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# Exploring the Merging of Two Divergent Behavioral Support Systems in Juvenile Justice

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*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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2017

Abstract

Exploring the Merging of Two Divergent Behavioral Support Systems in Juvenile Justice

by

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BA, Trinity University, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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## Abstract

In 2016, over 47,000 youths in the state of Florida were served by the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) probation services. While on probation, these youths were exposed to 2 different, and potentially conflicting disciplinary management systems. Youth are under the authority of juvenile probation officers (JPOs), who are bound to a consequence-based management approach. This approach is guided by negative reinforcement. The youths are simultaneously engaged with staff from diversion programs, many of which are strengths-based and guided by positive reinforcement. According to the ecosystemic complexity theory of conflict, exposure to incongruent systems can have negative effects such as confusion and ineffectiveness. By applying a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, I explored the responses to this convergence point from the perspective of 9 strengths-based school counseling staff members who supervise the youth that navigate between these 2 different behavior modification systems. This sample of 9 staff members also work directly with JPOs. Data were collected using iterative versions of semistructured interviews and analyzed using content analysis. Findings revealed that conflict did exist at the convergence point, and that cohesion, on varying levels, also existed, and that solutions to the philosophical incompatibility have emerged. This research contributes to social change by illuminating the possible conflict inherent in implementing incongruent approaches to behavior management, which may inform policymakers regarding program management for juvenile justice.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

The published records of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (Florida DJJ) indicate that over 47,000 youth, aged 10 to 17, were assigned probation services in 2016 (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017a). This is nearly a 20,000 person increase from just 4 years ago (Finnie, 2013). During sentencing, the judge will choose from a variety of diversion programs of which to assign the youths. These diversion programs are designed to help youth by applying a variety of behavior modification approaches.

Diversion programs have different behavior management philosophies. For example, in the military environment of the Florida Youth Challenge Academy, staff applies a discipline-based philosophy (Florida Youth Challenge Academy, 2013). Strengths-based philosophies, on the other hand, include the positive behavior reinforcement environment in programs like the PACE Centers for Girls (2014) and the holistic wellness programs offered by the Boys and Girls Club of America (2013). In this study, I focused on the strengths-based approach.

The Florida DJJ has contracted with organizations that are strengths-based to provide additional support and individual development services to youth in conflict with the law. These organizations use a strengths-based approach to behavior management. Many states have experienced a high degree of success by using a strengths-based approach with delinquent youth (Hodges, Martin, Smith, & Cooper, 2011; Kuehn & Corrado, 2011; Peterson, 2013; Taxman, 2010). While the addition of the strengths-based approach would appear to be of value, the DJJ must now integrate two seemingly

incongruent systems of behavior management. Juvenile probation officers (JPOs), as the frontline direct-service providers, manage their caseload of youth using consequence-based methods, which rely on sanctions and negative reinforcements (Florida DJJ, 2013, p. 7). The contracted strengths-based diversion programs approach behavior management using positive reinforcement. This approach follows the theory that punitive or sanctions-based approaches are counterproductive. Strengths-based approaches emphasize the use of positive reinforcement for behavior modification, whereas sanctions-based approaches emphasize negative reinforcement for behavior modification (Gonzalez, 2012; Nissen, 2006). These two approaches to managing youth coexist under the umbrella of the DJJ system. The JPOs and the counseling staff of the strengths-based diversion programs are on the frontlines of this convergence.

The literature is replete with discussions and research regarding strengths-based programs and troubled teens (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Bockern, 2014; Hodges et al., 2011; Kuehn & Corrado, 2011; Peterson, 2013; Taxman, 2010). However, based on the research, there are no discussions regarding the convergence point of strengths-based programs with the sanctions-based approach of juvenile corrections departments from the perspective of the staff who must navigate discrepancies.

### **Problem Statement**

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (FDJJ) is a consequence-based penal system (Florida DJJ, 2013). JPO's are the frontline enforcers of sanctions (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017a). The DJJ also contracts with strengths-based organizations, which manage youth from an opposite and incongruent approach

(Gonzalez, 2012; G6rger, Evenepoel, Kraus, & Taefi, 2013). Youths in the DJJ system must navigate between their JPOs and the staff of any strengths-based diversion program with which they are involved. According to ecosystemic complexity theory (Brack, Lassiter, Hill, & Moore, 2011), Simmel's theory of conflict (Levine, 1971), and Marx's conflict theory (Turner, 1975) the convergence of incongruent systems results in conflict for those who must manage within the two systems.

Based on the aforementioned theories, then, the highest degree of incongruence may be in diversion program day schools where youths are exposed to strengths-based management but then are required to navigate consequence-based management from their JPOs, often within the same day. Two such educational systems are the PACE Center for Girls and the Boys and Girls Club of America. The PACE Center for Girls is a day school for girls ages 11-17. Criteria for enrollment includes, but is not limited to: DJJ involvement, academic underachievement, and Department of Child and Family services involvement. The Boys and Girls Club of America has an academic base, though it exclusively provides after school care. Youths who are DJJ involved are often required to participate in the Boys and Girls Club of America programs.

According to multiple authors such as Brendtro (2014), Peterson (2013), and Hill (2008), social services fields have widely applied strengths-based behavioral support systems to serve youth due to their success in diverting or changing delinquent behaviors. The public and alternative school systems in California, for example, have implemented strengths-based models and programs since the rise of such programs at the turn of the 21st century (Furlong, Ritchey, & O'Brennan, 2009). Juvenile justice systems throughout

the country and the world are successfully applying strengths-based systems (Görge et al., 2013). Despite this wide application, Departments of Juvenile Justice across the country have a history of failing to maintain a strengths perspective (Goshe, 2013; Hodges et al., 2011; House, 2013; Schwartz, 2013). Chapter 2 includes a discussion of this at length. On the front lines, where sanction- and strengths-based behavior management converge, we may be able to find reasons for either cooperation and adaptation or conflict and decline. In this hermeneutic phenomenological study, I explored the experiences, attitudes, and beliefs of the staff of a strengths-based diversion program regarding the integration of these two systems.

In Florida, strengths-based diversion programs are not as pervasive as they are in many other states due to the Zero Tolerance Policy 1006.13. This policy states that there is to be no leniency for delinquent behaviors in the public-school system (Florida Department of Education, 2013). Despite this strict policy, strengths-based approaches to behavior management have started to gain traction in the Florida DJJ since 2013 (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2013).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experience of the staff from the diversion, strengths-based system and to understand their interpretation of how they manage their roles in the convergence between the two systems in the field. The lived experiences of those who work directly with youth illuminated a clearer understanding of the cohesive and in-cohesive aspects of this collaboration.

### **Nature of the Study**

The literature suggests that qualitative methods are preferred when considering social systems (Gregersen & Sailer, 1993; Sanger & Giddings, 2012; Starke, 2013). I explore a previously unexplored phenomenon; the convergence between the consequence-based juvenile justice system and strengths-based diversion programs from the perspective of the strengths-program staff. Since a strengths-based method of behavior management precludes punitive or sanction-focused approaches (Gonzalez, 2012; Greenwood, 2008; Lehmann, Jordan, Bolton, Huynh, & Chigbu, 2012; Nissen, 2006), youths are caught between two incongruent systems. By applying a hermeneutic, phenomenological approach, I used the interview questions (see Appendix A) to focus on the lived experiences of the staff as they relate to converging these approaches to behavior management. The use of hermeneutic phenomenology is for the purpose of considering whether an issue exists (Moustakas, 1994; Saldaña, 2012). In addition to conducting semistructured interviews, I included follow-up reviews of the findings with participants. I discuss the methodological details of the study in Chapter 3.

### **Research Questions**

The overall research question for this study was: how do the staff of strengths-based diversion programs integrate two seemingly incongruent youth behavior management systems? A sub question was: how do they describe the programs' convergence? Appendix A includes a complete list of interview questions.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework draws upon three related theories that, in part, apply to the study of divergent cultures that must converge. These two theories are; Brack et al.'s (2011) ecosystemic complexity theory of conflict (ECTC), Simmel's theory of conflict (Levine, 1971; Simmel, 1904), and Karl Marx's social conflict theory (Turner, 1975).

In 2011, Brack, Lassiter, Hill, and Moore debut an article on ecosystemic complexity theory of conflict (ECTC) in the *Journal of Humanistic Counseling*. ECTC is useful to the current research because it synthesized several theories of conflict and applied this fusion to social interactions, such as the convergence of the juvenile justice system with the strengths-based school system currently under study.

Karl Marx first described social conflict theory in his 1848 pamphlet, *Communist Manifesto*, as a response to the social inequities across Europe (Boyer, 1998). Sixty years later, Georg Simmel expanded the theory by emphasizing the equitable side of conflict, revealing how diversity does not have to culminate in anarchy, as Karl Marx supposed (Simmel, 1904). This is relevant to the current research because ECTC does not adequately address the applicable nature of conflict theory for the purpose of this study. I discuss this issue in depth in Chapter 2.

### **Definition of Terms**

This section includes operational definitions of key concepts, conceptualizing diversion programs, as well as punitive-based, consequence-based, and strengths-based systems. These definitions come from peer-reviewed literature and the Department of



Juvenile Justice. Journals include *Reclaiming Children & Youth*, *Review of Effective Practice in Juvenile Justice*, and *Advances in Social Work*.

*Diversion program*: An "alternative to secure detention," a program designed "to divert youth from the court process, and effectively transitioning youth home and back into their communities" (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2013, p. 6). A more specific type of diversion program is one that claims to be strength-based.

*Juvenile Probation Officers (JPO)*: Court-appointed law officers assigned to enforce imposed sanctions on offending youth (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2012).

*Punitive-based*: "A justice model focused on holding young people accountable for their actions and enforcing punitive measures through due process" (Murphy, McGinness, & McDermott, 2010, p. III). The Florida DJJ recently replaced the term "punitive" with the term "sanction" (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2013, p.7).

*Sanction [consequence]*: A court-ordered, punishment-based directive that JPOs enforce. Sanctions include curfews, community-service hours, and restitution to victims (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2006). Consequence-based programs, therefore, include processes focused on sanctions designed to enforce compliance with court orders.

*Strengths-based*: A program that upholds a core value to "find and strengthen the positive and healthy elements [of an individual], no matter how deeply they are hidden" and to "enthusiastically believe in the existence of those elements even in the seemingly worst of our adolescents" (Brendtro & Larson, 2004, p. 194). A strengths-based program takes an approach to behavior modification that is goal-oriented, assesses strengths, and

uses community resources, and it focuses on hope, achievement, and the ability to make positive choices (Rapp, Saleebey, & Sullivan, 2006)

### **Assumptions**

The current study was based on three assumptions. First, the participants will answer the interview questions honestly and with candor. Second, conflict will exist at a definable point of impact, according to theories of conflict.(Brack, Lassiter, Hill, & Moore, 2011; Cowie & Nichols, 2010; Drack & Schwarz, 2010; Drori, Wrzesniewski, & Ellis, 2011).Third, staff must navigate this conflict toward a cohesive collaboration (Drack & Schwarz, 2010; Von Bertalanffy, 1972). I was able to validate these assumptions in the results of the study.

### **Limitations**

I designed this study to generate more questions than answers. I explored a previously unexplored phenomenon for the purpose of further research. Because of the relatively small sample size, generalizability of the findings is very limited. An application of the findings may be considered but only for the immediate strengths-based school, or schools like it that work with JPOs in the state of Florida, and only for female youths between the ages of 11-17. The results may not apply to male youths in similar conditions.

The results of this study may apply to JPOs, but only so far as understanding the possible beliefs, values, and attitudes of their strengths-based counterparts. In this study, I do not adequately convey the perspective of the JPOs.

### **Delimitations**

In this study, I do not consider the success or failure of either system, nor the laws that govern either process. I did not attempt to compare or contrast the two systems with those on a national or global scale. Finally, I did not gather data regarding the perspective of the youths who are wards of the juvenile justice system and who are exposed to these two systems.

### **Significance of the Study**

The results of this study lend support to future research designed to understand and positively influence the challenge of managing the delinquent behaviors of juvenile offenders in the Florida DJJ. The Florida DJJ has a rich history of attempting to create a strengths-based culture, as I will discuss in Chapter 2 (Abbott, 1913; Goshe, 2013; Lehmann et al., 2012). However, the DJJ has also been unsuccessful in maintaining a strengths-based culture (Goshe, 2013; Mathur & Nelson, 2013; Murphy et al., 2010; Nissen, 2006). History has shown the integration of strengths-based approaches at the Florida DJJ have been short-lived.

Today, the strengths approach has a firmer hold at the Florida DJJ than ever before (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017a). Therefore, exploring the areas that may show incongruence or conversely, cohesiveness, lends support to efforts to improve and integrate these programs (Brooks & Roush, 2014; McAlinden, 2011; Murphy et al., 2010). With more and better information, policymakers will be able to direct resources efficiently and accurately, and communities may receive genuinely

rehabilitated youth back into society. This would amount to significant positive social change.

### **Summary**

Strengths-based programs within the Florida DJJ have been developing for decades, largely due to their success in transforming delinquent behaviors (Mathur & Nelson, 2013; Murphy et al., 2010). The DJJ is home to Florida's juvenile delinquent population, and they are making ever-greater attempts to integrate strengths-based programs into their system (Brooks & Roush, 2014; McAlinden, 2011).

Incongruently, however, the DJJ is consequence-based in its behavior management of juveniles, and JPO staff are agents that must function under that mandate (Kuehn & Corrado, 2011; Taxman, 2010). JPOs must collaborate with staff of strengths-based diversion programs, and vice versa. I explore that intersection from the perspective of the strengths-based staff, contributing to future research designed to assess what is and is not effective, as these incongruent systems continue to converge.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the origins of the juvenile justice system and strengths-based diversion programs, along with a history of their collaboration. Since the convergence of divergent systems suggests the presence of conflict, various theories of conflict are considered. In chapter 3, I discuss the proposed study's use of qualitative phenomenology, participant selection, and strategy for data analysis. Chapter 4 includes data and my analysis of the findings. Finally, in chapter 5, I present a discussion of the findings, recommendations for further study, and concluding statements.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

In this study, I examined the convergence point of two lived experiences: those of JPOs, who function in a consequence-based system, and those of diversion/prevention program staff, who function in a strengths-based system. Literature has reported that JPOs manage delinquents from an orientation of negative reinforcement, while strengths-based diversion programs manage the very same youths from an orientation of positive reinforcement (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2012; Jimenez, 2003; Saleebey, 1996). These two systems must function together even though they are philosophically incongruent. From the perspective of the strengths-based staff, I explore whether or not this divergence creates conflict in attaining the goals of both systems.

The literature is replete with discussion and research regarding strengths-based programs and troubled teens (Hodges et al., 2011; Kuehn & Corrado, 2011; Taxman, 2010). However, the research did not reveal any discussion regarding the management of delinquent youths as it relates to navigating both the consequence-based juvenile justice system and strengths-based diversion programs. Therefore, the focus of this study was on exploring assumptions, concepts, and theories regarding this convergence from the perspective of the staff that must manage the same youth. To begin, I present theories that best consider and explore the phenomenon created when a strengths-based diversion program intersects with a consequence-based justice system. A brief history of the juvenile justice system in the United States will follow, including a review regarding how the punitive culture of this system, which was a response to antisocial behaviors, has

altered over the years until the present status of the practice. In this discussion I consider the origin and recent application of strengths-based systems both within and without the juvenile justice system, followed by the exploration of methodologies that best address the study.

### **Data Search Strategy**

I located and retrieved the majority of scholarly journal articles for this review from the Walden University online search engine. Less than 15% of scholarly journals were located and retrieved from Google Scholar. I also located and purchased Kindle versions of some original works and scholarly books from Amazon.com.

The databases that I used in the Walden University search engine included: Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete ERIC, Political Science Complete, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, SocINDEX with Full Text, Business Source Premier/Complete, Political Science Complete: A Sage Full-Text Collection , CBCA Complete: Social Sciences and OxResearch. I used the ProQuest databases, extensively. This is a complete list of those databases: ProQuest Career and Technical Education: Social Sciences, ProQuest Criminal Justice, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text: Social Sciences, ProQuest Education, Journals, ProQuest Political Science, ProQuest Psychology Journals, ProQuest Research Library: Social Sciences, ProQuest Social Science Journals, and ProQuest Sociology.

I used all of the terms in every database listed above. I did not assign terms to additional search fields unless the results exceeded 100 in number, in which case SU Subject fields were most commonly assigned as additional search fields. Search terms

included *strength(s)-based, strength(s) and based, solution-based, solution and based, solution-focused, solution and focused, punitive, punitive-based, punitive and based, juvenile justice, delinquency, diversion, prevention, corrections, chaos theory, chaos, Simmel, Marx, ecosystemic complexity theory of conflict, ecosystemic as a subject term, ecosystemic + conflict, complexity theory, conflict theory, Lorenz chaotic attractor, attractor, Lorenz*. A search for *systems interactions* yielded significant numbers, so I narrowed the search to *system or culture and/or clash, conflict* with a date range of 2010–2017. I also limited the source type to academic journals and used the following subject terms: *social aspects, social conflict, social systems, political systems, conflict management, common goals, opposing forces, qualitative and chaos or systems and theory, qualitative and social systems*.

As important documents emerged from within the literature based on citations, I searched the Walden Library as well as the public Internet for the original documentation. This included the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (Soulier and Scott, 2010), and the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (National Association of Social Workers, 2008).

### **Theoretical Framework**

In this section, I will discuss two primary theories that, in part, apply to the study of merging divergent cultures, such as the integration of strengths-based and consequence-based worldviews studied here. The synthesized theories are Brack et al.'s (2011) ecosystemic complexity theory and Simmel's (Levine, 1971) theory of conflict, and Karl Marx's (Turner, 1975) conflict theory.

### **Ecosystemic complexity theory of conflict**

Brack et al.'s (2011) Ecosystemic complexity theory of conflict (ECTC) synthesizes numerous theories: (1) systems theory, (2) complexity theory, (3) chaos theory, and (4) theory of conflict. The study of human systems has synthesized systems theory, complexity theory, and chaos theory for over 30 years (Warren, Franklin, & Streeter, 1998). ECTC uniquely incorporates conflict theory by including power differentials, much like Karl Marx's conflict theory (Turner, 1975), in which Marx asserted that an imbalance of power creates conflict. ECTC, unlike conflict theory, further considers the complexity of conflicting systems and the challenge of attaining equilibrium (Brack et al., 2011). For the two systems studied here, this is important to consider, because even though both the DJJ and the diversion program are conflicting systems in culture, they must somehow find a working symmetry.

As previously mentioned, ECTC also incorporates complexity theory. Wallis (2009) challenges the validity of complexity theory due to the absence of a unified definition of the theory. Sanger and Giddings (2012) clarified in response the application of complexity theory in the social sciences versus the physical sciences. Sanger and Giddings (2012) asserted that complexity theory, when applied to the social sciences, is conceptual, and therefore leans toward subjectivity, as opposed to its precise mathematical application in the physical sciences. Thus, Sanger and Giddings (2012) contended, there is a unified definition for the theory, at least for the social sciences.

Brack et al. (2011) used this conceptual quality of complexity theory specifically to describe "emergent patterns" (p. 4) of cooperative behaviors that result from a conflict.



Applying this thought to the convergence studied here, I predicted that JPOs and diversion-program staff will naturally gravitate toward a pattern that promotes order from conflict. This pattern did, in fact, emerge from the data. To varying degrees, the data revealed a pattern of conflict-to-order in the lived experiences of the diversion staff as they endeavored to function with the JPOs.

The DJJ is most certainly a complex system that is in a perpetual state of reorganization, as later discussions in this chapter explain. The culture of the DJJ tends to gravitate toward consequence-based corrections, though influential advocates continue their attempt to cultivate a more restorative and strengths-based approach (Harvey & Hill, 2004; Nissen, 2006; Peters, 2011; Mathur & Nelson, 2013; Murphy et al., 2010). I took note of the cultures and worldviews of the staff of the diversion programs who must navigate between punitive and strengths-based cultures. Gallo (2013) emphasized the crucial nature of thoroughly understanding the parts to comprehend the whole. I considered elements of culture and worldview in the development of the interview questions.

Brack et al. (2011) also synthesize chaos theory into ECTC. These authors synthesized chaos theory from a mutation of Lorenz's (1963) chaos theory, which states that order naturally emerges from chaos (Trevisan & Palatella, 2011). Brack et al. (2011) refer to this as a phenomenon of "emergent patterns" (p. 4). ECTC is similar to chaos theory, in that resolution emerges from chaos, but it is different from chaos theory, since options for resolution present themselves in the form of patterns that all parties involved may or may not accept. All parties involved must eventually discover and apply a

solution. Even though unpredictable and chaotic variables may be the norm, especially in psychosocial systems, complex order is eventually perceivable and is, therefore, attainable. A naturally emerging resolution from within the conflict emerges from the interaction, as opposed to the parties' employing an external strategy of control. Therefore, not only should the solution present itself, it should do so from the substance of the conflict and not from any other source. Brack et al. (2011) suggested that the very application of external strategies of control can suppress access to the most effective solution.

The data in the current study supports the existence of an observable conflict between the JPOs who must manage behaviors with a punitive approach and the counselors in the strengths-based systems. It also supports ECTC theory regarding emergent solutions. Solutions to the conflict emerged from within the conflict and not from an outside source.

ECTC also synthesizes systems theory. JPOs and the strengths-based diversion/prevention staff work together under a single system called the Department of Juvenile Justice, even though each entity takes a dissimilar structure. Sanger and Giddings (2012) asserted that all social agencies are connected to each other, one way or another, within a single system.

Therefore, it is prudent to understand how ECTC applies systems theory. The developers of ECTC derived the systems aspect, termed ecosystemic, from the work of Moises Baron (2002). Baron argued that an adequate understanding of an individual or group is in the context of culture, ethnicity, and worldview (in Weiss et al., 2012).

Furthermore, Ludwig von Bertalanffy (Drack & Schwarz, 2010) argued that all living things naturally organize by kind to form complex systems of interaction and that the goal of these interactions is to form a functioning whole (von Bertalanffy, 1972).

Northey, Primer, and Christensen (1997) promoted the application of systems theory to the juvenile justice system for the purpose of prompting a system that can change and adapt. If the juvenile justice system became more like an organism, the system would thrive like a healthy organism. In the current study, I show how JPOs and strengths-based staff reject the differences of each other, and in other cases attempt to transform their differences into similarities for the purpose of achieving a functioning whole.

The literature is replete with scholarly research regarding systems interaction. When divergent systems intersect, scholars have been able to understand and identify criteria for the success or failure of their combination. Drori, Wrzesniewski, and Ellis (2011) suggested that a merging of systems would fail if there was an attempt to alter the basic norms and values of the people within those systems. This may shed some light on the Florida DJJ's inability, suggested by the literature, to sustain a strengths-based approach to juvenile justice (Harvey & Hill, 2004; Nissen, 2006; Peters, 2011; Mathur & Nelson, 2013; Murphy et al., 2010).

The two systems studied here challenge each other at the core of their established values. Cowie and Nichols (2010), however, established that cooperation could be achieved even when core values clash if a relationship is established between parties based on mutual understanding and respect. Interview questions in this study, therefore, included discussions of core values among participants, and the nature of the relationship

between JPOs and strengths-based program staff, from the perspective of the strengths-based staff.

In the ECTC theory of conflict, Brack et al. (2011) categorized all human systems as highly complex. As stress levels increase, they argued, people's abilities to navigate toward a solution decreases. The jobs of both JPOs and diversion-program staff are highly stressful; they must attempt to deal effectively with moderate-to-severe behavior challenges in adolescents (Barford & Whelton, 2010; Lewis, Lewis, & Garby, 2013). Therefore, interview questions included a request for participants to describe stress levels when attempting to navigate between cultures.

Understanding and applying ECTC requires the context of a lived culture, ethnicity, and worldview of an individual or a social group (Brack et al., 2011). Observations of interaction between individuals or social groups must include this context. The compatibility of human systems can be determined based on the conflict that emerges. If it is essential for the systems to coexist, but they cannot seem to do so, an observer to the conflict can be expected to discover a solution to their compatibility by watching for a solution-based pattern to emerge from the conflict. Identification of this pattern then warrants the application of a change agent.

### **Theory of conflict**

The origins of this theory come from the work of Karl Marx and Georg Simmel (Simmel, 2011; Turner, 1975), who deviate from each other's view on conflict in significant ways. Though many of their premises are cohesive, their interpretations are significantly different. For example, Marx envisioned a homogenous society, whereas

Simmel celebrated diversity and could envision the productive coexistence of difference (Turner, 1975). Additionally, whereas Marx saw conflict as a force against the evils of social inequity, Simmel considered conflict to originate with basic human instincts. Marx was concerned with the power of conflict while Simmel was concerned with the product of conflict (Simmel, 2011; Turner, 1975). Both agree that conflict leads to the product of cohesion (Bernard, 2012).

Simmel's focus on the product of conflict aligns closer to the assumptions of the current study. For example, Lance and Dronkers (2011) drew on Simmel's premise in their research regarding the outcomes of cultural, economic, and religious diversity in Dutch neighborhoods. They applied conflict theory to the product of distrust that was pervasive in these diverse neighborhoods, concluding that five factors are essential for dispelling the conflict of distrust resulting from diversity: "equal status between groups, common goals to be reached, inter-group cooperation, support of laws and customs and the potential for friendship" (Lance & Dronkers, 2011, p. 615). The interview questions for this study included these five factors. I designed the questions to understand perceptions of status equality between both systems, identification of common goals, examples of cross-system cooperation, and inter-personal connections across system boundaries.

Hughes (2008) contended that the assimilation of core values into one's identity prevents systems with divergent core values from resolving conflict. Therefore, I factored into the interview questions the extent to which participants had assimilated into their personal identities any of the aforementioned five aspects. Such questions include, "What

are your thoughts regarding what you know about the strengths-based structure of the diversion school, and to what degree do you personally and professionally subscribe to that structure?" Appendix A includes the full set of interview questions.

### **Summary Theoretical Framework**

In the current study, I consider the convergence of conflicting systems. More specifically, I consider the incompatible nature of the consequence-based juvenile justice system and the strengths-based diversion school system from the perspective of the counseling staff of the strengths-based school program. ECTC suggests that the solution to conflict emerges from that conflict, as do attractors that naturally create cohesion even in the midst of divergence. Solutions to the conflict did emerge from the data.

Not all the elements of ECTC are necessary to consider. For example, considering ethnicity or a specific culture is extraneous. Since in this study I consider the clash of systems, systems became the focal point of the research. As mentioned previously, Simmel's Theory of Conflict also provided insight and direction for the study, by directing the attention toward the results of the convergence, which the interview data reflected.

### **History of the juvenile justice system in the United States**

In order to better understand the application of the current study, a brief review of the juvenile justice system in the United States is warranted. The juvenile justice administration has had a persistent challenge maintaining a functioning strengths-based orientation (Harvey & Hill, 2004; Nissen, 2006; Peters, 2011; Mathur & Nelson, 2013;

Murphy et al., 2010). These historical insights help to frame the essential nature of the current study.

According to House (2013) and Soulier and Scott (2010), the origins of the juvenile criminal justice system in America were based on English common law, which held that children under the age of fourteen were not culpable for any criminal actions in which they might engage. Once a child reached the age of fourteen, the child was as culpable as any adult and was even able to incur the death penalty. English common law also asserted that the state was ultimately responsible for the effective rearing of children; so, in the early 1800s, the United States developed reformatories specifically designed to house delinquent youth (Doig, 1974; Soulier & Scott, 2010; Whitehead & Lab, 2013). The objective of these reformatories, also known as houses of refuge, was to rehabilitate juvenile offenders by providing academic education, character development, and vocational training (Soulier & Scott, 2010). Though well intentioned, these reformatories failed to provide a rehabilitating environment for the youth who were incarcerated (Soulier & Scott, 2010). They failed for lack of sufficient funding and regulation; as a result, they facilitated physical abuse and intolerable living conditions (Soulier & Scott, 2010). Founders of The Child Savers movement established a social response to this injustice (Soulier & Scott, 2010; Whitehead & Lab, 2013). House (2013) included the Child Savers movement in the broader Progressive movement. Those administering this movement had an expressed intent to remove juveniles from a punitive system altogether, placing them in yet another attempt at a rehabilitative system.

Illinois law makers established the first juvenile court system in 1899, maintaining a restorative, rather than punitive approach to the detention program (Doig, 1974; House, 2013; Soulier & Scott, 2010; Whitehead & Lab, 2013). The prevailing intent was for the courts to act in the best interest of the juvenile, as opposed to the adult system, where the courts acted in the best interest of society (House, 2013; Soulier & Scott, 2010; Whitehead & Lab, 2013). This positive approach to juvenile management led to the establishment of psychiatric treatment programs for troubled youth (Soulier & Scott, 2010).

The success of the juvenile system's rehabilitative versus punitive approach to youth offenders waned by 1950, when cases began to emerge that suggested glaring inequalities for youth compared to how adults were treated and sentenced (Doig, 1974; Soulier & Scott, 2010; Whitehead & Lab, 2013). For example, according to House (2013), judges handed more violent juvenile offenders over to adult court for trial, rather than develop more effective rehabilitative services. Society perceived the insurgence of violent juvenile crimes as a failure on the part of the juvenile justice model, demanding a return to more punitive measures. (Doig, 1974; House, 2013; Soulier & Scott, 2010). This second attempt at a cohesive and effective coexistence of punitive and strengths-based systems therefore failed.

After multiple Supreme Court rulings, policy makers passed the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) in 1974 (Soulier & Scott, 2010). This act channeled federal funds to states that upheld two principal strategies: (1) keep juveniles out of detention centers for less severe offenses, and (2) separate juvenile and adult



detainees (Soulier & Scott, 2010). Throughout this period of time, Soulier and Scott (2010) argue, the juvenile justice system had managed to retain its focus on rehabilitation, as opposed to the punitive approach taken by the adult justice system. This third attempt to maintain a strengths focus alongside a punitive system seemed to be successful. Unfortunately, by the late 1980s, juvenile violent crime had dramatically increased, overwhelming the juvenile justice system, and causing a turn back toward punitive-based approaches (Soulier & Scott, 2010; Whitehead & Lab, 2013). House (2013) argues that the "get tough on crime" approach initiated in the 1980s—and which still perpetuates today—had miscarried, creating an increase of juvenile crime rather than a decrease. The implied argument here is that crime will increase with the application of even minimal punitive measures. Increased strengths-based measures do not decrease crime in the presence of punitive measures.

This model persisted well into the 1990s. The most destructive feature, according to House (2013), was the trying of juveniles as adults. Soulier and Scott (2010) call into question the courts' intentions and their possible deviation from their original compass of acting restoratively on behalf of youth offenders. Goshe (2013) and House (2013) emphatically argue that this was, indeed, the case. Nevertheless, the evidence at the time largely suggested to policymakers and broader society that a decline in punitive-based approaches might have been a factor in the increase of juvenile delinquency.

Though the work of Clark and Corcoran (1997) greatly advanced the practice of strengths-based approaches with offending juveniles (in Lehmann et al., 2012), the philosophy of redirection and prevention in this form failed to meet expectations. A push

by lawmakers for a revival of strengths-based approaches briefly appeared with the 2002 reauthorization of the JJDP, which presented moderate restructuring toward intervention programs (O'Bryant, Teasley, & Fairman Cooper, 2003). This push was not strong enough to challenge the punitive-based core identity of the DJJ. Some state legislators, such as that in Florida, remained absolute in their "get tough" approach (Hodges et al., 2011). Goshe (2013) asserts that the juvenile justice system fully returned to its punitive-based identity with the 2008 reauthorization of the Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. Schwartz (2013) insists that the "get tough" approach only served to increase juvenile crime.

House (2013) argues that the current juvenile justice system cannot divert recidivism or prevent juvenile-related crime. House (2013) calls for extensive reform in the department of juvenile justice, citing the eras when restoration and rehabilitation were the focus of the system, not retribution. House (2013) asserts that the Progressive movement did not fail; it simply did not have the resources necessary to succeed. Advocates such as Schwartz (2013) suggest that a trend toward balance is finally taking root. Nevertheless, no historical attempt to converge these two divergent systems has yet to succeed.

### **History of strengths-based programs**

The professional development of strengths-based approaches in social science dates back to 1900, when sociologist Ellen Key predicted the emergence of positive, as opposed to punitive treatments, particularly for youth (Brendtro & Larson, 2004). In 1902, William James wrote on the subject of healthy-mindedness, which emphasized

individual strengths as a basis for individual recovery and growth (Gable & Haidt, 2005). In 1920, physician Karl Wilker advocated finding and capitalizing on the strengths of troubled youth, asserting that every young person, "no matter how deeply they are hidden," possess these positive attributes (Brendtro & Larson, 2004, p. 194). Other prominent voices joined this conversation, including Allport in 1958 and Maslow in 1968 (Gable & Haidt, 2005). These proponents formed the positive psychology movement (Gable & Haidt, 2005). Bozic (2013) attributes the rise of strengths-based approaches in educational psychology to the positive psychology movement, resiliency theory, and community psychology.

Weick, Rapp, Sullivan, and Kisthardt (1989) originally pitched the term "strengths-based" as "strengths perspective". Saleebey spent the following decade expounding on the principles and applications of this concept in social work (Jimenez, 2003; Saleebey, 1996). Today, strengths-based behavioral support systems in programs that serve adolescents have been widely applied in social-service fields due to their success in diverting or changing delinquent behaviors (Hill, 2008; Hurley, Lambert, Epstein, & Stevens, 2015; Winek et al., 2010).

Administration in other fields have also successfully applied strength-based principles. One example is the application of strengths-based approaches in military settings. The military personnel have a reputation of exerting demeaning and harsh treatment (Key-Roberts, 2014). Another example is the public and alternative school systems in California. The policymakers in this system have implemented strengths-based models and programs since the rise of these models at the turn of the century

(Furlong et al., 2009). Strengths-based models and measurement tools are abundant. Architects of the ecosystemic structural family therapy (ESFT) model in the 1980s, for example, designed it to be a therapeutic approach to complex child and family behavioral challenges (Lindblad-Goldberg & Northey, 2013). Other models include the Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale-2, the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment, the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment, and Houvast, a strengths-based approach to youth homelessness (Krabbenborg, Boersma, & Wolf, 2013; Nickerson & Fishman, 2013).

### **Application of strengths-based programs in the juvenile justice system**

According to Gonzalez (2012), approaches besides punitive policies have been widely sought due to dramatic increases in juvenile crime rates, prison populations, and school suspensions since the turn of the 21st century. Lehmann et al. (2012) report that strengths-based approaches have been developing in the U.S. justice system for twenty years. These programs have been given credit for reducing over-crowding in the justice system (Amirthalingam, 2013; Shdaimah & Bailey-Kloch, 2014).

Strengths-based philosophy has a rich history in the justice system. Abbott (1913) was the first to suggest a strengths-based orientation for criminal justice, arguing that incarcerated men ought to focus on productive efforts as a means to bolster a sense of purpose. Abbott (1913) thought this sense of purpose would perpetuate, thus transforming the offender into a productive member of society. Preceding this effort by nearly 100 years were the reformatories designed to rehabilitate delinquent youth, with the aim of preventing them from becoming adult offenders (House, 2013; Whitehead & Lab, 2013).

As mentioned previously, in 1997, Clark and Corcoran greatly advanced the practice of strengths-based approaches with offending juveniles by applying Solution-Focused Brief Therapy, or SFBT (Lehmann et al., 2012). The elements of SFBT are mutual respect, the discovery of an offender's strengths, and optimism for the offender's future. Proponents of this approach view these characteristics as a means not only to detour the youth from reoffending, but also to replace the compulsion or need to reoffend altogether (Lehmann et al., 2012). This form of intervention did not have the traction necessary to dominate the field, evidence for which includes the 2002 reauthorization of the JJDP (O'Bryant et al., 2003). New Hampshire lawmakers, however, instituted a strengths-based approach in 2001, at the very inception of their division for juvenile justice services (Jensen & Vance, 2004).

Harvey and Hill (2004) continued attempts to ignite the strengths-based philosophy on a national level by researching and promoting the development of strengths-based approaches as a viable approach to serving at-risk youth. Nissen (2006) called for the strong reconsideration of strengths-based programs in the juvenile justice system, summing up the strengths-based approach as involving "a focus on the generally untapped gifts, positive attributes, and under-developed capabilities of persons, families, and even communities" (Nissen, 2006, p. 41). Nissen (2006) further discusses how a strengths-based system diminishes counter-productive negative labeling, which reframes the problem as an opportunity for positive growth and change. Greenwood (2008) called for an unbiased look at the evidence supporting the value of prevention programs. Nevertheless, as Goshe (2013) highlighted, the 2008 reauthorization of the Justice and

Delinquency Prevention Act was a stronger influence, returning the DJJ to its punitive nature.

As the DJJ returned to its punitive nature, the largest social work system in the country, The Administration of Children and Families, finally provided a definition and directive toward a strengths-based value system (DePanfilis, 2006). According to the Administration of Children and Families, to be strengths-based is to focus not on what is inherently absent or lacking, but rather to emphasize the assets and strengths of the individual, the family unit, and the community at large (DePanfilis, 2006, p. 45). An example of the practical application of this definition is the Support Network Intervention Team, a therapeutic approach involving the whole family that is solution focused, as opposed to deficit focused (Winek et al., 2010). This approach emphasizes and promotes existing strengths instead of focusing on work to shore up weaknesses (Winek et al., 2010).

I found stated within the NASW Code of Ethics that the mission of social work is to meet humanitarian needs and to promote wellbeing, further asserting the achievement of wellbeing through personal and community empowerment (National Association of Social Workers, 2008, Preamble). According to Peters (2011), social work has no effective collaborative history with corrections institutions, which serve one of the most vulnerable populations in our country. Peters (2011) suggested that social work and corrections should and could find an effective means of collaboration moving forward, and he further argued that social workers would, by nature of the mission, make effective JPOs.

Today, significant reports, such as the internationally published report titled "Review of effective practice in juvenile justice" (Murphy et al., 2010), reveal that the punitive, get-tough measures of the juvenile justice system have been largely ineffective. More recently, Wilson (2014) asserted that the zero tolerance position has not only been ineffective, but that it has actually fostered failure. According to Brooks and Roush (2014), and McAlinden (2011), there is a renewed trend toward incorporating strengths-based prevention programs into the consequence-based DJJ system. Currently, DJJ administration has applied strengths-based systems in juvenile justice throughout the country in the form of diversion and prevention programs (Görge et al., 2013; Whitehead & Lab, 2013). Mathur and Nelson (2013) praised the efforts of many state departments and school systems for changing their cultures from punitive to strengths-based. They further call into question the surge of zero-tolerance policies, which lean toward the criminalization more than the rehabilitation of youth offenders (Wilson, 2014).

Taxman (2010) and Kuehn and Corrado (2011) emphasized that the juvenile justice system generates confusing and contradictory messages for offenders because of the convergence of both punitive and strengths-based philosophies. I explored this very convergence in the current study. I found that the participants did experience the confusion and contradiction that Taxman (2010) and Kuehn and Corrado (2011) have asserted.

### **Strengths-based diversion programs in Florida**

In Florida, definitively strengths-based diversion programs are sparse due to Zero Tolerance Policy 1006.13. This policy states that there is to be no leniency for delinquent behaviors in the public-school system (Florida Department of Education, 2013). Despite this strict policy, strengths-based approaches to behavior management have started to gain traction in the Florida DJJ since 2013 (Dembo, Gullledge, Robinson, & Winters, 2011; Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2013).

Diversion programs are designed to keep offending youths in the community but under the supervision of a juvenile probation officer (JPO). The purpose is to keep these youths out of the juvenile system as much as possible (Ryan, 2014; Tsui, 2014). In Florida, the following programs are DJJ sponsored: Community Arbitration, Juvenile Alternative Services Program, Teen Court, Intensive Delinquency Diversion Services, Civil Citation, Boy and Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs mentoring programs, and alternative schools (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2012). Only four of these programs are strengths-based in accordance with the definition provided earlier. These programs include the PACE Center for Girls, the Florida Alliance for Boys and Girls Clubs, Prodigy, and Big Brothers Big Sisters Statewide (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice Youth Programs, 2012).

Whereas directors of purely strengths-based programs reject the notion that punitive measures can have positive outcomes, not everyone in the DJJ agrees that all negative reinforcement is counterproductive. According to Cox, Allan, and Hanser (2014) in their book, *Juvenile Justice: A Guide to Theory, Policy, and Practice*, negative



reinforcement is an effective approach to behavior modification. Negative reinforcement helps detour delinquent behavior by reducing or removing a negative consequence as a reward for positive behavior. Strengths-based approaches, on the other hand, direct staff to avoid listing negative consequences as a viable form of behavior modification altogether. Strengths-based approaches promote a focus on the rewards that come with the development of the youth's strengths (Bower, Carroll, & Ashman, 2015).

The military-style boot camps for juvenile offenders is an example of an extreme punitive setting. Military boot camps rose to prominence in the early 1980s (Wilson, MacKenzie, & Mitchell, 2008). This system of behavior modification is in stark contrast to the strengths-based system. In a 2010 report issued by the Department of Justice, this punitive-based approach was considered ineffectual after nearly 30 years of prominence (Wilson, MacKenzie, & Ngo, 2010). Even though strong proponents of the strengths-based approach classified these boot camps as abusive (Brendtro & Martin, 2014), this extreme example of punitive-based approaches was not without merit. Boot camps lowered cost by offering shorter, but more severe sentences, and increased the offender's ability to achieve self-control (Jolliffe, Farrington, & Howard, 2013).

A much less drastic approach to behavior modification, yet still one that clashes with strengths-based interventions is the most recent use of reintegrative shaming. Reintegrative shaming is a technique used in Restorative Justice; an approach to behavior modification that incorporates a balance of negative and positive reinforcement (Mongold & Edwards, 2014). Whereas the proponent of reintegrative shaming is careful to distinguish the offense from the offender, so as not to shame the person but the action,

they nevertheless emphasize that the offender internalizes the negative effects of the offending action. Such an approach allows the offender to create empathy, and by extension, to modify behavior (Mongold & Edwards, 2014). This is problematic for the pure strengths-based program, since any use of negative reinforcement is counterproductive, according to proponents.

### **The Literature and Methodology**

Based on the theories outlined above, systems that are different and incongruent may conflict when required to work together. Sanger and Giddings (2012) stress the validity of qualitative research when interviewing participants from social agencies with highly stressful roles, which, according to Lewis et al. (2013), includes the role of Juvenile Probation Officers. Gregersen and Sailer (1993) chose qualitative research methods for studying social behaviors in chaotic systems. Akmansoy and Kartal (2014) also chose qualitative methods for their study of chaos with an objective to understanding lived experiences and worldviews.

The Florida DJJ and strengths-based diversion/prevention program staff manage behavioral challenges using incongruent approaches, and the youths they both serve must navigate between these approaches. In the literature, authors suggest that a qualitative method that focuses on understanding the lived experience of both JPOs and strengths-based program staff would best serve the objectives of the current study (Choi, Green, & Gilbert, 2011; Davidson, Jimenez, Onifade, & Hankins, 2010; Shaw, 2014).

Unfortunately, I was only able to gather data from counseling staff members of the

strengths-based school, and not the JPOs. Though I had obtained IRB approval from the Florida DJJ, the individual circuit chiefs declined participation.

Moreover, I consider social mechanisms in this study, which, according to Starke (2013), requires qualitative research processes. For example, since the strengths-based program staff concur that their collaboration, to varying degrees, is effective, I identified the social mechanism or the reason for this success. By contrast, the strengths-based program staff did not find collaboration always effective, therefore discovering the reason is crucial for further study.

With regard to systems theory, researchers often apply qualitative methodologies in the study of social systems. For example, Choi et al. (2011) applied qualitative methods to understand the lived experience of juvenile offenders in restorative justice systems. Shaw (2014) applied qualitative methods to understand the lived experiences and opinions of staff in residential children's homes concerning the pipeline from such homes into the juvenile justice system. Finally, Davidson et al. (2010) used a qualitative methodology to better understand the experiences of adolescents in the Adolescent Diversion Project.

### **Phenomenology**

Edward Husserl originally developed phenomenology around 1900 (Beyer, 2013; Creswell, 2012; Wertz, 2005). Within the following two decades, Husserl developed phenomenology further into transcendental phenomenology, which requires strict suspension of bias on the part of I (Beyer, 2013; Creswell, 2012). Husserl refers to this

ability as epoché, or bracketing (Beyer, 2013; Creswell, 2012). This technique is developed further in Chapter Three.

A student of Husserl, Martin Heidegger, later developed hermeneutic phenomenology (Kafle, 2011; Lavery, 2003; Stassen, 2003). The objective of hermeneutic phenomenology is to understand the phenomenon exclusively through the lens of the participant (Kafle, 2011; Lavery, 2003; Stassen, 2003). Reality is relative and subjective. This is in contrast to Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, which attempts to reduce the participant's experience down to clear, logical meaning, thus identifying a common reality (Kafle, 2011; Lavery, 2003). A third approach, which capitalizes on Heidegger, is existential phenomenology (Kafle, 2011). Existential phenomenology holds the perspective that transcending or detaching oneself from the phenomenon of study will actually exempt I from truly understanding the occurrence (Kafle, 2011). Is are to saturate themselves in the phenomenon. Unbiased observation on the part of I does not achieve understanding, but rather, personal experience achieves understanding.

The first step in research is to convey the phenomenon from the perspective of those who are experiencing it. Therefore, I applied a phenomenological hermeneutic method to this study. The analysis inherent in transcendental phenomenology is premature. An existential-phenomenological approach is not practical since I is not able to experience the convergence first hand.

Researchers applying hermeneutic phenomenology commonly use the interview as the preferred tool for data collection (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). I conducted semistructured, one-on-one interviews with nine strengths-based diversion school staff

members. Since there are so few participants, I focused less on the interpretation of the data and more on the raw descriptions of the data in order to generate possibilities for further research. My focus was on what the participants experience and not so much on how they are experiencing it (Schuback, 2006). Finally, bracketing was an essential exercise for me, since I have an employment history with the strengths-based school represented in this study.

### **Conclusion**

Though we can see in the literature an increase in strengths-based applications within the juvenile justice system, the literature would appear not to include information concerning the convergence of these two opposing systems; the strengths-based diversion/prevention programs and the consequence-based Department of Juvenile Justice. The literature does not include concerns or dilemmas that may have arisen or that might arise at the convergence of these two systems. Using qualitative methodology, I explored that gap.

However, the information from the literature did provide direction for the methodology and research questions that best served the objectives of the current study. I applied a qualitative, phenomenological method using structured one-on-one interviews to understand the lived experiences of the strengths-based diversion-program staff as it relates to their convergence with JPOs who function from the divergent consequence-based approach to behavior management.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experience of the staff from two incongruent systems. These two systems are managed by the JPOs who are mandated to function from a consequence-based approach to behavior management, and the counseling staff of the strengths-based school program. Youths who are DJJ involved experience both of these management systems, and often within the same day. In this study, I addressed the perspective of the strengths-based diversion program staff.

The incongruence between these systems lies in the management approaches taken with the youths they serve. JPOs are mandated by the DJJ to take sanctions-based measures (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017a; Hodges et al., 2011; Hinton, Sims, Adams, & West, 2007), while diversion day-school counselors are mandated to take strengths-based measures. Additionally, in the state of Florida, the DJJ funds both systems, even though they are incongruent behavior management systems (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017a).

In this chapter, I present the research design and rationale and discuss the role of I and the methodology. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the trustworthiness of this research approach and a consideration of possible ethical issues.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The overall research question for this study was: how do strengths-based diversion program staff perceive the convergence of incongruent systems? For example,

does the staff perceive the convergence as a successful approach to managing youth offenders? If so, then how? If not, then how?

The phenomenon of interest is the point where the punitive ideology of the DJJ and the strengths-based ideology of the diversion program intersect. The staff who must navigate this intersection described this phenomenon to me in a phone interview lasting from 45 minutes to one hour. The interview protocol that I used for collecting data focused on the lived experiences of the staff as related to the phenomenon of intersecting ideologies and practices. I used a hermeneutic, phenomenological design for this study. Phenomenology is a suitable design and method for this study because my goal was to understand this phenomenon through the lens of those experiencing the occurrence.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role as the primary researcher was to conduct all interviews. I had a great deal of experience with strengths-based programs; therefore, I applied Husserl's bracketing method to reduce personal bias (Beyer, 2013; Creswell, 2012). I had observed the interaction between JPOs and strengths-based program staff for more than 4 years. For the first 3 years, I was a philosophy teacher in this strengths-based diversion-program day school for female youths. I interacted with the counseling staff, who had direct contact with JPOs. In the last year, I had direct contact with JPOs as the counseling staff manager.

Fischer (2009) and Tufford and Newman (2012) emphasized that bracketing is not a one-time event by which all bias is suspended until the analysis is complete. Rather, bracketing requires an ongoing awareness of my stated biases and vigilance to perceive

previously undetected biases as the research progresses. I was mindful of this throughout the process.

As it was my experience that led me to consider the necessity of the current study, so also it is this experience from which I must un-bias herself. I had participated in discussions with staff from both systems that has included frustration, as well as cohesion. I had also participated in discussions with the youths that both systems serve regarding this convergence. The first step I took to bracket this experience was to, as thoroughly as possible, journal the conclusions that were drawn based on her experience. Second, I kept an abridged version of these conclusions in clear sight at all times as a tool for continual vigilance. Third, I posted a reminder to be alert to biases that may surface during research. As previously undiscovered biases surfaced, I added them to the list. I then reviewed and bracketed her biases before sorting and analyzing the data.

## **Methodology**

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Triangulating the results through member checking and subjecting the findings to peer review strengthens credibility (Creswell, 2012; Silverstein and Auerbach, 2003). The request for participation in the study included a request for a follow-up review of the findings to assure accuracy. Each participant provided a response to the findings. These responses are in Appendix F.

In addition to member checking, I asked the corporate office of the diversion school to allow one of its other 19 center locations in the state of Florida the opportunity



to review and comment on the findings. Unfortunately, I was not able to obtain this triangulation.

Additional support for transferability lies in the thick description (Saldaña, 2012) inherent within the extensiveness of the information gleaned during the interview process. I had hoped to achieve triangulation by including other branches of the same organization to confirm the findings, but this was unfortunately not possible.

Finally, by employing the same bracketing technique so essential to the data collection process, I endeavored to maintain a mental state of unknowing while interpreting the data. Saldaña (2012) terms this reflexivity. To the best of my ability, I did not allow what she had experienced to be a filter for what others have experienced.

### **Delimitations**

As a qualitative study, the results of this study are not generalizable. It is my intention to simply to provide a platform for new information and presently unheard voices. The sample was limited; therefore, saturation was limited to the population in the current location. Additionally, the strengths-based diversion day school exclusively serves girls ages 11-17. Since the results suggest that conflict exists between these incongruent systems, that conflict may be due to the management of girls as opposed to boys.

A third delimitation includes the type of approach to diversion the current school employs. Not all diversion programs claim to be strengths-based. Though all programs promote diversion from delinquent to socially productive behaviors, not every program necessarily emphasizes the promotion of personal strengths over personal discipline as a

primary approach to behavior modification (DeAngelis, 2011). Therefore, the findings may only apply to diversion programs that are expressly strengths-based.

### **Ethical Procedures**

I sent a written request to the corporate office of the diversion school, stating the precise interview procedure and location and including the actual interview questions. The request included assurances of anonymity and that I would not document personal names or center locations. The diversion school program was given the option to remain anonymous as a DJJ-contracted, strengths-based academic diversion program.

I thoroughly informed the participants regarding what they can expect in the interview. Appendix B includes the preamble to each interview. I secured written permission to record the interview and assured against any identifying remarks during the recorded part of the interview. In the end, no interview was recorded. I documented each participant with a number. Participant numbers were associated with email addresses until member-checking was complete. During data collection, no participant accidentally provided confidential information regarding DJJ-involved youth.

The collection process included two steps for the participants: (a) the interview and (b) data review of the synthesized data. Participant emails were deleted after the second step. A final step was to include an anonymous center's preliminary review of the findings. However, the organization was not able to accommodate that request.

The transcribed data did not include any identifying information. Reference numbers identified participants. I handled all data anonymously from collection to archive with the exception of a list separated from the data that matched participant

numbers to email addresses, again for the purpose of member-checking the findings.

Once member-checking was complete, I deleted the list.

It is appropriate to provide a gesture of appreciation for those who provide 45 minutes of their busy day. Since the diversion-school staff works on an 8am-4pm schedule, counselor participation was during off-work hours. The participants selected a \$10 gift card to a preferred establishment.

One final ethical concern included conflicts of interest or a perceived power differential. Since I requested to interview counselors with whom I had no previous introduction, it was prudent to refrain from divulging my previous experience as a manager at a different location within the organization. The counselors may have provided skewed answers if they felt a former superior was interviewing them. Beyond these factors, bracketing the experiences with the diversion school was imperative to a successful process.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I consider how to explore the convergence of two incongruent systems, by interviewing counselors from a strengths-based diversion day school. The phenomenon of interest was the point at which the punitive culture of the DJJ and the strengths culture of the diversion day school intersect, as described by the staff who must navigate this intersection. A discussion was presented on the best method—a hermeneutic, phenomenological approach—for understanding the lived experience of participants.

I provided a description of the procedure for identifying and recruiting the best participants. Participants included nine counselors from a strengths-based diversion program in an academic setting. After discussing the data analysis plan, I discussed issues of trustworthiness. The analysis and follow-up process lent support to the proposed study's credibility and transferability. This chapter concluded with a discussion of ethical procedures, including potential concerns such as confidentiality and data disposal.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the intersection of two incongruent behavior management systems. The DJJ uses JPOs to execute court sanctions on youth offenders (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2017a). The DJJ refers to this as consequence-based management. The JPOs have the mandate to assure that the youth offender is completing the requirements of probation, and if they do not, the JPOs must report the youth. These JPOs manage many of the same female youths who attend strengths-based schools. The consequence-based system tends to utilize the fear of consequences as a predominate source of motivation. Conversely, the strengths-based system tends to minimize the use of consequences by exploring the strengths of the youth in the midst of an infraction. The female youth, while under the supervision of the JPOs, is motivated to comply in order to avoid adverse consequences, while the same female youth is motivated to comply based on positive reinforcement at the strengths-based school.

The overall research question was: how do the staff of strengths-based diversion programs integrate two seemingly incongruent youth behavior management systems with the same youth? A subquestion was how do they describe the programs' convergence? According to the authors of ECTC, exposure to incongruent systems can have adverse effects such as confusion and ineffectiveness (Brack, Lassiter, Hill, & Moore, 2011). The authors of ECTC also suggest that the solution to conflict emerges from that conflict, as

do attractors that naturally create cohesion even in the midst of divergence. Indeed, participants reported conflict in their interactions with JPOs, and some also reported how solutions to the conflict emerged from the forced interaction. Several of the participants acted as attractors that helped form cohesion between the JPOs and the staff.

In this chapter I discuss setting and demographic characteristics of the participants. I explained the data collection and analysis process, and I discussed evidence of trustworthiness. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the results.

### **Setting**

The initial data collection plan was to conduct face-to-face, recorded interviews. However, due to a change in the convenience sample, I conducted phone interviews. I was not able to rely on a sufficient number of participants in the local area, so I opened the study to eighteen of the nineteen strengths-based schools for female youths located around the state of Florida. One school was excluded due to my previous employment with that center.

I did not record the phone interviews. Instead, I reflected all answers back to the participant for accuracy. I read each answer back to the participant to assure for accuracy before moving on to the next question. I did not move on from a question until the participant acknowledged that the answer was a correct reflection.

### **Demographics**

All participants were female counselors who work full time at one of 19 strengths-based schools for female youths around the state of Florida. The vast majority of the counseling staff in this organization are female. However, most centers typically

include at least one male academic teacher. Each participant reported interaction with JPOs, and also with the female youths who must navigate between the two behavior management systems. Three counselors reported previous employment with the DJJ, and two of those were employed as JPOs.

### **Data Collection**

I collected data from nine participants. I assigned a number to the participant once an interview day and time was scheduled. Participant numbers are 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309.

I used the same semistructured interview instrument with each participant. I conducted each interview by phone. I conducted all interviews after work hours. In two cases, the participants were located at their office. I conducted two other interviews with participants as they were driving home from the center, and I conducted the rest of the interviews with participants from their residences. Interview 304 lasted 36 minutes, but the remaining eight ranged from 47 to 59 minutes each. Participant 304 lacked firsthand experience with the JPOs. This was the reason for the shortened interview.

I typed the data on a computer as the answers were provided, using a Word platform. I used a headset in order to free the hands to type. At the end of each answer I was careful to reiterate the answers in order to assure for accuracy. Finally, I encountered no unusual circumstances in the data collection process. I was not interrupted during any interview. I used the Interview Preamble Script, located in Appendix C, at the beginning of each interview.

Originally, the data collection plan included JPOs who have had direct experience with the strengths-based school for female youths. Even though the research was approved by the DJJ IRB, the individual circuit chiefs declined the participation of their JPOs.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Coding Strategy**

I followed Saldaña's (2012) process for coding. I began the extraction process by sifting through the data and searching for concepts directly linked to the research question. Saldaña's (2012) full process proceeds as follows: (a) extracting the significant concepts; (b) interpreting the meaning of each concept; (c) sorting each concept according to theme; and, finally, (d) expounding on the themes using rich description.

Data were initially and broadly coded for values-based beliefs, assessment of worth, and attitudes. This is referred to as values coding (see Saldaña, 2012). My goal was to categorize the data broadly according to the research questions, thus preparing for a more detailed screening in the second phase of analysis. Data consisted of 432 statements from the original interviews, and 34 from the follow-up survey designed to member-check the findings. Every statement was categorized.

As detailed in Chapter 2, regarding the theoretical framework of the proposed study, understanding the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the participants is crucial to evaluate the presence of conflict. Saldaña (2012) provides the example of coding a V for assessment of worth, a B for a belief, and an A for an attitude alongside transcribed data.



The second phase of coding and analysis synthesized the codes into broader categories. This is referred to as pattern coding (Saldaña, 2012). Eight meaningful statements emerged in this phase.

### **Coding for Value-based Beliefs**

Maxwell-Smith, Seligman, Conway, and Cheung (2015) distinguished between several forms of belief. Descriptive beliefs, for example, are knowledge, or information based, and ego-expressive beliefs consider self-concept. Values-based beliefs are beliefs that are in line with personal values. Maxwell-Smith et al. (2015) used the example of, “abortion is a form of murder,” and “humans should adjust their lifestyle to stop climate change,” (p.127).

I sorted what the participants believed about both the consequence-based system of the DJJ and the strengths-based system of the school for female youths. I sub-coded for positive and for aversive statements per system. I used the label B1+ and B1- to beliefs regarding the consequence-based system of the DJJ and B2+ and B2- to beliefs regarding the strengths-based system of the school for female youths. I also created a category for beliefs regarding the effects of these systems on the female youths. I labeled that category B3.

With regard to positive beliefs about the effects of the consequence-based system as it currently operates, every participant made optimistic statements about the DJJ and their experiences with JPOs. The most common themes highlighted the need for consequences as a motivational tool, and taking responsibility for inappropriate behavior. As for example, participant 301 stated, “Children need to understand that there are good

and bad consequences,” and participant 305 remarked, “Consequences are always necessary. That’s life.” Participant 308 commented that JPOs “try to see what the problem is and help them understand the consequences of their actions,” and 309 provided an example, stating, “I had one female youth say to me that she started changing her behavior because of the third strike.”

Each participant made twice as many aversive statements regarding the current integration of the two systems. Participant 301 stated, “I believe JPOs should focus more on what the youth is doing correctly and give them a fair chance to be successful.” Participant 303 observed of one JPO: “He was all about the charge and the behavior. Like a drill sergeant. You are criminalizing this child and not looking beyond the behavior to the trauma.” She added that the prevailing attitude tends to be, “You break the law and there is consequence, and it doesn’t matter if you were traumatized, or neglected. You break the law, you pay.” Participant 305 stated, “I see some changes but for the most part the DJJ is still punitive-based. They have a lot of work to do.”

With regard to the strengths-based system of the school for female youths, every participant believed this approach is highly effective. As for example, participant 301 commented, “They (the female youths) are surrounded by people who advocate for them,” and “We are focusing on the good that the female youths have within them.” Participant 302 summed up the strengths-based approach this way; “Strengthening self-esteem, mental health, stability, morals, self-worth,” adding, “We spin consequence into positive experience.” Participant 303 commented, “We look for the good out of the bad,” and in contrast to her perception of the DJJ approach, added “She is not treated like a

criminal.” Participant 304, also in contrast to the influence of JPOs, remarked, “We catch them (the female youths) doing good instead of berating her for what she isn’t doing well.” Participant 306 believes that in the strengths-based system, “the counselors look past the attitude to explore the problem.” Participant 305 also remarked, “the strengths-based approach builds them up and helps them understand the whys,” citing the importance of “helping her understand the origin of the behavior; the trauma.”

The strengths-based model is not without concern. Participant 303 believed that “Some female youths are so high level that they will only respond to a stricter environment.” Participant 309 commented that, “The strengths-based doesn’t deal enough with the group dynamic,” adding, “The strengths-based system does not work to the degree where we are not really taking in the dynamic of female youths when they are together.”

The final category regarding beliefs involves the effects of the convergence of these two systems on the female youths. The participants were asked to expound on the effects, whether positive or negative, they have observed on the female youths as these youths navigate between the two incongruent systems. All but one participant responded with an observation of changed behavior. Participant 308 commented, “The female youths’ behavior does not change when the JPO is present.”

Participant 301 responded, “The female youths straighten up when they see their JPOs.” Participant 307 observed that, “the girl took the situation more seriously with the JPO there; more timid; avoided eye-contact; didn’t volunteer information.” Likewise, 303 included that, “the JPO helps her walk the straight the narrow,” but added that “they

struggle navigating the two systems. It's embarrassing when the JPOs visit them at school. But not for some female youths." Participant 302 agreed that "It creates embarrassment for female youths when the JPOs show up. They go into survival mode when dealing with their JPOs."

Participant 304 observed that, "They're scared and nervous. I've seen a female youth hide. Its warranted fear because these JPOs can put them in jail." Participant 306 also observed that, "the stress level rises when the JPOs come to the center. I have observed JPOs going off on the female youths. They don't freak out when the JPO shows up, but it's rarely viewed as a positive experience." Participant 309 agreed, stating, "Yes, very stressful when the JPO comes."

Participant 305 offered a unique perspective that, "at (name of school), the interaction with JPOs feels safer for the female youths because they are in an affirming environment. With others, they are standoff-ish; very guarded with the JPOs. Their body language changes. They become nervous- withdrawn. They're always guarded with the JPO. The trust is not there."

### **Coding Strategy Assessment of Worth**

Assessment of worth is an evaluation of the effectiveness of each program according to the participants. I explored to what degree each system is valued by the participants as a guiding principle. According to Prinsloo (2014), guiding principles are societal and personal determinations of effective behavior. The participants were asked to assess the current DJJ system and the strengths-based system in terms of effectiveness,

I labeled V1 for consequence-based system and V2 for strengths-based system. Several participants expressed a lack of value with the current DJJ system to effectively motivate the female youths toward positive behaviors. All participants expressed that the strengths-based system was of great value toward motivating change in the female youths.

Even though each participant could find at least one positive aspect of the consequence-based system, not all participants particularly value that system. For example, participant 304, in support of a consequence-based approach, remarked, “The female youths are held accountable for their actions, and have to do something they might not want to do,” but then added, “They (the JPOs) don’t necessarily use it as a teachable moment but rather a thing to complete.” She distinguished between a consequence-based system and her lived experience with the existing DJJ system. Participant 303 commented, “The consequence structure keeps them in the cycle of recidivism,” adding, “I do not subscribe to it.” Her lived experience includes positive experiences with JPOs, but only as the JPO has moved beyond the consequence and aided the female youth to obtain actual help. The JPO, “knew the trauma and worked on trying to help her not violate probation.”

In contrast, every participant asserted that the strengths-based system has tremendous value, and each one subscribes to this model on a personal level. Participant 306 remarked, “It rolls over into my personal life.” Participant 301 acknowledged that the strengths-based approach has taught her to “find a strength in every adverse situation,”

both professionally and personally. She concluded her thought with, “I believe in this concept wholeheartedly.”

### **Coding Strategy Attitudes**

Coding for attitudes allowed me to consider the participants’ personal opinions and feelings regarding both systems. Collisson and Howell (2014) describe attitudes in terms of what an individual likes or dislikes. An attitude is an emotional reaction to the world around us. An intriguing notion is that, “people like others to the extent that those others are similar to themselves,” (Collisson & Howell, 2014, p. 385). This concept plays out in the current study. I discovered that the attitudes of the participants hinged on the similarities and dissimilarities of the two systems when measured against personal and professional preferences.

I used the code A1 for the consequence-based system of the DJJ, and A2 for strengths-based system of the school. Most of the statements reflect beliefs and valuation, but a few statements clearly reflected the participants’ sentiments regarding both systems.

Regarding the consequence-based system, A1, participant 302 remarked, “I don’t know if it’s helping, but I don’t necessarily think it’s hurting.” This attitude is considered ambivalent. Participant 303 reflected on her experience with the current system, stating, “You (the existing DJJ system) are criminalizing this child and not looking beyond the behavior to the trauma.” The attitude, here, is one of disdain. Participant 307 went as far as asserting, “I’m glad someone’s looking into this,” regarding the difficulty of the two systems to cohesively function. Participant 305 feels that “for the most part the DJJ is still punitive-based,” adding, “DJJ tries to implement more positive strategies, but there’s still

a lot of resistance with the JPOs to help these girls.” In this statement, the participant is expressing empathy with a system that functions contrary to her values.

A2, attitudes regarding the strengths-based system, is in stark contrast. As I have already reported, every participant esteems the strengths-based system on a personal level. For example, Participant 307 responded, “I try to make sure that everything I do is through a strengths-based lens.” Participant 309 conceded, “With everything you do, you have to have consequences,” but added, “applaud when they are doing something right.” Participant 303 feels that, “We are so unique... I can empower this female youth to act differently.”

### **Coding Strategy Cohesiveness**

Coding for cohesiveness allowed me to explore whether or not conflict emerges in the convergence. For this study, “conflict” is defined as incompatible systems occupying the same space. As a result, the convergence point is characterized by chaos, disruption, and incohesion.

Cohesiveness is illustrated by a group’s ability to achieve collective efficacy; the successful effort to gain social control and cooperation among diverse populations or systems (Volker, Mollenhorst, Steenbeek & Schutjens, 2016). In the current study, I explore the extent to which the JPOs successfully cooperate with the strengths-based school to achieve positive results. This was a critical consideration for the interview instrument to address since it speaks directly to the theory of this study.

Question eight explores the cohesiveness of the integrated systems.

*Q. 8: Do you believe that the strengths-based system of the school functions cohesively with the consequence-based DJJ system? Why or why not?*

The purpose of this question, and question 10 are to ascertain whether the participants have naturally created from the conflict generated by the two incongruent systems. All participants, with the exception of 304, brought rich description to these questions. Participant 304 did not feel that she could contribute to these questions due to a lack of firsthand experience.

All qualifying participants acknowledged that the two systems work effectively together to some degree, though the reasons for and the extent of the cohesion is widely varied. Participant 305 commented that the two systems are “sometimes cohesive, but mostly there are brick walls.” This is in stark contrast to participant 301 who asserts, “I believe that the two programs work harmoniously.” This participant and participant 306 share locations, and the sentiment is shared by 306, who remarked, “They mesh well together.”

This lead me to consider if participants who shared locations are having the same experience. Indeed, participant 305 shares the same location and perspective with participant 307, who answered, “No. It’s not cohesive, but they do work together.” Similarly, participant 302, who resides on the other side of the state of Florida, commented, “Sometimes they work cohesively,” adding, “but only with the JPOs that go above and beyond.”

Most of the participants expounded on unique solutions that emerged from the conflict. Participant 301 referred to the JPO as “another parent” who “has the power to



enforce the boundaries.” Likewise, participant 304 has observed that the two agencies “strike a balance.” She provided the example of “good cop, bad cop,” expounding on how the female youths are “held accountable by DJJ, but find the teachable moment by (name of school).” Participant 301 also referred to the relationship as “good cop, bad cop.” Participant 308 observed that “In a lot of ways it brings a balance to the female youths,” and participant 309, who shares the same location, remarked, “Sometimes they need a little bit of fear to help them act right.”

### **Coding Strategy Common Goals**

Coding for common goals allowed me to explore whether or not solutions have emerged, in accordance with ECTC. “Solutions,” for this study, is defined as resolution to the conflict; an emergent strategy that transforms the conflict into a productive occurrence (Brack, 2011). Until now, participants have been fairly deliberate in their responses and sure of how the systems are, or are not working. Conversely, question 10 seemed to elicit uncertainty.

This question explores the common goals between the two systems:

*Q. 10: What goals do you believe both systems share? In what way do you believe these goals are or are not being adequately met?*

Only participant 307 provided a well-informed answer to this question. Without pause for thought, she responded, “Mutual goals include decrease of female youths involved in the system. Prevention assessment tools are used by both agencies. These tools help decrease female youths from getting involved in the first place.”

To the contrary, all other participants either stated that they did not know what the mutual goals are, but took a guess, or they had to think about how to answer the question, signifying that mutual goals are not clearly discussed between agencies. Participant 306 illustrates this pause; “Each side plays a role and (long pause) I don’t know.” Participant 305 asserted, “There are no mutual goals to speak of regardless of the rhetoric,” and 309 responded, “We don’t know what the shared goals are.”

The most common answer encompassed recidivism prevention. Participant 307 responded, “Mutual goals include decrease of female youths involved in the system.” 308 replied, “For the female youth to not end up getting in trouble again.” 303; “To get the female youth out of the system,” and 302; “To reduce recidivism.”

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

To strengthen credibility, I obtained verification from the participants regarding the results of the study. I summarized the data into eight statements, which were then emailed to the participants for verification and/or clarification of the findings. Appendix D includes this member checked data. A discussion of this data is in the summary of the findings

#### **Transferability**

The findings in this study are greatly limited in transferability. The findings may be generalized to other counselors in this precise strengths-based school setting. The results do not transfer to JPOs. Also, since juvenile justice is unique from state to state,

the findings may be limited to strengths-based schools within the state of Florida. I discuss the limitations further in the next chapter.

### **Dependability**

I was careful to maintain a uniform approach to the interview questions. With the exception of gaining greater clarity to a response, the integrity of each question was maintained. Question eleven, for example, asked “Finally, please describe your observations regarding how the juveniles navigate between the consequence-based DJJ and the strengths-based diversion school.” If the participant included an answer that indicated negative stress, I would further ask, “Describe their levels of stress when attempting to navigate between cultures.”

### **Confirmability**

I achieved confirmability by checking each answer given by the participant as the interview progressed. I reflected the given answer back to the participant for confirmation or clarity. If clarity was necessary, I adjusted the answer accordingly, and then reflected each answer until I achieved an acknowledgement of accuracy. Also, I synthesized the data into eight findings. Each participant member-checked the findings. Each either agreed, or provided further clarification as to why they did not agree with the finding.

## **Results**

I identified eight findings from the data that tie directly to the research questions and to the ECTC. The overall research question is; how do the staff of strengths-based diversion programs integrate two seemingly incongruent youth behavior management systems? A sub question is how do they describe the programs' convergence? According

to the authors of ECTC, exposure to incongruent systems can have adverse effects such as confusion and ineffectiveness. I discovered this effect on the female youths that must navigate these two systems. The authors of ECTC also suggest that the solution to conflict emerges from that conflict, as do attractors that naturally create cohesion even in the midst of divergence. I reveal in this study that conflict does exist, and as the authors of ECTC predicted, solutions to the conflict emerged from data analysis.

### **Summary of findings**

I emailed the eight findings to each participant so as to member-check the results. Every participant responded as requested. I asked each participant to respond with either “Agree,” or “Disagree” below each statement. Additionally, if the participant disagreed, I requested that they provide a comment as to why they disagreed.

The first finding that I deduced was that conflict of behavior management exists between the school for female youths and DJJ JPOs, but not all of DJJ. The DJJ Teen Court is an example of a valued program by the school for female youths’ staff. In my second finding I discovered that the JPOs and the school for female youths’ staff manage to work cohesively at least *some* of the time.

My third finding, according to the participants, is that the consequence-based system has some merit. However, it cannot be the only system in place. When it is the only system in place, it becomes counterproductive to successful change.

Fourthly, I discovered that the existing consequence-based system of Florida DJJ, as executed by JPOs (not Teen Court or other diversion programs) has an undesirable effect most of the time. My fifth deduction was that JPOs tend to have an excessive focus

on the adverse aspects of the consequences. My sixth deduction was that the strengths-based approach is both professionally and personally preferred, and my seventh deduction was that the presence of JPOs at the center tends to have an adverse effect on the female youths.

My eighth finding lent direct support to the ECTC authors' assertion that solutions to the conflict will emerge from those navigating the conflict. Two such solutions were presented by participants in the form of cohesive dual roles: Good cop, bad cop; stern father and nurturing mother. Adverse consequences handed down by the JPO were integrated into a positive intervention by the school staff.

### **Themes**

From these eight findings, I deduced two themes. According to Van Manen (1990), theming involves identifying not merely the frequency of a term but rather the frequency of a concept. Two concepts surfaced from the sorting. Before discussing these themes, remember that this data only reflects the opinions of one side. It was my intention to interview both JPOs and strengths-based school counselors. This is further discussed in Chapter 5.

The predominate theme is, opinions greatly vary with regards to the benefits or concerns of the DJJ, as experienced through Juvenile Probation Officers. Conversely, even though the participants unanimously agree that the strengths-based system is effective, they do not agree on the extent of that effectiveness. Some participants clearly state that the collaboration with DJJ is an essential component to the success of the

youths they both serve, while others suggest that it barely has value. The convergence of these two systems is not perceived as an all or nothing collaboration.

This lead to the second theme. Collaboration emerges. Cohesiveness would not appear to be a deliberate agenda of the two divergent agencies, but rather, it is achieved by the individual counselors, and select JPOs. This is particularly evident in the section, Common Goals, where the participants could not readily refer to stated goals between agencies.

### **Discussion**

Participants unanimously agreed with findings 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8, provisionally. Finding 4 states, “The existing consequence-based system of Florida DJJ, as executed by JPOs (not Teen Court or other diversion programs) has an undesirable effect most of the time.” Two of the participants changed the word “most” to “some.”

The synthesis of findings 2,3,4,6 and 8 is as follows: According to the participants, both agencies manage to work cohesively at least some of the time. The consequence-based system has merit, but it cannot be the only system in place. When it is not balanced with the strengths-based approach, it becomes counterproductive. The existing consequence-based system of the Florida DJJ, as executed by JPOs has an undesirable effect some of the time, but not necessarily most of the time. Solutions have emerged from the conflict. The JPOs and the school for female youths’ counselors have found themselves falling into cohesive dual roles such as Good Cop / Bad Cop, and parental roles such as Stern father / nurturing mother. The counselors have managed to turn the adverse consequences, as managed by the JPOs, into a positive intervention.

Findings 1,5, and 7 were not unanimously accepted. Six of the nine agreed with finding 1: “Conflict of behavior management exists between school for female youths and DJJ JPOs, but not all of DJJ. The DJJ Teen Court is an example of a valued program by school for female youths’ staff.” One participant who disagreed, 302, reported in her initial interview that, “Sometimes they work cohesively with JPOs, but only with the JPOs that go above and beyond. But the others are like, ‘I’ll let the judge handle it,’ because that’s all they have to do.” The other two participants that disagreed with finding 1 cite that within their centers the counselors and the JPOs work cohesively. Participant 301 responded, “(Name of school) practices the strength-based model where we focus mainly on the strengths of the female youths, while DJJ focuses mainly on the adverse behavior and consequences that brought them into the system. A key component to the success of the female youths is follow-up/wrap around services. It is critical to the youth to continue to monitor and follow up with them after care is complete. That will ensure the success of the youth and family while we focus on the achievement since coming into the system.” Participant 309 responded, “I do believe that the majority of JPOs and (name of school) staff try to work together for the better good of the youth.”

This same participant, 309, disagreed with finding 5: “JPOs tend to have an excessive focus on the adverse aspects of the consequences.” She responded, “I don’t think JPOs focus *enough* on the adverse aspects of the consequences. If they did, they would seek more alternative solutions.” Six of the nine did, however, agree that JPOs have an excessive focus on the adverse.

Finding 7 draws direct attention to the potential presence of conflict for the female youths: “The presence of JPOs at the center tends to have an adverse effect on the female youths.” Six of the nine participants agreed with this finding. Participant 302 disagreed, provisionally. She wrote, “I disagree with ‘tend.’ It depends on the delivery of the meeting. Meetings (with JPOs at the center) should be more planned out. If a female youth is given adverse information in a meeting and have to return to class, she is no longer paying attention. There needs to be more positive involvement when it pertains to their sanctions, giving directives etc. A planned meeting would help make that better. Even a call ahead of time would help so the counselors are prepared for the ‘what if’s’. It would also be helpful if the staff knew who they were coming to see rather than them having to say their name in the front office where other students/parents may hear and now there could be embarrassment or conflict as a result of confidentially to the female youth’s status.”

Participant 301 reports that the presence of the JPOs at the center elicits the opposite reaction. She responded, “The JPOs that come to our center are like celebrities. They have had several female youths from our center and they give updates of the female youths and vice versa. The JPOs enjoy seeing the female youths in the classroom and seeing their progress socially and academically. So when the other female youths in the center see a JPO, they greet them and the JPOs love all of the attention they get from the female youths in our center. The female youths see firsthand that the JPOs and staff are working together for their success.” This is certainly a unique response when compared to the other participants.



## **Summary**

The majority of responses support the theory that when two divergent systems converge, conflict is present. The data reveals that the female youths who must navigate between these two systems have, at times, had difficulty doing so. Additionally, the findings support proponents of ECTC who assert that solutions will emerge from the chaos. I have discussed responses that indicate that these two conflicting systems have found a way to work cohesively.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of those who participate in a convergence of two agencies that are incompatible in behavior management approaches, and yet must somehow work together in a productive manner. Female youths, ages 11-17, who are involved with the DJJ system, who must report to a JPO, and who attend a strengths-based school will find themselves navigating between systems that are theoretically incompatible.

In this study, I explored the perceptions of the strengths-based school staff participants to deduce if incompatibility was present, and to deduce the nature of the interaction between these two systems. In several instances, these two divergent systems managed to effectively work together to produce positive behavior changes in DJJ-involved youth. According to Brack (et al., 2011), collaboration and cohesion will emerge from the point of conflict.

The data suggested that cohesion, on varying levels, does exist, and that solutions to the philosophical incompatibility have emerged. For example, some counselors have collaborated with JPOs to create an informal family unit, where the JPO is the father figure and the counselor is the mother figure. Other counselors mentioned the emergence of a “good cop, bad cop” approach toward eliciting cooperation between the divergent behavior management approaches.

It is important to note that the credit for cohesiveness does not go to agency policy-making, but rather to individuals in the field: certain strengths-based school counselors and certain JPOs. Volker (2016) discussed how personal relationships tend to create a desired societal collaboration, and the data suggested that where cohesion exists between strengths staff and JPOs, it does so through such personal relationships. Nevertheless, since the data suggested that this collaboration is far from unanimous, agency policy is worth exploring.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The literature would appear not to include information concerning the convergence of these two opposing systems; the strengths-based school and the consequence-based DJJ. The literature does not include concerns or dilemmas that may have arisen or that might arise at the convergence of these two systems. This study explored that gap. I did find conflict, but I also found cohesion amidst the divergence.

The authors of ECTC suggest that conflict emerges when systems with divergent principles, such as the ones in this study, attempt to collaborate (Brack 2011). The participants in this study often described JPOs as a negative force, and the strengths-based school as the remedy. The negative force of the JPO, however, was not always considered to have a negative impact. Many counselors expressed value in having the fear of consequences as a motivational tool toward behavior modification.

Even though, by principle, strengths-based behavior management is the antithesis of the consequence-based approach, many counselors and JPOs have found a way to collaborate. Furthermore, each counselor unwaveringly expressed that the strengths-

based approach is a personal core value. This is in stark contrast to what Hughes (2008) argued, that the assimilation of core values into one's identity prevents systems with divergent core values from resolving conflict. Instead, we find Bernard's (2012) assertion—that conflict leads to the product of cohesion, regardless of core values—to be true.

Perhaps Hughes (2008) does apply when considering the DJJ as a whole. Participants cite programs such as Teen Court and Juvenile Diversion Alternative Program (JDAP), which do utilize some strengths-based tools (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 2007, 2012). Even though the participants did not share the core values of the JPOs approach to behavior management, perhaps they share some of these values with the DJJ overall. I recommend further research in this area.

The authors of ECTC further suggest that the solution to conflict emerges from the conflict, as do attractors that naturally create cohesion even in the midst of divergence. Again, I did find such attractors in the participants' ability to create successful collaboration. Assigning unintentional roles such as father and mother, good cop and bad cop are examples. Rhodes, Lok, Loh, and Cheng (2016) suggested that effective, collaborative roles require interaction; to the degree that these two divergent systems communicate, quality collaboration is created. Indeed, the data that revealed the most effective cooperation between agencies included extensive time working together toward a solution. Negative experiences reported from participants tended to be based on observations from a distance, or an inability to spend sufficient time engaging the JPOs. In one case, it was the persistence of the participant to engage the JPOs, despite an initial

increase in conflict, that resulted in an effective collaboration on behalf of the female youth they both served.

Sebrant (2014) suggested that where power struggles in the exercise of authority emerge, egocentric behavior trumps cooperation toward a common goal. Hence, this study included a question regarding power and influence: Do you view the JPOs as having equal, less than, or more authority over the juveniles than you do? Several participants responded that the JPO has more authority due to their ability to recommend incarceration for lack of compliance. However, other participants clarified that the counselor has more influence over the behaviors of the youth due to the trusting relationship established between the participant and the youth. One participant recalled a time when the JPOs, who recognized that the participant had this power, asked her for assistance in influencing the youth toward changed behavior. According to Sebrant (2014), when individuals view collaboration as noncompetitive, they are inclined to free themselves of envy or regressive behaviors that tend to accompany egocentric competitiveness. This JPO was able to view the relationship between agencies as noncompetitive.

### **Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of this study was that it did not include the perspective of JPOs regarding the nature of their interaction with strengths-based systems. I recommend further research in the next section. A second limitation is that the data only reflected the setting of a strengths-based school, and not necessarily any other strengths-based program sponsored or supported by the DJJ, such as the Boys and Girls Club. Third, even

though the strengths-based ideology is experiencing national momentum, the findings may only apply to the strengths-based and consequence-based convergence in the state of Florida.

### **Recommendations**

My first recommendation revisits the original intention of this study, which was to conduct interviews with the JPOs that must collaborate with the strengths-based school. The JPO is the other half of the story.

My second recommendation for further research is to explore the benefits of a concise policy with regard to common goals and deliberate collaborative efforts between agencies. The cohesion between these two agencies would appear to be a byproduct of forced collaboration as opposed to a best practice. Solutions such as the father/mother approach, or the good-cop/bad-cop approach may be widely utilized, or it may be underutilized. Further research could reveal more of what works toward creating sustainable and effective collaborations, and the results inform these agencies toward creating best practices.

Third, the nine participants that I interviewed represents 13% of the entire counseling staff of all 19 agencies in Florida. Further research could convert the eight findings into a quantifiable survey to determine the extent of the concern, but also to provide opportunity for more solutions to emerge. An opportunity to expatiate solutions could accompany the survey.

My fourth recommendation for further research is to explore the degree to which DJJ programs align with strengths-based interventions, and to more thoroughly explore

the level of communication and collaboration that exists between all the strengths-based programs under the umbrella of the DJJ. It would appear that the strengths-based school and the DJJ, overall, share some common core values.

My fifth recommendation is for researchers to explore the development of agency policy toward creating intentional, instead of unintentional collaboration. Effective agency policy may provide guidance toward creating cohesive and cooperative relationships between individuals that do not share the same behavior management philosophy. As previously mentioned, several participants had developed a parental quality in cooperation with JPOs toward successful behavior modification. The consequence-based presence of the JPO acted as a stern father, in cooperation with the more nurturing presence of the strengths-based counselor. In fact, this parental emphasis is pronounced in the *parens patriate*, or “the state as parent” protocol established over 100 years ago by the founders of the Juvenile Justice system, which underscores the states responsibility to take over parenting the delinquent youth (Brank, 2012; Mears, Pickett, & Macini, 2015).

Policy, in this case, may include expert training toward creating this kind of relationship between agency personnel. I recommend further research into what individual characteristics are present or absent that lends to a cooperative relationship. For example, an absence of an egocentric identity, mentioned earlier (Sebrant, 2014).

The expected behaviors that policy might assert, however, are often undermined by the capacity of people to simply get along. Ezaga (2016) suggested that the inability of people to cooperate toward a common goal is enabled when the players believe that their

control over a situation is threatened. He further equates the feeling of control with a sense of security, suggesting that individuals will do whatever it takes to protect their safety. Therefore, policy should include clear designations of control, as well as a clear vision and direction toward a common goal. This clarity provides a sense of certainty, which lends to feelings of security, and ultimately, cooperation.

### **Implications**

The implications for social change, as represented in both the results of this study and the suggestion for further research, impact every level of society. Individuals, families, society, and agencies could all benefit to one degree or another from more effective DJJ programs. The female youths and their families in the program would benefit by experiencing a cohesive intervention toward behavior modification. Society would benefit by a reduction in recidivism. Steps taken from this study could establish effective divergent program collaborations, which would expand the effectiveness of both programs. Solutions that have emerged in this study, through further exploration, would help inform each agency toward a policy of best practices. An actual protocol or training could be created that provided steps for JPOs and strengths-based school staff to work side by side in a mutually beneficial manner.

The second implication follows the first. The female teens who must navigate between these two currently divergent agencies would find themselves on a more unified track toward successful behavior change. This would lead to a reduction in recidivism, which would lead to healthier communities.



## Conclusions

This journey began with a deep compassion and concern for the female teens that I once served at the strengths-based school mentioned in this dissertation. I was delighted to see the compromise and the collaboration that is emerging from the conflict created by the clash of these divergent systems. I discovered and present in this study a vision toward a strengths-based program that does not merely tolerate a convergence with the DJJ, but celebrates it. Future researchers may result in the development of training programs that actually enable and streamline the counselor and the JPO relationship towards an even greater reduction in recidivism.

The literature suggests that the DJJ, coast to coast, is once again attempting to return to their strengths-based roots; a repeated cycle evident in the historical account of the juvenile justice. Unfortunately, the program, until possibly now, has always cycled back to a punitive, get-tough-on-crime agenda. This study, in cooperation with the literature, offers insight that may help prevent such a relapse for the first time in the history of juvenile justice.

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## Appendix A: Interview Questions

The interview questions for strengths-based school counselors are as follows:

1. Please define what you believe the term “consequence-based” means.
2. Please define what you believe the term “strengths-based” means.
3. Please describe the nature of your interactions with JPOs. How often do you interact with JPOs, and what is the nature of those interactions?
4. What are your thoughts regarding the consequence-based behavior management approach structure of the DJJ, and to what degree do you personally and professionally subscribe to that approach?
5. What are your thoughts regarding what you know about the strengths-based structure of the diversion school, and to what degree do you personally and professionally subscribe to that structure?
6. What are your thoughts regarding what you know about the effect of this strengths-based program on the juveniles that both systems serve? What has been your experience?
7. How about the effects of the consequence-based system?
8. Do you believe that the strengths-based system of the Center functions cohesively with the consequence-based DJJ system? Why or why not?
9. Do you view the JPOs as having equal, less than, or more authority over the juveniles than you do? Please explain your answer.

10. What goals do you believe both systems share? In what way do you believe these goals are or are not being adequately met?
11. Finally, please describe your observations regarding how the juveniles navigate between the consequence-based DJJ and the strengths-based diversion school.

## Appendix B: Interview Preamble Script

“First of all, thank you for your valuable time today. Just to reiterate, this interview is confidential. No one will be able to associate you, personally, to the answer you provide except for me, and even I will no longer have that information once you have completed the follow-up review of the preliminary results. This interview will take approximately 45 minutes. [At this point in the introduction I made sure arrangements were made regarding the gift card of their choice.] The following questions are designed to explore your experiences with Juvenile Probation Officers and the female youths that must navigate between the strengths-based system of the school for female youths and the consequence-based system of the DJJ. This interview will not be recorded. However, I will be typing your answers and then reflecting back to you what I write to assure that I have adequately understood your answer. Do you have any questions for me before we start?”

Appendix C: Interview Data Sample

Questions	301	302	303	304
<p>1 Please define what you believe the term "consequence-based" means.</p>	<p>If you do something unlawful or break a rule there are consequences to that behavior. Children need to understand that there are good and bad consequences. I support that there are consequences.</p>	<p>Something negative. Whatever you have done, we are going to put you in a program, teen court, sanctions, you can't do that and as a result we will give you consequences. Does this describe your experience? Teen court, JDAP, they're trying to do more case management. Their sanctions are the interventions. They took badges away and replaced with ID cards to make them less threatening to the kids, but still authoritarian. (Speaking of Teen Court, not JPOs: Writing apologies, community service. But they also put counseling into place, food stamps, housing authority. They try the positive approach before defaulting to negative approach. Extra mile. It exceeds the expectations of the JPOs job. They put interventions and services in place.</p>	<p>You do the crime you do the time. You do this action, this is the consequence. You break the law and there is consequence, and it doesn't matter if you were traumatized, or neglected. You break the law, you pay. Negative action equal negative consequences. Positive action equal reward. Consequence is a punishment.</p>	<p>The girls are held accountable for their actions, and have to do something they might not want to do. Negative reinforcement. With the JPOs, I have had good experiences with very caring JPOs who are motivating and strengths-based but in the Teen court, they're not interested in excuses. They just want it to get done. When things aren't done they're not interested in why not. But I haven't had bad experiences. They are hard to reach, but that's the worst. The girls tend to be bounced around to different JPOs regularly.</p>
<p>2 Please define what you believe the term "strengths-based" means.</p>	<p>We are focusing on the good that the girls have within them. Focus on the strong attributes of each girl. We as society tend to focus on the negative but not on the fact that these girls have a reason for that negative response. So this is leadership—a strength. A girl pulled a fire alarm. The reason was, she was not being heard. This was her way of speaking up. You can find a strength in every negative situation.</p>	<p>Find out what the real cause of the behavior is instead of punishing the reaction. Talking to the person and finding out what's really going on. Build trust. PBRS: if you have a group of girls all being disrespectful, and 5 or 6 that are quiet, instead of acknowledging the ones being rude, call out and reward the ones that are behaving properly. Providing the girls an opportunity to have a better future by giving them positive guidance and advocacy. Allowing them to be themselves and so they feel like they have a voice. Build trust by showing them they are being heard. Strengthening mental self-esteem, mental health, stability, morals, self-worth. Constant encouragement.</p>	<p>The program is created specifically for girls. Based on the sociology of girls. Gender-specific. We provide counseling, guidance, not to say there are not consequences, but we allow the nature consequences to take place. If a girl gossips about a peer, a natural consequence will be mediation. Mediation focuses on talking it through. What was your role? What could you have done differently? The root is not what causes the explosion. Mediation gets to the root. They are building communication skills and don't even realize it. Learning how to advocate and healing. Coping skills. We teach coping skills, ways to handle the past experiences and how to not react negatively. To respond positively while healing. We look for the good out of the bad. Honoring the female spirit. We do it from a holistic, gentler approach than the DJJ. We help them change their thought processes. To think positively about themselves and their environment. We find the strength in the girl. A lot of times they don't even know the great things inside of them.</p>	<p>Looking at what the girl does well and what she's capable of and what she would be like in a more perfect world. Focusing on the ideal aspects: on what she is capable of instead of beating her for what she isn't doing well.</p>

Questions	301	302	303	304
<p>3 Please describe the nature of your interactions with JPOs. How often do you interact with JPOs, and what is the nature of those interactions?</p>	<p>Outreach counselor. I meet with the JPOs and explain the criteria of the program. Once the JPO recommends a girl I do not speak with them again. This falls to the counselor.</p>	<p>Once a week. Because I use to work as a JPO I am their point of contact. They trust me. I can relate to their frustrations. Also used to work with DCFC. Interaction is intense because I know the whole circle. I observe them to be stern. They're not coming in to be friendly. They'll default to "they're violating" not, "Maybe she needs a program...". They try not to open up a can of words.</p>	<p>Only interacted two times in 3 years. One was harsh. He was all about the charge and the behavior. Like a drill sergeant. You are criminalizing this child and not looking beyond the behavior to the trauma. Another knew the trauma and worked on trying to help her not violate probation. Both were collaborative. The harsh one seemed to always be looking for the violation. I had to really stand on my feet and support the girl. Girl didn't want to be home but she had a curfew. The trauma was in the home and the JPO was not willing to recognize that problem. The root of their legal problems was in the home but the probation required her to be where she was constantly triggered. JPO came around (finally agreed) and helped get the girl into residential. The second JPO (female) was more collaborative. Focused on community service in a positive environment- i.e. the center. The JPO was not looking to violate her.</p>	<p>They're hard to reach. They change a lot. Angry faced (from a long time ago), describe their levels of stress when attempting to navigate between cultures. Yes. They're sensitive/nervous. I've seen a girl hide. "Don't tell him I'm here." His warranted fear because these JPOs can put them in jail.</p>
<p>4 What are your thoughts regarding the structure of the diversion school? Is it consequence-based? To what degree do you personally and professionally subscribe to that structure?</p>	<p>They are heading in the right direction. Teachers and counselors in a smaller setting helps them feel supported. They are surrounded by people who advocate for them. They have the love and support. (School name) knows what they're doing. Of course there are consequences to breaking the rules, but we help them talk through their actions and help them consider a different approach, as opposed to just punishing. They may be sent home for a day of reflection where they are required to consider the situation, their role in it, and at what point could they have made a better decision. They come up with options that they did not consider at the time but now have as a tool for the future. I explain to the parents and potential student that this is the culture of the center. This is fairly new for me. I worked with the DJJ. If you mess up, there are severe consequences. But now I consider the why and not just the action. Giving the girls the tools to be productive citizens. They are not hammered about what they've done wrong. I believe in this concept wholeheartedly.</p>		<p>It is strengths-based. The girls may view it as consequence because they are court ordered to be there. I subscribe to it 100%. We are so unique. Nothing is a cookie cutter. It is girl by girl. Every single girls to be looked at based on background.</p>	<p>Yes. They catch them doing good. Reward systems. Point store. Lots of positive reinforcement. I personally subscribe to this approach.</p>

Questions	301	302	303	304
<p>5 What are your thoughts regarding what you know about the consequence-based structure of DJJ, and to what degree do you personally and professionally subscribe to that structure?</p>	<p>There's still a need for it. We need to figure out why this child made the decision they made. The motivation of punishment has value. Good cop/bad cop. Believe JPOs should focus more on what the youth is doing correctly and give them a fair chance to be successful. Communication is very important between the JPOs, youth and family. In the past working with JPOs, its more of a fearful relationship between the JPOs and youth. The JPO give the command and the youth do it without any questions. The consequence-based system should be changed to focus on the strengths of the youth as well as parental involvement. Parents should be held more accountable for the behavior of the youth and should be more involved.</p>	<p>It depends on the girl. Each girl comes from a different background. What I might think is disrespectful, you may not. Consequences may be effective for some of the girls. At (School name) we'll always try the positive engagements. If you have to give them a negative reinforcement then that's okay, it's just how you do it. A kid with substance abuse. We tried to get them to stop. We decide as a team to send her to rehab. Day of reflection to think about what you did and how to make it better. Detention center- kids act up and are put into confinement--no paper, pencils. We do it differently. Same action, different. We spin consequence into positive experience.</p>	<p>The consequence structure keeps them in the cycle of recidivism. I do not subscribe to it.</p>	<p>The girls have to write apology letters, community service hours, ankle bracelets, courtew checks, court fees. They don't necessarily use it as a teachable moment but rather a thing to complete. There is a place for consequence-based approach. We've had girls not respond until there was a consequence, ie. attendance contract. We had a girl badly. We tried to spin it as she is a leader, but not until there was a consequence did she change. I see a balance for both. They're integrated (both approaches).</p>
<p>6 What are your thoughts regarding what you know about the effect of this strengths-based program on the juveniles that both systems serve? What has been your experience?</p>	<p>(School name) practices the strength-based model where we focus mainly on the strengths of the girls, while DJJ focuses mainly on the negative behavior and consequences that brought them into the system. A key component to the success of the girls is follow-up/wrap around services. It is critical to the youth to continue to monitor and follow up with them after care is complete. That will ensure the success of the youth and family while we focus on the achievement since coming into the system.</p>	<p>High graduation rate. Recidivism decreased. Attitudes change.</p>	<p>Girls that have completed the program break out of recidivism.</p>	<p>I've observed girls' faces light up when they are rewarded. Had girls hear their moms say they are proud of them and that shocks the girls. I've seen girls thrive on that positive attention. The girls look to make her proud of them. Rise in confidence.</p>
<p>7 How about the effects of the consequence-based system?</p>	<p>The girls know that the JPOs have to do their job, they have to be monitored. They get it. The girls get it. They are able to navigate back and forth. The JPOs like the program because it has taught the girls to stand up for themselves and get back on track.</p>	<p>Very little change. Often times you'll have a kid arrested for petty theft not getting off probation until 19 with 5 pages of arrest history. They don't change because their environment hasn't changed. The JPOs don't have the time to be effective. Even if they did have the time, they are not trusted. They have to default, by law, to the consequence. They have to do something about it. The girls can't be honest or else they'll get a new charge. The top want them to be case managers, but they can't really be because they have to violate. I couldn't do that job anymore because of this.</p>	<p>(School name) is not for every girl. Some girls are so high level that they will only respond to a stricter environment. In a softer environment, like (School name) they will break the rules. "Think of the girls that are currently navigating both systems. What are your observations about their journey?" Strengths-based wins every time. "Miss ####, I can see you're not just here for a psychcheck."</p>	<p>see Q5</p>

Questions	301	302	303	304
<p>8 Do you believe that the strengths-based system of the school functions collectively with the consequence-based DJJ system? Why or why not?</p>	<p>It works because it takes the negative attention they are getting and turns it into positive attention. They get the opportunity to experience what it is to make better choices and better decisions. What is the value of the JPO?—once the girls see that the JPO wants them to succeed it makes their job easier. The girls see the JPO as another parent. Someone that cares but has the power to enforce the boundaries. At my center, the JPOs are welcomed and come to the center all of the time in support of the girls and their progress socially and academically. JPOs keep the counselors well informed with the girls progress while on probation and what the girls need to complete the terms of their probation. Communication is big here between the counselors and JPOs. So my disagreement is based on my center and the statement "at least some of the time". So that statement in the question I disagree with because at my center, it is a great relationship between staff and the JPOs.</p>	<p>Sometimes they work cohesively. But only with the JPOs that go above and beyond. But the others are like, "I'll let the judge handle it." Because that's all they have to do.</p>	<p>Yes. When a girl buys into the program she understands that she can be treated differently. She is not treated like a criminal. It keeps their arrest rates down. We do have attendance contracts, behavior contracts, to help keep her from violating. The negative and the positive works together.</p>	<p>It strikes a balance. Good cop/bad cop. Hold accountable but find the teachable moment.</p>
<p>9 Do you view the JPO staff as having equal, less than, or more authority over the juveniles than you do? Please explain your answer.</p>	<p>They have more authority. They have the power over the girls freedom. The girls straighten up when they see their JPOs.</p>	<p>They do in terms of the law. But with the families, we have more influence. We have more influence in their lives.</p>	<p>Less. I can empower this girl to act differently. They can only violate. I can get them off of probation. I have the upper hand. I can change this child's thinking from negative to positive with the cooperation of the child.</p>	<p>Defining authority as influence, then we have bigger influence. But power to arrest, no. For example, we had a girl that we thought was involved in sex trafficking. We have no power to intervene, but the JPO can use an ankle bracelet. This is an example of consequences being used for good.</p>

Questions	301	302	303	304
<p>10 What goals do you believe both systems share? In what way do you believe these goals are or are not being adequately met?</p>	<p>They share the goal that there's more to these girls' future than the direction they are going. To be the best that they can be.</p>	<p>To reduce recidivism, to get these kids back on the right track. We have the same goals, we just approach it differently. <i>As the JPO a benefit in any way?</i> It's not, not a benefit... I don't know if it's helping, but I don't necessarily think it's hurting.</p>	<p>To get the girl out of the system. To prevent them from going into the system in the first place. Sometimes it doesn't get met because of the girl and the family, but not because of the JPO.</p>	<p>The goal to stop crime. The goal to have a safer society; to teach lessons; to make an impact; to make the world a better place.</p>
<p>11 Finally, please describe your observations regarding how the juveniles navigate between the consequence-based DJJ and the strengths-based diversion school.</p>	<p>Like a parental relationship. The JPOs that come to our center are like celebrities. They have had several gifts from our center and they give updates of the gifts and vice versa. The JPOs enjoy seeing the girls in the classroom and seeing their progress socially and academically. So when the other girls in the center see a JPO, they greet them and the JPOs love all of the attention they get from the girls in our center. The girls see first hand that the JPOs and staff are working together for their success.</p>	<p>It's hard to go from a loving environment to a different mode: (the girls go into) survival mode when dealing with their JPOs, describe their levels of stress when attempting to navigate between cultures. It creates embarrassment for girls when the JPOs show up. Other than that, the girls do not seem to be affected by the presence of the JPOs.</p>	<p>They struggle navigating the two systems. They want to get rid of the past and move on but the JPOs keep them in the past. The ankle bracelets are embarrassing. It's embarrassing when the JPOs visit them at school. For some girls, though, the JPO helps her walk the straight the narrow. Consequence has a positive motivational effect. The program works. The model works. A softer, gentler approach works.</p>	<p>see Q3</p>







Statement	301	302	303	304	305	306	307	308	309
<p>7 The presence of JPOs at the center tends to have a negative effect on the girls.</p>	<p>Disagree: The JPOs that come to our center are like celebrities. They have had several gifts from our center and they give updates of the gifts and vice versa. The JPOs enjoy seeing the girls in the classroom and seeing their progress socially and academically. So when the other girls in the center see a JPO, they greet them and the JPOs love all of the attention they get from the girls in our center. The girls see firsthand that the JPOs and staff are working together for their success.</p>	<p>Disagree with "tend". Depends of the delivery of the meeting. Meeting should be more planned out. If a girl is given negative information in a meeting and have to return to class, she is no longer paying attention. There needs to be more positive involvement when it pertains to their sanctions, giving directives, etc. A planned meeting would help make that better. Even a call ahead of time would help so the counselors are prepared for the "what if's". It would also be helpful if the staff knew who they were coming to see rather than them having to say their name in the front office where other students/parents may hear and now there could be embarrassment or conflict as a result of confidentiality to the girls status.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Agree: some</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Disagree: In the one time I interacted with a girl and her JPO, there was not a negative impact but girl appeared timid in his presence.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Agree</p>
<p>8 Solutions have emerged from the conflict, such as: Cohesive dual roles such as Good Cop / Bad Cop, and parental roles such as Stern father / nurturing mother. Negative consequences handed down by the JPO are then accepted by the (school name) staff and integrated into a positive intervention.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Agree: JPO are not always the bad person. They are plenty that do the best they can with the resources they have.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Agree</p>

## Appendix E: Sample Data Sort

Participant color code	Cohesiveness
301	I don't know if it works cohesively or not.
302	Each side plays a role
303	<b>They mesh well together</b>
304	The consequence-based system and the strengths-based is working cohesively toward that goal.
305	I don't know if both systems were strengths-based that it would be a good thing.
306	There is a place for negative reinforcement but only a little.
307	After they are acclimated they are able to see how the two tie in together.
308	<b>I believe that the two programs work harmoniously.</b>
309	The girls know that the JPOs have to do their job, they have to be monitored.
	The girls get it.
	They are able to navigate back and forth.
	The JPOs like the program because it has taught the girls to stand up for themselves and get back on track.
	It works because it takes the negative attention they are getting and turns it into positive attention.
	They get the opportunity to experience what it is to make better choices and better decisions
	The girls see the JPO as another parent.
	Someone(JPO) that cares but has the power to enforce the boundaries.
	Like a parental relationship.
	Because I use to work as a JPO I am their point of contact. They trust me.
	<b>Sometimes they work cohesively.</b>
	<b>(Works but only) with the JPOs that go above and beyond.</b>
	<b>The negative and the positive works together.</b>
	It strikes a balance.
	<b>Good cop/bad cop</b>
	Held accountable (by DJJ) but find the teachable moment (by Pace)
	I see a balance for both.
	They're integrated (both approaches).
	For example, we had a girl that we thought was involved in sex trafficking, We have no power to intervene, but the JPO can use an ankle bracelet.
	-This is an example of consequences being used for good.
	<b>Good cop/bad cop</b>
	<b>With some of them, they have a more productive experience with the JPO because of the Pace environment</b>
	No. Its not cohesive
	But they do work together
	We end up trying to undo some of the damage put on the girl in the DJJ system.
	The idea of girls coming to us and being distrustful because of negative experiences with law enforcement
	Distrust of authority figures in general.
	"All this stuff Im being forced to do..." She retained that attitude with Pace (was not able to view the 2 agencies separately).
	<b>Sometimes cohesive but mostly brick walls.</b>
	<b>they are also collaborative.</b>
	I kind of see the girls struggle between the two systems.
	In a lot of ways it brings a balance to the girls.
	I have one girl on my caseload that is DJJ involved. She tries to bounce off both systems in a positive way. She uses the strengths of both systems.
	Other girls seem to be struggling crossing the barrier. Impeded not by DJJ but by the circumstances in their life.
	The girls are trying to reconcile the consequences of their actions. They want to live normally. They feel like it's just too much from the JPOs.
	This (the question) is a hard one.
	It could work but it mostly depends on the girl and where she's at in the process.
	The JPOs don't really check in on the girls. It would help if they did.
	<b>Sometimes they need a little bit of fear to help them act right.</b>