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RESIDENTIAL COUNSELORS AND DUAL-STATUS YOUTH CHALLENGES AND RESILIENCY

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RESIDENTIAL COUNSELORS AND DUAL-STATUS YOUTH
CHALLENGES AND RESILIENCY

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Kenny Brian Gallegos
Leslie Stephanie Romero-Gallegos

June 2018

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the common challenges that residential counselors face when working with dual-status youth, which we defined as any youth with at least one open case with the child welfare system or juvenile justice system (or both) and who have previously had a case with the latter in their lifetime. Data were collected through qualitative interviews with their residential counselors across five different residential treatment centers in southern California.

The most common challenges reported by the residential treatment counselors included multiple roles, role limitation, dual-status youth behaviors, deficiency in training, management, and preparation when working with dual-status youth in a residential treatment facility. This study also found that counselor resiliency served as a buffer against these common challenges.

Findings from this study highlight the importance of considering the challenges residential counselors face while working with their dual-status youth clients in residential treatment facilities because it may affect their clients overall treatment. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of continuing to conduct research on short-term residential therapeutic center policy changes; as well as, the experiences of social workers with dual-status youth clients in residential treatment facilities who are served by residential counselors.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all the residential counselors across the United States who work with dual-status youth every day and continue to find ways to be role models and empower them to be resilient during and after residential treatment despite their challenges. More importantly, this study is dedicated to dual-status youth who face the complex implications that may result from life in residential treatment in conjunction with involvement with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Dual-status youth consist of adolescents who are jointly a part of the child welfare and justice juvenile system. As stated by Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, & Marshall, dual-status youth are also referred to as, “crossover youth,” who are simultaneously involved with both the child welfare system and the justice juvenile system due to delinquency and maltreatment referrals (2008). Within dual-status youth, there are various subgroups within this particular population. These subgroups consist of dual-status youth who have open child welfare cases in both the child welfare and the juvenile justice systems. They may also consist of youth with documented involvement in the child welfare system who are engaged in the justice juvenile system as well as all youth who have experienced some form of abuse or neglect (with no CPS involvement) and who have current involvement with the juvenile justice system (California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership, 2016). A significant implication of studying dual-status youth can be identified in how researchers define dual-status youth. For the purposes of this study, the researchers refer to dual-status youth as any youth who have at least one open case with the child welfare system or juvenile justice system (or both) and who have previously had a case with the latter in their lifetime.

The local and national scope of dual-status youth is a work in progress within the United States. The study of these youth requires a careful analysis of children under the care of the child welfare system as well as juvenile justice system. The issue of children and youth involved in the child welfare system has risen at the national level. According to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there were a total of 427,910 children and youth involved in the child welfare system as of 2015. On a local scope, there were approximately 67,000 children and youth who have open child welfare cases in California as of 2016 (California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership, 2016). In 2014, there were 101, 531 youth referred to the juvenile probation system (California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership, 2016). Although the exact number of dual-status youth in California has been difficult to determine, recent data presented by California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership indicate that approximately 50 to 65 percent of the estimated 40,000 youth in the juvenile justice system in California have also had contact with child welfare previously (2016).

A temporary and notable service that may be employed to care for these children whose cases are picked up and filtered by the child welfare system and juvenile justice system can be seen through residential treatment facilities. There is an extraordinary amount of services and supervision available to these youth through residential treatment facilities. A significant amount of these services are delivered through a collaboration of social workers, therapists, case managers,

residential staff, and others that are designed to support these youth temporarily in transition while their cases are processed by either the child welfare system, juvenile system, or both. Due to the complexity of collecting data on the exact number of dual-status youth from both the juvenile justice system and the child welfare system, it is difficult to determine how many dual-status youth are within residential treatment facilities.

This particular population of youth is unique in that they face complex and multiple challenges that may result from their involvement in both the child welfare and the justice juvenile systems. These challenges range from social service arrangements, substance abuse problems, mental health issues, instability within placements and foster homes, individual, social, and environmental challenges that negatively affect their status in both systems (Mashi, Hatcher, Schwalbe, & Rosato, 2008). According to recent research, this range of challenges seems to increase for dual-status youth who reside in placements (i.e. group homes, residential treatment facilities). For example, adolescents placed in group homes are two and one half times more likely to be at risk of delinquency (2008). These ranges of challenges are important to note because they may involve difficulties in the delivery of services and require a significant amount of social services. In addition, these challenges may require collaboration that may be concerning to various individuals and institutions involved, especially for dual-status youth residing in residential treatment facilities.

As stated by Nina Hyland (2016), many dual-status youths' needs go unmet due to the difficulty in the youth's workers (social worker and probation officer) obtaining reliable information and history of the dual-status youth from multiple agencies and data systems. Although there has been policies and changes within California towards new ways of collecting data on dual-status youth such as the Title IV-E Waiver Child Welfare Demonstration Project which advocates for a focus between an effective partnership between the justice juvenile system and the child welfare system, there is still a large gap towards collecting the exact numbers and data of this population (California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership, 2016). This difficulty in obtaining reliable information and history on dual-status youth is an ongoing concern for many states' child welfare and justice juvenile systems. Many states have tried to develop a more concise and universal system that allow both the child welfare and the justice juvenile systems to access information at the same time and be able to provide universal and consistent services towards their dual-status clients (Fromknecht, 2016).

It remains especially important to study the barriers that dual-status youth face within the child welfare system and juvenile justice system while in residential treatment. For those dual-status youth in residential care it is also important to study how they are being cared for, who is caring for them, and what services are available to them. Residential counselors at residential treatment facilities are among the individuals that spend the most time with these

vulnerable youth and are integral part of how these youth are being cared for. Studying residential counselors and their work with this population is important to social work practice because it may help social work practitioners evaluate how dual-status youth are being cared for, how their needs are being met, and implement changes if needed in order to improve the quality of care. This in turn may help influence how policy, macro, mezzo, and micro practice is implemented with these youth overall in order to effectively continue helping them through their challenges and empower them to become resilient during treatment and post treatment stages.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of current residential counselors in residential treatment facilities working with dual-status youth in order to evaluate the challenges they face servicing these youth as well as the methods employed, if any, to help empower these youth in their environments to become resilient. This particular study is especially important to the researchers as former residential counselors who worked with dual-status at-risk adolescent female youth. There is a need to continue to study and work with high risk dual-status youth in residential treatment facilities while taking into consideration the perception of the challenges that residential counselors face while caring for this population. Further, it is important to continue to identify the needs and challenges of dual-status youth in residential treatment facilities. It is imperative to be cognizant of the risk factors of being a dual-status adolescent in

residential care in order to develop and establish a consensus for competent intervention and prevention methods for systems and individuals to implement when working with these youths.

The findings of this study were built on the foundation of a qualitative research design that employed an interview guide that was administered to current residential counselors that service dual-status youth from various residential treatment facilities in southern California and have at least one year of experience working with these youth. The interview guide questions were designed to capture and elicit the magnitude of important challenges and themes that come with caring for these youth during residential care. In addition, the interview guide questions attempted to capture how residential counselors employed methods, if any, to help empower dual-status youth to become resilient. A qualitative research method design was the most appropriate because it provided the researchers with firsthand knowledge about the experiences of residential counselors directly from themselves who work with these youth on a daily and consistent basis.

Because access to residential counselors who work with dual-status youth can be difficult to obtain, the qualitative research study relied on non-probability sampling methods. The researchers anticipated that the processes involved and procedures necessary in obtaining permission from residential treatment facility agencies that service dual-status youth and employ residential counselors would be extensive and challenging. The non-probability sampling method such as a

snowball sampling allowed for easier access and recruitment of residential counselors for the purposes of the study. Interviewing voluntary residential counselor research subjects with this method contributed to identifying and locating other volunteer residential counselor research subjects. Furthermore, the employment of this method allowed for accessing the network of individual current residential counselors who work with these youth alongside other current residential counselors who had at least one year of experience. The implementation of this method also allowed for access to current residential counselors from different residential treatment facility agencies that serviced dual-status youth as well. Ultimately, the purpose of this study aims to build on the already limited research conducted and available about the specific challenges that residential counselors experience when working with dual-status youth while in residential care.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

The findings of this study may help identify current challenges that residential counselors face while working with dual-status youth under the care of a residential treatment facility. It may not only contribute to maximizing the voices of residential counselors in regards to the challenges they face when working with this population but also potentially contribute to the ways in which social workers collaborate with residential counselors for the sake of better serving dual-status youth clients within residential treatment facilities. By identifying the gaps that may exist within the systematic structure of the child welfare system,

the juvenile justice system, the residential treatment system, the potential insight of the challenges of residential counselors working with dual-status youth may contribute to the lines of how social work can attempt to fill in those gaps.

The findings of this study may help social workers increase their knowledge on the range of challenges that other social service employees (in this case residential counselors) may face while working with their dual-status clients. This in turn can give insight towards a more holistic view for social workers of what their dual-status clients go through while in residential treatment facilities. Moreover, this study may further contribute to initiate efforts to continue to build and improve on interventions, as well as preventive methods currently being practiced in the lines of social work towards dual-status youth. This study addresses the needs and challenges presented amongst residential counselors.

This study may further benefit the social work profession by potentially discovering and analyzing the challenges that residential counselors face while working with dual-status youth in residential treatment in hopes to contribute to the worker-client relationship experience of social workers and any other form of social service agencies working with dual-status youth. This study aims to contribute to social work policy that may initiate more open discussion and bringing awareness towards the need of a more effective collaboration of both the child welfare system and the justice juvenile system. In addition, it may contribute to policy that potentially contributes to helping policy makers within the child welfare system and the justice juvenile system make informed decisions

through their increase of knowledge concerning the needs within this particular issue and population. In turn, this study aims to answer the research question of what are the challenges that residential counselors face while working with dual-status youth in residential treatment facilities and further, how are they contributing to empowering these youth to become resilient during treatment and post treatment stages.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will consist of a discussion and summary of the relevant literature to this particular research study. This chapter is divided into sections such as the influences of child welfare and juvenile justice system towards dual-status youth, the influence of residential treatment facilities on dual-status youth, the influence of residential treatment facilities on dual-status youth, influence of individual characteristics of dual-status youth, previous studies on youth care workers' experience working with dual-status youth, and the theories that are applied towards this research study.

Qualitative and Quantitative Studies

Based on a thorough analysis of current literature, the researchers found that there is range of studies that touch on various aspects regarding the multi-system challenges of dual-status youth, their involvement in residential care, and residential counselor challenges working with youth in residential treatment facilities. As stated previously, this study aims to capture how residential counselors work with dual-status youth, the challenges they face working with them, the effort, methods, and resources they use to empower these youth to become resilient while in placement and beyond. Unfortunately, little research has been conducted regarding the experiences of residential counselors and the

challenges they face while working with dual-status youth. Through conducting rigorous research on past studies, the researchers found studies that reported on the group home effects on youth behaviors, the influence of dual-status youth's characteristics, the effects of the child welfare and the justice juvenile system on the dual-status youth, and the influence that residential treatment facilities may have on dual-status youth; consequently they may present challenges for residential counselors who work alongside this population.

Influences of Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice System Towards Dual-Status Youth

To start off, the child welfare system and justice juvenile system play an influential factor towards the potential challenges involved when working with dual-status youth. One study by, Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, and Marshall (2007), studied the relationship between child welfare status and two judicial outcomes such as case dismissal and probation. The study tried to identify if youth that come from a history in child welfare are treated and convicted similarly or differently than youth that solely come from a history of delinquency. The researchers used administrative data from child welfare and juvenile justice departments of Los Angeles County to distinguish their sample of 69,009 youth. After conducting a chi-square analysis and logistic regression model, this research found that of the 69,009 youth that were first time offenders between 2002 and 2005, 4,811 (7% of the 69,009 population sampled) were a part of the Los Angeles County child welfare system. The study also found that youth

entering the juvenile justice system via the child welfare system are more likely to be placed in a suitable placement or correctional placement usually supervised by probation than delinquent status youth. This study presented the challenges that dual-status youth carry as those who were first time offenders within the juvenile justice system have had previous history with the child welfare system. Although this study primarily focused on the judicial outcomes of dual-status youth, one of the judicial outcomes involved being placed within a suitable placement such as a residential group home facility with twenty-four hour supervision by residential counselors. The history carried by the dual-status youth may present significant challenges for these residential counselors who are continuously supervising this population.

Another study by Chuang and Wells (2010) studied the three dimensions of collaboration between local child welfare and juvenile justice agencies that may influence a youth's chances of receiving proper behavioral health services. The researchers collected their data through implementing the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being of families that are involved in the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system that consisted of a complex sampling design of two stages of stratification on 4080 children and youth who have been investigated for maltreatment between October 1999 and December 2000. After conducting multiple surveys, interviews, and research data from multiple parties involved in youths' decision-making, the researchers found that having a single agency accountable for a youth's care increased the youth's chances of receiving

out and inpatient behavioral health services than those youth involved in both the child welfare and the juvenile justice system. Unfortunately, this data is limited due to the sample of youth not fully being involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice system. This can create challenges for faculty working with dual-status youth due to the potential risk factors of dual-status youth. These risk factors may involve potentially not receiving the proper behavioral health services due to the lack of collaboration between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Influence of Residential Facilities on Dual-Status Youth

Alongside the effects that the child welfare and justice juvenile system can have on dual-status youth, there are various studies that indicate that residential treatment facilities themselves play an influential role towards dual-status youths' characteristics, the ways in which dual-status youth internalize or externalize their behaviors, and the ways in which they are perceived by staff. This range of influences of residential treatment facilities on dual-status youth may influence the challenges that residential counselors may experience while working with this particular population.

Ryan, Marshall, Herz, and Hernandez (2008) studied the relationship between group home placements in child welfare and the risk of delinquency. They used administrative records from a specific urban county for a sample that consisted of 20,309 youth (between ages 7 and 16) who were a part of the Department of Children and Families Services and Department of Probation of

Los Angeles County. After conducting a cross-tabulation and chi-square method on both samples, this study was able to effectively identify many characteristics such as race, gender, ethnicity, group home status, child behavior variables, and the types of placements (group home or foster care) that influence the risk of delinquency among crossover youth. One limitation that the study indicated was that of measuring the delinquency of a youth that was a part of the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system. The authors used arrest data by the Los Angeles County Department of Probation to determine the sample group of those involved in the probation system which included youth that have been arrested at least once in their life. This particular strategy may limit the strength of the study due to the various youth that may be a part of the delinquency system, but have never been arrested for their actions and were thus not sampled in the study. These findings may have a significant amount to say about the types of factors and characteristics of dual-status youth that residential counselors may work with at residential treatment facilities that may lead to potential challenges for residential counselors.

Jordan, Leon, Epstein, Durkin, Helgerson, and Lakin-Starr (2009) studied the relationship between organizational climate and the changes in youths' internalizing and externalizing behaviors in residential treatment centers (i.e. group homes). Here, the authors were interested in knowing if there is any influence on the ways in which front-line workers (i.e. residential counselors) perceived the fairness and community of their organization and the effects that

may have on the ways in which youth in that organization internalize and externalize their behaviors overall. In this study, internalizing behaviors consisted of depression, anxiety, and danger to self, while externalizing behaviors consisted of hyperactivity, socio-legal, and danger to others. After collecting survey data and administrative data that consisted of the Child Functional Assessment Rating Scale for the youth's behaviors and the Areas of Worklife Survey for front-line workers, the authors found that the higher the perception of community within front-line staff was associated with improvement on youth externalizing behaviors and the higher perception on workload and fairness within front-line staff was associated with less improvement on youth internalizing and externalizing behavior. This study was limited due to the misconceptions of what fairness means to various front-line staff and small sample of residential treatment providers surveyed. This study indicated that more research needs to be done towards obtaining proper perceptions of staff towards the common behaviors they see in youth within residential treatment facilities.

There are studies that focus on solely the outcomes of residential treatment and its effectiveness. Bettmann and Jasperson (2009) conducted a literature review that focused on the effects of residential and inpatient treatment amongst adolescents and youth. An article in the literature review by Colson et al. (1991) studied the relationships between a youth's characteristics, therapeutic alliance, and treatment outcomes. After conducting a set of rating scales to assess for any difficult behaviors, the study found that participants who staff perceived to be

difficult had the worst treatment outcomes (Colson et al., 2009). Building off of this literature review, the researchers aim to further the discussion of staff's (residential counselors) perceptions through asking them about the common challenges they see dual-status youth face while living in a residential treatment facility, and move past asking them their opinion on how they perceived youths' behaviors to be.

Influence of Individual Characteristics of Dual-Status Youth

Huang, Ryan, and Herz (2012) studied the characteristics of dual-status youth and the influence those characteristics may have on subsequent maltreatment (rereporting) and re-offending (recidivism) amongst dual-status youth. Similarly to Ryan, Marshall, and Hernandez (2008), this study used administrative records from the Department of Children and Family Services and the Departments of Juvenile Probation in Los Angeles County on 1148 dual-status cases. The researchers used descriptive statistics and Cox regression model to measure the flow of youth between child welfare and the juvenile justice systems to focus on their outcomes of rereporting and recidivism. The study found that 32% of youth had subsequent maltreatment referrals after an arrest and 56% committed a least one new offense after their first time arrest. This study emphasized the need for a more coordinated and collaborative relationship between the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Moreover, they advocate to better help the unique and specific needs that dual-status youth require in order to better the circumstances of dual-status youth before and after treatment to help prevent dual-status youth recidivism and rereporting. This study can be

used to emphasize and explore how the experiences of residential counselors working with dual-status youth in residential treatment facilities may relate in contributing to better the circumstances of these youth while in residential treatment in order to prevent recidivism.

Hurley, Chmelka, Burns, Epstein, and Thompson (2009) studied whether the mental health status of youth admitted into residential group home care was constant or if it changed within the years of 1995 to 2004. The researchers analyzed and reviewed 1,047 youth case data within this residential group home between 1995 and 2004. After conducting a sequential logistic regression analysis on the youths' domains of demographic/placement information, mental, and psychiatric diagnosis, the authors found that youth admitted in 2004 had more mental health needs, had multiple psychiatric diagnoses, were prescribed two or more psychotropic medications, health functioning and were using alcohol or drugs far more than the youth admitted in 1995 (Hurley et al., 2009). This study had some limitations on the fact that these results are based solely on one residential group home agency on two periods of time. As stated by the authors, the study was also limited in that they were not able to gather information on mental health functioning from multiple perspectives (Hurley et al., 2009). In study aims to build off of this limitation and further gather the perspectives of residential counselors' challenges in working with dual-status youth in order to better grasp the overall challenges that dual-status youth may potentially present while in a residential treatment facility.

There is also substantial research indicative that the development of adolescence is vital to understanding the significant relationship between child maltreatment and adolescent offending for dual-status youth. Cashmore (2011) reviewed an array of surveys and different types of studies concerning dual-status youth in Australia. From an international standpoint, Cashmore's review of findings in Australia, United States, and other English-speaking countries illustrated that although adolescence is a timeframe of significant developmental growth and maturity the adolescent brain development, socio-emotional and cognitive development can be negatively affected by deficient or unhealthy parenting. In her review, she found that dual-status males in residential treatment with a history of three or more placements doubled the risk of offending for males; on the other hand, for dual-status females any placement not just instability increased the risk of offending (2011). Furthermore, Cashmore's analysis is relevant to this study in that she discussed the detrimental effects of systems neglect via the fluctuation between approaches to dual-status youth in shifting between a justice model and welfare model with no real synthesis of services provided to youth (2011). This article may be relative to the experiences of residential counselors who work with this population of dual-status youth who not only have to be aware of the developmental dynamics affected by trauma within this population, but also may be tasked to support and guide these youth through the child welfare and juvenile justice system to prevent reoffending.

Youth Care Workers' Experience

Similar to this study's focus, there are studies that focus on the residential youth care workers' perception of working within a residential treatment facility. A study by Kristal Ramirez explored the perceptions of youth counselors within residential treatment facilities to explore the common difficulties they have experienced working within residential treatment facilities (2011). The author performed a qualitative study in which she used the snowball method to conduct interviews with current youth counselors from a variety of residential treatment facilities within southern California. After conducting these interviews using a semi-structured interview guide, the researcher found that majority of her participants reported their difficulties being that they needed more training on properly handling youths' issues, more support from administrators and other staff within the facility, and their work hours. This study acknowledged that some of the limitations to its results are a possibility of biases within the qualitative answers of the youth counselors' interviews, researcher bias, and the limited effects of snowball sampling. Although this study illustrated the importance of training and agency support towards youth counselors within residential treatment facilities, a gap still remained as this solely focused on the perceptions of difficulties of youth counselors working in residential treatment facilities. This study aimed to take these findings into a further focus by putting into perspective not only the multi-tier challenges residential counselors face when working with

dual-status youth but also how they empower clients to be resilient at their residential placement and beyond.

Correspondingly, a study by DosReis and Davarya, researched the staff perspectives of triggers to aggressive behavior of adolescents within a residential treatment facility (2008). This study included staff with a variety of titles such as psychiatrists, nurses, psychologists, social workers, and front-line staff (i.e. residential counselors) (DosReis & Davarya, 2008). Through in-depth qualitative interviews, the authors asked the participants questions regarding their experiences working within the residential treatment facilities, the similarities they found when and if the adolescent clients would express aggressive behaviors, the approaches they used when managing the aggressive behaviors of clients, strategies that they use to decrease the behavior of the client, and their own individual feelings about the situation (DosReis & Davarya, 2008). After using NVivo software to translate the qualitative data, results indicated that there is a continuous need for consistent staff training and awareness towards clients' triggers to aggressive behaviors and that these aggressive behaviors in the perception of staff within this study stemmed from trying to understand the adolescent, staff's views of interaction within the surroundings of the aggressive client, and their perspective of the agency's policies and procedures within the residential treatment facility (DosReis & Davarya, 2008). Some limitations on this study is that it was limited to only female adolescent residential treatment facilities, the potential biases within the answers of the single particular agency's

staff members, and the limited education level of the staff that was interviewed being strictly clinical (DosReis & Davarya, 2008). This study aims to take this similar research a step further by focusing on one particular population of clients, dual-status youth, and asking the residential counselors the challenges that they have experienced while working with this particular population within a residential treatment facility rather than strictly focusing on only aggressive youth.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

As illustrated in this literature review, the majority of the studies conducted on a range of group home effects on dual-status youth behaviors, the influence of individual characteristics of dual-status youth, the effects of the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system on the dual-status youth, and the influence of organizations on dual-status youth may all lead towards potential challenges that residential counselors may face while working with this certain population. These factors may be understood through a system's theory perspective and is prevalent in the research and findings toward dual-status youth and residential counselors. As stated by social work license map website, "systems theory explains human behavior as the intersection of the influences of multiple interrelated systems (i.e. individual issues, families, organizations, societies, and other systems related to the individual) (2017). This theory better explains the ways in which multiple systems, individuals, and institutions in an individual's life can be interrelated and affect one another. This study utilizes the systems theory in order to gain some insight as to how the population of dual-

status youth may give rise to challenges for residential counselors in residential treatment facilities due to dual-status youths' difficulties and involvement in multiple systems in their life (i.e. child welfare system, justice juvenile system, individual issues, family, friends, society, etc.).

A theory that this research study contributes towards the research on the challenges that residential counselors may face when working with dual-status youth is the empowerment theory. As stated by Radovic (2008), empowerment theory consists of assisting vulnerable individuals and populations realize their full potential, helping individuals understand the structural or social inequalities that affect them directly and indirectly while assisting these individuals in becoming interdependent individuals in society. This study guided by this theory as it provides perspective on residential counselors challenges when working with dual-status youth along with their perspective on how they might see resiliency within this population. By gaining insight to these views, this research study explores how residential counselors go about empowering the vulnerable population of dual-status youth within their residential treatment facilities to assist them in becoming strong, interdependent individuals in society.

Summary

To summarize, this study aims to capture how residential counselors work with dual-status youth, the challenges they face while working with this population, and the efforts, methods, and resources they utilize to empower these youth to become resilient interdependent individuals in placement and

beyond. By taking into consideration the multiple challenges that dual-status youth endure from a systematic and individual approach, the researchers gained insight on what the challenges are from a residential counselor's perspective, in working with this particular population within a residential treatment facility.

These systematic and individual factors include group home effects on youth behaviors, the influence of dual-status youth's characteristics, the effects of the child welfare and the juvenile justice system on the dual-status youth, and the influence that residential treatment facilities may have on dual-status youth. By conducting this study, the researchers aim to find if these common challenging factors of dual-status youth may influence challenges for residential counselors to work alongside this population.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODS

Introduction

This section will provide a detailed description on the research methods that were utilized in this research study. This description will include the study design of the research study, the type of sample this study was conducted from, the data collection and instruments that were used, procedures, the protection of human subjects within this study, and the data analysis that was used to answer the research study question.

Study Design

The derivation of this study originated from existing literature on the challenges of dual-status youth and residential counselors. Significant research has been conducted on dual-status youth and their involvement in the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system. Similarly, research has also been conducted on youth counselors' challenges in working in residential treatment facilities. The premise of this research study is based on the notion that there is limited research on the experiences of residential counselors and their work with dual-status youth in residential care. The design of this study embodies that of a qualitative study employed through individual interviews of voluntary current residential counselors in southern California who work with dual-status youth in residential treatment facilities. These interviews were conducted via semi-

structured interviews with the use of interview guide questions. The purpose and design of this study aims to explore and answer the research question of what are the challenges of residential counselors who work with dual-status youth in residential treatment facilities and the methods they employ to empower these youth while in placement and beyond. In this study, individual interviews of current residential counselors were used by the researchers in order to engage in the attempt to best elicit the experiences of current residential counselors with dual-status youth in residential placement. Through individual interviews this study aims to not only continue to build on existing literature about dual-status youth and residential counselors, but also put into perspective the experiences of individuals who work significantly the most with dual-status youth in residential care.

Although this study is qualitative in design, this study has several strengths in its data collection and research methods. A significant strength of this particular approach is that the data collected were responses produced directly from the residential counselors themselves. The use of this method allowed researchers to gain firsthand knowledge about the experiences of residential counselors themselves and their work with dual-status youth in residential treatment. In addition, the experiences of the participants were examined in greater detail and depth. Similarly, although the researchers used an interview guide, they were not restricted to those specific questions, the

interview guide framework researchers was modified and adjusted as needed when new information became available.

Due to the design of this particular study, this study did have methodological limitations and implications. This study design and research was guided by the interest of the researchers as current and former residential counselors; this may have subject the data interpretation and derivation of themes by the researchers' idiosyncrasies and personal biases. Another significant limitation and implication of the proposed study is that the data collection, analysis and time for interpretation of themes were time consuming. Similarly, due to the design, the presence of the researchers during individual interviews and data gathering may have affected the participants' responses and thus, may have been another significant limitation and implication of this study.

Sampling

Participants for this study were selected by the researchers of this study. Due to the time restraint for this study and the inability to obtain consent from specific residential treatment facilities this study was conducted from a variety of residential counselors from a variety of residential treatment facilities. Because there was no need for consent from a specific agency with residential counselors who work with dual-status youth to conduct this research, approaching voluntary current residential counselors made this study feasible.

Researchers recruited 3 residential counselors from the researchers' current co-workers that held current residential counselor positions at a

residential treatment facility. The researchers used snowball sampling by asking these residential counselor coworkers if they knew or had any friends or previous co-workers that were current residential counselors in other residential treatment facilities to obtain 7 more participants. In total, this study obtained 10 participants. The participants that were recruited met the minimum requirements of having been a current residential counselor for at least 1 year within a residential treatment facility that serves dual-status youth. Participants were also required to meet with the researchers for an individual interview if they agreed to participate in the study.

From recruiting, the researchers of this study aimed to have a variety of residential counselors from various residential treatment facilities within southern California. Only residential counselors were allowed to participate within this study as this study aimed to research the challenges that residential counselors endure while working with dual-status youth within their residential treatment facilities. Therapists, social workers, probation officers, supervisors, recreational staff, officers/security, interns, team leaders, and program directors were not allowed to participate in the study. This sample of residential counselors aimed to consist of adults (18 years or older), from a variety of ethnicities, sex, gender, and social classes. This particular sample of residential counselors was chosen due to the significant amount of time that they spend with their dual-status youth clients compared to other positions within their residential treatment facilities. Due to the fact that these residential counselors that were recruited were 18

years or older, and were from of a variety of residential treatment facilities, it was feasible to collect the qualitative data that this research study aimed to collect.

Data Collection and Instruments

The data that was collected was in the form of qualitative data responses from each individual residential counselor participant within the sample. The interview was guided by an interview guide and was administered towards each participant via the researchers. Due to this study being conducted through a qualitative design, there were no independent or dependent variables being measured. The interview guide (shown in Appendix B) consisted of a variety of open-ended questions in an interview that covered a variety of subjects. Specifically, the demographic section included questions on age, education, ethnicity, and numbers of years working as a residential counselor within a residential treatment facility. Although this data was not specifically significant towards the research study question, it was additional information the study measured in regards to any similarity in responses to the qualitative interview guide questions.

The open-ended questions section consisted of questions that aimed to measure the participants' challenges and perceptions towards working with dual-status youth within a residential treatment facility. These questions ranged from asking question like: describing the challenges, obstacles, or barriers, that the participant may face working with dual-status youth; differences or similarities between the challenges of working with single status youth vs dual-status youth;

participant perceptions on what they enjoy about working with dual-status youth; what motivated the participants in working as a residential counselor within a residential treatment facility; a description on the participant's' daily duties and roles as a residential counselor; participants' past training towards working with dual-status youth; their opinion on any possible changes or additions they believe would be beneficial towards decreasing any challenges they may have while working with dual-status youth; and the type of role they perceive to play towards possibly empowering dual-status youth within their residential treatment facility as residential counselors.

The interview guide questions were created by the researchers themselves. These questions were created by the researchers through the commonalities that the researchers found by working with dual-status youth themselves. There are some limitations towards using this form of data collection. These limitations include biases of the researchers in which the researchers' beliefs and knowledge may influence the ways in which the data is interpreted into categories, themes, and coded. Another limitation is that the questions asked may not fully relate to the participants. In order to address these limitations, the researchers received input from their research supervisor and professors towards the interview guide questions that were created in order to gain a broader insight towards the questions the researchers may ask as well as the ways in which the researchers can interpret the answers with minimal biases. A strength towards using this form of data collection and instrument is that it

aimed to gain the participants personal experiences, knowledge, and insight towards answering the research study research question.

Procedures

One of the initial procedures that took place in order to conduct this study was to obtain consent from the participants themselves (shown in Appendix A). An informational packet was administered to each participant within the study. This packet included a letter of introduction stating the purpose of the study and an informed consent form that was administered to participants of the study before the qualitative interview was conducted. This packet was sealed and labeled for participants to keep for any future reference or questions they may have towards the study they participated in.

The letter of introduction stated the purpose of the study. This information provided participants with information regarding who the researchers are and their purpose in conducting the study. The letter of introduction also stated the history of why and how the researchers decided on this particular research study and their motive behind conducting research on the research question. The participants were also administered an informed consent form in which possible participants were instructed to mark with an "X" in order to give full consent towards voluntarily participating in this research study. Each consent form was marked with an identification number ranging randomly from one to ten. Participants were emailed a copy of their consent form after they have participated in the study.

Due to each participants being interviewed individually, there was multiple locations in which data was collected. These locations varied depending on the preference of the researchers and the participants' form of commute and convenience of driving in order to meet in person. Researchers within this study met with participants more than half way from their living location to meet at any local, yet quiet location such as a coffee shop, local library, park, etc. The location, dates, and times varied depending on the participants and the researchers availability and preferences. The timeline this research data was collected between January 2018 and March 2018. Both researchers collected the data simultaneously.

Protection of Human Subjects

The protection of the rights and overall welfare of participants was one of the main priorities within the study. The researchers protected these rights by emphasizing the fact that the name of the participants remained confidential and anonymous by assigning each participant a number, ranging from 1 to 10, in order for participants to be reassured that their names and responses will be kept confidential. Participants were informed that the individual interview with them was audio recorded, but the record would not mention names or names of the agencies they work for. Adding on, an informed consent form was distributed to all the participants of the study asking them to sign with an "X" if they agree to voluntarily participate in the study. Researchers informed participants that their participation was solely voluntary, if at any point in time during the study if

participants chose to no longer participate, they had the right to discontinue participation in the study. Participants also received a letter of introduction that discussed the purpose of the study and the ways in which participants would anonymously be contributing towards. Participants were also be informed in the letter of introduction that the findings of the study would be announced anonymously as their responses were configured to common themes towards the answer of the study's research question. Lastly, participants were notified that the audio-recordings would be kept in a safe, secured space for three years, and then they would be properly disposed of.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis of this study was initiated from the transcription of data gathered from the individual interviews conducted on residential counselors. Once the data collected was transcribed by the researchers, the researchers reviewed the data transcripts. Once transcripts were reviewed, through the process of coding, researchers went through transcripts and labeled relevant words and phrases that were pertinent and important to the study. Consequently, researchers went through the process of deciding which codes would be most relevant to the research study and research question which revolve around the challenges and empowerment methods that residential counselors experience when working with dual-status youth. Once researchers decided which codes emerged as most relevant and important to the research study and question, the researchers categorized their codes within the

qualitative data by grouping similar codes together. Through the process of these groupings of codes and categorizations, researchers developed pertinent and major themes based on the data presented. The researchers in this study used these themes to analyze the results of their findings and develop a discussion based on the major themes found in the data.

Due to the implementation of the use of an interview guide for the data collection of this research study, the researchers of this study anticipated that there would be themes that may emerge. These anticipated themes included: multiple systematic gaps that residential counselors navigate when working with dual-status youth, differences in challenges and empowerment methods with different status youth, need for more effective trainings pertaining to dual-status youth, and organizational cultural and environmental influences. Although the researchers anticipated that these constructs would emerge, the research would not be solely limited to these constructs. The final constructs and themes would emerge when all data was collected and analyzed.

Summary

The research method that was utilized in this study was a qualitative study design using an individual interview guide. These interviews were conducted on an individual basis, were audio-recorded, and ranged from 30 to 45 minutes in length. Participants for this study were recruited using a snowball sampling method in which the researchers would conduct the first couple of interviews on participants that they had worked with within a residential treatment facility. The

sample consisted of 10 current residential counselors who had a least one year experience working within a residential treatment facility that served dual-status youth in southern California. The gender, sex, and ethnicity of these participants were expected to vary. The interview guide was expected to range in themes and categorizations of challenges working with dual-status youth compared to single-status youth, burnout, additional trainings, staff or agency support, participants daily duties working with dual-status youth, ways in which participants believed they had empowered any clients within this population of dual-status youth, how participants believed they are individually perceived as residential counselors within their residential treatment facility working with this population, and possible solutions towards decreasing the challenges they face working with dual-status youth. The data analysis for this study entailed coding, grouping codes into categories and forming themes relevant to challenges and empowerment methods of residential counselors and their work with dual-status youth in residential placement.

CHAPTER FOUR:

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the general findings of the residential counselor interviews conducted. A total of 10 residential counselors within southern California who work in residential placements in the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, and Riverside were interviewed in a period of three months beginning January 2018. All participants verbally verified that they had at least one year of experience working with dual-status youth in a residential placement setting. Participants were asked to provide the following demographic information: age, gender, highest level of education, ethnicity, number of years worked as a residential counselor, and number of hours worked on a weekly basis.

As noted in Table 1, participants ranged in age from 18-39. Five participants identified their age between the age range of 18-28. Five Participants identified their age between the age range of 29-39. Eight participants were female and two participants were male. Eight participants identified themselves as Latino/Hispanic, one participant identified themselves as African American, and one participant identified themselves as white/Caucasian. All participants had a level of education equivalent to a bachelor's degree. Five participants obtained their bachelor's degree in psychology, two participants obtained their bachelor's degree in sociology, two participants identified their bachelor's degree in social work, and one participant obtained their bachelor's degree in criminal

justice. Five participants identified themselves as having between 1-2 years of experience; five participants identified themselves as having more than two years of experience. Three participants identified that they worked between 20-29 hours weekly with dual-status youth, Two identified that they worked between 30-39 hours weekly with dual-status youth, and five identified that they worked 40 or more hours with dual-status youth.

Table 1

Residential Counselor Demographics

	Entire Sample n=10
Gender	
Female	8
Male	2
Ethnicity	
Caucasian	1
African-American	1
Hispanic	8
Age	
18–28	5
29–39	5
Education	
Less than High School	0
High School or GED	0
Bachelor's Degree	10
Years of Experience	
1 – 2	5
2 or more	5
Hours Worked per Week	
20–29	3
30–39	2
40 or more	5

Themes Identified

This study aimed to find the common challenges that residential counselors face while working with dual-status youth within residential treatment facilities. This chapter is organized by the challenges that participants suggested that ultimately have led to burn out and agency challenges that have influenced the challenges residential counselors face towards working with dual-status youth in residential treatment. Three themes were identified along with various subthemes and direct quotes from the data collection were utilized in order to justify each theme and subtheme identified by the researchers. Participants and agency names were kept anonymous.

Burnout

One of the main themes that arose within the research as one of the challenges that residential counselors face when working with dual-status youth was that of burnout. Burnout is commonly defined and recognized as, “a physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that can occur from involvement within occupations that are emotionally demanding” (McFadden, Campbell, & Taylor, 2015). Although each person experiences burnout emotionally, physically, or mentally differently, the participants within this study commonly mentioned that burnout was one of the challenges they face when working with dual-status youth within a residential treatment facility. After analyzing the results, some of the main factors towards burnout that the participants commonly

mentioned were that of multiple roles, role limitation, and dual-status youth behaviors.

Multiple Roles

One of the common challenges that residential counselors reported facing while working with dual-status youth was having to assume multiple roles at any given time. The designated residential counselor roles, duties, and responsibilities vary amongst different residential treatment facilities, the average residential counselor role is stated to include duties but not limited to therapeutic supervision of clients, parenting support, modeling appropriate behavior, facilitate daily structure, completes necessary documentation, monitor visits and phone calls, administer medication and drug testing, maintain cleanliness, and transport clients (Residential Counselor, n.d.). Although these duties and responsibilities are what may come with the job description of being a residential counselor within a residential treatment facility, these specific duties and responsibilities can create challenges for residential counselors working with dual-status youth.

One of the roles that the participants reported as a challenge towards working with dual-status youth was fulfilling the role of a caretaker to this specific population. Half of the participants reported having to play a parental, caretaker role in which they have to teach, model, and guide dual-status youth towards how to complete basic daily duties along with fulfilling daily duties that their parents would complete if the dual-status youth were not in a residential treatment facility.

As stated by a participant,

I'm basically like their caretaker in a sense, I give them medications, help with their children, tell them when to go to sleep, when to wake up, clean up after them, on top of that if a client discloses something personal, I am a mandated reporter. (Interview #9, Personal Interview January, 2018).

Another, participant stated,

I get their medications ready, wake them up for school, help them if they need something like help them make their bed, clean their rooms, clean around the cottage, take them to school, after school I prompt them to go to group therapy, help with their kids and babies, help them cook, just attending to their needs (Interview #10, Personal Interview January, 2018).

Similarly, one participant stated, "I'm almost like a mom in a way to them. Someone that can be there, support them, do day to day things with them. Help them out" (Interview #1, Personal Interview January, 2018). Another stated, "I take them to school, run errands for them, pick up lunch, transport them to appointments, and prompt them" (Interview #6, Personal Interview January, 2018). One participant stated that he takes on a caregiver with case manager duties simultaneously, "I'm a paperwork pusher, take the kids to their appointments, talk to their probation officers or social workers, I do a lot of the background stuff "(Interview #3, Personal Interview January, 2018).

Similar to the caregiver role, four participants reported one of their challenges towards working with dual-status youth as having to assume the authority role. Responses included, “I have to be the one that says yes or no, but sometimes that depends on what the program rules are, I have to enforce it” along with, “ I basically get them to stay running their program, making sure they’re ok, making sure they’re on schedule and on program” (Interview #5, Personal Interview January, 2018) and, “I basically make sure they run their program, have them clean, supervise them, have them respect the rules there are in and outside the facility” (Interview #7, Personal Interview January, 2018). One participant stated that her authority role is mixed with recreational duties. Participant stated, “I mostly take them out on fun events, especially on the weekends. But at the same time I have to prompt them and direct them to clean and have them complete their hygiene” (Interview #4, Personal Interview January, 2018).

Four participants responded that they take on a synthesis of a teacher, role model, therapist, case manager, and social worker role simultaneously when working with dual-status youth. As stated by one of the participants,

As a residential counselor, I’m usually stuck in the middle of roles. Some of the times staff with other titles do not respond or answer the dual-status youth, so I’m like putting on a case manager hat for

a second and trying to like figure that out... same goes for when the clients want to talk their social worker or therapist, it's really hard to like actually like help them out because it's like that's not my role to like use the resources and help them out and do everything for them. The services like I cannot provide directly so it was just kind of like I can't, I don't have the knowledge to be those other roles... that's not my forte (Interview #1, Personal Interview January, 2018).

Another participant stated that, “playing the role of a role model for them by guiding and teaching them to do even the smallest things like ironing clothes or cooking because they weren’t taught these small things when they were growing up” (Interview #6, Personal Interview January, 2018).

Similarly another participant stated,

I teach them daily life skills that they don't know, being able to fill knowledge gaps like what they need to do to feel better when they are sick, laundry. Because eventually they're going to move out of the system and they need more knowledge than they had when they first came in (Interview #1, Personal Interview January, 2018).

One participant specified that,

I am there most of the time, family therapist are there 3 times a week for an hour a day and so I'm there to see how their phone calls go, if they get presents or not for their birthdays or holidays, if their parents came to visit

or not, I deal with all of that, and so the kids confide in me more than their therapist (Interview #4, Personal Interview January, 2018).

The challenge by taking on these multiple roles was identified by one of the participants as, “I feel like I always like create conflict. A lot of times conflicts happen because of the resources I can't provide because it's not my field or my role” (Interview #1, Personal Interview January, 2018).

Role Limitation

Role limitations were one of the common challenges that residential counselors stated they encountered when working with dual-status youth in residential treatment. Three of the participants mentioned their role limitation towards dual-status youths' treatment plan.

We (residential counselors) are at the bottom in terms of treatment teams, we are at the very bottom. A lot of the times the program and team leads are making a lot of changes and not talking to the people who are spending the most time with them, us (Interview #9, Personal Interview January, 2018).

The same participant mentioned how this role limitation is personally challenging,

For me personally, it's frustrating and challenging not being able to do more for them. Your hands are tied, you, you see them going through this system, going through the courts and then like at all stages of this process, people are dropping the ball. Somebody didn't send the right, they went to court,

didn't send the right paperwork, they, you know, like it's just a mess. So it's really frustrating for me because I want to believe in the system that we have in place, but it's so broken that sometimes all I can say like, I'm sorry you're going through that and you know, I wish it was different or I don't know I just think it's really challenging to like help them believe in the system. I'm seeing it fail them time and time again. So it's, I don't know, I, I can relate and I understand their frustration so, and I feel the same way. So I mean I just feel like my hands are tied (Interview #9, Personal Interview January, 2018).

While another mentioned that their own race and ethnicity negatively affects their roles as a residential counselor for dual-status youth.

Challenging and resistant behaviors towards me due to my race, I'm a Caucasian female that had a good upbringing and the girls would target that by cussing at me and telling me that I didn't understand what they were going through (Interview #1, Personal Interview January, 2018).

Two participants mentioned how their training, knowledge, and access within their role as residential counselors challenges them as well.

I want to say that currently my role limits me a lot. You're trained to do only certain things and if you cross those lines, that's when you get in trouble. You know you can do more, but you're not allowed to and I feel like this creates challenges for me and my clients because you can't do as much as you want to for them (Interview #3, Personal Interview January, 2018).

I think my role is very limited because I don't have access to talk to client's probation officers or social workers in order to find out if there is something else we can do for the client to help encourage them like possibly set up an outing for them or take them out; I think that's what makes this role challenging is that we are not given specific goals that the client's treatment team come up with for the client (Interview #7, Personal Interview January, 2018).

Dual-Status Youth Behaviors

Results from this study also indicated the ways in which dual-status youths' behaviors negatively challenge residential counselors from working with this particular population. More than half (seven) participants mentioned dual-status youths' resistant and delinquent behaviors as some of the challenges they face while working as residential counselors with dual-status youth.

It can get challenging at times when they do like certain behaviors or like AWOL, or substance use because I feel like maybe we can be there and you know, try to help them and guide them through the same thing to the right direction, It's not easy but sometimes it's just sad knowing that maybe what if they're not safe or what happens in the time that they AWOL (Interview #8, Personal Interview January, 2018).

“There's behavioral issues such as when they become irritable, they become disrespectful, they don't care, start using substances to cope” (Interview #7, Personal Interview January, 2018). Resistant behaviors such as refusals,

talking back, and using foul language from dual-status youth were commonly mentioned by half of the participants.

When I'm prompting them to do something, they don't do it, they refuse.

They give me attitude or call me bad words or whatever and I just have to be the bigger, professional person, but of course I'm holding myself back (Interview #10, Personal Interview January, 2018).

"They have their bad moments and we are so prone to verbal abuse that I had to learn to control my understanding that it's not personal and not take it past the work environment" (Interview #2, Personal Interview January, 2018).

High stress, not listening, talking back, group of girls. They say triggering things where you go from them yelling in your face, calling me all types of names, and I'm supposed to stand there and be very calm and take it.

They ping pong from one emotion to another (Interview #5, Personal Interview January, 2018).

One of the participants mentioned how dual-status youths' behaviors can ultimately lead to feeling burn out. "The girls themselves are challenging to deal with because of what they've been through and everything and like there's a point where you try to be empathetic and understand, but when you're burnt out, you're burnt out" (Interview #1, Personal Interview January, 2018).

Agency Challenges

Support

A pervasive common theme relative to agency challenges that residential counselors experienced with dual-status youth was staff support. Although reasons varied from residential counselors in how they felt they lacked support or received adequate support, a majority of residential counselors expressed they lacked staff support. The majority of residential counselors commonly mentioned short staffing and management involvement as factors in support. Eight out of ten residential counselors expressed they lacked staff support when working with these youth. Two residential counselors either shared that they had adequate support and or made no mention of staff support as a challenge when working with dual-status youth.

With regard to staffing concerns, one residential counselor described her experience as,

But sometimes there was no staff or those, like it was hectic. So I would stay later. There was times where I worked from 7:00 AM until 10:00 PM. So when I say where I was working at, because we were always short staff, it was a lot like maybe at least five times a month they would ask me if I could stay that late and if I didn't stay that late, at least I would stay till like seven or eight or just to help out or they would say yeah, this girl needs an appointment, will be done by seven and you have to leave at seven. So I was like OK. But it was just kind of hard because I like worked

10 hours already and you're tired. And there was times that they took my swing staff from me, so they took her to work at another house. So I was by myself from 8:00 AM till 5:00 PM. There was one time where I was by myself from 8:00 AM till 10:00 PM. Because I was like, there was five to 10 staff called out. I didn't have my swing, can you say, I'm like, OK, like, and I feel bad being like, no, figure it out sometimes, you know, unless I have something to do like I really can't. But if I was like I'm just going to be home and I'd be like, I guess I'll say it's a lot of hours. Yeah. But I think the most problem I think was just, we were always short staff. So that was our main issue where it was just not enough staff and since the house where I worked with the farthest away from everyone else, like nobody wanted to really (Interview #6, Personal Interview January, 2018).

Another residential counselor described her experience with regard to staffing similarly.

A lot of stuff at my agency does not work out because of the staffing. A lot of it where you don't have the support and time and energy to do half the things we want to do with them. So it's like if we, even if you plan something to the perfect, like you plan everything out and you have transport and you have enough staff like that day comes and something happened (Interview #1, Personal Interview January, 2018).

When discussing agency recommendations for working conditions to help them work better with dual-status youth one residential counselor stated:

First of all I'll say bring more staff in, like more backup. There's hardly, sometimes I'm by myself in the floor clients with 12 to 14 clients plus like five to six babies. They know, they know that I can, they know that I can. That's why I think they take advantage of it, which I'm OK with it. Um, I do get overwhelmed, but at the end of the day, like I said, it's rewarding knowing that you did help a couple of girls out to make it better (Interview #10, Personal Interview February, 2018).

Management Involvement

While some residential counselors commonly identified lack of staff as an agency concern when working with dual-status youth, residential counselors also commonly identified management involvement as an agency concern. When discussing management involvement and providing services for dual-status youth one residential counselor stated:

I think that, you know, being able to have more like one on one time with your leadership and you know, having that constant supervision and having, being able to feel like you can ask questions and you're going to get the right answer and not that you're going to ask somebody something and they're going to tell you one thing and then you're going to find out that you've been doing it wrong the entire time because that person told you wrong. So more than anything we need to be on the same page and we all need to be able to do our job because we are doing a big disservice

to these girls and it's really disheartening (Interview #9, Personal Interview January, 2018).

In addition to lack of family involvement and limited social services contact, one residential counselor describes her experience with challenges with management and her perception on the effect on dual-status youth as:

I would say that there's challenges because there is no support from the agency or from the families or from let's say if they were already involved with social services, there's not a lot of interactions. So like, for example, like the guys (management), they reward them with community passes or like home passes, but with this type of population, where are they going to go? There is nobody that is going to come and pick them up to take them, and sometimes the agency promises them to go and take them to an outing with a staff, like one on one, kind of like if the staff was their family members, but sometimes it doesn't happen. Sometimes the staff doesn't even show. So there's more disappointment for the youth. So they kind of, they develop this kind of hopeless attitude, and I can see that they start becoming more depressed, less engaged (Interview #7, Personal Interview, January, 2018).

Preparation

While a majority of the participants of this study reported short staffing; they also commonly shared that they lacked preparation with regard with working with dual-status youth and adequate training. Eight out of ten residential

counselors shared that they lacked preparation with regard with working with dual-status youth and adequate training for working with dual-status youth. Two out of ten residential counselors reported that they received adequate preparation and training with working with dual-status youth.

When asked about her preparation and training in working with dual-status youth, one residential counselor stated:

I think a more realistic view of what it's going to be like. For example, in the trainings they should print out actual cottage shift reports, change the names, and have the trainers read that on a day where it was really hectic just because they tell you horror stories, but I feel like there isn't a middle ground. Like here's what totally can happen, but is it a normal occurrence? We need to hear about the outlier events like fights, AWOLs, and the calmer events. We need more preparation of how it's going to be like on the floor, because we can get a lot of training on how to help clients when they are ready to receive help, but what about when they're not? What about when they are not in a mental or physical place to listen to what you're saying, to do their program, to want to do better for themselves. How do you deal with them then? I don't think as new staff we get nearly enough exposure to what those moments are going to be like (Interview #5, Personal Interview, January 2018).

Similarly, another residential counselor shared her preparation with working with dual-status youth:

Well for me I thought it was hard not getting the training when I first started and I was just there for like three or four months just cruising without having like TCI and therapeutic crisis intervention, the one to help deescalate clients. But they're like, oh, well if you're by yourself you can't use it anyway. So I'm like OK, well, you know, being just like a new staff who worked a lot on their own, like I didn't even really have any training and no one really explained to me like who I was working with and why they were there. Like I found out through asking staff or like reading things, like the books, like I never had like a formal training. Like Hey, when I first started like hey this is who you're working with, this is why they're here. And in my recollection, like even in new hire, I don't really know if they even talked about it that much. I don't even remember them talking about it a huge amount. Like I just know I was working with kids that were in a system that was broken. Like that's all I really knew. Like they didn't really tell you like the aspects of it really. And the only time where I actually learned something about like some of the populations when they did like the c sec training, but I didn't have that until eight months working. So it was just like you kind of get thrown in there and not really having it. I mean yeah I got my degree in psychology but like that's the only a bachelor's degree and in psychology like it's all about mental health, not necessarily like upbringings or their backgrounds. Like in like applying like bachelor's degree knowledge is very minimal and as far as

like being able to help people. So it's just kind of was a stepping stone into the next thing. So like I felt like going in I was kind of like blindsided. I had no idea what I was working with. Even like recently like read text messages, like from when I first started, it like popped up on my computer and I was like, oh, work is so hard. I don't know what I'm doing (Interview #1, Personal Interview, January 2018).

In her preparation experience, one residential counselor describes it as: I don't feel like you can adequately train for this specific field. I don't think that we're adequately trained. I feel like, I mean, you learn as you go, which is really unfortunate because it's not a position which you want to learn as you go. I started this job as while I was still doing my undergrad and I was a sociology major and I didn't know anything about anything as far I've taken classes so I've got that knowledge. But in reality I don't know how to, you know, have these like conversations with clients that are disclosing some really serious stuff to you and you have nothing. Like I have no training. I'm not qualified to be a therapist. I'm not licensed for that. I think it's just really overwhelming. So I feel like we're doing a disservice to the clients (Interview #9, Personal Interview January, 2018).

Counselor Resiliency

While there were emerging themes relative to the challenges of being a residential counselor to dual-status youth, residential counselors were also able to identify positive aspects to their jobs and working with dual-status youth.

Despite their hardships there was a prevalent theme among residential counselors and their perceptions on being positive change agents. One residential counselor stated:

I think that, you know, we do have that capability to empower them and to motivate them and to give them, you know, some of the tools that they need to say, I could do this, I'm going to be fine, I'm going to make it. Um, and I think that it could be just through daily interactions, um, you know, positive reinforcements (Interview #9, Personal Interview January, 2018).

Similarly, another residential counselor shared:

By motivating them and educating them on not just the basics but like just guiding them. Guiding them to stay focused and empowering them to do what they're supposed to do. I know as a teen it must difficult because they shouldn't be going through situations like the situations they're in, but just setting them on the right path (Interview #8, Personal Interview January, 2018).

Another residential counselor shared:

Working with girls who are in both systems, I think they come from a place where there was no structure and so changing that and having them understand that structure will help them become more productive. I think that's the role, letting them know yeah chores suck, I don't like doing them either, but its skills you have to learn and structure you have to learn because otherwise you will not be successful in the outside world. There

are laws, rules, guidelines you have to follow. I think I have taken it upon myself to take this type of stance because if I slack on this, the client might go out into the real work thinking that it's okay and might end up back in a similar situation. I think keeping them mostly in line is the most beneficial thing for them and that's what I try to do. Like even if you go through life with trauma, as long as you abide by the rules, you can hold down a job, you can be productive, things that you can do to develop those skills with taking this form of approach (Interview #5, Personal Interview, January, 2018).

Describing his involvement with dual-status youth:

In my position I do try to encourage I do try to share my knowledge share my opinion, share how I can actually benefit them in encouraging, that's how I try to make my day my position meaningful. There is times where I can say hey I just did work and didn't have an impact but there is definitely days that I do want to make an effort that I had an actual impact on at least two or three of the youth there (Interview #2, Personal Interview January, 2018).

Summary

Overall, the residential counselors interviewed in this study commonly experienced challenges when working with dual-status youth. The residential counselors in this study experienced varying degrees of burnout. Residential counselors commonly experienced burnout via navigating multiple roles, having

role limitations, and dealing with dual-status youth behavior. In addition, residential counselors commonly experienced agency challenges relative to support and lack of preparation for working with dual-status youth. Despite experiencing burnout and agency challenges, residential counselors commonly shared a desire to be a positive change agent for dual-status youth.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

Chapter five provides a discussion of previous research and the findings of this study. This study was conducted using qualitative methods in which interviews were conducted based off an interview guide by the researchers. The results of this qualitative study are discussed in comparison to previous research on group home effects on youth behaviors, the influence of dual-status youth's characteristics, the effects of the child welfare and the justice juvenile system on the dual-status youth, and the influence that residential treatment facilities may have on dual-status youth all of which may present challenges for residential counselors who work with dual-status youth. The limitations, strengths, and conclusions of this study are further discussed within this chapter along with the implications for social work practice, research, policy and possible direction for future research on residential counselors and their involvement with dual-status youth.

Discussion

As mentioned previously, unfortunately, there is not a substantial amount of research in regards to the challenges that residential counselors face while working with dual-status youth, nor the common factors that residential counselors suggestively utilize in order to possibly empower these youth. There

are multiple similarities and possible further discussions to be conducted when comparing the results of this qualitative study and previous research on dual-status youth and residential counselors.

Dual-Status Youth Behaviors

Overall, more than half of the participants mentioned dual-status youth behaviors as a challenge they face when working with this specific population. The participants mentioned difficult behaviors including substance abuse, going AWOL, negatively talking back, and refusing to follow directives, disrespectful forms of language, outbursts, and unpredictable emotions. These behaviors contributed to burn out as some participants mentioned that these form of difficult behaviors triggered them in a personal way. This finding is similar to previous literature that certain characteristics such as form of placement is suggested to influence the risk of delinquency among dual-status youth (Ryan, Marshall, & Hernandez, 2008). The results from this study suggest that these forms of delinquency behaviors can be found within a residential treatment facility as resistance and unpredictable behaviors reported by residential counselors within this study.

Not only can these forms of behaviors from dual-status youth ultimately lead residential counselors towards burnout and high turnover rates within residential treatment facilities working with this population, but it may result towards negative treatment outcomes for dual-status youth. As mentioned in previous research, clients who were perceived as, "difficult," had the worst

treatment outcomes within residential treatment (Bettmann & Jaspersen, 2009). This is an important factor to take into consideration as residential counselors face dual-status youth's difficult behaviors as an influential and predominant challenge when working with them in residential treatment.

Multiple Roles

Results from this study suggest that fulfilling multiple roles is another predominant challenge that residential counselors face when working with dual-status youth within a residential treatment facility. As indicated by previous research, adolescents' developmental growth and maturity can be negatively affected by deficient and unhealthy parenting (Cashmore, 2011). Due to these deficiencies within parenting experiences that some dual-status youth face as adolescents from their parents, residential counselors oftentimes have to take multiple roles to fulfill that void. Participants within this study suggest that one of the challenges they faced working with dual-status youth was having to assume multiple roles including but not limited to that of a case manager, nurse, caregiver, positive role model, probation officer, social worker, transportation, teacher, therapist, maid, and parental authority figure. This is a factor to take into consideration as this study suggests that attempting to fulfill these multiple roles as a residential counselor for dual-status youth can negatively affect dual-status youth outcomes depending if residential counselors are positively or negatively fulfilling these multiple roles that are unintentionally assigned to them.

Role Limitations

This study's findings suggest that another challenge that residential counselors face when working with dual-status youth within residential treatment is the limitations they have within their roles as residential counselors. As stated by some of the participants, majority of their efforts, suggestions, and knowledge go unnoticed as their opinions are often not considered by their management when creating or changing treatment plans for their dual-status youth clients. Some participants also indicated their frustrations towards not being able to be involved within the treatment plans that dual-status youths' probation officers and social workers implement. These results build on the foundation of the negative effects such as recidivism and rereporting from dual-status youth due to the lack of collaboration from the child welfare system and justice juvenile system along with absence of collaboration with residential counselors who spend on average eight to ten hours a day with their dual-status youth (Chuang and Wells, 2010, and Huang, Ryan, and Herz, 2012). Some participants also indicated that this challenge of being limited to their roles as residential counselors frustrates them due to their desire to, "do more for them," specifically due to their perceptions that, "the systems are letting them down."

Support

Another finding within this study indicated that one of the challenges that residential counselors face when working with dual-status youth within a residential treatment is a lack of support from other staff members and the

organization overall. As stated by majority of participants within this study, many of them expressed lack of support within their agencies towards working with dual-status youth. Lack of support included shortage of staff, discrepancy of management involvement, shortage of family involvement, and limited social services contact. These results add to prior studies by examining the organizational challenges as perceived by residential counselors while working with dual-status youth. As suggested by Jordan, Leon, Epstein, Durkin, Helgerson, & Lakin-Starr, the more positive perceptions that front-line workers have on their organization and its community, the more likely youth positively express their emotions externally than internally (2009). This is an important finding due to the lack of support reported by residential counselors within this study; this lack of support can possibly influence dual-status youth's form of coping and behaving.

Similarly, results within this study align with previous research on the difficulties that residential counselors experience when working within residential treatment facilities. Results from this study found that residential counselors wanted more support from staff, supervisors, and management. The findings within this study align with previous research suggesting that residential counselors identified more support from administrators and other staff within their facility as a critical request in order to make their experience working within a residential treatment facility less difficult (Ramirez, 2011). These findings indicate

that residential counselors need more support from their organization as a whole in order to better serve their clients, specifically dual-status youth.

Preparation

Results from this study suggest that lack of preparation and training to work with dual-status youth is one of many common challenges that residential counselors face when working with this particular population within a residential treatment facility. As shown by more than half of the participants within this study, lack of preparation with regard to training, exposure, and transparency from their agencies regarding what the job position of a residential counselor ultimately entails led the majority of the participants to “learn as they go.” This study’s findings further exemplify the importance of training residential counselors on the effects of the dual-status youth family history, their behavioral issues, their mental health issues, their triggers, and how residential counselors should handle these difficult issues is a key factor towards providing the best form of services to dual-status youth in residential treatment (Cashmore, 2011; DosReis & Davarya, 2008; Hurley et al., 2009; & Ramirez, 2011).

Counselor Resiliency

The findings within this study identified the positive impacts that residential counselors believe they make while working with dual-status youth within residential treatment. Results indicated that some of the participants within the study saw themselves as positive change agents towards their dual-status youth

clients. Despite the challenges previously mentioned, participants believed they made a positive difference in their dual-status youth client's lives by empowering them through common factors such as teaching, guiding, listening, and respecting them even through the difficult challenges they face while working with this population. This is particularly important to note due to previous research suggesting that the ways in which front-line workers view their clients is influential towards their treatment outcomes (Bettmann & Jasperson, 2009) and towards bettering their circumstances as studies have shown that a coordinated, collaborative, and positive relationship between systems is essential for youth's outcomes (Huan, Ryan, & Herz, 2012).

Limitations

The majority of participants interviewed in this study were discovered using snowball sampling methods, and additionally some participants were self-selected by the researchers, which could have caused bias based on self-selection. Additionally, the researchers interviewed residential counselors that worked either with male and or female youth, therefore results could not be exclusively interpreted based on gender. Additionally, most residential counselors worked with several youth with different statuses, not just dual-status youth. Their experiences as residential counselors may not have been exclusive to solely dual-status youth.

Due to the qualitative design of this study, the data produced in this study may not be an accurate representation of residential counselors who work with

dual-status youth in residential treatment facilities. While the information produced via interviews may be true for the residential counselors who work with dual-status youth that were interviewed, it may not be true for all residential counselors who work with dual-status youth. Last, it is important to note that we did not interview dual-status youth to see if their perceptions matched what was reported by residential counselors.

Strengths

Despite the aforementioned limitations, this study had many strengths. A significant strength of this study is that the interviews entailed current residential counselors across five different residential treatment facilities in southern California. All of the residential counselors were employed at the time and were reflective of their experiences during their current employment. Furthermore, the findings from this study were consistent with existent literature about implications for residential counselors and residential treatment facilities that may provide services for dual-status youth. The findings from this study also indicated strong similarities in challenges and methods employed for residential counselors who work with dual-status youth. Last and most important, this study provided an in depth perspective about the experiences of residential counselors who work with dual-status youth that may not have been possible if other research methods would have been implemented.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy, and Research

Practice

The literature on residential counselors and dual-status youth in residential settings in addition to the findings of this study indicate that there is a need for social workers to become increasingly involved with residential counselors in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The findings of this study indicated that residential counselors that worked with dual-status youth faced unique challenges when working with these youth while they temporarily resided in placement. Despite these challenges, however, many of these residential counselors still attempted to employ their own unique methods of empowerment for these youth to be resilient while in residential placement. Despite their limitations, residential counselors have expressed the desire to be more involved in the care planning and implementation of care for their dual-status youth clients even though they work with these youth the most when compared to other members of their residential team. Such involvement can include having residential counselors participate in the dual-status youth's child and family team meetings or meeting with the dual-status youth's therapists to discuss any concerns or suggestions.

The researchers of this study recommend that social workers become more invested in the contribution of improving the working conditions that exacerbate the challenges of residential counselors who work with dual-status youth in residential settings. Moreover, it is recommended that social workers be

involved in contributing how residential treatment facilities/agencies prepare residential counselors in educating and training them to work with dual-status youth so that ultimately they can provide the best experience and services while they are under their residential care. Furthermore, these trainings need to address the many challenges that residential counselors face that were identified in this study in order to better improve the services provided to dual-status youth.

Policy

Social workers advocate for their clients in a variety of ways. It is recommended by the researchers that social workers become familiar with the dynamics of Assembly Bill 403, the continuum of care reform, and short-term residential therapeutic centers. It is important and recommended that social workers familiarize themselves in how they work and are set to work in the California in the future especially when they are considering placing their clients in residential settings. Becoming familiar with AB403 is important because this policy has resulted in a series of ongoing changes for group homes and residential treatment facilities across the state of California and will affect their delivery of services. The changes to residential facilities and group homes as a result from AB403 policy and the effects on residential counselors and dual-status youth remain unknown.

The potential possibilities for detrimental effects on residential counselors and perhaps consequently dual-status youth is concerning. Research on children in residential settings that are placed for extensive periods of time demonstrate

that youth may become significantly more vulnerable and have poorer outcomes such as greater likelihood of being arrested, homelessness, and reentry to foster care than youth not in residential settings (California Department of Social Services, 2016). Due to these factors and risk factors for youth in residential placements, it remains all the more important to also consider the experiences of residential counselors who work with youth in residential placements who work with them the most. Dual-status youth are among the most vulnerable populations within these residential facilities as they are prone to facing the complex implications that may be caused by the child welfare and justice juvenile systems. Understanding the challenges of residential counselors and the methods employed in empowering these youth to become resilient and mitigate the chances of these poor outcomes remains important for social work practice. Becoming familiar with these systems and policies and how they may affect residential counselors may help social workers identify some shortcomings and or areas of improvement for residential counselors in residential settings overall. This in turn may encourage social workers to become more involved in the policy development for policies and systems like AB 403, continuum of care, and short-term residential therapeutic centers; and in the process, create more nurturing and cultivating environments for residential counselors who work with their dual-status clients and consequently dual-status youth.

Directions for Future Research

The findings of this study suggest that more research on residential counselors who work with dual -status youth is needed. Ample research on short-term residential therapeutic centers and foster family agencies and the changes and ongoing restructuring that has initiated beginning in 2016 for group homes and residential settings that house and work with dual-status youth is needed given the statutory timelines set in motion by several policies regarding residential settings. The timing of this research remains crucial as the effects on residential counselors who work with dual-status youth by the ongoing changes and restructuring for residential settings remain unknown. Engaging in research may help social workers and policy makers engage in early intervention and or preventative efforts in the identification of potential negative outcomes perceived by residential counselors and or dual-status youth as a result of these changes. Also, despite challenges to interviewing dual-status youth, it is important that future research capture their perspectives on the challenges they face while receiving treatment in a residential treatment facility as their perspectives can help bring a more client-centered approach towards providing services within residential treatment facilities for this population.

Conclusion

This study identified several important challenges that residential counselors face while working with dual-status youth in residential treatment including multiple roles, role limitations, and dual-status youth behaviors as well

as insufficient support and preparation, which may contribute to burnout. Through these identified challenges, this study also suggests the ways in which residential counselors' resiliency towards working with dual-status youth in residential treatment aim to be positive change agents for these youth. These findings are important towards the field of social work specifically due to the changes that have recently taken place towards residential treatment facilities, and due to the influence that residential counselors have on dual-status youths' treatment and services in residential treatment facilities. These are important factors that social workers should take into consideration as residential counselors are one of the few positions that work a significant amount of hours with their clients on a one on one basis compared to other professions in the facility and overall.

APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

Informed Consent

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine residential counselors in residential treatment facilities working with dually-involved youth in order to evaluate the challenges they face servicing these youths as well as the methods employed. The study is being conducted by Leslie Romero-Gallegos and Kenny Gallegos, MSW students under the supervision of Dr. James Simon, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Sub-Committee, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the study is to examine residential counselors in residential treatment facilities working with dually-involved youth in order to evaluate the challenges they face servicing these youth as well as the methods employed, if any, to help empower these youth in their environments to become resilient while under their care and in their communities.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked of a few questions on their current challenges they face while working with dual-status youth within their residential treatment facilities, ways in which they believe they have empowered this population, and some demographics.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in the study is totally voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY: Your responses will remain anonymous and data will be reported anonymously.

DURATION: It will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete the individual, audio-recorded interview with a researcher(s).

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks to the participants.

BENEFITS: There will not be any direct benefits to the participants.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. James Simon at 909-537-7224 (email: james.simon@csusb.edu).

909.537.5501 · 909.537.7029

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College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

RESULTS: Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu>) at California State University, San Bernardino after December 2018.

This is to certify that I read the above and I am 18 years or older.

_____ Date
Place an X mark here
I agree to be tape recorded: _____ Yes _____ No

909.537.5501 · 909.537.7029

5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

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DURATION: It will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete the individual, audio-recorded interview with a researcher(s).

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks to the participants.

BENEFITS: There will not be any direct benefits to the participants.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Janet Chang at 909-537-5557 (email: james.simon@csusb.edu).

RESULTS: Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu>) at California State University, San Bernardino after December 2018.

This is to certify that I read the above and I am 18 years or older.

Place an X mark here

Date

I agree to be tape recorded: _____ Yes _____

APPENDIX B
RESEARCH INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research Interview Guide

The following research guide was created by the researchers under the supervision of research advisors.

1. What is your age?

1. 18-28
2. 29-39
3. 40-50
4. 51-61
5. 61 and over

2. What is your gender?

. Male

1. Female
2. Other

3. What is your highest level of education?

1. High school Diploma
2. Bachelor's Degree
3. Master's Degree
4. Doctorate's Degree
5. Other

4. What is your ethnicity?

. Latino/ Hispanic

1. Caucasian/ White
 2. Asian
 3. Native American
 4. African American
 5. Other
5. How many years have you worked as a Residential Counselor?
 6. On average, how many hours do you work with dual-status youth?
 7. What do you enjoy most about working with youth that have involvement with DCFS, and Probation?
 8. What made you want to work as a residential counselor at your agency?
 9. How would you describe your day to day interactions with dual-status youth; what is your role?
 10. How would you describe your challenges, obstacles, or barriers if any, that you face working with dual-status youth in residential placement? For you personally, do you think there are similarities or differences in the challenges, obstacles, or barriers you face when working with single status youth? If so, how would you describe those differences or similarities?
 11. How do you think your role as a residential counselor benefits dual-status youth?

12. How do you think your role as a residential counselor creates **barriers** for dual-status youth in their involvement with DCFS and or Probation?
13. How would you describe your training and qualifications for working with dual-status youth?
14. Do you believe it is enough to be effective when working with this population?
15. If you could make any changes or add anything to your current trainings in regard to working with these youth what would it be?
16. What do you think your role is as a residential counselor is in empowering dual-status youth within their residential treatment facility? What do you do personally to empower them?
17. What resources and services are available to dual-status youth at your facility, and how is it connected to your role as a residential counselor?
(Where do you fall?)

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ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILTIES

The researchers, Kenny Brian Gallegos and Leslie Stephanie Romero-Gallegos were responsible for data collection, data analyses, literature review, writing, and formatting of this project.