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Residential Staff Perspectives on Implementing Collaborative and Proactive Solutions in a Juvenile Justice Setting

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Studies in juvenile justice residential settings tend to focus on outcomes of various interventions, but there is a lack of research that gives attention to how these interventions are applied. This study seeks to fill the gap between intervention and implementation by exploring nine residential program staffs' perspectives on implementing Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) after previously using solely a point and level system. CPS is a cognitive, skills-based behavioral modification approach that has been advocated for use in place of point and level systems. Thematic analysis revealed that employees experienced personal and systemic challenges in implementing CPS, had to actively work to change the program organizational culture while embedded in the broader juvenile justice climate, and redefined the meaning of treatment in the residential program. The lessons learned from this study are valuable for those interested in using CPS in residential settings with juvenile justice populations and any individual or organization implementing a new intervention. Implications for future research are discussed, including a need for further research on implementation.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) (n.d.), placement in a residential facility is the most severe sanction imposed by a court for an adjudicated youth. In 2014, there were over 50,000 youth in juvenile justice residential facilities nationwide (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, n.d.). There are several different kinds of residential placements, each with its own set of operations, approaches, and treatments, making research on residential facilities in the juvenile justice system complicated. Research on residential treatment usually centers on outcomes, typically recidivism, offering little to be understood about the implementation of interventions in these types of settings. Since residential placement is a frequent option for adjudicated youth, more research is needed on the experience of implementing interventions in these settings.

The current study focuses on the implementation of Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS), formerly known as Collaborative Problem Solving (Greene, 2016b), in a juvenile justice residential program for adjudicated boys ages 14-18. The CPS model is a skills-based, cognitive, developmental approach used for working with youth who present with challenging behaviors. CPS has primarily been studied in educational and clinical settings, although one juvenile

detention center found that the use of CPS was associated with a decrease in recidivism rates and injuries (Greene, 2016a). While this result is encouraging to the field of juvenile justice, it provides little insight for those who may be seeking support around implementation of the model.

Prior to implementing CPS, the agency in this study used a point-and-level system as its primary treatment modality. The agency has for some time wanted to move away from a point-and-level system as its primary treatment modality, without having a framework that aligned with the agency's treatment values. Since implementing CPS as its primary treatment modality, the agency has experienced both challenges and opportunities. The current study therefore focuses on what it has been like for the staff at a residential program to implement CPS. The research question for this study is: What has it been like to implement CPS in a residential juvenile justice setting?

Literature Review

Residential Treatment in Juvenile Justice

The enactment of the Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act (JJDPA) in 1974 propagated landmark reform for juvenile justice, including federal funding for alternative programming for juveniles other than detention or confinement in an effort to formally separate the treatment of juveniles from adults in the justice system (Eith, 2008; Hughes, 2011). These types of programming have included diversion programs such as youth courts (Cole & Heilig, 2011; Godwin, 2000) and rehabilitation programs like sex offender or substance abuse treatment (McNeese & Ryan, 2014). Depending on the state or jurisdiction, residential treatment can include any of these types of programming, making for a complex system of residential programs (McNeese & Ryan, 2014).

There are some discrepancies in the ways the term "residential" is used in juvenile justice. The OJJDP uses the term "residential placement" to include any type of facility where a youth is sanctioned by a judge to live, including corrections and detention facilities (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, n.d.). In this sense of the term, not every residential facility provides treatment. In 2014, only 63% of residential facilities were providing treatment services, such as mental health, substance abuse, or offense-specific treatment (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, n.d.). Therefore, not every youth committed to a residential facility receives treatment and not every residential facility offers the same type of services.

Residential treatment programs vary in treatment modality and approaches. Some have more restrictive environments, such as lock-down facilities, while others have less restrictive settings (Roberts, Montgomery, Church, & Springer, 2014). Some treatment programs may include educational or recreational activities as a rehabilitative enhancement to the primary treatment model (Roberts et. al., 2014). Some evidence-based practices seen in residential treatment are Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), Motivational Enhancement Therapy, and Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (Weaver, Byrnes, & Church, 2014). However, like many other evidence-based practices, these have displayed limitations in terms of application across diverse youth and have only been shown to reduce symptoms in the presence of a specific

condition (e.g. DBT reduces self-harm symptoms among suicidal youth) (Weaver, Byrnes, & Church, 2014).

Point and Level Systems.

A traditional, common approach for behavior modification in residential treatment is point and level systems. Point and level systems stem from B.F. Skinner's operant conditioning principles, in which a behavior is determined by the presence of a reward or consequence (Iverson, 1992; Mohr, Martin, Olson, & Pumariega, 2009; Mohr & Pumariega, 2004). Point and level systems operate by rewarding desired behaviors with points and aiming to reduce undesired behaviors through the absence or removal of points (Mohr et. al., 2009). Based on these points, a youth progresses through treatment by advancing to higher levels where privileges are increased.

There is little to no evidence that supports the effectiveness or long-term success of point and level systems (Mohr et. al., 2009; Mohr & Pumariega, 2004). In fact, there has been criticism about the appropriateness of the use of point and level systems in residential treatment settings, especially in relation to the developmental considerations of children and youth (Mohr & Pumariega, 2004). Point and level systems impart a superficial environment in which youth do not develop and grow, rather just learn and adhere to desired behaviors (Tompkins-Rosenblatt & VanderVen, 2005). Additionally, the cultural validity of point and level systems has been questioned, as the structure offers little room for considerations of the unique needs of diverse populations (Mohr et. al., 2009; Tompkins-Rosenblatt & VanderVen, 2005).

Many researchers and juvenile programs are now considering behavioral modification models that are founded on the developmental considerations of children and youth, such as CPS. CPS has been advocated for as an alternative to point and level systems (Mohr et. al., 2009). CPS has been developed to work with children who present with challenging and/or explosive behaviors, often characteristics of youth in the juvenile justice system (Rawal, Romansky, Jenuwine, & Lyons, 2004).

Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS)

CPS is a model that was developed for working with children that have extreme, challenging, or "explosive" behaviors (Greene, 1998; Greene & Ablon, 2006). CPS is rooted in developmental psychology and social learning theory (Greene & Ablon, 2006). The developmental aspect of CPS is a focus on cognitive skills and abilities of children. Greene and Ablon (2006) state that there are five cognitive pathways that inform development of skills in children, including: executive skills; language-processing skills; emotion regulation skills; cognitive flexibility skills; and social skills. When a skill in any of these areas is "lagging"—for whatever reason was not socially developed, learned, or taught—a child uses what skills he/she *does* have, which may be a challenging behavior, to get his/her needs met (Greene & Ablon, 2006). Social learning theory stems from the work of Albert Bandura on modeling behaviors and internal processing (Grusec, 1992). In CPS, adults model empathy and listening skills to children through a conversational problem-solving process. The premise of CPS is that through this process, children then develop the skills they need to do well, which informs the main theme of CPS, "Kids do well if they can" (Greene, 2014; Greene, 2016b).

The plans. The three “plans” in CPS are approaches that adults use with children to resolve problems (Greene, 2016b). In CPS, Plan B is always the ideal plan to use; it is therefore presented last here (Greene & Ablon, 2006; Greene, 2016b).

Plan A. Plan A is when adult will or solutions are imposed (Greene & Ablon, 2006; Greene, 2016b). For example, if a child is refusing to do a chore, an adult may insist that the child do the chore through the use of consequences. When considering lagging skills, Plan A can intensify instances of extreme or challenging behaviors (Greene & Ablon, 2006; Greene, 2016b). However, Plan A can be necessary, especially when safety or other imminent concerns present.

Plan C. Plan C is when an expectation is dropped for the time being, either to prevent an extreme behavior from occurring or because a mutual resolution cannot be made. Plan C is about prioritizing what behaviors and expectations need to be addressed right now (Greene & Ablon, 2006; Greene, 2016b). For example, if a child is refusing to do a chore, the adult expectation (completing the chore) may need to be dropped in the moment to reduce the likelihood that an explosive episode occurs.

Plan B. Plan B is when adults and children work towards a mutual solution to a problem through three steps: 1.) Empathy: Acknowledging and understanding the child’s concern (i.e. identifying lagging skills); 2.) Defining the problem: Bringing the adult concern into consideration, and; 3.) Invitation: Inviting the child to collaboratively work toward a solution that addresses the adult and child concern (Greene & Ablon, 2006). Plan B does not always come naturally to adults. The more adults gain experience with it, and the more it is used, the more effective it is and the less often Plans A and C need to be used (Greene & Ablon, 2006; Greene, 2016b).

Research on CPS. The use of CPS has mostly been advocated for in schools (Greene, 2011; Greene 2014). Research in school settings has shown a decrease in behavioral referrals with 7th and 8th grade students (Shaubman, Stetson, & Plog, 2011), reduction of teacher stress (Stetson & Plog, 2016), and improved communication between teachers and students (Gruntman, 2014). In clinical settings, research on CPS used with children ages 13 and under with Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder has shown significant outcomes across parenting stress, parent-child relations, and clinical symptoms (Greene et. al., 2004; Johnson et. al., 2012). In an inpatient child psychiatric unit, CPS was found to significantly reduce the use of seclusions and restraints (Greene, Ablon, & Martin, 2006). One study of CPS in a juvenile detention center found a significant reduction of injuries and recidivism (Greene, 2016a).

There are very few CPS studies that focus on its implementation. One qualitative study examined teachers’ perceptions of using CPS in a school setting (Gruntman, 2014). There are no studies focusing on implementation of CPS in a residential setting or juvenile justice setting. Given that CPS has been presented as an ideal alternative to point and level systems (Mohr et. al., 2009; Stetson & Plog, 2016), studies of implementation, rather than outcomes, are needed so that CPS can be better understood and successfully applied in residential settings. Implementation science is a growing area of study that offers frameworks and dialogue around the successful implementation of interventions, as opposed to the typical focus on outcomes (Ogden & Fixsen,

2014). Using implementation science to consider CPS can help shift the focus from outcomes to how the model can be successfully applied.

Implementation of CPS Intervention

In a review of over 1,000 behavioral change outcome studies, researchers found that only 5% to 30% of experimental studies described the intervention being used, and even fewer measured the degree of fidelity of the intervention to the specific model (Michie, Fixsen, Grimshaw, & Eccles, 2009). The lack of intervention descriptions in studies creates confusion around terminology of behavioral interventions for researchers and practitioners (Michie et. al., 2009). There are two major theoretical frameworks of implementation science: stages of implementation and core implementation components (Fixsen, Blase, Naoom, & Wallace, 2009). This study focuses on stages of implementation, as the agency in this study has recently implemented CPS.

Fixsen, Blase, Metz, and Van Dyke (2013), identify four stages of implementation: exploration, installation, initial implementation, and full implementation. The exploration stage involves assessment of the needs and strengths of an organization and decision making on whether to move forward with implementing a program (Fixsen et. al., 2013; Odom, Duda, Kucharczyk, Cox, & Stabel, 2014). The installation stage involves the onset of the program delivery, such as training staff or establishing new protocols at the organization (Fixsen et. al., 2013; Odom et. al., 2014). The initial implementation stage is the most fragile stage for the organization, when staff is adjusting to the new program and changing from the previous way of operating (Fixsen et. al., 2013). The full implementation stage is when the program becomes the standard way of doing things in the organization (Fixsen et. al., 2013). The current study seeks to explore the ways in which staff at a residential juvenile justice program experienced the implementation of CPS. Table 1.1 illustrates how the four stages of implementation could apply to the agency in this study.

Table 1.1. Four stages of implementation and CPS.

Stages of Implementation				
	<i>1: Exploration</i>	<i>2: Installation</i>	<i>3: Initial Implementation</i>	<i>4: Full Implementation</i>
CPS	Directors looking for something other than levels system. CPS is aligned with desired values system. Directors and supervisors assess capacity for new training, documentation, and consultation. Staff are willing to be trained. Directors express need for support from community partners.	Employees attend CPS training. Directors and supervisors set a date to "go live" with CPS. Directors establish new documentation and have daily meetings with staff to consult about CPS. Employees begin actively and intentionally having CPS conversations with youth.	Employees learn and get oriented to new system. All employees begin to raise unforeseen questions about CPS model. All employees have to be creative when crisis or safety issues emerge. All employees have to adjust and increase documentation, training, and consultation efforts.	All employees are fully trained in CPS; CPS training is included in new employee hiring. Employees use CPS without having to think about it. CPS is a part of routine documentation. Consultation continues as needed. Adhering to the CPS model to fidelity is the expectation rather than the rule.

STUDY SETTING

The study takes place at a small juvenile justice residential treatment program at an agency located in Oregon. This is a behavioral program for males ages 14-18 in custody of the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA). At any given moment, there are approximately 1,500 youth served by the OYA, 87% of whom are male (Oregon Youth Authority, 2016). The program in this study is a non-restrictive environment and no holds or restraints are used. From 2014-2015, 80% of youth served were Caucasian, 13% were Hispanic/Latino, less than 1% were African-American, less than 1% were Asian, and 0% were American Indian/Alaska Native.

The residential program in this study adopted CPS as its primary treatment modality in 2015. Prior to using CPS, the agency relied on restrictions imposed through a point and level system. The agency has since done away with using restrictions as a method of behavioral modification. A modified version of a levels system is still used. While agency leadership has expressed a long-term goal of doing away with a levels system altogether, aspects of it continue to be in favor with funding sources. In addition to CPS, the agency uses other evidence-based treatments, such as DBT, and various curricula for treatment groups. All youth participate in individual and family therapies. In partnership with a local school district, youth attend school on-site. The agency has been working with school personnel on-site to also implement CPS.

METHODS

The methodological considerations of this study were guided by a constructivist approach, which is the premise that situations are relative to context and individual perception (Morris, 2006). Therefore, the methodology for this study was chosen based on the position that reality is best understood through the experiences and perspectives of individuals in a given setting (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011a; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). With respect to the constructivist positionality of the researcher, I currently have an embedded research placement with the agency as part of my doctoral education. In this capacity, I assist the agency in establishing data systems and developing research and evaluation projects, which has facilitated the opportunity to conduct this study. A university Institutional Review Board approved this study.

Dyadic and individual interviews were conducted. Dyads were organized in homogeneous groups by level of employee at the agency, as similar types of employees have shared job responsibilities and work in conjunction with one another (Morgan, 2016). In the event that scheduling prevented dyadic interviews from occurring, individual interviews were offered. Although individual interviews do not have the peer interaction desired in a dyad, they are still useful in gaining insight into a focused topic (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011b).

Given my embedded researcher role, practicing reflexivity was a critical tool in remaining aware of my own positionality throughout the research process. Reflexive journaling is a practice that lends itself to establishing rigor in qualitative research, where the researcher examines self-awareness throughout the research process in an effort to respond to power dynamics, biases, values, and subjective inclinations (Daley, 2010; Riessman, 2008; Tracey, 2010).

Participants

Participants were contacted for recruitment in person and via agency email. All levels of employees of the residential program were approached including: Directors, therapists, staff supervisor, and youth workers. In all, twelve employees were approached to interview and nine participated in the study. Two people did not respond to an email request and one was not able to participate due to scheduling. As anticipated, scheduling issues did not allow for some participants to be interviewed in a dyad. In total, there were three dyadic interviews and three individual interviews. All of the individual interviews were held with youth workers. Two dyads consisted of similar employee levels at the agency, including directors and therapists. One dyad consisted of a therapist and staff supervisor who had a similar employment history at the agency.

The participants in this study consisted of four males and five females, all identified as Caucasian. The length of employment at the agency ranged from one year to twenty-one years. All participants identified some level of education beyond high school. Almost all of the participants had experience working with youth in another setting, with the average being about six years. None of the participants had prior experience in using CPS.

All of the interviews were conducted using an interview guide that was developed based on Morgan's (2016) funnel and history taking formats. The funnel format is a way to structure interview questions so that broader questions are asked in the beginning to open the discussion

and narrower questions are asked towards the end (Morgan, 2016). The history taking format incorporated a way to capture experience. For example, the interview started with the broad prompt, “Tell me about your history with [agency name],” and ended with the more specific final question, “Suppose another facility were to switch to CPS, what advice would you give them?” All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this study. For preliminary data analysis, each of the transcriptions was read through for accuracy and any interesting observations were noted (Grbich, 2013a). A block and file approach was used to reduce data, where large blocks of text are broken down into broad categories (Grbich, 2013b). I created six broad categories based on my preliminary analysis and used an Excel spreadsheet to copy and paste blocks of text into categories. The data within the six categories were then moved into more specific categories to begin capturing themes. This was a cyclical process that required re-reading of data in one category, taking notes, reading it again, taking more notes, seeing how notes fit together, and continuing this through each of the six categories. This process was replicated until three themes, each with two subthemes, emerged. The final manuscript was then shared with the agency for member-checking, where participants reviewed final themes and subthemes to ensure validity.

FINDINGS

The themes presented here are indicative of the challenges, opportunities, lessons learned, and rewards that participants experienced in implementing CPS. The first theme encompasses the various levels of interactions that have to be navigated when implementing a new intervention, including subthemes that address employees’ personal and systemic challenges. The second theme speaks to changing an organizational culture, with subthemes that relate to the specifics of using a model that is fundamentally different than previous models used in this setting and the level of training and support required. The third theme captures how participants had to redefine what treatment means, with subthemes highlighting how empathy, validation, and building relationships with youth were critical.

Theme #1: Implementation through challenges of all levels.

Throughout all of the interviews, participants spoke of interactions in working with and against various systems. Some of these systems included personal and interpersonal conflicts, while other challenges were at a more systemic level, such as the milieu or community partners.

Subtheme #1: Personal and interpersonal challenges. For individuals, engaging in the CPS model was an internal process. Both adults and youth were described as having to go through a learning process for the model to be implemented in the context of the program. Many participants discussed the learning curve in figuring out how to have these conversations with youth. One participant exemplified this:

“And ironically, the reason I think [other employees] are doing so well is because they struggled with it openly. They actually went through a CPS process themselves. They

kept talking about it and talking about it and they went through a process of engaging parts of their brains.”

Observing youth go through this process was a rewarding experience for the participants, particularly with youth who presented with externally challenging behaviors. For some youth, the ability to have a difficult conversation grew out of CPS. Participants observed growth that may not have otherwise been seen:

“I think we saw, with certain individual youth, a surprising capacity to collab[orate] or problem solve that we didn't know was there until we tapped into it.”

Participants noted that these skills extend to interpersonal dynamics beyond individuals, such as families:

“We've always looked at going home as a privilege...but it is also an opportunity to practice skills that they're learning...to gain the skills to be successful at home.”

Subtheme #2: Systemic challenges. In addition to working with youth on an individual level, implementing CPS in the larger milieu certainly came with its challenges, although the result ended up being a more productive and useful milieu. Implementing CPS required redefining what the milieu should look like:

“...One of the predominant ways that people judge whether they're being successful is based on compliance in the milieu...the CPS process doesn't require compliance...So the milieu became a much messier although more useful environment for kids to be in.”

A learning curve in using CPS also appeared with community partners. Partnerships with educational systems and other juvenile justice entities were not always familiar with CPS or supportive with the approach, especially its use in a residential juvenile justice program. Employees had to learn to respond to these systems and work with the youths' responses to these systems. Even though some organizational partners appeared to be committed to implementing CPS, there was still some work that had to be done in learning how to navigate those systems. When discussing the challenge of working with a community partner, one participant stated:

“One of the challenges there is we had seasoned professionals who were not part of our agency and we were asking them to do something that was contrary to a lot of their training....but it was a hard thing for us to impose upon another system and that still is a challenge. It's still a challenge.”

Overall, there seems to be a different understanding and perspective between systems:

“...but there's a difference in our understanding of what accountability is from the perspective of doing treatment with kids and the state's understanding of what accountability is from the juvenile justice system.”

Theme #2: Changing a culture.

The decision to switch to CPS as a primary treatment modality meant changing an entire culture. The agency is embedded in the larger context of the juvenile justice system, which is punitive in nature. CPS is not an intervention based on punishment, unlike the standard point and level system that the agency had been relying on before. This required an intentional focus among

employees to uphold the values that they believed in as an agency, despite being situated in the larger context of a punitive juvenile justice environment. Therefore, constant training and support are recognized as imperative when committing to changing a culture.

Subtheme #1: Moving to a non-punitive system in a punitive environment. Both the adults and youth have relied on the traditional system for a sense of safety and familiarity. Despite this, most participants noted that in practice, this has never been an effective way to work with youth in residential settings. Most of the participants discussed the fear of losing control, while also recognizing that there had never actually been control in the previous system:

“I mean, we're taking away the only tool we had really. I think there was a lot of fear of like, "How are we going to control this place if we don't have this hammer?" But, it had never been under control.”

Youth, especially those coming from other juvenile justice settings, also experienced the adjustment to a non-punitive system. One participant expressed it in this way:

“I think there's an adjustment period that's pretty difficult for a lot of kids. Kids coming in from a correctional facility or program that has a lot more punitive consequences... Actually thinking about what could help them instead of, this is going to be imposed upon you and you just have to deal with that.”

All participants expressed the view that while there is a time and place for punitive methods, it is neither a desirable nor effective way to work with youth. However, given that this program is situated within a larger, punitive system, several participants cited a need for balance between conventional ways of the greater system and CPS.

Subtheme #2: Importance of training and support. Throughout the interviews, there was a strong emphasis on the importance of being able to provide current training for all employees. In addition to training, all participants talked about how meaningful it was to either receive or provide supervisory support when there were questions or when it was difficult to use CPS in the moment. However, being able to adequately train and support or seek support in the midst of the everyday, chaotic residential environment was challenging. One participant described these initial concerns in this way:

“It's a big culture shift, and any time you try to change culture in an agency, it comes with a lot of growing pains. I think my concerns were more about having empathy for [other employees] and all the other things we have to do and how this really fit in. Can we really set the time aside to train people to a level they needed to be trained and support them while they're going through it?”

Many participants expressed that in retrospect, they wished that there had been more of a connection between training and implementation. Several of the participants expressed that the transition was “messy,” “overwhelming,” or “confusing,” as everyone was trying to figure out their new role. The level of support that this requires is intense, but necessary. It requires a full-time commitment to change a culture:

“It's something you have to do all the time...If you're gonna engage with the process fully, you have a responsibility to make sure that your staff are engaging in it correctly for the youth's well-being and the staff's well-being.”

During a period of high staff turnover, the importance of training and support became especially clear when it appeared to have an effect on the youth. Within the first six months that the agency began using CPS, there were several youth workers that left the agency amidst the new organizational changes. This led to a gap in training for new staff and was a point of stress and frustration for existing staff. This subsequently illuminated a difference in the milieu:

“...We had a staff turnover at one point and, so, people weren't problem solving and...It was kind of cool in hindsight because there's a huge difference when we're not having those conversations with just how...dysregulated it gets and how kids feel like staff isn't doing anything and then they start acting out more because they feel like we're not doing anything.”

Theme #3: Conversations, not consequences, as treatment.

With CPS, the process of talking with the youth is in fact the treatment, which requires a different way of examining treatment compliance. Empathy and validation are recognized as key skills in engaging with youth in CPS. By spending more time having conversations with youth about concerning behaviors, youth are able to form healthy relationships with adults, which leads to more effective ways that youth are able to get their needs met.

Subtheme #1: Empathy and validation. The participants recognized that in juvenile justice settings, empathy and validation can feel unnatural and especially difficult when youth have committed certain crimes or behaved in ways that trigger adults. Several participants noted how in the previous system, there was emotional safety in using punishments and consequences. Empathy and validation require a different way of engaging with youth. Participants felt that CPS provided a framework to empathize with and validate youth when it is especially difficult, by shifting the focus away from the actual behavior to the underlying cause of the behavior:

“...You're not looking at them as a juvenile delinquent or somebody who's antisocial or somebody who is out to hurt me personally. Yes, a lot of these youth have caused harm, emotional and physical or financial harm. That's true, but they've done it because they are trying to cope with their own situation. So if their desire actually is to do well and you look at the kid that way, then the behavior is not quite so important as what has led up to the behavior.”

Learning how to empathize and validate, although challenging, is rewarding in terms of eliminating power dynamics that are often inherent in punitive juvenile justice settings. This leads to a much more productive treatment environment for both youth and adults, where issues can be talked out instead of punished:

“The fact that staff are able to now validate, "It's okay that you're mad right now, and it's okay that you were just explosive, but let's talk about it. You're not going to miss your home visit this weekend...I'm going to help put support around this."...It just has really eliminated that power dynamic, I think, between the staff and the youth.”

Subtheme #2: Importance of adult relationships with youth. The process of empathizing and validating are aspects of forming healthy relationships. The CPS model humanizes treatment by inviting adults to share their concerns rather than simply handing out a consequence. The youth are then engaging in more opportunities to practice communication skills and establish boundaries. The result is that a relationship is formed and a sense of accountability is established for both youth and adults. All of the participants discussed how the most rewarding aspect of this is observing youth grow in their treatment through this process:

“Sometimes they can't go on outings, play pool, and whatnot, but continuing those CPS conversations, it helps create a relationship with you and the youth. They might be frustrated about it, but they're more willing to have a conversation. That's pretty awesome, having youth with struggles controlling certain emotions have a conversation with someone that they might be frustrated with.”

DISCUSSION

The research question addressed in this study was: *What has it been like to implement CPS in a residential juvenile justice setting?* The analysis of interviews with employees yielded three themes, each with two subthemes that reflect the expected growing pains and rewards in implementing a new treatment model. The first theme addresses how implementing CPS involved individuals going through their own internal processes while larger systems, such as the milieu or community partners, also had to be navigated using this new approach. The second theme addresses the dynamics of what it is like to change an organizational culture to a non-punitive model, especially when situated in the context of the larger juvenile justice system. This makes training and support essential for employees. The third and final theme speaks to redefining what treatment actually means in this setting. The process of empathizing, validating, and forming relationships is more meaningful treatment than using restrictions and/or consequences to define how a youth is progressing in treatment.

This study had some practical and methodological limitations. All of the participants in this study identified as Caucasian. It would have benefited the study to have a more demographically diverse sample in order to explore other perspectives. My position as an embedded researcher afforded opportunities to build relationships and truly understand the agency, however, participants may have not shared certain things in the interview due to existing relationships or the assumption that I already knew information. The agency is very small, making employees highly visible. While all measures were taken to maintain confidentiality, it is possible that participants may have not shared certain things due to their inherent exposure at the agency. Shortly after switching to CPS, the agency experienced a point of high staff turnover. This study was only able to capture the perspectives of employees who remained at the agency through the change and therefore may be more invested in implementing the CPS model, thus not garnering a totally complete picture. It would have benefitted this study to also have perspectives of employees who had left the agency. Although it was not the focus of the study, it would be extremely valuable to include perspectives of youth, especially youth that have been involved in other types of juvenile justice settings.

The findings of this study reflect literature suggesting that the punitive climate of point and level systems is ineffective for long-term success (Mohr & Pumariega, 2004; Mohr et. al. 2009). The participants in this study expressed in several different ways how the previous reward-and-punishment system did not promote individual growth or treatment for the youth. Rather, as Tompkins-Rosenblatt and VanderVen, (2005) claim, it only created power struggles and an environment where youth learned to comply rather than develop skills.

As captured in the subthemes, “Personal and interpersonal challenges,” and, “Moving to a non-punitive system in a punitive environment,” the findings of this study speak to philosophical tensions between the CPS model and juvenile justice systems. The participants discussed how although it appeared that community partners were in alignment with the values of the CPS model, in the day-to-day interactions it was actually a struggle to gain trust from community partners. This serves as useful insight for other agencies that might switch to a new intervention and need to maintain relationships with community partners. Implementation science literature suggests that in the exploration stage, an assessment of the strengths, needs, and supports should be conducted to assess readiness for change and implementation (Fixsen et. al., 2013). This assessment should include considerations of any philosophical differences among community partners or key stakeholders and strategies on how these differences can be addressed.

Literature on CPS has mostly reported on outcomes, which was not the focus of this study. In a study of teachers’ perceptions of CPS, Gruntman (2014) found “One size doesn’t fit all” as a main theme, where teachers expressed that CPS is useful for most, but not all children. The participants in this study also had similar indications, that there are some instances where restrictions are necessary. Often in residential settings, there are crisis or emergency situations that impact the milieu and safety of all youth, where Plan A, imposing adult will, must be used for everyone in order to ensure safety. This can be confusing for youth who are used to having problem-solving conversations when issues arise. This is one example of where the bridge between CPS and the punitive juvenile justice environment needs to be further explored. Future research on CPS in juvenile justice settings should also focus on outcomes other than restraints or injuries. Since CPS is a model that provides opportunities for positive skill development, outcomes specific to this in juvenile justice settings should be further explored.

As outlined in Fixsen et. al.’s (2013) proposed stages of implementation, this study suggests that the agency is in the initial implementation stage, the fragile time period when employees are adjusting to the new change. Participants especially spoke to this throughout the first theme, “Attending to systems of all levels,” and also the subtheme, “Importance of training and support.” In regards to working with systems, the participants expressed how once CPS was implemented, they had to then navigate both the expected and unexpected internal and external systems. This is in alignment with the implementation science literature, which suggests that different organizations will require different amounts of internal and external resources for support; not all organizations will come across the same challenge and opportunities as other organizations (Fixsen et. al., 2013; Odom et. al., 2014). In retrospect, the participants highlighted that training and support are crucial and should be intense for a successful transition to CPS. This is perhaps a lesson learned for the agency, and reflects Fixsen et. al.’s (2013) first two stages of implementation, exploration and installation, the time period in which assessment

of readiness and training for staff are most critical. This agency, like many other agencies, would have greatly benefited from having prior knowledge of research on implementation science.

This study has important implications for practitioners and administrators working in residential treatment and in juvenile justice settings. In the juvenile justice system, practitioners are charged with implementing new or different interventions, and doing so efficiently and effectively. Unfortunately, as Michie, Fixsen, Grimshaw, & Eccles (2009) point out, there is not enough attention focused on implementation. This study contributes to the implementation literature base and offers insight into the inevitable challenges and opportunities associated with implementing a new treatment model. Programs that may be considering a new intervention can derive support and lessons learned from the experiences of agencies like this one. The lessons learned from this study offer insight into how every day interactions and program processes were impacted by learning how to implement a different kind of intervention than what the agency had previously used with this population. Practitioners can benefit from experiences like the ones in this study in order to gain continued understanding into what has previously worked or not worked with implementation efforts, in order to deliver services effectively and efficiently.

Future research in this area should include the perspectives of a more diverse population in order to explore how CPS is experienced across varying cultural considerations. Although it was not the focus of this study, future studies should include the perspectives of youth, particularly youth in residential juvenile justice settings. Future research in this area could also incorporate quantitative methods to explore any significant CPS-related outcomes in a juvenile justice setting. Future researchers should continue to seek out ways to contribute to understanding the challenges and opportunities that present in implementing CPS.

CONCLUSION

Participants of this study spoke to the challenges and opportunities presented in implementing a new treatment model in a residential setting, addressing research gaps in both CPS and implementation science. The findings of this study suggest that there were many benefits to implementing CPS in a juvenile justice setting that has traditionally relied on a point and level system for behavior modification. CPS provided a framework for participants to talk with youth in a developmentally appropriate way about *why* behaviors were occurring instead of punishing them. As a result, participants created a more meaningful definition of treatment, improved relationships with youth, and learned a different way to work with all of the various systems in juvenile justice. This study highlights the need for more dialogue and research in experiences of implementation, as agencies like the one in this study can benefit from the mutual support and lessons learned. This study suggests many opportunities for continued research including the areas of residential juvenile justice programming, CPS or other non-punitive treatment models, and incorporating perspectives of youth in implementation research.

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