Examining the Effectiveness of Youth Diversion Programming

Shannon Seiler

LAWS 4003 – Research Project

Justice Institute of British Columbia

Advisor: Andy Richards

Instructor: Florence Daddey

March 27th, 2017

Executive Summary/Abstract

The ability to divert youth, found guilty of offences under the Canadian Youth Criminal Justice Act, away from formal sentencing sanctions is a fundamental principle and cornerstone of Youth Justice. This research paper contains both an analysis of the existing literature and the expert opinion of a Youth Diversion Program Coordinator in British Columbia (who will be referred to as Informant A). An examination of the existing literature indicated that youth diversion programs are effective in reducing recidivism rates among youth. This paper focuses specifically on the elements which contribute to a successful diversion program.   These include: collaboration with the community and various stakeholders, mentoring, youth taking accountability and responsibility and police 'buy in' of the program. Interestingly, gender was found not to be a contributing factor to referral rates or successful completion of the diversion program. Various deficiencies in the literature are also discussed, including: challenges defining youth diversion, small sample sizes and lack of Canadian content.   In summary, this research paper demonstrates that youth diversion programs are an effective measure in reducing recidivism rates among youth. These programs, when they contain the aforementioned elements above, are an acceptable means to hold youth accountable to the community.

Table of Contents

Background

The implementation of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, in 2003, drastically altered the way youth crime is dealt with in Canada (Department of Justice, 2016). This Act applies to youth, aged 12 – 18, who are alleged to have committed criminal offences (Department of Justice, 2016). The Preamble and Declaration of Principle, respectively, state:

- "Communities and families should work in partnership with others to prevent youth crime" (Department of Justice, 2016, p.2).

- "The youth justice system is intended to protect the public by…(iii) supporting crime prevention by referring young persons to programs or agencies in the community to address the circumstances underlying their offending behaviour" (Department of Justice, 2016, p.2).

Community based programs, or diversionary measures, are gaining in popularity. An analysis of youth court statistics from 2014/2015 found that 26% of all cases were referred to a diversionary measure (Miladinovic, 2016). The significant number of youth cases that are referred to diversion, forms the rationale for this research paper. It is essential to understand the elements of a diversion program, before one can determine if they are effective in reducing recidivism rates among young offenders.

Research Project Rationale and Description

The scope of this research paper is to examine if youth diversion programs are effective in reducing youth recidivism rates. This will be accomplished by:

- An analysis of the existing research literature
  - Identifying relevant themes

- o   Identifying problems or gaps in the literature

- An interview with an expert at a Lower Mainland Youth Diversion Program

  - o   Identify successful elements of the diversion program

  - o   Discussing external influences to the diversion program

  - o   What role does gender and age play in the diversion program

The literature review is completed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the background of diversion programing, what elements are contained in the program and factors which contribute to the success of the program. The foundation for the interview questions will be based off the findings in the literature review. This research is intended to analyze diversion programs only; and should not be deemed applicable to other youth justice extra-judicial measures contained in the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Theoretical Perspectives (some literature)

The sociological world view perspective which relates to youth justice and diversion is the transformative world view. According to Creswell (2014), this perspective focuses on power and social justice. The themes of power and social justice are inherently intertwined in the youth justice system. Youth diversion programs essentially give the power back to the youth and community. It is the youth's responsibility, with the help of the community, to successfully complete the terms of their diversion agreements. Ultimately, youth diversion programs are transforming justice systems away from older more traditional forms of justice.

In addition to the sociological perspective, criminological perspectives also contribute to youth justice theoretical models. Traditionally there have been three different models for youth justice: welfare, justice, and crime control (Corrado, Gronsdahl, MacAlister & Cohen, 2010).

The Youth Criminal Justice Act operates from the corporatist theoretical perspective (Corrado et al., 2010). This model "was formulated as an option to the welfare and justice models" (Corrado et al., 2010, p.400). The corporatist model, "envisions the merging of various multi-disciplinary juvenile-justice agencies…[to] resolve conflicts with most young offenders in order to produce a planned outcome that often includes diversion to specific community programs" (Corrado et al., 2010, p. 400). This perspective directly relates to diversionary measures, and is an important factor to consider when discussing the effectiveness of youth diversion.

Research Design and Methodology

Literature Review Methodology

The literature review was completed through searching the Justice Institute of British Columbia Library database, EBSO*host*. Three separate search terms were conducted in order to fulfill the objectives for this research paper. The search terms were: youth diversion, mentoring and youth crime, and youth restorative justice programs. Thousands of articles resulted from these search terms so the following inclusion and exclusion criterion was established:

Search term	**Youth Diversion**
Initial hits	1,605
Inclusion criteria	Scholarly (peer reviewed) journals, full text, available in library collection, publication date: 2007 – 2016
Exclusion criteria	Articles published prior to 2007, magazines, trade articles, related subject terms provided by the database (juvenile delinquency, juvenile delinquents, recidivism, criminals – rehabilitation, diversion, juvenile justice administration)
Revised number of hits	609

Search term B	Mentoring and Youth Crime
Initial hits	347
Inclusion criteria	Scholarly (peer reviewed) journals, full text, available in library collection, publication date: 2007 – 2016
Exclusion criteria	Articles published prior to 2007, magazines, trade articles, related subject terms provided by the database (mentoring, crime prevention, juvenile delinquency, juvenile delinquents, violence, prevention)
Revised number of hits	18

Search term C	Youth Restorative Justice Participants
Initial hits	138
Inclusion criteria	Scholarly (peer reviewed) journals, available in library collection, publication date: 2007 – 2016
Exclusion criteria	Articles published prior to 2007, magazines, trade articles, related subject terms provided by the database: restorative justice, juvenile delinquency, human, criminal justice administration, adolescence (13 – 17 yrs), juvenile delinquents)
Revised number of hits	18

All three search terms (a) youth diversion (b) mentoring and youth crime and (c) youth restorative justice participants were selected for varying reasons. The first search term, youth diversion, was selected to gain a general oversight of the existing literature in the youth diversion field. This initial search yielded multiple results; and the themes of mentoring and youth restorative justice participants kept remerging. Consequently, 'mentoring and youth crime' and 'youth restorative justice participants' were selected as it brought the concept into greater focus and directly relates to the main objectives outlined for this research paper.

Fifteen abstracts were selected for review. These fifteen articles were chosen for abstract review because they met the inclusion criteria, listed above, and were available in the Justice

Institute of British Columbia's Library database. Moreover, the fifteen abstracts analyzed were selected because they represent the most recent research available in the field.   This is important because youth crime is constantly evolving and changing; consequently, the research must continue to evolve and change to remain relevant.

In addition to the academic articles, Government of Canada publications, newspaper articles and social science research textbooks were examined to gain a more comprehensive understanding of youth diversion measures.

Semi-structured Interview Questions Methodology

Ten semi-structured interview questions were created based on the findings of the literature review. The ten questions were typed and administered to Informant A. The survey questions and research topic proposal was submitted to the Justice Institute of British Columbia Research Ethics Board for approval prior to being submitted.   An attached copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix A. Once approval was received, the questions were administered in person to Informant A. The individual, Informant A, was identified because of their expertise in the field of youth diversion programming.

Potential problems in collecting both the primary and secondary research were addressed. An ethics approval form was completed through the Justice Institute of British Columbia. Informant A was promised anonymity and signed a waiver prior to completing the questions. The secondary research for the literature review was only collected from scholarly, peer reviewed sources.

Research Question and Rationale

As mentioned previously, the research question for this research paper is: are youth diversion programs effective in reducing recidivism rates among youth?

The concept of diverting youth away from formal sentencing procedures is encompassed in the Canadian Youth Criminal Justice Act. Since the Act's implementation in 2003, the number of diversion of youth cases away from the traditional court system has increased (Department of Justice Canada, 2016).

If youth diversion programs can reduce recidivism rates, this has numerous positive applications for the Canadian Youth Criminal Justice System.   Diversion programs boast several benefits including, "avoiding court, efficiency in addressing the youth's issues, and cost effectiveness" (Evidence Exchange Network, 2014, p. 5). All of these factors are noteworthy, particularly reducing costs. Federal and Provincial Government administrations must constantly be mindful of the costs associated in operating the Justice System.

Literature Review

This literature review focused on two separate concepts. In order to answer if diversion programs are effective in reducing recidivism, one must first understand the elements of a youth diversion program. Therefore, the two concepts being addressed are:

- What are the essential elements of youth diversion programming?
- Does youth diversion programming reduce recidivism rates?

<u>What are the essential elements of youth diversion programming?</u>

Four themes resulted when examining the youth diversion literature. The first theme states that in order for youth diversion to be effective, it must be a collaborative process. The second theme identifies mentoring as a beneficial component of youth diversion. The third theme found youth must take accountability and responsibility for their behaviour. The fourth theme discussed the differences between gender and the diversion process.

Youth Diversion is a Collaborative Process

The literature differed on the exact elements of a diversion program; however, all the sources examined were in agreeance that youth diversion programs contain various community partners and relationships. Researchers Wong, Bouchard, Gravel, Bouchard and Morselli (2016) identified that diversion programs contain third parties, victims and community service.   Hobbs, Wulf-Ludden and Strawhun (2013) suggested, "educational classes, community service, paying restitution, or written assignments" (p.84) are all elements of a diversion program. In addition, the research found diversionary activities can include schools, community groups, sports teams, dance groups, and informal mentoring (Rogers, 2011). Finally researchers Mutter, Shemmings, Dugmore and Hyare (2008) explain the youth diversion process contains the police, the victim, the young offender's family, and professionals.

The discovery that youth diversion programs differ in individual elements, but all have community measures is a significant finding. It lends itself to the idea that youth diversion is a flexible process; and can be adaptable to best serve the needs of the youth and the community.

## Benefits of Mentoring in Youth Diversion Programming

The second theme the literature presented was the beneficial partnership that results from mentoring in youth diversion programming. Historical community-based youth interventions contained mentoring relationships (Matz, 2014). Despite advances in youth justice knowledge, mentoring is still being used today. This testifies to the notion that mentoring is an essential element for a successful youth diversion intervention. Further research found mentoring is beneficial for youth diversion processes as it is cost-effective, customizable, and community focused (Miller, Barnes, Miller & McKinnon, 2012). Research by Ruth, corroborates these findings by stating, "mentoring is…rooted in communities" (2011, p.160). Ultimately, a conclusion can be drawn that mentoring is an essential part of an effective youth diversion program.

The Importance of Accountability and Responsibility in Youth Diversion Programming

The third theme the literature discussed was accountability from the offender. Accountability must be shown to the victim and the community at large. One evaluation of diversionary programming, found that the offender must take responsibility before the process can commence (Mutter et al., 2008). In addition, accountability also influences whether police officers make a referral to a youth diversion process (Voula & Innocente, 2008). Researchers Voula and Inncente completed a qualitative study entitled, *Factors Influencing Police Attitudes toward Extrajudicial Measures under the Youth Criminal Justice Act.* Their research found that if the youth failed to take responsibility for their offence, the police officer would more likely avoid referring the youth to a diversion process (Voula & Inncente, 2008). Thus accountability and responsibility are essential components of youth diversion programming.

Relationship between Gender and Youth Diversion Referrals

The fourth theme that the literature presented was the differences in gender referral rates to youth diversion. Depending on which research paper was analyzed, there was disagreement on whether boys or girls are more involved in youth diversion. A study by Ortega, Lyubansky, Nettles and Espelage (2016) found that 16 females and nine males participated in the restorative circles program. Whereas, research by Evans, Smokowski, Barbee, Bower and Barefoot found, "61.83% (n 149 of the sample was male" (2016, p.20). Moreover, researchers Mutter et al., (2008) agree with the finding more boys are in youth diversion. Their research stated, "number of males and females in the study were 26 (87%) and four (13%) respectively" (2008, p. 265). The absence of significant differences in gender rates of diversion is important. Gender is something that cannot be controlled.
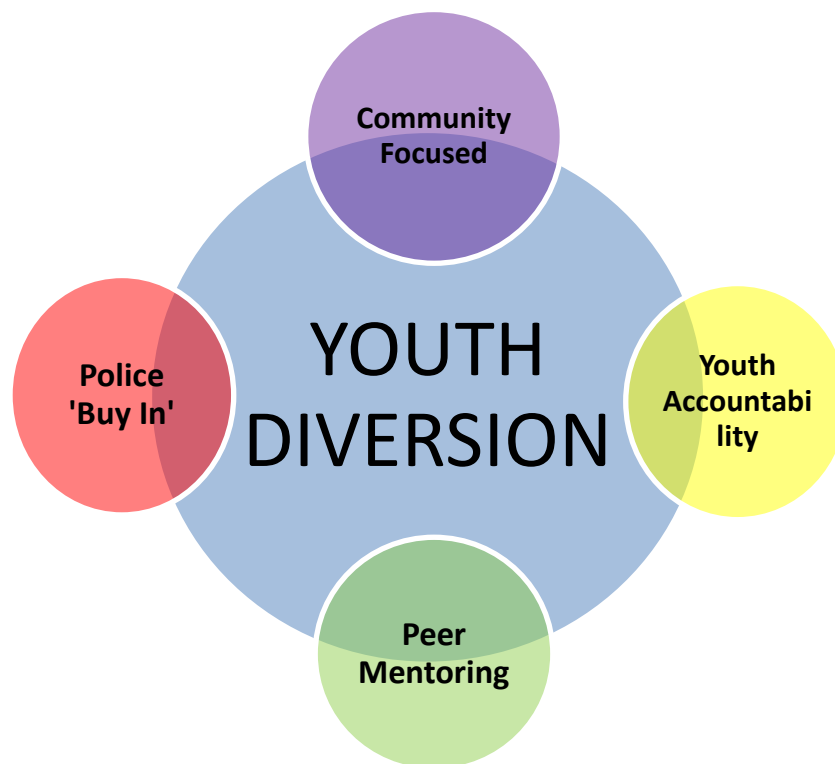
Does youth diversion programming reduce recidivism rates?

Both popular culture sources and academic research have contributed to this topic. Wilson and Hoge (2013) suggest, "diversion is significantly more effective than the criminal justice system in reducing recidivism rates" (p.512). This significant finding of the success of diversion programs is crucial. Moreover, a meta-analysis of youth characteristics in diversion programming found gender to be a nonsignificant variable (Wilson & Hoge, 2013). The absence of gender playing a role in diversion corroborates the findings listed previously.

Research by Seroczynski, Evans, Jobst, Horvath and Carozza (2016) report similar findings. They suggest, "participation in RFL [a diversion program] greatly reduces the propensity to recidivate" (p.25). Their research entitled, *Reading for Life and Adolescent Re-Arrest: Evaluating a Unique Juvenile Diversion Program,* found mentoring initiatives were successful in reducing recidivism rates (Seroczynski et al., 2016). This is encouraging as it confirms the findings above that mentoring is part of successful diversion programming.

Asides from the academic literature, popular culture has also made important commentary on the topic. The "Boys Scouts of America" made a diversion program in response to high rates of youth crime and violence (Boy Scouts of America, 2017). Many of their diversion programs involve volunteers, the offender's families, writing apology letters and communities (Boy Scouts of America, 2017). Moreover, an article for *The Washington Post* comments, "of the 500 youths who completed the [diversion] program between June 2014 and March, 90 percent haven't been arrested again" (Racine, 2016, para.2).

Ultimately, both academic and popular culture articles support that diversion measures are effective in reducing youth crime. These programs that are effective contain the elements discussed previously in this literature review.

Background – Problems or Gaps in the Existing Literature

The first problem that arose in examining the literature was defining a youth diversion program. Despite youth diversion being defined in the Canadian Youth Criminal Justice Act, several variations of the definition arose. Researchers Wong, Bouchard, Gravel, Bouchard and Morselli comment, "there is no universally accepted definition of a diversion program" (2016, p.1311). It becomes challenging to universally examine the youth diversion process, when the various programs use independent definitions.

Another gap in the existing literature is the lack of Canadian content and perspective. Without a variety of material to compare existing youth diversion programs with, it becomes difficult to accurately state the effectiveness of any youth diversion program. Indeed, the vast majority of research examined in this paper came from American sources. This has multiple challenges, as the American Youth Justice System is fundamentally unique and different to the Canadian Youth Justice System.

The small sample sizes which the articles used and completed analysis on, is another problem in the existing literature. The article, "*Evaluating community-based interventions for young people: Measuring the impact of informal mentoring*" only observed 80 young people (Rogers, 2011). While the article, *"Family group conferences in youth justice"* only observed 30 young people in the study (Mutter et al., 2008). It is difficult to generalize the results into the

larger population, when the existing academic literature is based off relatively small sample sizes.

Finally, as the research examined was qualitative in nature, subjectivity and researcher bias are important considerations to be aware of. Although there are benefits for using qualitative research, consideration must be given to the disadvantages that subsequently followed by using this method. Firstly, "ambiguities can be recognized in the analysis" (Atieno, 2009). What constitutes essential elements for youth diversion programming for one academic may not necessarily be considered for another academic. Secondly, qualitative findings "cannot be extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative analyses can" (Atieno, 2009, p.17). Although all the articles examined were scholarly and peer reviewed, individual bias about the benefits of mentoring in the diversion process, have the possibility of being present in the research.

Discussion and Findings

As youth crime and diversionary processes are constantly evolving, it was important to collect primary data to gain a deeper understanding of what elements comprise a successful youth diversion program. The individual interviewed for this research was a Program Coordinator from a Lower Mainland Youth Diversion Program. This individual was selected because of convenience – the researcher has a relationship with this individual.

The ten semi-structured interview questions were based off the literature review on youth diversion programming. This was completed prior to the interview. The results to the interview questions are as follows (A complete copy can be found in Appendix A):

1. *How would you define youth diversion programming?*

I would define Youth Diversion programming as a program that works to hold youth accountable for their criminal actions and behaviours while diverting them away from the judicial system and reducing recidivism.

2. *What are the successful elements of a youth diversion program?*

The successful elements of a youth diversion program are
- Engaging youth in support services – youth identified areas which could be underlying cause of crime.
- Youth accountability to victim and community
- Providing an opportunity for Youth to understand impact on others
- Responsiveness to the needs of others
- Program flexibility to meet the needs of victims and community
- Support services, in-house specialized programs, and accountability are some of the ways in which Diversion programs reduce recidivism.

3. *Which element of the youth diversion process do you believe is the most crucial in*

preventing recidivism rates among youth?

If I had to narrow it to only one element I would say accountability to victim, community, and self is the most crucial in preventing recidivism among youth.

4. *Are more boys or girls referred to youth diversion?*

There is a slightly higher percentage of boys referred than girls.

5. *What role does the age of the young offender play in the youth diversion process?*

Younger youth 12 and 13 year olds are more likely to commit crimes unintentionally, that is, that they did not think their actions could cause an event to happen or cause harm. Older youth may be more developmentally ready to understand harm therefore be more accountable and able to have the difficult conversations with victims.

6. *What are the offences youth commit that are most commonly referred to the youth*

diversion program?

Top three offences are assault, theft under $5000, and mischief.

7. *What role do volunteers play in the youth diversion process?*

For our program, volunteers play an extensive role. They assist the staff in co-facilitating restorative justice conferences and they are mentors to youth referred. Volunteer mentors also guide and support youth to fulfill their agreements.

8. *What role do police officers (other justice system personnel) play in the youth diversion*

   process?

   For our program, police officers and Crown counsel are referral sources. Police officers at times will take part in a youth diversion or restorative justice conference if they were the attending officers or impacted by the offence.

9. *How has youth diversion changed over time?*

   For our program youth diversion changed from a diversion program to a restorative justice program – from a accountability program for youth to a restorative process for youth, families, victims, and community – from a Crown only referral system to police, school, business, and self-referral – from a rigid procedure to a fluid, responsive, and holistic process.

10. *How does the Youth Criminal Justice Act contribute to the youth diversion*

    process/program?

    The YCJA has provision in it for Crown and police to refer youth age 12 to 17 years old to a community agency as an appropriate, effective, and meaningful option to deal with youth who have committed a criminal offence.

Interview Responses Corroborate Literature Findings

The interview responses corroborate many of the findings in the literature review. Of particular interest is the concept of accountability in the youth diversion process. The respondent commented:

- "successful elements of a youth diversion program are…youth accountability to the victim and community" (personal communication, February 27, 2017)

- "youth diversion programming is a program that works to hold youth accountable for

  their criminal actions and behaviour while diverting them from the traditional court

  system and reducing recidivism" (personal communication, February 27, 2017)

Accountability is also central in the Youth Criminal Justice Act. According to the Act, the

intervention and diversion process should, "hold the young person accountable through

interventions that are fair…" (Department of Justice, 2016). It is safe to say that accountability

is an essential element of diversion programming and contributes to the success rates of

diversion programming.

Gender is often discussed in the context of the Criminal Justice System. For this research, it

is important to consider whether gender impacts a youth's successful completion of the diversion

process. If a definitive conclusion can be drawn that gender impacts a youth's chance at success

in the program; then it must be taken into consideration when designing youth diversion

programs.   The semi-structured interview results indicated that, "There is a slightly higher

percentage of boys referred [to diversion] than girls" (personal communication, February 27,

2017). When analyzed, the research confirmed these findings. Research by Evans, Smokowski,

Barbee, Bower and Barefoot found in their study that "61.83% (n 149 of the sample was male"

(2016, p.20). Ultimately, based on the results of both the interview responses and literature

analyzed, gender does not play a role in determining whether a youth has been referred to the

program or their chances for successful completion.

Finally, it should be noted that both the semi-structured interview responses and the

literature found that youth diversion programming is effective when the police are involved in

the process and the police view the program as a worthwhile endeavour. Informant A

commented, "police officers…are referral sources. Police officers at times will take part in a

youth diversion [process]" (personal communication, February 27, 2017). A study entitled,

Factors Influencing Police Attitudes towards Extra-judicial Measures found, "police rated

extrajudicial measures relatively positively in accomplishing the goals that they are designed to"

(Marinos & Innocente, 2008, p. 485). In summary, because the police are the main referral

source to the youth diversion program it is imperative they see the benefits of the program.

Ethical Issues

Prior to conducting any research or data collection, an ethics approval application was

submitted to the Justice Institute of British Columbia's Ethics Review Board. This research

received approval on February 20th, 2017.

The first ethical consideration was the individual who was interviewed volunteered to

take part in the research.   The individual did not receive any monetary compensation for

completing the interview. Secondly, the individual knew what this research project was going to

be about. They read and signed "The Informed Consent Form". Moreover, the individual prior

to completing the interview questions was aware of the following information:

- Estimated time commitment for participation

- The research was voluntary and they could stop participating at any time

- All associated data will be destroyed upon completion of this study

- Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained through the use of a

    pseudonym

Recommendations

Further study needs to be completed on the effectiveness of youth diversion programming from a Canadian perspective. While the academic results and popular culture commentary indicated that youth diversion is an effective means to reduce youth crime; it was viewed from an American perspective. They have a different Youth Justice System; consequently; one cannot assume the positive results would be replicated in Canada.

Additionally, an analysis of youth reoffending rates who participated in diversion programming would be beneficial. Statistics Canada only released numerical indicators on the number of youth who are referred to the diversion program. If statistics were provided on the number of youth who do not reoffend after participating in the program; it would provide greater creditability to diversion programs.

Conclusion

Ultimately, this research paper has completed a two part analysis. In order to determine if youth diversion programs are effective in reducing youth crime, one must analyze the elements of the diversion program.   Both the academic articles and the interview responses, confirmed many of the same elements to diversion programs.

As demonstrated from this research paper results, youth diversion programming is effective in reducing recidivism rates among youth. Gender does not contribute to enrollment rates or chances of successful completion in a diversion program. A community centered collaborative approach, mentoring, youth responsibility and accountability, and police acceptance were found to be the main elements of a successful youth diversion program.

References

Atieno, O. P. (2009). An analysis of the strengths and limitation of qualitative and quantitative

    research paradigms. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century, 13*(1), 13 – 18.

    Retrieved April 25, 2017, from

    http://www.scientiasocialis.lt/pec/files/pdf/Atieno_Vol.13.pdf

Boy Scouts of America. (2017). *Juvenile diversion program.* Retrieved from

    http://www.scouting.org/Home/Membership/Cultural_Marketing/JuvnileDiversion.aspx

Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*

    (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Department of Justice Canada. (2016). *The Youth Criminal Justice Act: Summary and*

    background. Retrieved from http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/yj-jj/tools-

    outils/pdf/back-hist.pdf

Evans, C. R., Smokowski, P. R., Barbee, J., Bower, M., & Barefoot, S. (2016). Restorative

    justice programming in teen court: A path to improved interpersonal relationships and

    psychological functioning for high-risk rural youth. *Journal of Rural Mental*

    Health, *40*(1), 15-30. doi:10.1037/rmh0000042.

Evidence Exchange Network. (2014). *Evidence summary: Community-based diversion program*

    models for youth at risk for justice system involvement. Retrieved from

    http://eenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Pre-charge-Divert_YOUTH_April2014-

    Final.pdf

Hobbs, A. M., Lee Wulf-Ludden, T., & Strawhun, J. (2013). Assessing youth early in the

      Juvenile Justice System. *Journal of Juvenile Justice*, *3*(1), 80-96. Retrieved from

      http://www.journalofjuvjustice.org/JOJJ0301/JOJJ0301.pdf

Marinos, V., & Innocente, N. (2008). Factors influencing police attitudes towards extrajudicial

      measures under the Youth Criminal Justice Act. *Canadian Journal of Criminology &*

      Criminal Justice, 50(4), 469-489. Retrieved from https://www.ccja-

      acjp.ca/pub/en/criminology-journal/

Matz, A. K. (2014). COMMENTARY: Do youth mentoring programs work? A review of the

      empirical literature. *Journal of Juvenile Justice*, *3*(2), 83-101. Retrieved from

      http://www.journalofjuvjustice.org/

Miladinovic, Z. (2016). *Youth Court Statistics in Canada, 2014/2015* (Report No. 85-002-X),

      Retrieved from Statistics Canada website: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-

      x/2016001/article/14656-eng.pdf

Miller, J., Barnes, J., Miller, H., & McKinnon, L. (2013). Exploring the link between mentoring

      program structure & success rates: Results from a national survey. *American Journal of*

      Criminal Justice, *38*(3), 439-456. doi:10.1007/s12103-012-9188-9.

Mutter, R., Shemmings, D., Dugmore, P., & Hyare, M. (2008). Family group conferences in

      youth justice. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, *16*(3), 262-270. Retrieved from

      http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1365-2524/issues

Ortega, L., Lyubansky, M., Nettles, S., & Espelage, D. L. (2016). Outcomes of a restorative

circles program in a high school setting. *Psychology of Violence*, *6*(3), 459-468.

doi:10.1037/vio0000048.

Racine, K, A. (2016). *D.C does have a successful youth diversion program.* Retrieved from

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/dc-does-have-a-successful-youth-diversion-

program/2016/07/04/807bcf34-3fd3-11e6-9e16-

4cf01a41decb_story.html?utm_term=.2ae249ffff1e

Rogers, R. (2011). Evaluating community-based interventions for young people: measuring the

impact of informal mentoring. *Journal of Poverty & Social Justice*, *19*(2), 159-168.

Retrieved from http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/tpp/jpsj

Seroczynski, A. D., Evans, W. N., Jobst A. D., Horvath, L., & Carozza, G. (2016). Reading for

life and adolescent re-arrest: Evaluating a unique juvenile diversion program. *Journal of

Policy Analysis and Management, 35*(3), 662-682. doi:10.1002/pam.21916

Wong, J. S., Bouchard, J., Gravel, J., Bouchard, M., & Morselli, C. (2016). Can at-risk youth be

diverted from crime? A meta-analysis of restorative diversion programs. *Criminal Justice

and Behavior, 43*(10), 1310-1329. doi:10.1177/0093854816640835.

Wilson, A. H., & Hoge, R. D. (2013). The effect of youth diversion programs on recidivism: A

meta-analytic review. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour, 40*(5), 497-518.

doi:10.1177/0093854812451089

Appendix A – Semi-structured Interview Responses

1. *How would you define youth diversion programming?*

I would define Youth Diversion programming as a program that works to hold youth accountable for their criminal actions and behaviours while diverting them away from the judicial system and reducing recidivism.

2. *What are the successful elements of a youth diversion program?*

The successful elements of a youth diversion program are
- Engaging youth in support services – youth identified areas which could be underlying cause of crime.
- Youth accountability to victim and community
- Providing an opportunity for Youth to understand impact on others
- Responsiveness to the needs of others
- Program flexibility to meet the needs of victims and community
- Support services, in-house specialized programs, and accountability are some of the ways in which Diversion programs reduce recidivism.

3. *Which element of the youth diversion process do you believe is the most crucial in*

preventing recidivism rates among youth?

If I had to narrow it to only one element I would say accountability to victim, community, and self is the most crucial in preventing recidivism among youth.

4. *Are more boys or girls referred to youth diversion?*

There is a slightly higher percentage of boys referred than girls.

5. *What role does the age of the young offender play in the youth diversion process?*

Younger youth 12 and 13 year olds are more likely to commit crimes unintentionally, that is, that they did not think their actions could cause an event to happen or cause harm. Older youth may be more developmentally ready to understand harm therefore be more accountable and able to have the difficult conversations with victims.

6. *What are the offences youth commit that are most commonly referred to the youth*

diversion program?

Top three offences are assault, theft under $5000, and mischief.

7. *What role do volunteers play in the youth diversion process?*

For our program, volunteers play an extensive role. They assist the staff in co-facilitating restorative justice conferences and they are mentors to youth referred. Volunteer mentors also guide and support youth to fulfill their agreements.

8. *What role do police officers (other justice system personnel) play in the youth diversion*

process?

For our program, police officers and Crown counsel are referral sources. Police officers at times will take part in a youth diversion or restorative justice conference if they were the attending officers or impacted by the offence.

9. *How has youth diversion changed over time?*

For our program youth diversion changed from a diversion program to a restorative justice program – from a accountability program for youth to a restorative process for youth, families, victims, and community – from a Crown only referral system to police, school, business, and self-referral – from a rigid procedure to a fluid, responsive, and holistic process.

10. *How does the Youth Criminal Justice Act contribute to the youth diversion*

process/program?

The YCJA has provision in it for Crown and police to refer youth age 12 to 17 years old to a community agency as an appropriate, effective, and meaningful option to deal with youth who have committed a criminal offence.