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Perceptions of Head Start Staff: The role of services provided and child behavior in
preventing youth and adult criminal behavior

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Abstract

The sample was comprised of 40 Southern Oregon Head Start employees who were surveyed in regards to the impact that current services have in helping children succeed as adults; the impact of new, or improved services and; the significance of behaviors displayed by a child as a possible indicator of adult criminal behavior. The child's social-emotional development was rated as the most significant current service. Providing Head Start services to more eligible children was rated as the improved service with the greatest impact. A child hitting a teacher, staff or volunteer member was rated as the most significant predictor of adult criminality. Data suggested counties have differing service needs.

Perceptions of Head Start Staff: The role of services provided and child behavior in preventing youth and adult criminal behavior

Statistically, the United States of America is one of the most violent countries of the world. The violent crime rate in the United States dwarfs that of countries such as England, China, and France (Drammer, Fairchild & Albanese, 2006). As reported by the U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), during the year 2007 an estimated 1,408,337 violent crimes took place nationwide. Of those violent crimes, 16,929 were murders, 90,427 were forcible rapes, 445,125 were robberies, and an estimated 855,856 were aggravated assaults (FBI, September 2008). Clearly, crime is a topic of great social concern.

Many theories have been drafted in order to explain the incidence of crime by criminologist, psychologist, sociologist, and politicians. The biological, psychological, social disorganization, socialization practices, instrumental Marxism, and power-control theories, to name a few, have been criminological theories proposed over time addressing deviant and criminal behavior (Curran & Renzetti, 2001). However, crime is a complicated phenomenon and no single theoretical proposition can explain all forms of deviance and crime, especially the “chronic six percent.”

The chronic six percent, also known as career criminals, is a term utilized by experts in the criminal justice system to refer to a small amount of offenders (six percent of all criminals) who are responsible for the majority of all criminal offenses (Siegel, 2005). Rather than aging out of crime, career criminals will commit at least 6 crimes during their life time. Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin (as cited in Yoshikawa, 1994) are attributed with the concept of career or chronic offender due to their research efforts in

their landmark 1972 study (Siegel, 2005). Wolfgang et al. (as cited in Yoshikawa, 1994) analyzed the behavior of 13,160 boys born in 1958 and found that 7.5% of the cohort, which had five or more contacts with the juvenile justice systems, were responsible for 61% of all recorded offences. According to Farrington's longitudinal study of 411 boys in London, the "most troublesome" kids at the ages 8 and 10, as rated by teachers and peers, made up 22% of the total sample, yet were 70% of future chronic offenders (as cited in Yoshikawa, 1994). Again, a small sample of the group was responsible for the majority of criminal behavior. In his study Farrington (as cited in Yoshikawa, 1994) defined chronic offenders as those who had repeatedly committed crimes by the age of 19 and continued to do for the next five years or more.

Farrington further identified a prediction index where two of its seven factors from the Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development were "troublesomeness (as rated by teachers and peers)" and "acting-out behavior" (as cited in Yoshikawa, 1994). "Troublesomeness" and "acting-out behavior" in children may be considered "problem behavior." According to Fight Crime (2006), "problem behavior" can lead to youth and adult crime. Recently, thousands of police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, other law enforcement leaders, and survivors of violence have analyzed and synthesized through their knowledge, personal experience and academic expertise what works and what does not work to prevent crime and violence. These leaders (71% of those polled) within the criminal justice system have recognized that the most effective and powerful strategy to combat and prevent crime and violence are "quality pre-kindergarten programs, such as Head start, that help kids get the right start in life" (Fight Crime, 2006, 3). Furthermore, many researchers and experts, such as Dr. Dee Southard, affirm that education is an

effective strategy utilized to combat not only poverty but deviant and criminal behavior as well (Castaneda, Oct. 28, 2008). The most well known federally funded programs that provide quality pre-kindergarten experiences are the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program, the Chicago Child-Parent Center Program, and the Head Start Program.

High/Scope Perry Preschool Program

Initiated in 1962, the High/Scope Perry Educational Research Foundation randomly assigned children of ages three and four from low-income families to participate in either a High/Scope Perry Program group or a no-program group, where the child was not enrolled in any preschool program (Fight Crime, 2004; Fight Crime, 2006). The High/Scope Perry program was a high-quality program that provided a one to two-year long educational experience focused on the children's intellectual development while paired with an in-home parent coaching component (Fight Crime, 2004; Fight Crime, 2006; Schweinhart, 2007).

The children who participated in the High/Scope Perry Program had a higher tested ability and performance throughout childhood, higher adult earnings and rates of employment and home ownership than those in the no-program group. They were also less likely to abuse illegal drugs (Schweinhart, Barnes & Weikart, as cited in Fight Crime, 2006); less likely to be arrested for violent, property, and drug crimes; and less likely to be convicted (Schweinhart, 2007). Of the children who participated in the program, 7% were arrested five or more times as adults by age 27 as compared to 29% of the no-program group (Schweinhart, 2007). Schweinhart et al. (as cited in Fight Crime, 2004) also found that child participants of the High/Scope Perry Program were five times less likely to become chronic offenders by the age of 27. By the age of 40, those who

attended the High/Scope Perry Program were less likely to abuse illegal drugs; four times less likely to be arrested for drug felonies; and seven times less likely to be arrested for dangerous drugs than those excluded from the services provided by the program (Schweinhart, Montie, & Xiang, as cited in Fight Crime, 2006). Furthermore, Schweinhart (2007) predicted that the economic return to society was \$17.07 per dollar invested in the High/Scope Perry Program.

Chicago Child-Parent Center Program

The Chicago Child-Parent Center (CPC) Program has served over 10,000 three- and four-year-old children since its foundation in 1967 (Fight Crime, 2004). The program is an early intervention, large-scale, publicly funded program providing educational and family-support services to low-income families (Fight Crime, 2006). Children enrolled in the CPC Program attended an enriched program for two years beginning at the age of three plus received an additional program up to the age of nine (Graces, Thomas & Currie, 2002).

Participating in the CPC Program has been shown to reduce the incidence of high-school dropouts, delinquency, and crime (Graces et al, 2002). According to the work of Reynolds, Temple, Roberson and Mann (as cited in Fight Crime, 2004), where 989 children were compared, 550 of those participants of the CPC Program, the children who participated in the program were 70% less likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18. Furthermore, Reynolds (as cited in Fight Crime, 2006) estimated that the CPC Program prevented 33, 000 crimes by the time the CPC Program child participants reach the age of 18.

Utilizing the data provided from the Chicago Longitudinal Study, which is an ongoing investigation of the academic and social development of over 1,500 low-income youths, Mann and Reynolds (September 2006) found that CPC Program participation was a “statistically significant predictor of any juvenile arrest” (p.160). Reductions in the incidence, frequency, and severity of juvenile delinquency by age 18 were associated with preschool interventions. However, since 93% of the sample analyzed in the Chicago Longitudinal Study was comprised of African Americans, one must be careful to generalize Mann and Reynolds’s (2006) findings across all ethnic groups.

Reynolds, Ou, and Topitzes (2004) found that preschool participants were 10.2 % more likely to graduate from high-school. The higher levels of education translates into an estimated “net economic benefit in 1998 dollars of \$28,000 per participant in expected lifetime earnings and government tax revenues alone” (Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, as cited in Reynolds et al., 2004, p.1312). Furthermore, Reynolds et al. (as cited in Reynolds et al., 2004) state that in 1998 the United States of America could have had a “net economic benefit of \$21,000 per participant” (p.1312) due to the reduced amount of people processed through the Criminal Justice System and crime victim costs, if it had been able to reduce the rate of juvenile crime by one third.

The Head Start Program

The Head Start Program was initiated through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 due to the social concerns regarding the lack of educational preparation of poor children (Karger & Stoesz, 2002; Castaneda, Oct. 28, 2008). Head Start is a comprehensive program that offers a variety of services for both children and parent participants. These services include health and dental screenings, nutritional services,

social and emotional development, disabilities services, parent education, family involvement, mental health and social services (Fight Crime, 2006; Department of Health and Human Services (DHS), May 2005; Karger & Stoesz, 2002; National Head Start Association (NHSA), 2000-2007a; Yoshikawa, 1994; NHSA, 2000-2007b). The greatly differing correlates of poverty require Head Start to be a comprehensive program in order to have the maximum impact for those participating. Due to the services provided and the benefits received for low-income families, Head Start is the “most successful, longest running,” readiness program on a national level in the United States of America since it was created in 1965 (NHSA, 2000-2007a; Castaneda, Oct. 28, 2008).

In a study composed of 2,800 nationally representative children, Zill and colleagues (as cited in Fight Crime, 2006) found that the program narrowed the school readiness gap between low-income children participating in Head Start and the children from higher-income households. Yoshikawa’s (as cited in Fight Crime, 2006) research found that the achievement gap in pre-reading skills was reduced by nearly 50% between children participating in Head Start and the national average for all 3 and 4 year olds. In analyzing the national data from Graces et al. (2002) longitudinal research, it was established that children who attended Head Start were 8.5% less likely to be charged with a crime as juveniles and adults than other family members who did not attend Head Start but other pre-school programs instead.

In the Congressionally mandated Head Start Impact Study approximately 5,000 newly entering 3-and 4-year olds were randomly assigned to participate in either a Head Start group or a non-Head Start group (DHS, May 2005). The impact Head Start had on social-emotional development was broken down into three dimensions, “the incidence of

various problem behaviors” being one of them. Among the children in the 3 year-old group, the Head Start group displayed lower frequency and severity of problem behavior, as reported by their parents, than the non-Head Start group as well as lower rates of hyperactive behavior (DHS, May 2005).

Although Head Start provides children with many opportunities that they would normally not have to aid them in their success and academic preparation, Head Start is currently only able to service about 60% of eligible children (Karger & Stoesz, 2002; Fight Crime, 2006). It has been estimated that by fully funding Head Start, participation in the program would prevent as many as 500 children each year from becoming juvenile and adult criminal, in Oregon (Fight Crime, 2006). Early educational intervention alone will not eliminate juvenile and adult crime. However, it “might lessen the current devastating impact of chronic delinquency” (Yoshikawa, 1994, p. 46). It is much more politically feasible to support and fund a broadly targeted intervention than to address each of the social problems that are correlated with deviant and criminal behavior (Yoshikawa, 1994).

Head Start is a nationally funded program. In 2007, Southern Oregon Head Start, comprised of 18 centers throughout Jackson and Josephine County, provided services to 805 Head Start children 3-5 year-olds, 80 Early Head Start women and children 0-3 years-old, and 33 Listo families. Over 16,000 children and families have been served in Jackson and Josephine County since 1967. According to the Southern Oregon Head Start (2008) 2007 Annual Report, 38% of the children were socially and emotionally prepared with the necessary skills for kindergarten at the beginning of the year. By the end of the

year, 98% of the children had attained the social and emotional skills for kindergarten (Southern Oregon Head Start, 2008).

In the present study, the perspective of Southern Oregon Head Start employees will be surveyed and analyzed regarding: (a) the impact that current services provided in aiding Head Start children to become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens; (b) the additional, new or improved services Head Start employees would provide to Head Start children and parents; and (c) the significance of specific behaviors displayed by Head Start children as possible indicators of future juvenile and/or adult criminal behavior.

Hypothesis # 1

It is hypothesized that a) nutritional services; b) social-emotional development for children and; c) family involvement will be rated as the most impacting current services in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens.

Hypothesis # 2

It is hypothesized that a) providing services to more eligible children and; b) increasing teacher salaries will be rated as the additional, new or improved services with the greatest impact in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens.

Hypothesis # 3

It is hypothesized that a child a) hitting teachers; and b) refusing to acknowledge and obey teachers, staff or volunteers, will be ranked as the most significant problem behaviors that can serve as indicators or predictors of engagement in criminal behavior as juveniles and/or adults.

Analyses will be ran to identify differences of statistical significance between how the variables in each section (current services, future services, and displayed problem behaviors) are rated depending on the participant's employment position, education level, county of employment, and duration of employment at Head Start.

Methods

Participants

The sample in this study was comprised of 40 Southern Oregon Head Start employees of all ages, genders, employment positions, and educational backgrounds from both Jackson County and Josephine County. All participants were treated in accordance with American Psychological Association ethical principles for the use of human subjects in research.

Materials

A survey was utilized to collect the data on all of the measures being analyzed in this study. The survey was a reflection of the perspectives of Jackson and Josephine County Head Start employees. The survey addressed three major topics: the impact of the current services provided; additional, new or improved services provided; and the significance of specific behaviors displayed by a child.

Each category had specific instructions asking the participants to rate each service and behavior using a 9 point-rating scale, with 9 having the greatest impact and 1 having the least impact. The participants were instructed to circle only one rating number. The survey consisted of 31 rating questions, two open-ended questions, six fill-in-the blank questions, and four demographic, categorical questions for a total of 43 questions. No identifying personal information was requested.

Procedure

The survey was administered at each of the 16 Jackson and Josephine County centers by the administrators of the centers and took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

Research Design

This is a survey study with correlation comparisons among four predictor variables (employment category, education level, and duration of employment) and three criterion variables (perception of current services, additional services, and problem behaviors).

Results

Hypothesis # 1

Nutritional services. Nutritional services was rated overall as the sixth current, most impacting service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens ($M = 7.15$, $SD = 1.528$). Please refer to Table 1 for means and standard deviations for all variables. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants in management positions rated nutritional services as the most impacting service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens, $t(34) = .788$, $p = .436$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants with graduate degrees rated nutritional services as the most impacting service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens, $F(3,34) = .509$, $p = .678$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants in Jackson County rated nutritional services as the most impacting service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible,

law abiding citizens, $t(36) = .551, p = .585$. There was no statistically significant difference in how participants rated nutritional services as the most impacting service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens depending on their duration of employment Head Start, $F(3,33) = .789, p = .509$.

Social-emotional development for children. Social-emotional development was rated overall as the most impacting current service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens ($M = 8.25, SD = 1.127$). There was no statistically significant difference between how participants in management positions rated social-emotional development for the children as the most impacting service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens, $t(34) = .020, p = .984$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants with graduate degrees rated social-emotional development for the children as the most impacting service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens, $F(3,34) = .586, p = .628$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants in Jackson County rated social-emotional development for the children as the most impacting service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens, $t(36) = .702, p = .487$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants whom have been employed at Head Start the longest rated social-emotional development for the children as the most impacting service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens, $F(3,33) = .654, p = .586$.

Family involvement. Family involvement was rated overall as the second most impacting current service in helping Head Start children become contributing,

responsible, law abiding citizens ($M = 7.83$, $SD = 1.130$). There was no statistically significant difference between how participants in management positions rated family involvement as the most impacting current service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens, $t(34) = 1.368$, $p = .180$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants with graduate degrees rated family involvement as the most impacting current service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens, $F(3,34) = .663$, $p = .580$. There was a statistically significant difference between how participants employed in Josephine and Jackson County rated family involvement as the most impacting current service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens, $t(36) = 2.347$, $p = .025$. Participants in Josephine County rated family involvement as being a more impacting current service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens than participants in Jackson County. Approximately 36% of the variance in rating family involvement was accounted for by variance in ratings from county scores ($r^2 = .364$). There was no statistically significant difference between how participants whom have been employed at Head Start the longest rated family involvement as the most impacting current service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens, $F(3,33) = .225$, $p = .879$.

Dental Screenings. There was a marginal, statistically significant difference between how participants employed in Josephine County ($M = 6.33$, $SD = 1.676$) and Jackson County ($M = 7.35$, $SD = 1.526$) rated Dental screenings as the seventh, most impacting current service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens, $t(36) = 1.927$, $p = .062$. Participants employed in

Jackson County rated dental screenings as having a greater impact in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens than participants employed in Josephine County. Note again that of all of the services that are currently provided, dental screenings were reported as a whole group to be the least important in helping Head Start children succeed in life.

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations for Rating of Current Service With Most Impact

| Current Services | Mean | Standard Deviations |
|------------------------------|------|---------------------|
| Social-Emotional development | 8.25 | 1.127 |
| Family involvement | 7.83 | 1.130 |
| Mental health | 7.73 | 1.132 |
| Family support | 7.70 | 1.344 |
| Disability services | 7.58 | 1.483 |
| Nutritional support | 7.15 | 1.528 |
| Health screening | 7.08 | 1.526 |
| Dental screening | 7.00 | 1.617 |

Hypothesis # 2

Provide Head Start services to more eligible children. Providing Head Start services to more eligible children was rated overall as the new or improved service with the greatest impact in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens ($M = 7.87$, $SD = 1.508$). Please refer to Table 2 for means and standard deviations of all variables. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants in management positions rated providing Head Start services to more eligible children as the service with the greatest impact in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens, $t(34) = 1.226$, $p = .229$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants with graduate degrees rated

providing Head Start services to more eligible children, $F(3,34) = .716, p = .549$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants in Jackson County and Josephine County rated providing Head Start services to more eligible children as the service with the greatest impact in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens, $t(36) = .999, p = .324$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants whom have been employed at Head Start the longest, rated providing Head Start services to more eligible children, $F(3,33) = 1.054, p = .382$.

Teacher salary increases. Teacher salary increases was rated overall as the seventh new or improved service with the greatest impact in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens ($M = 7.32, SD = 1.141$). There was no statistically significant difference between how participants in management positions rated teacher salary increases, $t(33) = .045, p = .965$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants with graduate degrees rated teacher salary increases, $F(3,33) = .084, p = .968$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants in either county rated teacher salary increases as the service with the greatest impact in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens, $t(35) = .447, p = .658$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants whom have been employed at Head Start the longest rated teacher salary increases, $F(3,33) = .318, p = .812$.

Job Coaching Services for Parents: Job coaching services for parents was rated overall as the sixth new or improved, service with the greatest impact in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens

($M = 7.33$, $SD = 1.562$). There was a statistically significant difference between how participants employed in Josephine County ($M = 7.93$, $SD = 1.223$) and Jackson County ($M = 6.91$, $SD = 1.676$) rated job coaching services for parents as a new or improved service, $t(36) = 2.028$, $p = .050$. Participants in Josephine County rated job coaching services as having a greater impact than participants in Jackson County. Approximately 32% of the variance in rating family involvement was accounted for by variance in ratings from county scores ($r^2 = .320$).

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations for Rating of New or Improved Service With Most Impact

| New or Improved Services | Mean | Standard Deviations |
|---|------|---------------------|
| Provide head start services to more eligible children | 7.87 | 1.508 |
| Family literacy | 7.72 | 1.376 |
| Reduced class sizes | 7.56 | 1.209 |
| Increased slots in Early Head Start (birth-3yrs) | 7.56 | 1.483 |
| Additional support for parents in recovery of substance abuse | 7.54 | 1.189 |
| Job coaching services for parents | 7.33 | 1.562 |
| Teacher salary increases | 7.32 | 1.141 |
| Reduced caseloads for family advocates | 6.87 | 1.525 |

Hypothesis # 3

Hitting teachers, staff or volunteers. A child hitting teachers, staff or volunteer members was rated as the most significant predictor of adult criminal behavior ($M = 7.87$, $SD = 1.361$). Please refer to Table 3 for means and standard deviations of all variables. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants in management positions rated a child hitting teachers, staff, or volunteers that may serve as an indicator or predictor of juvenile and/or adult criminal behavior,

$t(34) = 1.628, p = .113$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants with graduate degrees rated a child hitting teachers, staff, or volunteers that may serve as an indicator or predictor of juvenile and/or adult criminal behavior,

$F(3,34) = 1.364, p = .270$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants in Jackson County rated a child hitting teachers, staff, or volunteers serving as an indicator or predictor of juvenile and/or adult criminal behavior,

$t(36) = .824, p = .415$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants whom have been employed at Head Start the longest rated a child hitting teachers, staff, or volunteers serving as an indicator or predictor of juvenile and/or adult criminal behavior, $F(3,33) = .305, p = .822$.

Refusing to acknowledge and obey teachers, staff or volunteers. A child refusing to acknowledge and obey teachers, staff or volunteer members was rated as the fifth, most significant predictor of adult criminal behavior ($M = 7.30, SD = 1.372$). There was no statistically significant difference between how participants in management positions rated a child refusing to acknowledge and obey teachers, staff or volunteers serving as an indicator or predictor of juvenile and/or adult criminal behavior,

$t(33) = .972, p = .338$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants with graduate degrees rated a child refusing to acknowledge and obey teachers, staff or volunteers serving as an indicator or predictor of juvenile and/or adult criminal behavior, $F(3,32) = .928, p = .438$. There was no statistically significant difference between how participants in Jackson County rated a child refusing to acknowledge and obey teachers, staff or volunteers serving as an indicator or predictor of juvenile and/or adult criminal behavior, $t(34) = .340, p = .736$. There was no statistically

significant difference between how participants whom have been employed at Head Start the longest rated a child refusing to acknowledge and obey teachers, staff or volunteers serving as an indicator or predictor of juvenile and/or adult criminal behavior, $F(3,31) = .245, p = .864$.

Table 3
Means and Standard Deviations for Rating of Behavior Displayed as a Significant Predictor of Adult Criminal Behavior

| Behavior Displayed by Child | Mean | Standard Deviations |
|---|------|---------------------|
| Hitting teachers, staff or volunteers | 7.87 | 1.361 |
| Pushing teachers, staff or volunteers | 7.62 | 1.726 |
| Throwing things at teachers, staff or volunteers | 7.54 | 1.603 |
| Spitting on teachers, staff or volunteers | 7.44 | 1.553 |
| Refusing to acknowledge and obey teacher, staff or volunteers | 7.30 | 1.372 |
| Saying inappropriate words to teachers, staff or volunteers | 7.03 | 1.325 |
| Hitting other children | 6.92 | 1.566 |
| Taking the belongings of teachers, staff or volunteers without their permission | 6.89 | 1.467 |
| Yelling at teachers, staff or volunteers | 6.77 | 1.547 |
| Spitting on other children | 6.62 | 1.426 |
| Throwing things at other children | 6.61 | 1.358 |
| Saying inappropriate words to other children | 6.29 | 1.450 |
| Taking the belongings of other children without their permission | 6.22 | 1.336 |
| Pushing other children | 6.03 | 1.624 |
| Yelling at other children | 5.95 | 1.433 |

Additional Findings

Severe “problem behaviors” and future behavior. There was a statistically significant difference between how participants in management positions ($M = 9.57, SD = 17.317$) and those working at the center level ($M = 35.67, SD = 36.401$) predicted the percentage of children who displayed severe “problem behaviors” by the end of the school year, that would engage in juvenile and/or adult criminal behavior,

$t(27) = 2.573, p = .016$. Participants in management positions predicted that a higher percentage of the children displaying severe “problem behaviors” by the end of the school year, that would engage in juvenile and/or adult criminal behavior. Approximately 44% of the variance in the predication of adult criminality was accounted for by variance in employment positions ($r^2 = .443$).

Discussion

The present study analyzed the perspectives of Southern Oregon Head Start employees regarding what they considered; (a) the impact of the current services provided to have in aiding Head Start children to become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens; (b) the additional, new or improved services Head Start employees could provide to Head Start children and parents and; (c) the significance of specific behaviors displayed a child as possible indicators of future juvenile and/or adult criminal behavior.

Hypothesis # 1

As hypothesized, social-emotional development of the child and family involvement were rated as the two, most impacting current services in aiding Head Start children to become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens. One of the reasons why Head Start is so successful is because it integrates the family component with the school system (Head Start). This type of partnership is not promoted and supported as much in the regular public school system. The partnership between parents and Head Start for the success of the children was confirmed by the general responses from the open ended question asking “what it was about Head Start that made it so successful.” Generally, participants responded that well trained and educated staff working together

with parents and children to help not only the kids but the whole family as well, is what makes Head Start such a successful program.

The data supported the hypothesis that the social-emotional development of the child is one of the most, significant current service that helps children become successful adults. Even more significant than family involvement, the appropriate social-emotional development of the children is what will help kids the most to become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens as adults. This makes psychological sense for all children regardless of their participation in Head Start. If children are able to learn and utilize appropriate social and emotional skills to interact with the rest of the world, they should not have many problems engaging with society and abiding by the rules of their community. It is when children are not able to process their emotions in a socially appropriate manner that problems arise. This problem is intensified when those same children with social-emotional problems grow up and continue to lack the appropriate skills to manage and process their emotions in a healthy manner. Thus they begin to hurt themselves and others.

It is surprising that nutritional services are not considered to be more important in helping children become law abiding citizens. This could be due to hunger being only a temporary problem that can be addressed and resolved quite easily by providing the individual with food. On the other hand, mental health services, which was rated as the third most, significant current service, is more of permanent issue that can be mitigated with psychological therapy and/or pharmaceuticals.

It is not surprising to find that dental screening services were rated as the least impacting current service in helping Head Start children become contributing,

responsible, law abiding citizens. Screening a child for dental issues is not something that requires immediate intervention because it will greatly impede the child as an adult to lead a contributing, responsible, and law abiding lifestyle. The child may have bad teeth but he/she should still be able to engage with the rest of society in a healthy manner. It is important to acknowledge that the child may develop a negative self image because of unhealthy teeth. A negative self image may then lead to other social-emotional problems. However, as important as dental screenings may be, that service may not be the most important service provided by Head Start.

Hypothesis # 2

As hypothesized, providing Head Start services to more eligible children was rated as the new, or improved service with the most impact in helping children become successful adults. It makes theoretical sense that by providing Head Start services to more eligible children, more children and families will be impacted; thus leading to a greater amount of children who will grow up and lead successful, law abiding lives. Furthermore, the data suggests that the participants seemed to be in agreement that by providing Head Start services to more eligible children, more children and families will be impacted.

Increasing teacher salaries was not rated as one of the new, or improved service with the most impact in helping children succeed in life. It is interesting that participants did not rate teacher salary increases to be that important in helping children succeed in life. This could be due to participants being very altruistic and wanting to do what they can for the children even at the expense of a possibly more luxurious lifestyle for themselves. The data also suggests that new or improved services that impact the employees directly, which would most likely improve their economic lifestyle, were rated

as least important. Teacher salary increase and reduced caseloads for family advocates were rated number seven and eight as having the greatest impact on the children. The data suggest that Head Start employees are willing to support or fund services that help the kids and their families first before they support services that help them over the kids. Additional studies should look into this possibility and the extent of it. It is possible that their altruistic attitude, as suggested by the data, is what makes Head Start such a successful program.

There was a statistically significant difference between how participants employed in Josephine County and Jackson County rated job coaching services for parents as a new, or improved service in helping Head Start children become contributing, responsible, law abiding citizens. The data suggested a discrepancy between job coaching services for parents and the increasing amounts of families in poverty. The trends that showed up in regards to the community's new needs suggest that job coaching should have been rated as more significant because of the current economic decline. The data suggests that there is a greater number of families in poverty, yet the services that can teach and help parents acquire additional job skills are not considered to be very significant in helping children succeed. If parents are earning more because they have more competitive job skills, then they will not have to work as much to afford their cost of living; which means that parents can then spend more time interacting with the child and participating at school. This means that it is possible to reduce the amount of families that are in poverty; reduce the amount of children whom have severe behavioral and social-emotional problems; and increase the amount of parent participation at Head Start

by providing more services that will help and facilitate parent's ability to compete in the job market. Future research should analyze this hypothesis further.

Hypothesis # 3

As hypothesized, a child hitting teachers, staff or volunteer members was rated as the most significant predictor of adult criminal behavior. The data suggests that a child is in need of intervention when he/she physically hurts a teacher, staff or volunteer member. This type of prediction most likely requires the child to hit the teacher on more than one occasion. The data suggests that any type of physical assault against a teacher, staff, or volunteer member is considered to be the most significant predictor of adult criminal behavior. A child refusing to acknowledge and obey teachers, staff or volunteer members was rated as the fifth, most significant predictor of adult criminal behavior which supports the previously mentioned hypothesis. The data suggests that refusing to acknowledge and obey teachers is not as significant because the child is not attacking the teacher physically. Future research should analyze this hypothesis further.

Additional Findings

There was a statistically significant difference between how participants in management positions and those working at the center level predicted the percentage of children who displayed severe "problem behaviors" by the end of the school year, would engage in juvenile and/or adult criminal behavior. These findings could be due to the possibility that because the participants at the center level who work directly with the children have a greater opportunity to get to know the child and the family, and they are better able to assess and predict the overall success of the family than those managing departments. It is also possible that participants at the center level are also more

optimistic about the children or just as likely that those in management positions are more pessimistic about the overall success of children whom display severe problem behaviors. However, it is very dangerous to conclude anything at this time because there was a very big difference between the highest and lowest percentages. Future research should analyze this further.

This researcher hoped to find some differences in how participants rated the various services and behaviors depending on current employment position at Head Start, the duration of employment, and their level of education. However, no differences were found between the various groups. The only consistent finding, as the data suggests, is that Head Start employees consider children and families residing in Josephine and Jackson Counties to have differing needs. No other conclusions can be drawn due to the small sample size. Also, the materials used to survey the participants could have been drafted in a clearer and more concise manner. This study served as a good beginning point for future research to be built from.

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