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ENSURING SUPPORTIVE TREATMENT FOR CROSSOVER YOUTH IN CHILD WELFARE

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ENSURING SUPPORTIVE TREATMENT
FOR CROSSOVER YOUTH IN CHILD WELFARE

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
Summer Salinas
Sussana Mendoza

May 2021

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to identify which supportive services and treatments are aiding minority crossover youth in child welfare. Literature has stated that minority crossover youth are overrepresented in the child welfare system in comparison to their white counterparts. Literature has also stated that crossover youth make subsequent contact with the adult prison systems due to child welfare involvement and other factors. Factors including prolonged group home placements and lack of rapport with mental health providers. Mental health providers lacking cultural competence and trauma-informed practice can negatively impede crossover youth from learning positive, adaptive coping mechanisms that can mitigate delinquent behaviors.

This research study used an exploratory, qualitative design. Data gathered consisted of one-on-one interviews with six child welfare workers and probation officers. Participants in the study have worked for counties in Southern California in child welfare or juvenile probation for at least a year and have worked directly with crossover youth. During the interviews, the researchers asked questions regarding their professional experiences working directly with crossover youth. The researchers focused on treatments and services to help crossover youth. Four themes emerged from the interviews: agency politics, rapport building, treatments and services, and macro barriers.

Our findings suggest that services offered to youth vary based on the institution taking the lead on the case; suggesting discrepancies in treatment

based on case assignment. Similarly, our findings suggest that there is not enough funding for child welfare workers and probation officers to provide crossover youth with the proper treatments and services that they needed. It is clear that changes must be made at a federal and state level in order for funding to be made readily available for dual status youth, and staff that work directly with dual status youth in order to help mitigate the barriers associated with this population.

Keywords: Crossover Youth, Child Welfare, Supportive Treatment

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Our aim to complete this research even despite the adversities present was to acknowledge minority youth within the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system to let you know that you have a place in this world to shine, live your best life, and use your voice to share your truths and experiences unapologetically. We hope that this research project opens up doors of understanding and opportunity to better support our youth to live out bright futures, even despite the experiences faced. May our youth know that it is not about where you come from, but about all of the places that you can go as the possibilities and opportunities are endless. You decide where to go!

DEDICATIONS

As a first generation Israeli Arab Latina American, I want to honorably dedicate this research project to my father, Danny Abraham Mahagna, who migrated to the United States of America from Israel in 1985 and left everything he knew to give me my full shot to live out the American dream. Baba, you have raised me to be a resilient, fearless, and a confident trailblazer. All of the success that I have acquired up until this point have been to further solidify that every sacrifice you made for me will never go unnoticed and unappreciated. Since I was a young girl, you encouraged me to use my voice and life for the greater good of all of humanity. All of my work done in this world and all that is to come, is in honor of who you are and all that you stand for.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Children who are dually involved with both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system are formally known as crossover youth. Research states that Latinx and African Americans as a whole comprise of 32% of the United States' population, but African American and Latinx youth make up a large percentage of youth being detained for delinquency while in the child welfare system (Martinez et al., 2017). Crossover youth are introduced to the child welfare system due to an array of maladaptive factors such as, abuse and neglect, maltreatment, family's history of substance use, family incarceration and other adverse childhood experiences that ultimately lead to the subsequent dual involvement with juvenile delinquency (Kolivoski et al., 2017).

Problem Statement

In terms of gender, minority crossover males and females enter the juvenile justice system at a much higher disproportionate rate in comparison to white youth in the child welfare system (Baglivio et al., 2016). It is reported that 63% of African American and Latinx youth transition from the child welfare system to subsequent contact with the juvenile justice system. After contact is made with the juvenile justice system, it is reported that 67% of African American

and Latinx youth will then proceed into the prison system after the age of 18 (Kolivoski et al., 2017). Based on previous self-reported accounts of African American and Latinx crossover youth, many youths stated that they felt misunderstood, misjudged, and disconnected from their mental health service providers and as a result were not able to build trust and positive rapport (Brown et al., 2016). This can be linked to intersectionality, complexities in culture, values, and overall experiences associated with mental health treatment (Riebschleger et al., 2015). The emphasis on supportive treatment becomes increasingly important for providers to implement with all crossover youth (Allegra et al., 2010).

Purpose of the Study

Understanding which supportive services are being implemented to mitigate barriers experienced by minority crossover youth is imperative. The purpose of this study will be to explore and identify which services are serving and benefiting minority crossover youth best in regard to services and treatments. Youth reach intrapersonal milestones that assist with goal attainment, self-regulation, self-esteem, positive coping mechanisms, and interpersonal communications with self and peers (Martinez et al., 2017).

Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice. For mental health providers and social work professionals, gaining a deeper understanding of the differences among cultural groups is necessary for supportive treatment (Lee et al., 2017). In doing so, providers can become culturally competent and made

aware of the diverse needs among different populations. In learning more about the cultural history of different minority groups along with cultural values, strengths, and cultural practices, providers can increase rapport with minority crossover youth in order to carry out supportive and effective treatment (Haight et al., 2016). The social work profession is founded on the fundamentals of social justice, racial equality, cultural diversity, and in promoting the dignity and worth of each person that they with (McDonald, 2016). However, due to the lack of culturally competent care, a wide range of micro and macro ramifications are present for minority crossover youth (Baglivio et al., 2016). Some micro ramifications include the lack of efficacy in supportive treatment will decrease positive outcomes for African American and Latinx youth in terms of emotional regulation, lack of healthy interpersonal relationships, and inability to cope and problem solve properly leading to future delinquency (Forest et al., 2018).

In a macro sense, if culturally competent treatment is not implemented to minority crossover youth, disproportionate rates will continue to increase for crossover youth entering the juvenile justice system which can perpetuate further involvement the prison system after the age of 18 (Hummer et al., 2010). In order to better understand the experiences of crossover youth, it will be imperative to gather data and information based off the personal accounts of child welfare workers and probation officers working directly with crossover youth to further assess outcomes. With this being said, what are the experiences of child welfare

workers and probation officers working with crossover youth and the services they receive?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Crossover Youth

Crossover youth are unique in nature, as they make up youth that have been in the child welfare system due to behavioral misconduct, inability to emotionally regulate, and assimilate into their foster placements (Wright et al., 2017). Crossover youth typically engage in negligent behaviors due to their history with past neglect, abuse, and additional adverse childhood experiences (Marshall & Haight, 2014). Crossover youth may be referred to as crossover youth even if they have not been reprimanded for a crime that they have committed (Wright et al., 2017). Crossover youth may also be dually involved, meaning that youth have contact with both child welfare systems and juvenile justice systems (Riebschleger et al., 2015). Another term is a dually adjudicated crossover youth, which has dual involvement with the child welfare system, juvenile justice system, and the court system for a crime that has been committed (Kolivoski et al., 2017).

It is important to note that not all youth that in are in the child welfare system are crossover youth. Crossover youth may be removed from their immediate home due to delinquency, safety risks, and posing harm or danger to others in their immediate home, and/or behavioral misconduct (Hummer et al., 2010). Research also states that there is a correlating factor between crossover

youth and multiple housing placements, ranging from foster placement with a non-family member, a group home setting, or residential treatment centers for substance use disorders (Baglivio et al., 2016). On average, crossover youth have been placed in three or more different placements within their time outside their immediate family's care within the child welfare system (Kolivoski et al., 2017). As a result, it is reported that youth have experienced issues acclimating and adjusting to their placements, subsequently resulting in longer stays in group homes settings (Forrest et al., 2018). Systemically, group home settings are only to be used on a short-term basis when preferred or applicable placement in the process of being found. However, that is often not the case with crossover youth as short-term stays have resulted in prolonged stays in group homes which are not designed to promote long lasting positive outcomes (Kolivoski et al., 2017).

Outcomes

Research states that there are higher volumes of minority youth living within the group setting for long periods of time (Lee et al., 2017). Crossover youth often experience lack of supervision from staff members, lack of positive and nourishing interactions from care providers, which result in crossover youth feeling unworthy, misunderstood, and isolated served (Lauricella et al., 2016). Adolescents in group home settings often seek approval and acceptance from peers, and often engage in maladaptive practices as a result of attempting to configure a sense of identity and belonging (Kolivoski et al., 2017).

Due to the presence of pre-existing adverse childhood experiences and pre-exposure to trauma, crossover youth display low levels of emotional regulation processes which result in impaired judgment and poor decision-making skills (Lee et al., 2017). As a result, crossover youth often engage in self-sabotaging and reckless behaviors on their own or in the presence of additional crossover youths (Wright et al., 2017). Subsequently, maladaptive behaviors paired with impulsive decision making can lead crossover youth to affiliation with gang activity (Huang et al., 2015). Research states that affiliation with gangs can extend further contact with the juvenile justice system, deeming a crossover youth as dually adjudicated (Kolivoski et al., 2017). Research also states that for many crossover youths, gang affiliations are powerful hierarchies that resemble a family like system and can result in deeply rooted ties and bonds typically perpetuated by manipulation and coercion, which can become nearly impossible to dismantle (Orsi et al., 2018). It then becomes more likely that youth will conform to a lifestyle of repeated crimes, delinquencies, and acts of violence (Martinez et al., 2017).

Due to the lack of positive and influential persons in the crossover's immediate microsystem, crossover youth continue to engage in maladaptive behaviors leading to a higher prevalence of being addicted to alcohol and drug substances as an attempt to cope with difficulties and unresolved trauma (Haight et al., 2016).

Supportive Services. Some supportive services present for crossover youth are wraparound services (Furman & Jackson, 2002). Wraparound services are intended to provide support to youth who exemplified challenges with carrying out positive outcomes or display extreme behavioral challenges (Pannebakker et al., 2015). Wraparound services may include psychotherapy, group counseling, and psychoeducational groups in addition to extracurricular activities (Mendenhall et al., 2013). Wraparound services provide youth with abilities to engage in extracurricular activities such as: sports teams, book clubs, and art and music expression. These opportunities have been reported increase problem solving skills, increased emotional regulation, and an ability to collaborate with peers (Yohannan et al., 2017).

Yet, research states that wraparound services are most effective when youth are able to feel connected with their immediate family systems. In addition, their school settings, places of employment, and additional subsystems make up a child's identity and contribute to their sense of safety (Weiner et al., 2011). These systems are imperative because they all work with one another and result in healthy, adaptive interactions with self and other peers (Mendenhall et al., 2013). Research also states that not all wraparound services are guaranteed to be supportive due to the lack of research conducted on African American and Latinx youth benefiting from services (Yohannan et al., 2017). When minority youth are unable to feel a genuine sense of cultural connection from their mental health providers, they are less likely to benefit from wraparound services (Allegra

et al., 2010). Additional factors that impact the effectiveness of wraparound services are cultural stigma regarding therapy and other supportive treatments (Kleban & Geller, 2013). Cultural stigmas regarding mental health services impend negative connotations on minority cultural groups that often translate weakness or institutionalization (Yohannan et al., 2017).

Research also states that some minority youth do not find the services to be accessible due to lengthy distance of wraparound services from their immediate communities. As a result, minority youth experiencing financial disparities and lack of transportation, will often continue to engage in maladaptive behaviors and regression (Pannebakker et al., 2015). Youth are known to thrive when they feel connected to those in their immediate environment, and in this case those that are providing the wraparound services and treatments. When engagement is honest and relatable, trust can be formed, and as a result strong rapport is made between the provider and the youth (Kleban & Geller, 2013). Research states that when mental health providers adopt and operate in culturally competent practice, minority youth will experience increased positive outcomes after completing wraparound services (Allegra et al., 2015).

According to research, there is a supportive treatment proven to offer positive outcomes specifically for African American youth in the child welfare system. This psychotherapeutic model is called Attachment tHAIRapy (Ashley & Brown, 2015). Attachment tHAIRapy is comprised of strengths-based perspective in terms of cultural values, African American history, and cognitive behavioral

therapy. What sets attachment tHAIRapy apart from other forms of therapy is its ability to increase self-esteem in African American youth specifically due to its focus on promoting a positive sense of self immersed in cultural identity and heritage. It was reported that African American youth that received attachment tHAIRapy gained higher self-confidence, an increase in emotional regulation, and an ability to use problem solving skills with self and peers and promote a sense of empowerment which resulted in goal attainment (Ashley & Brown, 2015).

Connection with the Provider. Research states that crossover youth that was not dually adjudicated, were able to receive supportive and meaningful treatment due to a sense of cultural connection and shared similarities in cultural values and practices with their service provider (Lee et al., 2017). Depending on the associated cultural group, individuals feel most comfortable receiving services by a provider that looks like them or identifies within their same culture (Lauricella et al., 2016). This allows individuals to feel a sense of closeness, community, and connection with those providing treatment (Jackson, 2009). Mental health providers and social work professionals are to engage in culturally competent practice when engaging with vulnerable populations with diverse needs (McDonald, 2016). By engaging in cultural competence, service providers can educate themselves on the values, practices, and ideals that are held close to different cultural groups and ethnicities (Smith & Soule, 2016).

Another aspect that strengthens connection between a provider and a client, is when the provider is aware specific disproportionalities and

intersectionality present for the clients that are being served (Lauricella et al., 2016). By increasing knowledge and self-awareness outcomes, professionals are able to empower, strengthen, and mobilize clients facing disparities as a direct result of racial injustice and systematic oppression (Vargas & Erba, 2017). Along with being aware of disparities within minority groups, it is also essential that service providers engage in trauma-informed practice with clients of all cultural backgrounds (Riebschleger et al., 2015). Trauma-informed care in practice is imperative when working with crossover youth, as trauma-informed care shifts the perspective from what's wrong with you? versus what happened to you and how can I help? (Fratto, 2016). The use of trauma-informed care in practice is being aware of the presence of adverse childhood experiences and its lasting effects on the mind, body, and soul (Conn et al., 2018). With knowledge of ACES and trauma-informed care, a provider can support youth with finding ways for the youth to cope in adaptive ways and express themselves through art, music, dance, writing, and other forms of positive expression (Allegra et al., 2010). Trauma-informed care in practice is essential for both mental health providers and crossover youth to increase resiliency and positive outcomes (Conn et al., 2018). Crossover youth can feel empowered through a strengths-based perspective, and engage in positive coping mechanisms, and set goals for future attainment (Bartlett et al., 2018).

Theories Guiding Conceptualization. Research states that youth in child welfare who have experienced abuse and maltreatment were more likely to

engage in negative behaviors and delinquency in comparison to youth who were not in the child welfare system (Farineau, 2016). When crossover youth become involved with the juvenile justice system, and are unable to receive supportive and effective treatment, there is an increased risk for further involvement with the adult criminal justice system (Richardson et al., 2018). In order to better serve crossover youth, it is important to understand how different experiences, attachments, and interactions within systems can affect and impact their well-being and overall functioning (Harwick et al., 2020). Research states that an individual's initial interaction with caregivers is one of the most imperative attachments that an individual can form after birth (Keller, 2018). Attachment theory in particular, is important to keep in mind because in order to achieve secure attachment, an individual must first create positive and trustworthy bonds with primary caregivers prior to creating relationships with others, as these attachments will influence all future attachments that follow (Bederian-Gardner et al., 2018). If a child is unable to form a secure attachment with a caregiver, an individual can experience difficulty in feeling grounded, secure, and inability to properly emotionally regulate (Allen, 2011). Some psychological factors that can influence insecure attachment during early childhood development, can be presence of adverse childhood experiences and unresolved trauma in caregivers (Conn et al., 2018). Caregivers who experienced unresolved intergenerational trauma and/or prolonged substance abused disorders, have been reported to

lack an ability to create secure attachment with their children (Babcock et al., 2016).

Another theory that applies to crossover youth is Ecological Systems Theory (Harwick et al., 2020). Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory believed that the child's microsystem was initially constituted of their sense of self and individuals in their immediate environment. In the microsystem, the immediate environment is composed of an individual's family, peers, school, workplace, and place of worship (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). An individual's mesosystem is also made up of the connections and interactions among these different subsystems, including the individual's neighborhood (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The exosystem consists of laws, policies, and additional political systems that can affect other systems such as the economic system, where an individual may experience disproportionality due to lower socioeconomic status (Harwick et al., 2020), along with religious systems that adhere to an individual's identity and purpose (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The macrosystem can be seen as values and beliefs that influence an individual's thoughts, actions, and behaviors (Farineau, 2016). In order to better serve children in the child welfare system and juvenile justice system, it is important to understand how these systems impact a child's ability to rationalize aspects of their environment and how to govern themselves among multiple subsystems (Richardson et al., 2018).

In understanding theories that impact crossover youth, mental health providers and social work professionals can educate other prominent individuals

in the youth's microsystem, in order to promote better outcomes and mitigate trajectories leading to further delinquency and entry to adult criminal justice systems (Richardson et al., 2018).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

In this section, we will be discussing the research design, information regarding the sampling data, how the data will be collected throughout the research process, and instruments used for all research purposes. Additional aspects discussed in this chapter will entail procedures on how the data was gathered, the protection of human subjects throughout the research process, and the following will be accompanied by the data analysis.

Study Design

Specifically, our research study evaluates the experiences of child welfare workers and probation officers as they work directly with crossover youth. Due to the fact that there is currently not an extensive amount of research present on crossover youth, our findings are best considered as exploratory findings. Exploratory research in this study is important to gather because a researcher must uncover and investigate trends, correlating factors, similarities, and how this relates directly with the subjects being researched. Our research is best described as a qualitative study as we will be gathering several one-on-one interviews with child welfare workers and probation officers within Riverside County.

Some methodological strengths that exist within the study are being able to gather multiple accounts from child welfare workers and probation officers, which make up two different disciplinary systems within the crossover youths' lives. Interviewing child welfare workers granted us the opportunity to gain deeper insight regarding extenuating factors present for crossover youth in terms of their transition into foster care placements, behavioral tendencies and concerns, and the effectiveness of supportive treatments and services available for crossover youth. In addition, we had the opportunity to interview probation officers, which allowed us to gather further information on the crossover youth delinquencies and the nature of crimes that youth commit, along with which services the youth were receiving while involved with the juvenile justice system as an intervention measure. In conducting dual accounts from both specializations, we gained more understanding about accessible treatments and the most effective resources present supporting the youth toward positive impending outcomes until saturation is present.

Sampling

Participants were gathered together through the assistance of county supervisors that have worked personally with child welfare workers and probation officers within a Southern California county. The sample size consisted of 6 child welfare workers and probation officers from a county in Southern California that were asked a series of questions regarding their personal demographics and

experiences with crossover youth. We recruited workers from culturally diverse backgrounds in order to provide multiple interview accounts. Child welfare workers were required to have worked within the child welfare agency for over a year and have had direct case management experience with crossover youth. Probation officers would have to have worked or previously worked with crossover youth as well for a minimum of one year.

Data Collection and Instruments

Data collection consists of a series of questions that was broken apart in two different categories for the interview guide. The interview guide was designed by the researchers and consist of questions such as: Do you have clients who are dually involved youth? How would you describe your relationships with crossover youth clients? What are some of the pros and cons of the treatments and services that are tailored for dually involved youth to receive? What services did you personally feel benefited dually involved youth?

The two different categories were divided between demographics and direct experience. Demographics included age, gender, ethnicity, highest level of education and/or training, and current position within a Southern California County. Experience talked about personal thoughts regarding supportive and beneficial services for crossover youth, and which protocols are set in place to support youth are involved in both the child welfare and juvenile system, and the

services and treatments they have individually observed to be the most helpful for youth.

Procedures

Procedures for the research study consisted of participants being gathered through collaboration with a Southern California county supervisors directly following county agency approval and CSUSB IRB approval. Participants were able to choose the place in which they would like to meet for the interview and interviews were held virtually. Participants were provided with an informed consent form along with being informed that any time, participants were able to decline an answer, stop the interview process, or reschedule due to an emergency situation. Interviews were conducted by the researchers and lasted approximately 45 minutes to an hour.

Protection of Human Subjects

In order to ensure safety for both researchers and the participant from possible exposure of COVID-19, all interviews were conducted virtually through phone call, FaceTime or Zoom. . In order to ensure confidentiality and protection of all human subjects, participants were provided with an informed consent form that provided the purpose of the study and confidentiality. They were reminded prior and throughout the interview process that participation voluntary and all

participants could stop the interview process at any time they chose and could decline to answer any questions listed on the interview guide.

Additionally, interviews were recorded as voice memos on the researcher's personal iPhones, where identifying features or personal information was protected and kept confidential for participants. Voice memos were accessed through the researcher's personal iPhone devices that contained personalized passwords upon entry that ensured protection of human subjects and confidentiality. Voice memos were used as recordings to transcribe the interviews, and following the transcription of interviews, the study was completed, and all voice memos were then deleted.

Data Analysis

Our research study utilized qualitative data analysis techniques, as all interviews were audio recorded. Interviews conducted by researchers were first audio recorded, then transcribed by a professional transcription company, as this ensured accuracy of all data obtained from the interviews. After researchers received completed transcriptions, researchers used a thematic analysis technique when analyzing all data. Both researchers worked together and individually to review the data on each transcribed interview and used open coding to find similarities, relationships, and different thematic categories for all transcripts. In doing this, researchers used axial coding to make all noted connections.

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter discussed the different research methods that were used throughout the exploratory study. Methods included a qualitative research design with five social workers and one probation officer in a Southern California county. Additional items discussed throughout the chapter were informed consent, confidentiality, how participants were protected throughout the course of the research study, and how data was protected, stored, and terminated after the study was completed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

In this chapter, we present the findings from our analysis of the data gathered throughout a three-month process. Through convenience sampling and referrals from Southern California county child welfare supervisors, the researchers were able to interview a total of six participants. Five interviews were from child welfare workers and one interview was of a probation officer who worked directly with dual status youth. The objective was to be able to gain deeper insight into the perspectives of workers working with dual status youth to assess what resources, treatments, and services were positively benefiting crossover youth. This chapter also addresses demographic information from the participants involved in the study, along with main themes that were identified throughout the research gathering process.

Participants

This qualitative study utilized a convenience and referral-based sample of 6 participants from current and former Southern California child welfare workers and probation officers. Five of the participants were female and one of the participants was a male, and all participants ranged from 30-45 years of age. Additionally, the participants were asked about their race/ethnicity and three of

the participants identified as Caucasian, two of the participants were Black/African American, and one participant was Middle Eastern. Five of the participants currently work with dual status youth in county child welfare agencies. One of the participants formerly worked in the juvenile probation's unit within a Southern California county, but no longer works with dual status youth. Five of the participants reported having a bachelor's degree in Social Work. One participant reported having a master's degree in Education Psychology.

Themes

Our analysis identified four major themes: agency politics, rapport building with youth, services and treatment, and macro barriers. We discuss these themes below.

Agency Politics

All six of the participants stated that child welfare workers do not receive the same access to supportive resources and therapeutic services for the youth on their caseloads, in comparison to probation officers that take the lead on shared caseloads. Agency politics can be seen in two key differences in the child welfare and juvenile justice system as access to supportive resources and therapeutic services are limited to child welfare organizations. Probation officers who take the lead on cases that are shared with social workers are able to provide the youth on their caseloads with higher quality services and supportive treatments that specific crossover youth meet the criteria for. Criteria that permit

a crossover youth in getting probation lead resources is determined by the severity and frequency of serious offenses. However, if youth who are dually involved have yet to commit a serious crime, it is more likely that they will be led by a social worker leading in lower quality services and treatments. When a youth is dually involved in both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system, the organizations involved with the case must decide who will take lead on the case for court report purposes.

When interviewing our six participants, they disclosed that it is more common for social workers to take the lead on cases that are shared with probation officers, with no fault of their own. . For example, Participant 5 explains below that social workers have to work harder to find safe foster placements for youth while still running the risk of having youth run away. On the other hand, probation lead cases have the authority to place youth in juvenile hall if they run away from their foster placements to prevent them from getting into more trouble.

Yeah. And another thing is if, if you're a 600 lead and you run away and the place calls, you know, the social worker or whoever says, come get him or her. They just take them to juvenile hall because they're a probation lead kid, and they ran away. So, the police just take them straight to juvenile hall. If it's a 300 kid, you as the social worker have to go to Bakersfield, wherever, wherever they're at, you go pick them up and you have to hold them until you can find a place to put them in. In the

meantime, they usually run away and get into more trouble. You know, so they get a meal out of you and then oftentimes they'll run away again. So, it's a big difference between the outcomes that you see between probation side and child welfare side (Participant 5).

A conflict or a big issue is, you know, is who is the lead agency? Child welfare is definitely the lead agency on way more than probation. And it's quite interesting because a lot of times it used to be years ago, like couple of decades ago, that county had much more to offer dual status youth, but not anymore. However, when I was in the unit, I wanted to see their list of placements. I wanted to see their list of services because I thought, wait a minute, are we really that much better and stronger? And honestly, we use 90% of the same providers, 90% of the same group homes. And then there is that 10% that are different, but sometimes that 10% can make all the difference for the youth to give them the structure that they need (Participant 2).

This participant stated that the lead organizations in charge of the case on court cases is entirely dependent on the number of resources and overall stability provided to dual status youth. Social worker lead cases do not have the same access to resources as the probation lead cases do. This participant stated that more times than not, child welfare workers take the lead on cases and do not have suitable placement options available for youth that contribute to long term

sustainability and structure for youth because of the lack of available resources to child welfare workers in comparison to probation lead cases.

Rapport Building

The participants talked about how engagement is important when working with crossover youth. A key component is that the youth do not have stable relationships because they are constantly being moved from place to place within short increments of time. Consequently, there is a need for consistency and trust for crossover youth to build meaningful relationships. Participants stated that they work with their dual status youth for a long period of time, which leads to a closer working relationship of trust, honesty, and open-ended communication.

Participant 1 described her experiences building rapport with these youth.

I feel like our communication was great. I feel that there are some social workers that have a really hard time talking to them. They probably don't have the experience with teenage kids or problem kiddos and just what the years with them you catch on and start realizing, 'Oh okay, this is the way to talk to them or this is how I get more out of them'. I just think it's with the time being there. It's just literally like getting to know your kids, right. The more you get to know them, the more they connect with you. Sadly, with our group home kiddos, dual kiddos, we've had them for years. So, you're kind of like their mom or dad figure safely and you know it's easier to talk (Participant 1).

Several participants explained that for some social workers it is difficult to engage with the youth because of not knowing how to appropriately communicate or connect with them. However, when specifically working with dually involved youth, the social workers in this study reported working with their youth clients for years, so the relationship and bond is much stronger. Our participants suggested that dual status youth view social workers more as family members rather than just simply a case worker providing them resources. Participant 5 explained her understanding of this challenge, since the youth are often moved or displaced.

“I grew up very poor. So, with the kids that grew up very poor, I kind of knew where they were coming from. And I would also tell them, ‘Hey that’s not an excuse just cause you’re in a poor neighborhood. You grew up poor. That doesn’t mean you’re not going to college. That means you don’t have to try because I did it so I know it can be done.’ And I could kind of relate to them on that level because I was there” (Participant 5).

This particular participant believed that being able to relate on a personal level to their clients was essential when working with youth. She also discussed that utilizing purposeful self-disclosure was effective when establishing rapport with her clients because they were able to feel that they were understood on a deeper level through shared experiences of empathy, vulnerability, and honesty. She also stated that when there was that special connection between social

workers and the youth because they were able to speak to one another without a filter, share accounts of personal experiences and naturally build a bond of trust.

Macro Barriers

Five of the participants identified macro barriers associated with youth that are social worker lead cases. One of the challenges associated with social worker lead cases are the out of state placements and how these placements displace youth from the support systems that they have created in the state of California. The five social worker participants attested to the disparities they personally see when having to travel out of the State of California to visit youth that are transported to group homes in other states. All five social worker participants did not agree with sending youth out of state because the resources are not available in California due to lack of compliance with state and child welfare regulations and policies.

“I was on a plane probably twice a week because we don't have resources here. And it's sad because it's still the same. I still talk to my coworkers out about it. It's just, I just wish here in California, we should have way more resources for them. Like, we sit there in court, like this happened, this happened there. There's no placements. We're going to go out of state, it's Michigan. We were in Wyoming, Montana, Florida, or everywhere. And sadly, like the, what are resources here is just, it's just minimal. And it kind of sucks because families are here and sometimes there's support here in California but that's what keeps on going and yeah,

probation officer's going to go see you out there and I go see them out there, but you know, who wants to not go to the same school they used to go to? Or it just, that's just like the downfall of everything. I kind of have to keep them motivated. I'm like, you know what, let's just try to stay strong and finish your program out there. So, you can come back out here, like an incentive, but honestly, shouldn't be like that for them. That's my personal opinion" (Participant 1).

This participant was explaining that due to the lack of funding for resources for dual status foster youth, youth were sent out of state because the State of California could not accommodate their needs. The State of California was also not able to house dual status youth in group homes due to the lack of formal training of group home staff. As a result, a lot of group home settings were closed down and not able to receive the necessary funding to keep them open. This participant also shared that she felt that it was not the youth's fault that the State of California could no longer house them. Many youth were sent to live in group homes out of state away from their family members and the minimal forms of their support systems that they had left.

"There's some bigger facilities that are in Northern California area or maybe mid California area that have larger facilities, more training, but in the six bed, regular group homes, there's a lot of power struggles. They don't have enough training. And it's just hard" (Participant 5).

The participant stated that most of the dually involved youth are in and out of juvenile hall or placed in group home facilities. The services and treatments are being affected directly because of the facility type that the youth is placed in. She stated that the traditional six bed, group homes lack the adequate training needed for their staff to deliver necessary services to their residents which causes power struggles among the children and staff. The participant also stated that negative interactions and power struggles with group home staff also contributed to youth running away from their foster placement without permission. Youth that leave their foster placements without authorized permission are more likely to engage in further negative behaviors and crimes.

Barriers to Treatments and Services

Most participants reported barriers to accessing treatments and services for crossover youth. Participants stated that there is a need for more resources, especially for funding. These impediments included: language, culture, and stigmas. Due to Spanish being a predominant language used by families of crossover youth in California, the professionals could not communicate directly with families in their native languages. Immigrant families were less likely to enroll and participate in the services they needed due to the lack of awareness of laws and policies surrounding crime in the United States.

I think generally speaking general counseling and having someone listen to some of the kids because a lot of times they didn't have that and just an opportunity to have someone sit in front of them in a closed environment

and vent about anything. And it doesn't have to be necessarily what the case plan was. If they had an issue with let's say a peer at school or something, you know, just getting them to be comfortable to open up to someone else who understands and will listen (Participant 6).

When asked what services or resources are most beneficial to the youth, this participant disclosed that having someone to talk to is important for the youth to have. It does not always have to be what the case plan says or what is instructed on the treatment plan. The youth need someone that is there to listen because it makes a difference when they are able to engage with service providers in a genuine, positive, and meaningful way.

There were a lot of things that took a lot of work for them to really come out and be open and honest about what the situation was. And I think also to that, the kids manipulated the parents at the time that was going on and they totally took advantage. And I remember specifically doing an interview for something, a Spanish speaking mother, and the boy was also Spanish speaking, but he spoke English and I had a translator in there of course. And she would say to me, he's not telling her what we're talking about. He was totally manipulating the situation. And then the translator had to intervene and say, you know, you need to stop. This is not what's going on. So, I think there was a lot of that. And I think a lot of the mothers especially took whatever the children said at face value and they didn't

follow up with anything. I think that caused a lot of problems that continue to this day. I know it does (Participant 6).

This participant explained that due to the language barriers that families underwent, the youth would often use this discrepancy to their advantage. The parents would believe that the child was doing well because youth were advising parents in their native languages that authorities were providing positive feedback during in-home meetings with family members. However, instead they were manipulating the situation and keeping their families in the dark about the seriousness of the offenses that youth would commit. Additionally, families were also unaware of the extent of the repercussions of the offenses themselves. As a result, many families did not collaborate with authorities to help support the youth with staying in compliance with court orders and case plans.

“A lot of the parents did not speak any English; many single mothers were raising multiple children... So, the lack of being able to adequately parent their children, not understanding of the system, not speaking English, not reaching out you know, a lot of things that were going on in the homes, but these families they kind of kept to themselves” (Participant 6).

Participant 6 explained that a lot of his work was done with immigrant families, primarily from Mexico or South American countries. He stated that because of their cultural and ethnic background it caused a lot of discrepancies with the families attending or enrolling in services. The language barrier was

present especially throughout important interactions with child welfare workers and probation officers.

“A lot of times, our service providers are also just servicing youth in general. So, they’re not specifically focused on dual status or offenders. Right. And then it’s like the scale. It’s not really a spectrum. It’s like two ends. So, we either have like general counseling or generally trained therapists. And then the other perspective is like a lot of our dual status are also sexual offenders. So then if I need to send them to address sexual offender delinquency, they’re going to have a service provider that provides services to adults, victims, perpetrators of all kinds. And then there, the kids feel labeled. They feel like ‘I’m not going to that creepy place’” (Participant 2).

This participant explained that when youth have to attend their services on their case plans such as general counseling or sexual perpetration education, most service providers are not specialized in working with complex trauma or serious offenses of the sexual nature with youth offenders. The participant also stated that interactions with service providers ended up feeling awkward and condescending for youth clients. This resulted in youth feel judged and labeled by mental health professionals and youth no longer wanted to attend services with their designated clinicians. She also stated that this can be an issue because youth are then treated like criminals for committing serious offenses, rather than a child client that is in need of support.

Summary

This chapter presented the themes identified by our analysis of interviews with professionals who have worked with crossover youth. The themes that were presented were rapport building, agency politics, treatments and services, and macro barriers. Through the crossover youth receiving services and treatments, it was discussed that there are impediments that prohibit them from receiving adequate services and treatments appropriate to their case plan or court order. Moreover, opinions and experiences were examined through six virtual interviews in order to demonstrate the findings presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter discusses the study's findings and how they relate to the existing literature on dual status youth. Moreover, this chapter will discuss the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and how the findings can be used to improve social work policies and practices with dual status youth.

Discussion

The literature shows that crossover youth do not have accessibility to adequate support systems in their foster placements. These reasons include lack of rapport building with group home staff, the absence of stability in foster placements and the lack of culturally competent mental health providers building rapport with crossover youth (Haight et al., 2016). This research study was designed to explore the experiences and services that child welfare workers and probation officers perceive to be effective for crossover youth.

Agency Politics

Prior to the study, we anticipated that collaboration between social workers and probation officers would promote equality for all crossover youth. Our participants stated that the organization taking the lead on crossover youth

cases has a direct impact on the youth's ability to receive the necessary services. However, this was found to be inconsistent because of the lack of literature available that discusses the interagency collaboration between the child welfare and juvenile justice system. The discrepancy found here is that probation lead cases provide better services to crossover youth however, the services are more expensive, and the probation lead cases are limited to more serious offenders instead of all offending crossover youth. This is partially consistent with the literature due to a lack of data on agency politics; however, previous research has said that it is imperative that agencies collaborate with one another every step of the way to provide overall consistency and stability for crossover youth (Wright et al., 2017).

Rapport Building

The participants also stated that there is a greater need for more effective engagement from professionals with crossover youth to promote emotional well-being and overall functioning. Better communication and healthy interpersonal relationship building would perpetuate greater outcomes for positive and adaptive coping mechanisms throughout day-to-day life. Previous research says that there is a lack of diversity in professionals that work with crossover youth which makes it difficult for the youth to engage and build rapport with the professionals they are working with (Jackson, 2009). Though this is not directly indicated through our participants having personal experiences with this, they explain that their colleagues have had difficulty engaging and building rapport with crossover youth

due to lack of cultural competence. This is consistent with the literature as our research and our participants both indicated the importance of cultural competency among professionals working directly with crossover youth.

Macro Barriers

This study found that crossover youth are often placed out of state in order to be provided with a stable home. Previous research discusses that there is a lack of instability that youth experience due to being in multiple foster placements (Huang et al., 2015). When crossover youth are placed in multiple placements within short periods of time, they are not able to create a sense of stability and establish life-long connections with their immediate support systems (Forrest et al., 2018). Participants in our research stated that there are barriers within the child welfare and juvenile justice system, in terms of resources readily available for youth and maintaining compliance with crossover youth's case plans. There is a need for there to be additional funding in the State of California in order to provide better services and treatments for crossover youth. This is found to be consistent with the literature as research has stated the importance of providing youth with stable foster placements to promote long term stability.

Barriers to Treatments and Services

The major findings of this study demonstrate that social workers have minimal services and resources to provide to their youth while probation officers have better access to resources for the youth on their caseloads. Literature states that there are not enough culturally competent mental health professionals

that are not specialized in the offences that the youth partake in (Bederian-Gardner et-al., 2018). As a result, the youth often feel judged by these individuals which leads to lack of competition of services. Literature also indicates that the therapists working with the youth are not skilled in trauma informed practice nor empathetic throughout their interactions with crossover youth due to the serious nature of delinquency committed by crossover youth (Fratto, 2016). Research also indicates that the effectiveness of services is impacted because of the negative cultural stigma associated with crossover youth receiving therapeutic services (Kleban & Geller, 2013). In our study we found this to be relevant and consistent with the literature. Professionals that predominately work with Latino families in California encounter issues when engaging with families that do not speak English as their native language. This is found to be consistent with the literature because research discusses the importance of mental health professionals being trained to have trauma informed practice.

Limitations

One of the limitations of the study is its small sample size. Due to the global pandemic, COVID-19, the researchers had difficulty accessing participants. This limitation skewed the number of participants needed due to the sample size of five social workers and one probation officer who participated within the study. The experiences of these six participants are important, but they may differ from those of other potential participants. The researchers had hoped

to interview at least 6 social workers and 6 probation officers in order to achieve a more balanced data set. Similarly, this study focused solely on participants from California, so the study's findings may not be generalizable to other regions or states.

Strengths

Despite limitations that occurred in the study, there were strengths found in the study. One of the strengths of this study was that though there were not sufficient participants, there was diversity in age and ethnic background from those who were able to participate. Another strength was that each participant expressed that they had at least four years of experience in child welfare, specifically in the group home unit. The researchers asked open ended questions to avoid any leading answers and perceptions. The qualitative research opened up conversation to allow the participants to share their personal experiences. Another strength was that all six of the participants emphasized the importance of genuine empathy and respectful rapport building when working with crossover youth.

Implications

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study suggest that professionals working with crossover youth need to be educated on the importance of cultural competence,

humility, and trauma informed practice. Professionals need more training and education to promote cultural competency and humility when working with crossover youth. Cultural competency can be promoted by creating trainings that are led by professionals of color within their organizations. These trainings could be instrumental as professionals would be sharing direct stories and experiences of what it is like to be a person of color and what barriers are present within different systems in America. These trainings can ultimately be helpful in providing professionals with the opportunity to learn how to work with different cultural groups and diverse populations such as crossover youth.

Implications for Policy

Changes can also be made on a macro level through state and federal funding as crossover youth in California have been placed in out of state placements due to the lack of availability of traditional group home placements and funding for qualifying foster placements. Maintaining placements within the state of California can positively aid crossover youth in preserving consistent support systems.

Crossover youth should have accessibility to the same services and not be divided between agency case lead. This can be done by eradicating the criteria for harsh and severe offenses and opening up the eligibility for all crossover youth. This can be helpful in the prevention of delinquency as youth will all be receiving the same quality of services, aiding in positive coping mechanisms, emotional regulation, and overall, well-being.

Implications for Research

As disparities are present with the crossover youth population, it is important to start gathering more personal accounts of experiences within the child welfare and juvenile justice system. Within child welfare and the juvenile justice system, crossover youth are known as “dual status youth”. The term “dual status youth” has been used by child welfare and juvenile justice systems to describe a youth that has committed delinquent behaviors and is also placed in the foster care system. The formal name for “dual status youth” is known as crossover youth. By adding the term crossover youth to the documentation databases used by organizations working with the youth it can provide more representation and support for services tailored for this population.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore social workers and probation officers’ perceptions on serving crossover. It is essential to comprehend the supportive services that are implemented to mitigate barriers experienced by minority crossover youth. The study collected perspectives from both social workers and one probation officer to discuss their experiences working with crossover youth. This study will hopefully provide knowledge to social workers and probation officers on the barriers and need of advocacy for crossover youth.

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARTICIPANTS

Interview Guide for Workers

- 1) Tell me about your role here at the agency.
 - a. How long have you worked here?
 - b. How long have you worked in this field overall?
 - c. What training or education have you had in preparation for this role?
- 2) Do you work with youth who are dually involved with the juvenile justice system and child welfare system?
 - a. Do you consider yourself to be experienced with working with youth who are dually involved in the juvenile justice system and the child welfare system?
 - b. What initially led you to work with dually involved youth?
 - c. How long have you worked with dually involved youth?
- 3) Do you have clients who are dually involved youth?
 - a. How many clients?
 - b. How often do you talk with/see those clients?
 - c. How would you describe the interactions and behaviors of those clients?
 - d. How else would you describe your clients that are dually involved youth?
- 4) How would you describe your ability to communicate with dually involved youth?

- a. Are you able to recognize the needs of dually involved youth?
 - b. How are you sure you are being receptive to their needs?
 - c. Do you feel the youth understand what you are saying to them when you are communicating with them?
 - d. What do you do if you have difficulty communicating?
 - e. How do you usually respond to resistance or defiance when working with a dually involved youth?
- 5) Do you and your clients share any similar cultural practices or beliefs?
- a. What cultural practices or beliefs do you share? Which are different?
 - b. What do you know about the cultural practices that your client is accustomed to?
 - c. What needs do you feel are present when working with dually involved youth of other cultures or ethnicities that are different from your own?
- 6) How would you describe your relationships with crossover youth clients?
- a. How do think your youth clients view their relationships with you?
 - b. Are these relationships different from youth who are not dually involved in both systems?
- 7) Thinking back over the past couple of years, can you think of a particularly challenging time you had with a youth that was dually involved with the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system?

- a. What happened?
 - b. What did you think the problem was?
 - c. How did you handle this situation?
 - d. What was the outcome?
- 8) What are some of the pros and cons of the treatments and services that are tailored for dually involved youth to receive?
- 9) What services did you personally feel benefited dually involved youth?
- 10) What else would you like me to know about your work with dually involved youth that we did not already ask?

(Created by Summer Salinas & Sussana Mendoza)

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT



College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

INFORMED CONSENT

For Workers

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine practitioners' beliefs on which treatments or services best support youth that are dually involved in both the child welfare system and juvenile justice system. The study is being conducted by Summer Salinas and Sussana Mendoza, both MSW students under the supervision of Dr. Deirdre Lanesskog, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at California State University, San Bernardino.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked of a few questions on their beliefs on which treatments or services best support youth that are dually involved in both the child welfare system and juvenile justice system.

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: Your identity and anything you say will be kept confidential. Only the CSUSB research team will have access to the information you provide. This information will be kept in password protected files or in locked cabinets. We will destroy the audio recording after transcription, and we will remove any information that might be used to identify you from the transcript. We will not identify you or anything that might reveal your identity in any of our future reports or articles.

DURATION: It will take 45 to 60 minutes to complete the interview.

RISKS: There are minimal risks to you from participating in this study, such as feeling uncomfortable talking about your experiences.

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

909.537.5501

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CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Deirdre Lanesskog at (909)537-7222 or at dlanesskog@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 May 2021.

I agree to have this interview be audio recorded: ____ YES ____ NO

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT: I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study, have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

Place an X mark here

Date

APPENDIX C
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

IRB #: IRB-FY2021-87

Title: Ensuring Supportive Treatments for Crossover Youth in Child Welfare

Creation Date: 10-27-2020

End Date:

Status: Approved

Principal Investigator: Deirdre Lanesskog

Review Board: Main IRB Designated Reviewers for School of Social Work

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Exempt	Decision	Exempt
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Key Study Contacts

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ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

This research project was completed as a collaborative project between partners: Summer Salinas and Sussana Mendoza. The following sections were completed as follows:

1. Data Collection; Summer Salinas and Sussana Mendoza
2. Data Analysis: Summer Salinas and Sussana Mendoza
3. Written Report and Presentation of Finding: Summer Salinas and Sussana Mendoza
4. Methods: Summer Salinas and Sussana Mendoza
5. Results: Summer Salinas and Sussana Mendoza
6. Discussion: Summer Salinas and Sussana Mendoza