield, 2001). Contrary to prior beliefs, it was found that maltreated females were at risk for an increase in arrests and delinquency, as were their male counterparts (Widom & Maxfield, 2001). Finally, the study concluded that between the two groups, there was little difference in the arrest records of those who remained at home or those who were in out-of-home placement (Widom & Maxfield, 2001). What mattered most seemed to be the stability of where the youth lived.

Although this study is the most extensive and informative to date, it has some limitations. One is the study was conducted in 1988 and again in 1996, and it is not clear the same results would be found today. Widom and Maxfield (2001) conclude that further research needs to be conducted on the progression of juvenile delinquency into adulthood. Research such as this is essential in not only understanding the dynamics of juvenile delinquency, but enabling service providers to identify factors that may contribute to its onset in order to allow for early intervention.

Another study which examines the dynamics of juvenile delinquency is one conducted by Alltucker, Bullis, Close, and Yovanoff (2006). This study examined the outcomes of 531 youth who were in the process of preparing to exit from the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) facility (Alltucker et al., 2006). These youth were incarcerated juvenile offenders and half of the youth in the sample came into contact with the juvenile court system at or before the age of 14. The variables of foster care experience, family history of criminality, special education, and social economic status were analyzed with logistic regression in order to predict the

age at which delinquent behaviors began based on the variables mentioned (Alltucker et al., 2006). The study concluded that foster care experience and having a family history of criminality increased the likelihood of becoming involved in juvenile delinquency at an earlier age (Alltucker et al., 2006). This finding confirms the notion that experience of maltreatment may lead to an increased likelihood of juvenile delinquency.

Extensive research has been conducted on juvenile delinquency among males, but juvenile delinquency among females is understudied. One study which involved female juvenile delinquents looked at intervention effectiveness among 103 girls who were referred from juvenile court judges in Oregon (Chamberlain, Leve, & DeGarmo, 2007). This study found that delinquency can be treated in a foster care system in which social workers, foster parents and others are well trained and supervised (Chamberlain et al., 2007). Furthermore, it was concluded that age played a dynamic role in delinquency, as younger girls were found to be more vulnerable to engaging in delinquent acts (Chamberlain et al., 2007). The study established that there is a growing need for gender sensitive interventions in the treatment of juvenile

delinquency among female adolescents. Maschi, Morgen, Bradley, and Hatcher (2008), also conducted research which recognized the need for gender sensitive treatment among juvenile delinquents. They found that maltreated females exhibit more internalizing behaviors, while their male counterparts exhibited more externalizing behaviors. Interventions must target these gender specific behaviors in order to prevent further escalation of maladaptive behaviors in the future (Maschi et al., 2008).

<div align="center">

Protective/Risk Factors for at
Risk and Delinquent Youth

</div>

There is an extensive amount of research which describes the potential risk and protective factors that exist for the engagement of delinquent behaviors among adolescents. The majority of such research attempts to understand the nature of risk and protective factors, however, what is lacking is research which focuses on the dependent youth population in the Child Welfare System and their relationship to displaying delinquent behaviors. One study which does describe the risk factors associated with juvenile delinquency among foster youth was conducted by Ryan, Hernandez, and Herz (2007). The researchers of this study utilized a sample size of 249

males exiting the foster care system in the Midwest (Ryan et al., 2007). They collected data on child characteristics such as education, substance use, and number of placements and arrests were collected as well. Data was analyzed utilizing semi-parametric group based modeling (SGM) and SAS to identify trajectories in offending (Ryan et al., 2007). Furthermore, multinomial logistic regression was used to discover what specific risk factors for delinquency exist among groups (Ryan et al., 2007). The study concluded that there were three offending paths youth exhibited while exiting the Child Welfare System. These included 52% of the sample being "non-offenders," 21% being "desisters," and 27% being "chronic offenders" (Ryan et al., 2007). In addition, the study found that 50% of older adolescents experience a minimum of one arrest while in the child welfare system (Ryan et al., 2007). In regards to risk factors, it was found that early arrests, placement instability, and lack of school participation were predictors of engaging in delinquency (Ryan et al., 2007).

Another study which focused on risk factors investigated the effects of substitute care and placement instability on the rate of juvenile delinquency (Ryan &

Testa, 2004). Data was collected and analyzed from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, as well as from the Illinois Juvenile Justice System. The study found evidence that aligns with previous research. It was concluded that placement instability has an effect on delinquency outcomes. The youth involved in the study that had multiple placement moves also had more delinquency issues than youth who had stable placements (Ryan & Testa, 2004).

A study conducted by Ryan, Testa, and Zhai (2008) had similar findings. Their study attempted to uncover the links connecting child maltreatment and delinquency in order for agencies to be able to provide better services that would help prevent delinquency among youth. The sample size of the study consisted of 278 youth between the ages of 11 and 16 (Ryan et al., 2008). The sample was exclusively male, African American, and the adolescents resided in relative or non-relative foster care (Ryan et al., 2008). Data was collected on delinquency petition dates, delinquent offenses, judicial disposition, and a survey used to measure attachment, commitment, and perceptions of placements (Ryan et al., 2008). Probalistic matching software was utilized to link

common identifiers (Ryan et al., 2008). The study concluded that youth suspension from school was found to be a risk factor associated with delinquency as is youth residing in relative placements. Furthermore, it was found that adolescents who perceived or predicted a change in their placement status were more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors (Ryan et al., 2008). In addition, a study conducted by Jonson-Reid (2004) confirmed the importance of environment and placement in predicting delinquency. The study also found that multiple reports of maltreatment were associated with higher likelihood of youth engaging in delinquency (Jonson-Reid, 2004). This study helped set a foundation on emerging research in the relationship between child welfare services, maltreatment, and delinquency.

Other studies have identified risk factors other than placement instability, early arrest, and school performance. One such study utilized a sample size of 76 males and females who were juvenile probationers (Carr & Vandiver, 2001). Information was collected on numerous variables which consisted of prior offenses, personal characteristics, family conditions, drug use, peer selection, school performance, and role models (Carr &

Vandiver, 2001). Once data were analyzed, it was found that family conditions constitute a risk factor for delinquency. Family conditions include homes with poor structure, few rules, poor support/guidance, and having more than four siblings (Carr & Vandiver, 2001).

The focus of research is typically on risk factors associated with juvenile delinquency, while there is limited research, which focuses solely on resiliency and protective factors. In regards to protective factors, a study previously mentioned also identified protective factors that exist to prevent the start of delinquency in youth. The study conducted by Carr and Vandiver (2001) also found that protective factors reduce the rate of recidivism among delinquent youth. It was concluded that personal characteristics and perceptions toward school, authority, and peers were protective factors against delinquency and recidivism (Carr & Vandiver, 2001). Personal characteristics included feeling happy with one self, getting along with others, and having the perception of having many friends (Carr & Vandiver, 2001). While having a positive attitude toward school rules, authority, and police rules constituted other protective factors (Carr & Vandiver, 2001). Furthermore,

in another study previously mentioned, Ryan, Testa, and
Zhai (2008), found that positive relationships among a
foster parent and foster child constitute a protective
factor against delinquency. As is the protective factor
of being involved and committed to a religious
organization (Ryan et al., 2008).

As mentioned, there are limited studies, which focus
on female juvenile delinquents as most of the research is
conducted on male participants. Mullis, Cornille, Mullis,
and Huber (2004) studied and reviewed the literature up
to that date regarding juvenile delinquency among
females. Their study focused on protective factors and
emphasized the notion of resiliency among youth and the
ability of individuals to overcome hardships and refrain
from engaging in high risk behaviors (Mullis et al.,
2004). They concluded that protective factors which
prevent delinquent behaviors include receiving positive
attention, stable care giving, having a quality
relationship with at least one care giver, confidence,
optimism, self-esteem, a positive self concept, emotional
support, and being in environments which are structured
and safe (Mullis et al., 2004).

The literature in this field is important because it can lead to an increased understanding of what risk and protective factors exist in regards to delinquency among foster care youth. Furthermore, it is important to understand in order to provide prevention and intervention strategies to best meet this populations needs.

Perceptions of Social Workers

In examining the dynamics of juvenile delinquency and subsequently, risk/protective factors and the services that exist to address the issue, it is essential to obtain the perspectives of social workers who actually provide services and are in constant contact with these youth. Limited research has been conducted which examines the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of social workers on these issues. The majority of the research that does exist has been conducted within the last decade. For example, Morazes, Benton, Clark, and Jacquet's (2010) qualitative study examines social workers who stay or leave within the specialization of child welfare. Their study was conducted by mail over a period of ten years. They surveyed 304 child welfare workers who stayed after

completing their Title IV-E stipend commitment following
receiving their MSW, and 82 Title IV-E MSW graduates who
left after completing their commitment (Morazes et al.,
2010). Title IV-E is part of the "Social Security Act to
provide funds for Foster Care and Adoption assistance
programs… to improve the quality of care of children in
foster care" (CalSWEC, 2008). The Title IV-E Stipend is a
Child Welfare Training Project for Social Workers, with
the goal to bring more professionals into the Child
Welfare System. MSW students selected for the Title IV-E
stipend attend classes with an emphasis on Child Welfare
and complete field placements both years in private and
public agencies serving child welfare (IV-E) clients
(CalSWEC, 2008). Although dealing with at-risk or
delinquent juveniles was not specifically addressed in
this study, both the "stayers" and the "leavers"
identified involuntary clients, high and difficult
caseloads, and limited face-to-face time with client was
most causal to their job satisfaction and retention. The
lack of support and respect from colleagues and
supervisors appeared to be of greatest importance in the
difficulty of buffering stressors (Morazes et al., 2010).

The above mentioned studies conducted by Morazes, Benton, Clark, and Jacquet's (2010) and Healy and Meagher (2007) serve as a foundation for this study as the focus is to gain the attitudes and perspectives of social workers within the specialization of at-risk and delinquent youths within the dependency system. Although the study upon which this report is based may experience some of the same limitations, such as the social worker's need to reflect back to previous cases (Morazes et al., 2010). Previous studies found in the literature have lead to further considerations in creating the interview guide, such as the level of supervision and support the workers report, the amount of time they perceived to spend on their at-risk cases versus other cases, and how prepared the worker felt when dealing with this specialized population.

In order to assess social workers' attitudes toward the population of juvenile delinquents, Russel and Sedlak (1993) conducted a study related to the Juvenile Justice Delinquent Prevention Act in 1974, which stated that community-based resources and centers are created for status offenders instead of placing them in detention centers with more severe delinquents. The study began by

defining a status offender in that it is a "child who becomes involved in the juvenile justice system for behaviors that would not be considered crimes if committed by an adult, such as running away from home, truancy, and ungovernability" (Russel & Sedlak, 1993, p. 13). Their study surveyed social service providers, caseworkers and residential child care staff, regarding their attitudes towards status offense cases, intervention, practice and policy, as the 1974 Act turned these youth and families over to the child welfare system (Russel & Sedlak, 1993). More than half of the respondents in both groups agreed with statements that the "juvenile justice system does not work effectively in status offender cases" and that the "juvenile court processing labels status offenders negatively and encourages further acting out" (Russel & Sedlak, 1993, p. 17).

Although the majority of both groups believed that status offenders should not be placed in a facility with delinquent youths, the two groups were not in agreement as to who should look after their respective client populations. While the caseworkers did not want the responsibility for status offender cases and felt it

should be the responsibility of the probation department, the residential child care staff reported the opposite (Russel & Sedlak, 1993). Virtually all respondents believed that the court should order more involvement among the youths' family, since family dysfunction is a causative factor in many cases. Additionally, the study reported that there is a correlation between school failure, juvenile court involvement, and learning disabilities which need to be further explored so that the agencies no longer lack in their available resources (Russel & Sedlak, 1993).

Since Russel and Sedlak's (1993) study, the correlation between schoolwork, school, violence, mental health and drug abuse has been further explored in Proctor's (2002) research. Proctor (2002), notes that society has failed to place children first, and therefore meeting their needs has rested heavily on the shoulders of social workers. As the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) proposed a policy for youth to be a "national, state, and local policy priority" (Proctor, 2002, p. 67), however, in order for this to happen services need to be created and built upon which are universally accessible to all youths. As the prevalence

of school violence has become more profound it has become

evident that this is more than a community issue, but

rather a global concern (Proctor, 2002). Social workers

have identified such factors as gender, sex, and

ethnicity as risks for victimization, which has effects

on the youths' developing mental health and how the youth

internalizes or externalizes their problems (Proctor,

2002). Other factors that influence the developing youth

include substance abuse, family environment, and academic

achievement; with these mentioned social workers believe

that a collaborative approach using evidence

based-practice is most beneficial in serving this at-risk

population (Proctor, 2002). The attitudes, perceptions,

and practices of current social workers within the Child

Welfare System is vital in understanding how services and

the provision of services for the dependent youth

engaging in status offenses and be improved upon to

better serve this population.

Theories and Guiding Conceptualization

A theoretical and practical model framework for

understanding the Child Welfare System while conducting

this study must also be used in order to analyze and

fully grasp the approaches utilized in providing services. The structure of this current study, as well as the interview guide, follows the form of the Social Work Advanced Generalist Model (Hepworth & Rooney, 2010). Since the clients of the participant social workers are primarily involuntary clients, by utilizing this model social workers are able to take an empowerment stance as they develop rapport and overcome barriers to change as goals are developed with clients. When using the Advanced Generalist Model social workers employ knowledge, values, and skills and a seven step process which consists of engagement, assessment, planning, implementing, evaluation, termination, and follow-up (Hepworth & Rooney, 2010).

During the first phases of engagement, assessment, and planing, the social workers are able to explore the client's problems and develop a multidimensional assessment of the problem, identifying systems that play a significant role in the difficulties, identify relevant resources that can be tapped or must be developed, and making referrals as necessary (Hepworth & Rooney, 2010). After the goals are determined, the second phase, consisting of implementation and evaluation of goal

attainment, can then be the focus of client-social worker relationships. This phase composes of the primary interaction between the worker and client, specifically for the at-risk youth population, the success of these steps relies on the success of the previous phase, mostly the relationship and trust that has developed, and the services available within the agency and community for the youths' needs.

The last phase, termination and follow-up, is often neglected in many settings in which social workers provide services to clients. The process of termination consists of assessing the goal outcomes achieved by the youth and deals with the reaction the youth may experience as a result of the relationship and services coming to an end, as well as how the client will continue to maintain and experience growth. Use of the Advanced Generalist Model steps of termination and follow-up could help to determine where services may be lacking for this at-risk youth population, and also how the provision of services within the agency could be better employed.

In addition to the Advanced Generalist Model, it is vital to understand Systems theory when providing services to delinquent and at risk youth in foster care.

As Proctor (2002) recommended, the collaboration of multiple service agencies can be supported by the Systems Theory. Although the specific participants in this study are not specifically collaborative in nature, research has demonstrated that a dependent's delinquent and risky behavior can be correlated to a number of other systems, of greatest importance are the family system and school system.

Bertalanffy stated that, "a system is a complex whole comprised of component parts that work together in an orderly way, over an extended period of time, toward the achievement of a common goal" (as cited in Lesser & Pope, 2007, p. 8). The Child Welfare System, school system, and all other systems supporting children and families strive to achieve the common goals of physical, emotional, social, and educational development.

Although there is not a great deal of collaboration among Child Welfare service providers in San Bernardino County, even the collaboration of staff and supervisors can prove to be very influential on both the case and the worker themselves. The systems approach can be utilized on the individual level with the person-in-environment system to analyze the individual's behavior and

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interaction with each agency to better understand the individual on multiple levels, rather than simply a child in the dependency system (Saleebey, 2011). Saleebey identifies a number of factors from a strengths-based approach that lead to change including the individuals personal, social, and spiritual resources; the helping relationship between the professional and the client; the helping professional's method of operation; and the influence of expectancy and positive expectation (pp. 477-478). In exploring the Strengths Perspective conditions of change, Saleebey (2011) identifies the importance of hope in that "people may waver… but if belief in them is constant and resolute, we can come to see them… not as someone 'at-risk' but someone 'at-promise'" (p. 479). In practice, the Strengths approach can begin by the professional identifying traits and characteristics that are signs of strengths with the client and demonstrating positive reflection, and ultimately keeping the hope alive that the client can build on their strengths to meet their goals and dreams (Saleebey, 2011, p. 481).

Further, Leon and Armantrout's (2006) study identifies Maslow's motivation theory, person-in

environment, and systems as important influences on the collaboration approach. The study discusses the tool, Collaborative Assessment of Life Function (CALF), and its applicability to the social service agency in assessing various life functions, specifically with children and families, so that a collaborative case may be developed (Leon & Armantrout, 2006). A tool like this may be applied to the clients served in the Child Welfare system as a method of empowerment by serving as a road map to assess the client's progress.

Proctor (2002) also identifies the need for the Child Welfare System to take on an evidence-based practice in order for services to be improved upon with social workers critiquing current services available to their clients. Evidence-based practice studies have been useful in determining the effectiveness of treatment and interventions among clients (Lesser & Pope, 2007, p. 75). Lesser and Pope (2007) posit that evidence-based practice approaches are most commonly based on Behavioral Therory. Although the present study seeks to ascertain the perceptions of social workers, the ultimate goal is to help provide more effective interventions to the population of juvenile dependents beginning to display

delinquent or risky behaviors. Therefore, based on the evidence-based practice literature, among the services and interventions utilized for this population, some form of cognitive and behavioral modification instruments should occur within the youth in this population to lower the incidence of future delinquency.

Summary

As can be concluded from previous research literature, there is a clear need for further interventions and services among the juvenile dependency population exhibiting or at-risk of exhibiting delinquent behaviors. Understanding the correlations and causation that occurs between a child experiencing maltreatment and then developing delinquent behaviors has become evident from past research studies. Through identifying protective and risk factors for this juvenile population from past research studies (Ryan et al., 2007; Ryan & Testa, 2004; Ryan et al., 2008; Jonson-Reid, 2004; Carr & Vandiver, 2001; Mullis et al., 2004), areas where services are deficient may be identified and new services and resources may become more available. Furthermore, by gaining the perspectives of current social workers within

the Child Welfare System, the San Bernardino County CFS will be able to learn from each other in order to better provide the necessary services and manage their difficult caseloads. Although San Bernardino County's Department of Children and Family Services may not have always undertaken a highly collaborative approach with other service providers, by increasing collaborating with staff and supervisors and assessing clients as a whole, services might prove to be beneficial to this population.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This section presents the methods utilized in conducting this study. A description of the study's design, sampling, data collection and instruments, procedures, protection of human subjects, and data analysis, which was utilized during the course of the study, is discussed.

Study Design

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of social workers in San Bernardino County, California, regarding their experiences in providing services and relating to delinquent and high-risk youth clients, as well as to investigate the services that are available to this population. Related literature has displayed a consistent gap in attempting to ascertain the perceptions of social workers within the child welfare system regarding juvenile delinquency among their clients. This study attempted to acquire the perceptions of workers in order to fully understand their experiences of working with this population, as well as to examine

the services which are available to them and to describe the dynamics of this population in San Bernardino County.

The study utilized a qualitative design. Although twenty participants were recruited, eighteen face-to-face interviews were conducted with social workers. From the twenty recruits, one participant dropped out of the study and another was eliminated from the study due to incompatibility with the criteria necessary for participation. The participants of the study worked within the child welfare department of San Bernardino County, California.

Conducting face-to-face interviews with selected social workers was believed to be the most practical and effective method of understanding their perceptions and experiences in working with foster youth whom exhibit delinquency. The qualitative nature of the design allowed for open-ended questions, which could elicit profound and in-depth responses. Furthermore, engaging in face-to-face interviews allowed for the tailoring of questions, as well as for follow-up questions to be utilized in order to elicit further information from respondents. The limitations of utilizing a qualitative design involved the ability to generalize the information gathered. Due

to the utilization of a convenience non-probability sample, the design is not be representative of social workers nationally or other child welfare departments within California. Also, the findings of the study may not be generalized to larger populations of child welfare social workers in other areas.

Sampling

The sample included in the study consisted of eighteen social workers employed in Children and Family Services, San Bernardino County, California. Each participant was asked for consent to take part in the study. Efforts were made to work in collaboration with the Children and Family Services Gifford office supervisor, Sally Richter, in determining potential participants were deemed suitable and willing to be interviewed for the study. The eighteen social workers ranged in age from 27 to 67. In regards to ethnicity, the sample included in the study was diverse. In addition, because the study attempted to explore the perceptions of social workers regarding the dynamics of delinquency as it relates to protective/risk factors and the services available to youth, the selection criteria was that

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participants must have had experience in working with youth who exhibit delinquent behaviors or are considered at risk for exhibiting such behavior. Both male and female participants were included in the study. Also, the participants had a higher level of education in the form of bachelors or masters degrees.

Furthermore, the sample was collected on the basis of convenience. Because the study is exploring the perceptions of social workers on juvenile delinquency and foster care, it was practical to obtain the participants through the County of San Bernardino, CFS as this child welfare department comes into contact with youth exhibiting delinquent behaviors and the County being studied is San Bernardino. Challenges faced in obtaining a sample of participants included the fact that there were a limited amount of social workers who have worked with youth exhibiting delinquency, as well as the fact that social workers had limited amounts of time to take part in a qualitative interview due to time constraints of employment.

Data Collection and Instruments

This study collected data through face-to-face interviews with social workers from CFS San Bernardino County. Prior to interviewing, participants were asked if they consented to being interviewed for the study, as well as if they consented to being audio taped during the interview. The interviewers utilized an interview guide comprised of twenty-eight questions, including follow-up questions. The questions inquired about certain areas of the participants' work experiences in dealing with youth in foster care that exhibit delinquency or are at-risk for it. Such questions inquired about social workers experience in working with the population, as well as their perceptions regarding services and protective/risk factors related to delinquency. Researchers asked the social workers questions such as; please describe the rapport building and interaction between the dependent children you have worked with and you? How do you assess, as a worker, whether interventions you use are helpful? And does the agency engage in follow up when these youth exit the child welfare system?

The questions within the interview schedule consisted of closed- and open-ended questions. The

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open-ended questions allowed for comprehensive and in-depth responses. In addition, many of the questions were constructed in ways that allowed for personal reflection. It is believed that this enabled the participants the ability to provide answers, which were more thoughtful and meaningful in nature. Ultimately, the instrument was designed to elicit comprehensive information relating to the experiences social workers have had in not only providing services to delinquent and at-risk youth, but in identifying any protective/risk factors associated with this population. (Please see Appendix A, for the interview schedule utilized in the study).

Data was also collected on the background of the participants. Background information was collected regarding various aspects of participants' lives, while simultaneously excluded any identifying information. Such background information included participant's age, ethnicity, gender, level of education, and their work experience with adolescents deemed at-risk or delinquent.

Procedures

Eligibility for participation in this study was
based upon the availability of social workers within CFS
San Bernardino, as well as participant experience in
working with at risk youth or youth who exhibit
delinquent behaviors. Approval from CFS San Bernardino
County was obtained in order to allow social worker
participation, as well as the approval of the overall
study. Once approval of the study was obtained,
researchers sent an internal email throughout the CFS
Department in order to solicit participation from social
workers. The ideal amount of participants was
twenty-five. However, twenty were obtained and eighteen
ultimately utilized as one participant dropped out and
another deemed inappropriate for the purpose of the
study.

After appropriate participants were located,
interviews with each participant were conducted by one of
two researchers at a rate of approximately five per week
over a five-week period. These interviews consisted of
approximately twenty-eight questions regarding their
experience in working with at-risk and delinquent youth
in order to describe this population within San

Bernardino County, as well as to explore what social workers' perceptions are regarding the protective/risk factors and services associated with these youth in foster care. These interviews lasted between twenty and thirty-five minutes. The interviews were conducted at varying San Bernardino County's Department of Children and Family Services, offices. Such offices included those in Rancho Cucamonga, Fontana, San Bernardino, and Victorville. The locations of the interviews were quiet and secure for the study participants. Once interviews were completed, the audiotape transcription, data analysis, and synthesis of the material took over one month to complete.

Protection of Human Subjects

Since this study is dependent on the face-to-face interviews with social workers from the CFS, every reasonable effort was made to ensure the confidentiality of participants. Obtaining the approval of the research study was sought from CFS, San Bernardino County, California. Furthermore, participants signed an informed consent document explaining the purpose and confidentiality of the study prior to their interview. In

addition, each participant received a debriefing statement following their participation in the study, referring them to contact Catholic Charities should they experience any distress. Although the interviews were audio-taped, consent by the participants was received prior to the interview and the participants' names were not mentioned at any time during the recording of the interview. A letter between 'A' and 'S' were randomly assigned to each participant's interview. Therefore, a participant's identity was not associated to the data for our study. In addition, records from the interview were stored and remained accessible only to those individuals involved in conducting the study. The results of the study were conveyed to CFS and appropriate staff. Audiotapes and notes were destroyed following the research study. In addition, the research was not used for any purpose other than the research project, and specifically was not used in any prejudicial way. (Please see Appendix B for informed Consent and Appendix C for the debriefing statement).

Data Analysis

This study employed qualitative analysis techniques.
First, descriptive statistics were utilized to summarize
the characteristics of the participants. Also included
was the means of descriptive variables. Such variables
which were analyzed included the age, ethnicity, gender,
level of education, number of years experience as a
social worker, and the position/title of participants.

Qualitative data analysis was conducted utilizing
the data received from the face-to-face interviews. The
data was collected through an in-depth interview guide
approach. The interviews were either audio-taped or
hand-written. The raw data was then transcribed either
verbatim or as precisely as possible. Furthermore, a
journal was utilized by both researchers during the data
analysis process. The journal was useful in writing notes
about the methods utilized, memos regarding categories
and meaning units, as well as for organizing information
relating to what occurred during interviews and rules
regarding the definition of categories developed and
codes (Grinnell & Unrau, 2008).

First level coding was utilized for identifying
meaning units and placing them into categories, and

assigning codes to the developed categories (Grinnell &

Unrau, 2008). In addition, second level coding was

utilized for identifying any similarities and differences

that existed between the categories (Grinnell & Unrau,

2008). This was done in order to determine relationships.

The researchers described the major categories, as well

as identified recurrent themes in the data (Grinnell &

Unrau, 2008). Furthermore, the researchers counted the

number of times each category appeared in order to

discover any regular patterns which existed in the data.

Finally, the researchers engaged in efforts to illustrate

the trustworthiness of the data collected. This was done

through the use of triangulation, in which multiple

perspectives are compared (Grinnell & Unrau, 2008).

Summary

The focus of this chapter was to describe the

methodology of this research study. This chapter explored

the qualitative study design that was utilized and the

sampling of social workers in the Department of Children

and Family Services, San Bernardino County, as

participants. Data collection procedures consisted of

collecting background information and conducting

face-to-face interviews with participants. A thorough

explanation of the interview guide and data analysis for

this study was also discussed. This chapter also

explained the measures taken to ensure the rights of

human subjects including informed consent and

confidentiality for all participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter four presents the results which were
discovered on this qualitative study that sought to
explore the perceptions and experiences social workers
have had in working with youth who are at-risk for
exhibiting delinquent behaviors as juveniles. The chapter
begins with the demographics of the participants. In
addition, each of the questions from the interview guide
was examined and the responses from participants
described.

Sample Description

This study focused on the perceptions and
experiences of 18 child welfare social workers currently
employed within CFS, San Bernardino County. Of the total
sample, 61% (11), of the social workers were female and
39% (7) social workers were male. The average age of the
social workers at the time of the interview was 40.8
years of age. Of the social workers in the sample, 33%
(6) were African American, 28% (5) social workers were
white, 17% (3) social workers were Asian/Pacific

Islander, 11%, (2) social workers were Hispanic, and the remaining 11% (2) social workers identified themselves as other. In regards to level of education, the majority of the social workers interviewed identified themselves as social service practitioners with 67%, (12) social workers having master's degrees, while the remaining 33% (6) of participants had bachelor's degrees and identified themselves as being in the job classification of Social Worker II. Furthermore, 89% (16) social workers, were not licensed clinical social workers; however of that number 25% (4) social workers, were in progress to be. The remaining 11% (12) social workers had no desire for licensure. The number of years experience as a child welfare social worker varied, with the average being 8.67 number of years experience in the field.

Results

A number of themes emerged from each question presented to participants during the interview. Firstly, each social worker was presented with a list of behaviors in order to provide them with the opportunity to assess their experience and familiarity in dealing with delinquent behaviors among their clients. These behaviors

included being frequently absent without leave (AWOL's), chronic truancy or absenteeism from school, physical violence towards others, self injurious behaviors, theft or robbery, school expulsion, multiple school suspensions, abuse of illegal substances, prostitution, arrests, gang involvement or affiliation, admittance into a psychiatric hospital, and admittance into a juvenile detention facility.

When asked what behavior the social workers felt they dealt with the most frequently when working with their clients, the most common answer was AWOL's. However, the overwhelming majority of social workers identified more than one behavior as being common among the adolescents with whom they work. Besides AWOL's, the other two most common behaviors seen among the clients of the interviewed social workers was use of illegal substances and frequent school truancy.

The next question dealt with the social workers' perceptions of what behaviors they believe constitute "juvenile delinquency". When asked if there were any other at-risk behaviors they would consider for delinquency, the typical response was no. The behaviors listed represented the majority of behaviors the social

workers dealt with among their at-risk clients. The following excerpts illustrate this theme:

> Well, I think that list has the most frequent ones I have seen. (Participant B, personal communication, Feb 7, 2011)

> No, this is a pretty well covered list. (Participant G, personal communication, Feb 8, 2011)

Although the majority of social workers felt the list provided to them covered most of the behaviors they address with clients, there were two participants who provided atypical responses from the rest of the sample. These participants felt that there were other behaviors or characteristics that were related to delinquency. These behaviors included verbal aggression and opposition to authority. The following quotes illustrate this theme:

> Well, I think that defiance of adults and authority is one. I think that clients who are delinquent often manifest that in their behaviors. (Participant G, personal communication, Feb 8, 2011)

> Verbal aggression, I've seen a lot of that and the inability to accept authority of adults causes a lot of conflict. I think those are the main ones.

(Participant P, personal communication, March 10,

2011)

The Interaction Process

The interaction and engagement process is essential

as social works try to gain client trust and provide

effective services. When asked to describe the rapport

building and interaction process among the social workers

and the adolescents on their caseload, one prominent

theme emerged. This theme included a focus on building a

relationship with the youth. This was done by utilizing

empathy, active listening, getting to know the youth, and

discovering common ground between the social worker and

client. The following statements exemplify this theme:

I think listening and empathy are the most important

ones because the most frequent is feeling

misunderstood. So even in the first meeting most of

the time I will ask them what is it like for you?

What has it been like being in foster care? What is

you experience and how was it with your previous

workers? What do you think I need to know with you

if I am going to work and help you? (Participant B,

personal communication, Feb 7, 2011)

Well, I think to begin you have to engage, and then

through that engagement you can build some rapport,

some relationship of trust with that individual. You

have to also be empathetic, you also have to be an

active listener, its important, because especially

with self-injurious behaviors, most of the time they

feel that they are not being listened to or they

don't get the chance to express themselves so I

think that if you listen, and give them that

environment to talk so you can listen to what they

have to say. (Participant R, personal communication,

March 1, 2011)

Trying to just give them the opportunity to speak

and that their feelings are valid, acknowledging

they have general concerns and genuine struggles.

Just allowing them the time to do it on their own,

if you push for it it's not going to happen.

(Participant L, personal communication, March 17,

2011)

In addition to rapport and interaction, the

engagement and connection to clients was a focal point of

investigation. In speaking with the social workers, it

was discovered that although the engagement process and

techniques may differ from worker to worker, there were

common methods utilized by social workers in attempts to

connect with the youth. This theme revolves around

discovering what the youth are interested in and getting

them involved with those activities. This may also

include meeting with the youth outside of CFS and their

placement. Some comments that illustrate this theme

include:

> Talk to them about their interests, movies, hobbies,
>
> sports to get involved with or clubs to get into.
>
> Talking on their level. (Participant N, personal
>
> communication, March 22, 2011)
>
> Talk to them about their interests, movies, hobbies,
>
> sports to get involved with or clubs to get into,
>
> talking on their level. (Participant R, personal
>
> communication, March 1, 2011)
>
> It's good to start off by spending time talking
>
> about what they like to do and showing I care about
>
> who they are and not what their situation is. I try
>
> to take them away from their situation so if I have
>
> a county car and the time, I will go to burger king
>
> or something like that. If you could somehow
>
> distract them with something else, something

pleasurable, it will let them open up easier.

Sometimes I will see a kid at school and say lets

get a basketball and go play outside, it lowers

their defenses. (Participant I, personal

communication, March 10, 2011)

Another area of exploration was related to the

social workers' perceptions of what they have generally

found to be most difficult when working with youth who

exhibit delinquent behaviors. The majority of social

workers revealed numerous hardships involved in working

with this population; however, three common responses

emerged. Most of the social workers said something

related to the youth having trust issues and various

forms of resistance, as well as a lack of values and

limited tools for success. This is illustrated by the

following:

Probably self sabotaging behaviors. As soon as they

start to build a relationship with the care giver,

regardless of the care giver or how much the

caregiver reaches out to them, in a lot of cases

once that type of relationship is built then these

mechanism start kicking in and they start to disrupt

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the placement. (Participant B, personal

communication, Feb 27, 2011)

It's when they build up a wall before you get a

chance to connect with them because they feel like

I'm going to get you before you get me. (Participant

H, personal communication, March 2, 2011)

Getting them to trust me and that I am not going to

disappoint them like everyone else in their life

has. (Participant L, personal communication, March

17, 2011)

The biggest difficulty I see is the lack of values.

I think in this field we can feel bad for saying to

clients that some things are wrong. (Participant G,

personal communication, Feb 8, 2011)

The frustration of the odds of them succeeding. I

stepped into the picture, social workers step into

the picture when, after a lot has transpired in

their lives. We have kind of limited tools as far as

the time we can spend with them and their being

receptive to what we think would work. So it's

frustrating when I try to do a quote intervention

whether it's a referral for something, or a piece of

advice or whatever it is, especially when it seems

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to be working at first and then seems to fall apart.

So it's the lack of success. (Participant P,

personal communication, March 10, 2011)

In addition to exploring what difficulties exist

when working with at-risk youth, it is equally important

to examine what social workers have found to be helpful

when working with this population. Once again, there were

a variety of perceptions' regarding what is helpful;

however, a common theme surfaced. The typical response

given by social workers revolved around the quality and

nature of the relationship social workers have with the

youth. This was especially true as it relates to honesty

and dependability. This theme is represented by the

following comments:

Being honest and genuine with them, trying to relate

and understand what they are going through.

(Participant O, personal communication, March 22,

2011)

Most helpful is just honesty and being able to

relate and dependability. (Participant D, personal

communication, February 16, 2011)

I think it's taking the time to establish rapport

and spending time with them to find out what their

interests are. I like to let them talk to me. I ask

them if they have any questions, I explain

guidelines, and let them know that I am accessible

to them. I like to talk to them about the case and

lay a foundation to let them see that I will be

consistent. I find it helps them to open up.

(Participant A, personal communication, February 4,

2011)

Also thought to be of importance in this study was

an exploration of how the working relationship between

social workers and at-risk clients differed from other

clients on their caseload that did not exhibit the

behavioral problems of the youth in question. The biggest

difference for social workers between clients was that it

was more difficult to connect to the youth engaging in

juvenile delinquent behaviors as the social workers had

to actively attempt to break through the psychological

defenses and resistances the youth displayed. The

majority of workers also expressed that more time was

spent with and on the cases of these youth. This is

illustrated by the following:

I mean I think that once I can break through their

walls, they are equally as receptive as other youth,

but it's just getting over the thick walls they

have. (Participant S, personal communication, March

10, 2011)

Well, I think, I would say I tend to spend a lot

more time on the cases involving this population

because most of them, some of them are suicidal and

have self-injurious behaviors are ones that have to

be watched, so you have to monitor them. So this

could be a daily thing, checking up on them, it

could be going to the home, to the school. So as far

as this population compared to other populations, I

probably spend a lot more time. (Participant R,

personal communication, March 1, 2011)

I think that with the at-risk youth, kids 11-17 it's

a more difficult relationship, one day they are

cooperative and the next day they are not. Much more

difficult, very angry teens, very angry.

(Participant C, personal communication, Feb 21,

2011)

In addition to the typical responses provided, two

social workers provided atypical responses to the

question. These two workers identified feeling more

rewarded in their efforts when working with the at-risk youth. This notion is illustrated by the following:

> I think it's a little bit more rewarding because you are invested in them and invested in seeing them succeed. (Participant L, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

> I actually enjoyed working with them, I feel like I make more of an impact, it's more rewarding to work with them. (Participant H, personal communication, Feb 17, 2011)

The Assessment Process

The next set of questions focused on the assessment of clients and their at-risk behaviors. In regards to experience working with this client population, social workers were asked how they assess the seriousness of the behaviors displayed by the youth in their care. The most common response by respondents was that it depends upon the behaviors displayed, beginning with the youth's harm toward self or others, and then assessing other aspects of their lives, such as school and family settings. Another common theme that emerged was the frequency and duration of the behaviors displayed.

Just like everything, it's case-by-case basis. You

have to look at exactly what's happening, what kind

of risks are they putting themselves at and way out;

their environment, their home. If they're removed in

foster care, what's going on in the home? What can

be put in place as a safety net for them? So I kind

of incorporate all of that and also whatever service

providers are available for and what's going on with

that in order to make a determination of just how

at-risk they are. (Participant P, personal

communication, March 10, 2011)

Assessment of clients is part of the initial

provision of services in order to determine what services

and resources are most necessary. The majority of social

work participants reported that there was no specific

tool that is used for every client to assess their risky

behaviors, but rather the assessment was made on a

case-by-case basis. Instead, the participants reported

that they assess the seriousness and potential

harmfulness of the behaviors and the chronicity.

We do have an assessment tool so I suppose I use it

and I'm used to using it that I don't think of it

that way. It's not something I pull out and look at

every step. We look at age, chronicity of the

problem, how long they have been using, how long

have they been AWOLing, where are they in school, if

they are a harm to self or others, what have they

done, what does the harm consist of, is it risk, is

it domestic violence with parents or siblings?

(Participant C, personal communication, February 21,

2011)

Another theme that emerged when interviewing the social

workers was that their own assessment also allows for the

caregivers and other service providers to participate in

the assessment process. This was particularly useful for

those youth that begin to display delinquent behaviors

while in placement. The following illustrates this theme:

Usually the information comes from the foster

parents. Foster parents will start having problems

with defiance, opposition, lying, stealing.

Initially it is the foster parents input with

assessment because they are with them most of the

day. (Participant A, personal communication,

February 4, 2011)

Another aspect of the assessment process that was

explored in this study was the identification of any

protective factors or strengths to build upon when working with the client. The first question posed to the social workers was related to whether or not they look for protective factors when assessing the client. All social workers reported that they do look for protective factors. In addition, some participants elaborated with statements such as the following:

There are so many factors, it's the social worker, the office, the home they live in, the FFA social worker, the school, the back up to all those systems, the time I have. There are so many factors related to if a kid is successful. (Participant J, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

I want to make sure they are safe where they are and make sure they can get the best services needed to address their problems...are they in an environment that's going to help improve them or one that's going to be self destructive. (Participant F, personal communication, February 16, 2011)

One response to this question was rather atypical:

The only thing I have been able to utilize is the report that I write to the probation committee where I am able to make a recommendation. If I feel like I

can't protect them anymore because of their behaviors, I will recommend that they become a ward of the court and that probation takes over because I feel like I've done all I can. (Participant H, personal communication, February 21, 2011)

Asking social workers if and how they assess for strengths with their clients followed the "protective factors" question. A number of themes emerged in the responses of participants specifically searching deeper for the youths' strengths by identifying things they like and are good at. These following responses support the themes found throughout the interviews:

Asking them what it is they like to do, finding what they are good at and build on it and showing them that they have strengths, sometimes they are not aware of what they do have. (Participant O, personal communication, March 22, 2011)

You can find strengths in just having a conversation or getting to know them and who they are...And even I have a youth who's very resilient having all these issues, extremely defiant, but he's resilient. He knows how to survive, he knows what to do, and he knows how to get places if he really wants. That's a

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strength in itself, obviously there's some negative

behaviors that are accompanying it, but you can

definitely find a strength. (Participant P, personal

communication, March 10, 2011)

One particular response focused on the strengths through

receiving services:

Actually, that's a standard for all the WRAP-around

meetings. One of the things they do at the team

meetings is always come up with the strengths at the

very beginning so that they can always build on the

positives and reinforce the positives. Always talk

about what's working. (Participant S, personal

communication, March 10, 2011)

Participants were asked to identify any risk factors that

contribute to the youths' behaviors. The theme of adult

involvement and supervision emerged. This could be from

the caregiver or parents, leading the youth to feel cared

for and having them in a stable home environment.

Lastly relating to assessment, the participants were

asked about protective factors they thought existed to

prevent the youth from engaging in these at-risk or

delinquent behaviors; the importance of social support

and family involvement was identified as well as the youth feeling cared-for being essential.

> Family involvement, staying connected with someone positive. Having values instilled within them. Support and having someone who cares, it helps to go a long way. (Participant J, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

> Family support/encouragement from those who are important and people being a cheerleader for them. Supportive relationships, if they are alone they will begin to feel hopeless. (Participant N, personal communication, March 22, 2011)

The Case Planning Process

The next practice that is essential for social workers in child welfare is the planning. This was explored by questioning Social Work participants about how they developed a plan for youth who engage in at-risk behaviors based upon their assessments. The responses varied among the participants, with the most typical responses being that the development of the plan included consulting with supervisors and co-workers, in addition to involving the youth in developing a plan. Furthermore, some workers reported that they must understand and be

sensitive to the fact that each client is different, as are their needs, so they must be referred to more services based on the specific needs. Other themes that emerged when discussing the plan components were the need to develop both long and short-term plans and to help the youth develop strengths and further coping strategies.

Just trying to open their eyes to reality of what could happen, what does happen. Try to get them to make the realization of why they are behaving the way they are...draw up some long-term goals and try to achieve those with them. So instead of focusing on the negative behaviors perhaps that they're displaying, focus on what is it that you want to do, what is it you want to achieve, who do you want to be, what kinds of adult do you want to be? (Participant D, personal communication, February 16, 2011)

In addition to incorporating the youth in the treatment and service plan, a number of participants reported that they look to other professionals the following response is an example:

You don't develop them in vacuums. There are all kinds of systems in place to help you, there are

supervisory meetings, IEP meetings, there are a

mired of different parts of the organization that

helps to develop the plan. I develop a plan based on

the contact I have with my supervisor, the monthly

contact I have with the FFA worker, and the child.

(Participant I, personal communication, March 10,

2011)

Understanding not only how this plan is developed

but also the specific components of the plan, was the

next area of exploration in order to provide the

necessary services to the youth. Social Workers reported

themes previously mentioned, such as each youth's needs

varying according to the behaviors displayed and goals

needing to be developed:

Long and short-term goal setting. Starting off with

a goal setting and finding something positive in

their life that keeps them going and build on that.

(Participant D, personal communication, February 16,

2011).

Well, first of all I have to say it's hard to

develop a plan because the plan means that someone

has to be participating, mainly the client. I would

say it's less of a plan than it is specific things

you do, like register for school, how can we cut down on your truancy, specific behavioral indications. But for clients who are at-risk, it also depends on how you define at-risk, are they doing the thing, are they on the verge of doing the thing...I feel like you can't put too much on them right away because it's overwhelming and you want to do it kind of piece by piece, so that can say 'I did this successfully, so I can do that successfully.' I find that lots of time social workers say, 'well, we're going to do this' in this grand scheme of lets get all this stuff accomplished, but it's too much and you need baby steps. (Participant Q, personal communication, March 7, 2011)

Another social worker stated,

It varies, definitely I incorporate the home that they're living in. We have WRAP around service, which actually puts a team in the home every week and also provides for what we call rehab sessions which has basically is just family partners, family specialists that spend time with the youth, just doing simply things, playing basketball, going out in the community, going shopping, stuff like that.

So that could be something, it just needs the modeling, the mentoring. It could be things like anger management, it could be things like counseling services, it just varies on the issues and on the child. (Participant P, personal communication, March 10, 2011)

The Intervention Process

Based on the plan, participants described the interventions that were available for youth displaying at-risk behaviors. Most participants reported referring their youth to counseling and Wraparound, with referrals to mentors, TBS, CASA, extracurricular activities, and school resources as additional interventions for this client population.

We have mentor programs, we have tutoring for kids who are 16 and above through Independent Living Program, we have tutoring for kids under that age...we have teen substance abuse programs, we have at-risk teen programs, for kids who aren't dependents but maybe their parents want to show them what it's like to be in jail we have those programs through juvenile court. We have counseling for the kids and of counseling can be broken down for

specific areas, like if the child has been molested we have counseling for victims, if they're a perpetrator we have counseling for perpetrator. We work with the school to make sure if they have special needs, we work to get them tested and an IEP. We also do teleconferencing, the conference for risks for teens who are about to emancipate and we do it for anyone over the age of 16 and we go over their plan for when they emancipate to make sure that they don't become at risk adults" (personal communication, Participant C, February 21, 2011).
"There is always the notion to put them into group counseling to help them work on their past. A lot has to do with their past and issues in it. We try to correlate how their past issues have molded them now. Also, CASA for group home kids who have no family. It gives them a meaningful person in their life. There is also outside activities...Twenty years ago there weren't many but now there are Wraparound and ILP programs. (Participant A, personal communication, February 4, 2011)

In addition, the participants identified a number of interventions, with the majority identifying counseling

as being utilized most often. A few other themes that emerged focused on the social worker's relationship with the client, family and social support system, school resources, and Wraparound as services which were used with these youth.

> I think one of the things most helpful once again is trying to find someone they are connected to someone they respect, who they will listen to, who they let be apart of their lives so if something's really wrong they maybe wont tell me but that person will. (Participant C, personal communication, February 21, 2011).

> We are the intervention. We try to utilize the school's resources if they have therapy or some kind of group counseling. Group homes, they have some resources depending on the level needed. Try to keep them in touch with someone like a family member or family friend to give them an outlet to their situation. (Participant J, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

Furthermore, participants were asked to identify any specific programs to which they refer youth. Wraparound was identified most by participants; however a number of

various programs previously discussed, were also mentioned based upon the youth's systematic behaviors. One participant summed up many of the services available in the statement,

> In most cases we usually refer the youth and family to counseling. We usually begin with individual or group and then try to integrate the family into counseling to get the whole family on the same page on how to work with the individual. (Participant R, personal communication, March 1, 2011)
>
> There are ILP services, Wraparound, counseling, also community school services, certain activities like the sports fair that goes on every year. (Participant K, personal communication, March 10, 2011)
>
> The Yes center, up in the High Desert is for youth who are emancipating, trying to get them on their two feet, there's just ton of resources, share programs for food, transitional assistance department, jobs and employment services department. Trying to get our youth some sense of control over their own life so that they can find housing and jobs and know that they only, a lot of youth only

have themselves, so showing them that that's all you

need. You only need yourself and he's how you're

going to do it. (Participant D, personal

communication, February 16, 2011)

The Evaluation Process

Not only is the initial assessment of youth

necessary, workers must assess whether the interventions

put in place for youth are helpful. Participants reported

that indicators of successful interventions include an

improvement in youth behaviors, which can be assessed

through contact with youth, service providers, and

caregivers.

If the behaviors has decreased, if they are

improving. The report from the service provider and

reports from the clients themselves. (Participant F,

personal communication, February 16, 2011)

Some of them need to be in a locked facility where

they can get appropriate therapy. (Participant G,

personal communication, February 8, 2011)

When asked, "What do you feel affects the outcomes

of the interventions?" participants most commonly

reported the youth's relationship with their worker and

other service providers. Other common responses regarded

the youth's placement and their compliance with services and motivation to change.

The client's attitude toward the service. If they are admitting or denying there is a problem, the availability of resources, the ability to access the service if they are available and appropriate. (Participant F, personal communication, February 16, 2011)

I think the support system, their involvement or lack of involvement affects whether the child progresses or not. (Participant R, personal communication, March 1, 2011)

To me it's the level of hope that I have and that I show and also the other service providers. If they are coming in with positive attitudes about it and it's obvious that they have hope for the situation, it tends to work out a lot better, because for me, I think the youth and the caregiver take their cues from everybody else's expectations. (Participant B, personal communication, February 27, 2011)

Participants were also asked whether there are youth who exhibit at-risk behaviors for which they are unable

to find services. Although a few participants, responded
by stating "Yes," such as the following response,

> Domestic violence for men who are the victims of it.
> I think we could have more therapist that specialize
> in that and sexual assault for men. (Participant K,
> personal communication, March 10, 2011)

the more common response was as such,

> I don't want to say I don't find services for, but
> it's more they decline, even though it's a youth,
> they have a say in it and the family has a say in
> it, so if you make a referral for a service and the
> family does not want to be involved in that service
> or does not believe that the youth needs that
> service then you do not get it. (Participant R,
> personal communication, March 1, 2011)

The next question consisted of asking the
participants if and what they see as service gaps within
San Bernardino County for at-risk youth. The majority of
social workers noted that any lack of services has been
more recent due to funding and budget cuts as well as
resistance from the youth to participate.

> Mainly revolving around the budget cuts because it
> limits what we can give to kids and the

accessibility of services, sometimes they are not

available due to distance or time frames.

(Participant O, personal communication, March 22,

2011)

However, some participants were able to note that despite

these funding issues,

Services for ILP have gotten a lot better.

(Participant K, personal communication, March 10,

2011)

Participants were able to note some specific services

which were not available for those with substance

addictions, chronic AWOLers, those within juvenile

detention centers, and those with disabilities, the

following responses were typical:

Yes, in transitional housing for the severely

mentally ill and developmentally disabled.

(Participant M, personal communication, March 2,

2011)

I can think of one. It's a youth that is currently

AWOL. We were throwing all types of services. It was

like we were throwing services at a wall to see

which ones would stick. Nothing would help. The

level of abuse he had at such a young age...When I

look back at his case files, I don't know what other

services I could have offered. He got to a certain

age where he just started rejecting everything.

(Participant B, personal communication, February 7,

2011)

The Termination Process

In the Child Welfare system, termination of services

is inevitable. Whether youth are reunified with their

parents or emancipate from the system, there are issues

that need to be raised or addressed by service providers

and social workers. Participants identified having a

plan. In addition to the safety plan and long-term goals

discussed with the client, participants identified vital

documents as important prior to termination. The most

common responses were very similar to the following:

Housing, education, specifically what they are going

to do afterwards and employment. I feel like those

things are addressed in the transitioning out

conference and aftercare is in place to help them

implement it. In the end it's up to them what they

do afterwards, but the three key things to me are

employment, housing, and school. (Participant B,

personal communication, February 7, 2011)

The issues that are raised are the child's

emancipation documents, so we need to make sure that

the child has a California Driver's License or

Identification Card, Social Security Card, Birth

Certificate, Health and Education Passport, and

their immunization records. We also look at their

housing situation, college, if they need help

applying for college. Make sure if they have mental

health issues that we apply for them for Social

Security before they're 18; that has to be done. And

that they have a way to support themselves.

(Participant C, personal communication, February 21,

2011)

One social worker participant responded atypically by

taking about the youth's readiness to terminate.

I don't think they are prepared. There is ILP but

many don't want to accept the service. They (the

agency) have added educational liaisons, which are

great to coordinate services. Some can't wait to get

out. Many kids have never dreamed about going to

college but many don't have great grads. What can

they do with a high school diploma? I know my kids

aren't prepared, no where near ready to leave.

(Participant A, personal communication, February 4, 2011)

Participants were asked to describe how they terminate with at-risk youth on their caseloads, in terms of their relationships. The respondents again stated that they develop goals and concrete plans, as well as remind the youth that they may be contacted if the youth are ever in need of further services. Participants also identified the need to start early and explain the process to the youth.

I actually start early so that they know its coming and I'm not just saying, 'oh, by the way, I'm leaving.' They usually know that if they go to court close to their 18th birthday, that's going to be it. If they want to stay in the system and they haven't graduates then we can keep them, but if it's time for them to go I usually start the process a couple of months before. And the day of, I wish them a lot of luck, I make sure they have my phone number; I make sure they have the phone number of their loved ones. I usually know where they are going and they often call me to check in. (Participant C, personal communication, February 21, 2011)

Although many social work participants recounted their experience with youth emancipating from the system, a few respondents discussed the termination process during reunification.

> I would say that at least within two months, if I know that, 'yes, this is definitely happening;' that's the thing that you have to be careful with, it's really hard to say something concrete, because from one week to another, especially with our families in this area, from one week to another, everything can completely change. So I guess I start it early on...I would not leave a family or a youth without making sure that there's some fort of plan in place. (Participant P, personal communication, March 10, 2011)

The Follow-up Process

Following the worker's termination with their clients, another area that was explored during the interviews was whether the agency engages in follow-up when these youth exit the child welfare system. A general consensus is that most social workers were not aware of such programs or procedures; however, some reported that there are continuing services such as "After-Care",

Transitional Housing Placement Plus (THPP), and the

Transitional Age Youth (TAY) center, but this is not

always enough.

> Not directly, but through after-care and THP Plus,
>
> assuming that they participant, but if they're not
>
> participating then I would say no...I know they make
>
> some efforts but I know they have a lot to do and so
>
> it's hard for them to do that. So it's also the
>
> youth's responsibility. (Participant Q, personal
>
> communication, March 7, 2011)
>
> We do have aftercare program so they can be referred
>
> so it wouldn't necessarily be me; although I do tend
>
> to follow-up with these kids quite often anyway. Or
>
> every once in a while, not that I can accept, but
>
> you'll get a Facebook request and someone's out
>
> there trying to connect. Social network cites would
>
> be great to utilize with that kind of follow-up but
>
> we do have After Care Services, which are less
>
> personable. (Participant D, personal communication,
>
> February 16, 2011)
>
> Not directly; however, based on the plan that is
>
> left, if the plan recommends that the child remain
>
> in therapy, then the agency providing those services

would provide follow-up. So the social worker maynot

maintain the relationship per-say; however, there is

the hope that the outside agencies provide

follow-up. (Participant R, personal communication,

March 1, 2011)

Participants reported that in their experience youth have

contacted them for additional resources, following the

formal termination from the program, supported by the

following statement:

I had one call back last week. She needed some

documents, but she called back after six years, so

it was nice. She wanted to go to college and needed

some information from her file. (Participant C,

personal communication, February 21, 2011)

Some participants additionally reported those cases that

have not experienced such positive outcomes:

I've had one run away and refuse to come back.

(Participant B, personal communication, February 27,

2011).

Many go back to the parents they were removed from.

(Participant A, personal communication, February 4,

2011).

Another area that was explored was the participants'
ideas for future services, in which they were asked, "If
you could create any treatment or service or elaborate on
existing ones to better meet youths' needs, what would
you create?" The majority of responses focused on
expanding services in the adolescent unit and aftercare
services. One participant stated,

> I wish there were more apprenticeship programs. I
> wish there were more access to former foster adults,
> who were in foster care, who could be mentors...It's
> hard for us to play the mentor role...The PFAs,
> they're former foster youth, so I had an experience
> with a couple of teenagers, not at-risk at all, but
> who did not want to participate in ILP and I kept
> saying 'you know what it's really great', but 'it's
> stupid' 'I don't have time.' They dispatched a
> couple of PSAs to go out there and talk to them and
> boom, they were involved, and they were sold. The
> PSAs I think are really valuable, being more
> engaged. (Participant Q, Personal Communication,
> March 7, 2011)
>
> For me, now this is my dream...my goal is to have a
> facility that caters to adolescents, period, and

giving them a sense of home and what a real home is ran like. In other words, I'm not doing this because I'm a foster parent; this is what families do any being able to implement the expectations. So, it's not so much like foster care but like a home with adopted adolescents...hopefully, by the time you get of age from the things you've learned while in this facility you will be able to manage on your own. (Participant H, Personal Communication, February 17, 2011)

Model families in which families who have been through the reunification process and success become mentors to families who are just going through it. Able to lessen the tension children may feel because they see that they can be reunified. More mentor programs are needed and youth programs to be more accessible in which they will be in a positive environment. (Participant N, personal communication, March 22, 2011)

Summary

This chapter focused on the findings obtained during the course of this study. Although participants provided

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a variety of responses to the questions presented through

the interview guide, common themes emerged. These themes

revolved around the protective/risk factors exist in

relation to delinquent behaviors, as well as the

interaction/engagement, assessment, planning,

intervention, evaluation, termination, and follow up

processes utilized with these adolescents.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Chapter five introduces a review of the significant results and their relation to the exploratory purpose of this study regarding social workers' perceptions and experiences in working with youth in the Child Welfare System who are at-risk of juvenile delinquency. This chapter also outlines how the findings align with current research on the topic area and discusses the limitations apparent within this study. Furthermore, suggestions for further research are presented as are implications for social work practice and policy.

Discussion

One significant finding included identifying specific delinquent behaviors seen by social workers from within San Bernardino County CFS in many of their Child Welfare clients. Social workers identified a number of co-occurring delinquent behaviors among the youth on their case loads with the two most significant problem areas being frequent away without leave (AWOL) and substance abuse. These findings align with previous

studies that suggest it is common to see delinquent youth in foster care who have a history of substance abuse, as well as frequent running away or AWOL's from their placements (Herz et al., 2010). Most of the youth within the Child Welfare system have experienced various forms of abuse, are likely to experience instability in placements, and may spend many years living within the system. These factors combined may result in adolescent's acting out behaviors. Youth who engage in running away and substance use may be attempting to find an escape to the situation they find themselves in. These youth may be using illegal substances as it may be a learned behavior, whether that is though their family of origin or due to their peers within school or the child Welfare System. In addition, it is common among this population to be familiar with frequent placement moves and changes in social workers. Youth may be running away not only to escape their problems, but because they feel no attachment or accountability to their caregiver. With no emotional ties to a home or caregiver, youth may feel as though there is no reason to stay.

The notion of social workers remaining reliable and consistent with their clients was shown to be essential

to the development of a positive working relationship between social workers and the at-risk youth they serve. This finding also correlates with previous research which demonstrated that perceived instability on the part of adolescents has an effect on delinquency outcomes in Child Welfare as these youth are more likely to engage in delinquency (Ryan et al., 2008). Youth who feel as though they have unstable relationships with important people in their lives are more likely to feel that instability in other aspects of their lives and become more vulnerable to delinquency. The nature of the Child Welfare system in which frequent case transfers are common place can have a detrimental effect on dependent youth when the beginning attachments they are developing with their social workers are disrupted and they have successions of new parent surrogates in their lives. It is necessary that workers remain as consistent and reliable as possible in their relationships with the youth they serve because in many instances they may be the primary source of stability within the lives of these youth. Stable, positive working relationships between youth and social workers may reduce the development of delinquency in dependent adolescent youth.

Remaining reliable and consistent for the at-risk youth population also lends itself to the notion of the engagement phase of the Advanced Generalist Model. This aspect of the model is concerned with establishing a connection with clients, building their trust, and engaging them on an individual level in order to establish rapport and provide services (Hepworth & Rooney, 2010). Illustrating consistency and reliability to youth will aid in developing a foundation for a mutually genuine relationship, as well as in providing them stability and accountability.

In addition to discovering what is helpful when working with these youth, social workers identified what is difficult. It was found that it is not uncommon for these youth to display resistance and distrust towards foster parents, social workers, therapists, and other potential sources of support. Social workers identified resistance and distrust common among this population, as well as being blocks to providing services. With these characteristics, it becomes difficult for youth to trust not only their workers, but the services they are attempting to provide them with.

In addition, social workers have identified recidivism of at risk behaviors as being difficult to work with. Social workers observed many of the youth on their case loads continuously falling back into old patterns of behavior which can make it very difficult to keep them out of delinquency. This finding aligns with previous research which indicated that youth within Child Welfare who exhibit delinquent behaviors have high rates of behavioral recidivism, which may be caused by multiple factors (Herz et al., 2010). It may be difficult for youth to discontinue the display of delinquent behaviors because once such behaviors are initially engaged in; continued participation may become easier over time. In addition, these behaviors serve a purpose for youth who are engaging in them, and until that purpose is explored and positive alternatives developed, recidivism is likely.

When looking at recidivism of behaviors, it becomes helpful to view this issue through a Systems Theory standpoint. There may be multiple reasons which exist to not only explain the development of delinquent behaviors, but the reason for their continued presence. Systems Theory aids in exploring the cause of recidivism by

viewing such behaviors in multiple contexts. Such contexts which may exacerbate the issues of delinquency and recidivism include individual characteristics, the family system, the Child Welfare system, and environmental systems such as communities, culture, and political structures (Lesser & Pope, 2007). Systems Theory can aid in viewing recidivism of behaviors holistically in order to address underlying issues exacerbating the problem, as well as in identifying the multiple systems and contexts which play a role in the cause of the behaviors.

Another significant finding in this study involved the assessment process Child Welfare social workers use with their adolescent clients. All the social workers interviewed indicated they performed risk assessment; however, there was no specific risk assessment tool that they utilize when assessing for the seriousness of the youth's delinquency. Although social workers identified no specific tool, all social workers involved in the study described to some extent the assessment process they use. The main factors associated with assessment included whether the youth were potentially a danger to harm themselves or others, reports from caregivers and

schools, and the frequency and duration of delinquent behaviors. The social workers identified the assessment processes they use as being determined on a case by case basis and multidimensional in nature.

Although social workers reported that they did not utilize a specific tool, the social workers did assess for the delinquency of youth utilizing the general risk assessment process required by Children and Family Services, San Bernardino County. The importance and frequency of assessment utilized by social workers aligns with research in this area, as does the assessment process of looking at an issue from a multidimensional viewpoint and identifying systems that play a role in the exacerbation of the issues (Hepworth & Rooney, 2010). The Generalist Model's phase of assessment can be seen as being important for social workers as they begin to assess their clients for risk, safety, and the provision of resources.

Social workers in Child Welfare are constantly assessing for general risk and safety among their clients. It is likely that the social workers engage in risk assessment so often that it becomes second nature to the job. In addition, specific risk assessment tools for

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delinquency are likely to be utilized more by and reserved for Juvenile Justice Systems, rather than the Child Welfare dependency system. Future research might focus more on the utility of using specific risk assessment tools for determining the level of risk for delinquency among youth in the Child Welfare system.

In addition to assessing for juvenile delinquency, social workers from this study reported assessing for client strengths. Social workers reported doing so by exploring from the client's view point what they excel in, as well as what has worked for them in the past in terms of coping skills. This finding is consistent with other research that reports an emphasis on strengths is important in preventing delinquent behaviors and producing empowerment among clients (Mullis et al., 2004). Asking clients what they like to do and what they are good at is a way in which the social worker can not only explore what the youth enjoy, but helps to identify positive aspects of the youth and what they excel in. It is likely that the social workers engage in such informal methods of strengths assessment as the casual manner allows youth to feel as though a mutual conversation is occurring rather than a formal agency procedure being

conducted. A focus on strengths by social workers as they

assess their clients is essential as many of the youth

within the system may be oblivious to the fact that they

have qualities and strengths within them to build upon

and utilize. One cardinal principal in social work

intervention is to build on client strengths, but

strengths cannot consciously be built on unless they are

first clearly identified (Saleeby, D. year, 2011).

Another important finding involved the protective

and risk factors social workers felt were associated with

delinquency among the dependent youth in San Bernardino

County. Risk factors associated with delinquency were

found to be a lack of social support, accountability for

actions, encouragement, parent/caregiver involvement,

supervision, and feeling uncared for. While, protective

factors associated with preventing delinquency included

having the presence of social support, taking

responsibility for ones actions, encouragement from

important people within the lives of the youth, having

parent/caregiver involvement, adequate supervision, and

feeling cared for. These findings align with research

which suggests that a number of factors, including social

support, family/caregiver involvement, supervision,

encouragement, and feeling cared for work together to either exacerbate delinquency or hinder it (Carr & Vandiver, 2001; Mullis et al., 2004). The combination of such factors can exacerbate delinquency among youth in the Child Welfare system as they are already in a vulnerable situation. These youth have experienced abuses, are away from their homes and family, and may feel as though they have nothing to lose by engaging in at risk behaviors. Such behaviors may also result in repeating the cycle of violence and negativity they experienced.

What was also found in this study to be a crucial point was that the success of services provided to the youth stemmed from youth and service provider "buy-in" or trust that the services provided will be successful. Social workers identified the outcomes of interventions to be most frequently tied to these two aspects. Youth and service provider buy in are essential components to the intervention process. If the youth receiving the services and the service provider supplying the service have no faith in the intervention process or its possibility of effectiveness, it is likely that doubt will present itself in treatment, as well as in the form

of resistance. These results do not coincide with the research reviewed for this study. More investigation needs to be conducted on the notion of service "buy-in" and its relationship to delinquency outcomes among youth in Child Welfare.

In addition, social workers identified support from family or caregivers as having an effect on the adolescent's acceptance of treatment and their ultimate outcomes of delinquency. This correlates with previous research which suggests that emotional support, positive attention, and quality relationships with caregivers have been identified as being factors associated with inhibiting the development of delinquency, as well as contributing to its resolution (Mullis et al., 2004). The more support and encouragement youth receive from important people in their lives, the more likely they will feel hopeful and not only consider treatment possibilities, but benefit from them.

In addition to exploring interventions, significant findings were related to follow-up processes with these youth. It was found that no follow-up procedures are conducted on youth within Child Welfare unless they participate in aftercare services. The majority of social

workers reported the common occurrence of previous youth on their case loads calling back once they exit the system in hopes of receiving aid in obtaining personal documents or resources. When youth exit the Child Welfare system aftercare services are offered and emphasized. Youth who refuse such services are left to their own devices as they learn to navigate the real world. The importance of follow up as expressed by the social workers in this study and the general lack of follow-up in child welfare is a cause of concern. Follow-up procedures are inherently important to the provision of services to clients and their ultimate success, yet this process is often overlooked in social services (Hepworth & Rooney, 2010). Follow-up services on these youth may be difficult to achieve as many move away or may become difficult to locate for various reasons. Regardless of the cause, there is a need for increased follow-up services among this vulnerable population not only to access the efficacy of any services that were provided but to help the youth where served maintain a sense of connectedness to agencies and professionals who might be of some use to them as they transition into adult life.

Another significant finding of this study relates to the importance of gaining the ideas and perspectives of social workers. Although there is limited research available on social workers' perspectives regarding the dynamics of delinquency among youth in Child Welfare, the value of obtaining their thoughts, views, and ideas aligns with other research findings (Proctor, 2002; Russel & Sedlak, 1993). Social workers interviewed in this study had a number of ideas for services to address the needs of the at risk youth population. Expanding the adolescent unit in CFS, increasing the utilization of mentors, combining the TAY center with youth advocates, and increasing the use and development of educational and aftercare services are examples of common initiatives proposed by social workers. Social workers are in constant contact with these at risk youth and consequently have personal knowledge on the needs and obstacles faced by this population.

The results presented thus far highlight the importance of working with and thinking of the at risk youth population from a systems and person-in-environment stand point as this population's risky behaviors may stem from a number of systems and contexts existing within

their lives and communities. Delinquent behavior of youth

can be understood by examining a number of contexts as

individual and environmental characteristics play a role

in the development or prevention of delinquent behaviors.

Furthermore, person-in-environment and system theories

aid in emphasizing the importance of assessing for youth

behavior and interactions on multiple levels in order to

fully understand not only the challenges these youth

face, but the various difficulties faced by those

attempting to provide services to them.

Limitations

Throughout the course of the study, a number of

limitations presented themselves. Firstly, the sample

size limited the generalizability of the study. The

sample size of the participants was small compared to the

number of social workers employed in CFS of San

Bernardino County. Furthermore, although there are ten

CFS office locations in the county, the offices utilized

for this study was limited to four. In addition, the

results of this study are limited in describing at-risk

youth as this population was not studied directly, but

indirectly through the social workers who provide

services to them. There may be essential information missing that only the youth themselves could have provided.

In addition to the size of the sample, there are other limitations apparent in the study. The criteria which were utilized to recruit participants were found to be broad in nature, resulting in a lack of cohesion among participants and their experiences in working with delinquent adolescents. There were also limitations involving the interview guide which was developed and used for this study. The questions in the interview guide were general in nature. Because some of the questions in the interview guide were excessively broad, some answers provided by participants were less specific than what was hoped for. Some respondents answered similarly to multiple questions which indicates that the questions might have been phrased differently in order to increase the likelihood of obtaining more "new" information on each question. Although this study had clear limitations the information collected is potentially helpful in beginning to understand the at-risk youth population in the San Bernardino County child welfare system, as well effective methods in providing services to them.

Recommendations for Social Work
Practice, Policy and Research

Social Work Practice

During the participant interviews, a few themes

emerged, which could have some impact on the further

practice of social work, specifically when working with

this client population. Assessment is a key concept in

the Social Work Advanced Generalist Model, as well as in

the provision of services to clients. As previously

discussed, social workers denied they used of a specific

assessment tool to determine the level of at-risk or

delinquency among their clients. One reason identified

for this response is that some participants felt that the

assessment is obvious, and they rely on their intuition

and prior knowledge and experience. In addition, social

workers also identified difficulty in utilizing a

standard assessment tool, as they believe each case and

client to be unique. Despite this difficulty in using a

general assessment tool with delinquent clients, in

providing evidence-based services to clients a few

assessments have emerged leading to a more standardized

practice in serving this population. One tool is the

Washington State Juvenile Court Assessment (WSJCA), which

was developed with the goal to determine the level of risk juvenile offenders had in re-offending, identifying interventions and developing a plan to intervene and monitor progress, with the goal of reducing the rate of recidivism and future crime rates (Washington State Juvenile Court Assessment Manual, 2004 p. 5-6). The second assessment relating to delinquent youth was also developed by the Juvenile Justice System to assess the risk or need of re-offending youth in Florida (Baglivio, 2009, p. 1). The Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) was similar to the Washington State Juvenile Court Assessment, except that it explored gender differences among juvenile delinquents. Both assessments evaluated the personal characteristics of the youth and the environmental influences (Baglivio, 2009, p. 1), which would provide a basis in developing a risk assessment among juvenile dependents in Child Welfare.

Another component of the periodic assessment, which would prove beneficial to social work practice, is the level of coping skills each youth possesses. During the interviews, one social worker commented that what one youth easily adjusts to, such as a change in schools, a similar youth may find life altering and lead to further

stress and possible acting out behaviors. By gaining this knowledge and understanding of each youth the social worker can better provide service and care, while also helping the youth the to process these changes and develop stronger coping skills.

An additional theme that arose throughout the study is the importance of building on the client's strengths as a source of empowerment. Although the majority of participants reported that they seek to uncover strengths, as well as protective factors, when assessing the client and developing a plan, many social workers stated that the client has a difficult time identifying and accepting that they have strengths. Since the practice of social work specifically when working with the Child Welfare system, is supposed to be a strengths-based approach, it is vital for future practice that social workers can not only identify the strengths of clients, but to encourage clients to recognize their own strengths and build upon them. The client's ability to acknowledge inherent strengths develops from the interaction they have with others, including the social worker. In many cases, the focus develops around the problems, with little emphasis on the strengths and

positives the client has, leading the client to be not accepting of any positive feed-back and consequently developing a self-fulfilling prophecy. Not only is it necessary for the strengths-based approach to be employed more in social work practice, but the efficacy of such an approach needs to be demonstrated through further research in Child Welfare clients and Child Welfare social workers.

A further area of exploration in the practice of Child Welfare social work stems from the fact that the behaviors most frequently encountered when working with this client population was AWOLing. Although this behavior was most identified by participants as an area of concern among their client population, it is also the most difficult to provide services and interventions for those youths who engage in this activity. It could very well be that if Child Welfare agencies were more proactive about providing youth with placements where they feel cared for, supported and connected the of absent without leave (AWOL) behavior would decrease. Although it is clear that social workers make efforts to place youth in the "best" home available the low number of homes available may make really appropriate and

therapeutic placements difficult. The quality and type of placement was identified by participants as strong protective factors for youth in the Child Welfare system. In addition, youth's social support and involvement in activities the youth likes and is good at within the community were seen as great strengths for the youth, leading to greater stability.

Another area of further exploration in social work research and practice lies within the interventions available and most effective with this client population. The majority of participants were able to identify at least one or two interventions they believed to be effective; however, limitations were still identified within the intervention process, specifically pertaining to the idea that there are not enough services for youth preparing for emancipation. During the conclusion of the interview, social workers were able to identify or develop a program or services that they believe will be of greatest benefit to this population of youth. Although the participants were questioned regarding the services pertaining to this population, future research could explore areas of training in which social workers feel

they, as well as clients, would benefit from in working
with this population.

Social Work Policy

With the recent passage in September 2010 of AB- 12,
California Foster Connections to Success, which allows
dependent youth to receive further support and services
up to the age of 21
(http://www.cafosteringconnections.org), the current
issues and concerns surrounding the amount and
effectiveness of follow-up and after care services is
expected to decrease, as this new policy may provide
youth with the hope of better outcomes as an adult if it
is implemented effectively.

This bill is proof that Social Workers are
successful in advocating for their clients on a Macro
level. It is essential that Social Workers continue to
advocate for their clients, particularly when working
with this population as they are often unable to speak
for themselves. Future policies may be created which
address delinquency issues on a preventative basis, in
order to improve the outcomes for dependent youth in
Child Welfare.

Social Work Research

This qualitative study serves as a basis for future research in that the researchers sought to better understand some of the delinquent behaviors social workers encounter when working with at-risk youths. Further assessments regarding at-risk youths may be developed or utilized specifically for the dependent population. Furthermore, specific behaviors could be the focus of further research as well as the interventions and services available in the treatment or prevention of youth exhibiting some of these delinquent behaviors.

A number of themes emerged from this exploratory study which could lead toward future social work research. The criteria in the recruitment process was very broad, in that the participants had to be case carrying social workers for San Bernardino County Children and Family Services and participants had to have experience with dependent youth displaying any number of behaviors from a long list of delinquency acts. In order to better fine-tune these limitations, future research requirements should be limited based upon the youth dependent's case or behaviors. The cases and youths discussed during the research interviews consisted of

Family Reunification and Permanency Plan/ Long-term Foster Care. Although most social workers have experience in each type or stage of the case plan, services the client receives vary greatly, as does the potential outcomes. Future research could focus on exploring the delinquency among youth with similar case plans, such as exclusively those with permanency plans or those with family reunification plans.

Conclusions

In today's economy it is becoming increasingly difficult to provide the necessary services to families in the community in need of proactive or reactive care. However, San Bernardino County's Children and Family Services have been able to maintain, and even improve upon, some of the necessary services for dependent youth. Social Workers have identified the handicaps that being a dependent of Juvenile Court can have and attempt to identify and utilize the services and interventions available to them. Despite the funding insufficiencies, social workers are able to access their own interpersonal characteristics as a useful tool and intervention for dependent youth displaying delinquent or at-risk

behaviors. As the theme of relationships and connections emerged during our study, it seems apparent that, more important than the services and resources are the family and community ties that a youth feels in relation to social workers, foster parents, and other service providers which serve as protective factors from engaging in such delinquent or at-risk behaviors. Through this research it is hoped that further research and practice approaches may be developed among this population.

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Email to be sent throughout SB County

This email is regarding a study being conducted by graduate social work students from California State University San Bernardino, Mallory Flores and Laura DeLuca. You are invited to share your opinions in this study exploring the perceptions of social workers regarding your experiences in working with foster care youth who are "at risk" for delinquency.

In your experience as a social worker within CFS San Bernardino County, have you worked with adolescents ages 11 through 17 who you saw as being at risk for delinquency because of exhibiting one or more of these behaviors:

- frequent away without leave (AWOL's)
- chronic truancy or absenteeism from school
- physical violence towards others
- self injurious behavior
- theft or robbery
- school expulsion
- multiple school suspensions
- abuse of illegal substances
- prostitution
- arrest
- gang involvement or affiliation
- admittance into a psychiatric hospital
- admittance into a juvenile detention facility

If you have answered no to the above question, please disregard the remainder of the email. Thank you for your time.

If you have worked with adolescents who have exhibited the above mentioned behaviors and are willing to participate in this study please respond with a confirmation email. Also, please state which behaviors you have had experience in working with and you employment title/position. We will be in contact with you shortly to set up an interview appointment. Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

Part I: Background Information

How old are you?_____ years

What is your gender?
1. Female
2. Male

What is your ethnicity? (please circle all that apply)
1. Hispanic/Latino
2. African American
3. Asian/Pacific Islander
4. Native American
5. White
6 Other (please specify) _____

What is your highest level of education?
1. Bachelor's Degree
2. Master's Degree
3. Other (please specify)_____

Are you licensed?
1. Yes, MFT
2. Yes, LCSW
3. No, in progress (please specify which license): _____
4. No

Number of years experience as a social worker in child welfare? _____

Please specify you job position: _____

Interview Schedule

1. In your experience as a social worker within CFS, San Bernardino County, have you worked with adolescents, ages 11 through 17, who you saw as "at-risk" for delinquency because of exhibiting one or more of these behaviors:

    _____ Frequent away without leave (AWOL)

    _____ Chronic absenteeism or truancy from school

    _____ Physical Violence towards others

    _____ Self-injurious behaviors

    _____ Theft or robbery

    _____ School expulsion

    _____ Multiple school suspensions

    _____ Abuse of illegal substances

    _____ Prostitution

    _____ Arrest

    _____ Gang Involvement or Affiliation

    _____ Admittance into a Psychiatric Hospital

    _____ Admittance into a Juvenile Detention Center

    - Of these above mentioned behaviors, which do you see most often?
    - What other behaviors would you considered to be "at-risk" for delinquency

2. Please describe the rapport building and interaction between the dependent children you have worked with and you?
    - What are some things you do to engage "at-risk" youth ages 11-17?
    - What have you found to be most difficult in working with this population?
    - What have you found to be most helpful in relating to this population?
    - How did you find your relationship with these youth fared in comparison to other youth who did not exhibit at risk or delinquent behaviors?

3. In your experience, working with youth ages 11-17 how do you assess the seriousness of the displayed behaviors?
    - Is there a specific risk assessment that you perform?
    - If so, please describe the assessment tool?
    - If not, how do you make this assessment?
    - Do you look for protective factors when assessing the client?
    - Do you asses for strengths? How?

4. Based on your assessment, how do you develop a plan for you who engage in "at-risk" behaviors?
    - What do the components of the plan look like?

5. Based on the plan what interventions are available for youth who display "at-risk" behaviors?
   - What interventions do you use most often?
   - If you refer youth to specific programs, which ones?

6. How do you assess as a worker whether interventions you use are helpful?
   - What do you feel affects the outcomes of interventions?
   - Are there youth you assess who exhibit "at-risk" behaviors that you are unable to find services for?
   - Do you see service gaps within San Bernardino County for "at-risk" youth?
   - If yes, what are they?

7. In your experience when terminating with "at-risk" youth, what particular issues are raised or addressed?
   - How do you terminate with this population?

8. Does the Agency do follow-up on youth?

Developed by Laura DeLuca and Mallory Flores

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent

You are invited to share your opinions in a study exploring the perceptions of social workers regarding their experiences in working with foster care youth that exhibit delinquent behaviors. The study is being conducted by Laura DeLuca and Mallory Flores, graduate social work students from California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB), under the supervision of Professor, Dr. Ray E. Liles. The study has been approved by the School of Social Work Subcommittee of the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Berardino.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of social worker's experiences in working with at risk or delinquent youth regarding the services they receive, as well as in identifying protective/risk factors.

Description: If you take part in this study, you will be asked a series of open and closed ended questions regarding your perceptions of the services provided, as well as in identifying protective/risk factors for delinquent and at risk youth in foster care.

Participation: Participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to skip any questions you do not wish to answer, as well as withdraw participation at any time.

Confidentiality: The information you give will remain confidential. No record will be made or kept of your name or any identifying information. The confidential data from the interview will only be seen by the researchers. The results of the study will be conveyed to the Department of Children and Family Services (CFS), San Bernardino County.

Duration: It is expected that the interview will last no more than thirty minutes.

Risks: There are no major foreseeable risks involved in taking part in the study. One minor risk may be some discomfort resulting from the nature of the questions asked in the interview. However, participation is fully voluntary as questions can be skipped and participation withdrawn at any point in time.

Benefits: Your opinions will help the CFS San Bernardino County staff to understand the experience of high risk and delinquent youth in foster care, as well as become aware of the services that exist and are needed to better meet the needs of this population.

Contact: If you have any question or concerns about this study you can contact Dr. Ray E. Liles at (909) 537-5557.

Results: The results will be posted on the Pfau Library at California State University, San Bernardino after December 1, 2011.

By marking below, you agree that you have been fully informed about this study and are volunteering to take part in it.

_____   _____
Place a check mark here   Date

APPENDIX D

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

"Social worker's perceptions regarding at risk and delinquent youth in foster care"

Debriefing Statement

The study you have just completed was about discovering your perceptions and experiences in working with foster care youth who exhibit delinquent or at risk behaviors. The researchers were particularly interested to explore the perceptions and opinions you have on the services foster youth receive, as well as in exploring what is helpful or unhelpful for you in relating to this population. It is hoped that the findings of the study will help social workers better understand the dynamics of delinquency among foster care youth, as well as identify what is helpful in relating and providing services to this population within San Bernardino County.

Thank you for participating in the study and for not discussing the contents of the interview with other people. If you feel uncomfortable or distressed as a result of participating in the study, you are advised to contact Catholic Charities at (909) 880-3625. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Dr. Liles at (909) 537-5557. If you would like to obtain a copy of the findings of the study, please contact the Pfau Library at California State University San Bernardino after December 1, 2011.

APPENDIX E

FREQUENCIES

Frequencies

Statistics

	ID	Participant Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Level of Education	licensing	experience	title	AWOL	absenteeism	violence to others	self injury method	ery	school expulsion	suspension	substance e use proments	n	arrests	involvement	hospitalization	juvenile detention
N Valid	18	16	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	17	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Missing	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Frequency Table

ID

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	5.6	5.6	5.6
	2	1	5.6	5.6	11.1
	3	1	5.6	5.6	16.7
	4	1	5.6	5.6	22.2
	5	1	5.6	5.6	27.8
	6	1	5.6	5.6	33.3
	7	1	5.6	5.6	38.9
	8	1	5.6	5.6	44.4
	9	1	5.6	5.6	50.0
	10	1	5.6	5.6	55.6
	11	1	5.6	5.6	61.1
	12	1	5.6	5.6	66.7
	13	1	5.6	5.6	72.2
	14	1	5.6	5.6	77.8
	15	1	5.6	5.6	83.3
	16	1	5.6	5.6	88.9
	17	1	5.6	5.6	94.4
	18	1	5.6	5.6	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

Participant Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	27	2	11.1	12.5	12.5
	28	1	5.6	6.3	18.8
	29	1	5.6	6.3	25.0
	33	1	5.6	6.3	31.3
	36	1	5.6	6.3	37.5
	37	1	5.6	6.3	43.8
	38	1	5.6	6.3	50.0
	42	1	5.6	6.3	56.3
	43	2	11.1	12.5	68.8
	46	2	11.1	12.5	81.3
	57	1	5.6	6.3	87.5
	58	1	5.6	6.3	93.8
	67	1	5.6	6.3	100.0
	Total	16	88.9	100.0	
Missing	99	2	11.1		
Total		18	100.0		

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	7	38.9	38.9	38.9
	female	11	61.1	61.1	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

Ethnicity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	White	3	16.7	16.7	16.7
	African American	6	33.3	33.3	50.0
	Hispanic	2	11.1	11.1	61.1
	Asian/Pacific Islander	3	16.7	16.7	77.8
	Other	4	22.2	22.2	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

Level of Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bachelors	6	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Masters	12	66.7	66.7	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

licensing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	13	72.2	72.2	72.2
	in progress	3	16.7	16.7	88.9
	LCSW	2	11.1	11.1	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

years experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	11.1	11.1	11.1
	2	2	11.1	11.1	22.2
	3	1	5.6	5.6	27.8
	5	1	5.6	5.6	33.3
	6	1	5.6	5.6	38.9
	7	2	11.1	11.1	50.0
	8	1	5.6	5.6	55.6
	10	2	11.1	11.1	66.7
	11	1	5.6	5.6	72.2
	14	2	11.1	11.1	83.3
	16	1	5.6	5.6	88.9
	17	1	5.6	5.6	94.4
	22	1	5.6	5.6	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

title

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Social worker II	6	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Social Service Practitioner	12	66.7	66.7	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

AWOL

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	18	100.0	100.0	100.0

truancy/absenteeism

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	18	100.0	100.0	100.0

violence to others

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	5	27.8	29.4	29.4
	yes	12	66.7	70.6	100.0
	Total	17	94.4	100.0	
Missing	System	1	5.6		
Total		18	100.0		

self injury

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	2	11.1	11.1	11.1
	yes	16	88.9	88.9	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

theft/robbery

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	3	16.7	16.7	16.7
	yes	15	83.3	83.3	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

school expulsion

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	3	16.7	16.7	16.7
	yes	15	83.3	83.3	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

school suspension

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	3	16.7	16.7	16.7
	yes	15	83.3	83.3	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

illegal substance use

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	18	100.0	100.0	100.0

prostitution

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	9	50.0	50.0	50.0
	yes	9	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

arrests

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	1	5.6	5.6	5.6
	yes	17	94.4	94.4	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

gang involvement

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	4	22.2	22.2	22.2
	yes	14	77.8	77.8	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

psychiatric hospitalization

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	3	16.7	16.7	16.7
	yes	15	83.3	83.3	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

juvenile detention

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no	1	5.6	5.6	5.6
	yes	17	94.4	94.4	100.0
	Total	18	100.0	100.0	

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ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE

This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. However, for each phase of the project, certain authors took primary responsibility. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

1. Data Collection:

    Team Effort: Laura DeLuca & Mallory Flores

2. Data Entry and Analysis:

    Team Effort: Laura DeLuca & Mallory Flores

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:

    a. Introduction and Literature

        Team Effort: Laura DeLuca & Mallory Flores

    b. Methods

        Team Effort: Laura DeLuca & Mallory Flores

    c. Results

        Team Effort: Laura DeLuca & Mallory Flores

    d. Discussion

        Team Effort: Laura DeLuca & Mallory Flores