

Oral Defense Announcement

University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Criminology and Criminal Justice

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M.A. in Criminal Justice, June 2018, Seattle University
B.A. in Psychology, May 2016, Florida Southern College

A Multisite Qualitative Analysis of the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems: Implications for Dual System Youth

Date: April 19th, 2024
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Place: Jim Short Room, 324 Lucas Hall

Abstract

Researchers have been studying juveniles who experience both child maltreatment and delinquency for decades. These studies document the prevalence, outcomes, and demographics of youth who navigate child welfare and juvenile justice systems, also known as dual system youth. However, there is a lack of investigation into the complex processes occurring at the intersection of these two systems. This dissertation aims to fill that gap by building on previous research, organizational theory, and the growing area of punishment literature in criminal justice. The goal is to better understand how juvenile justice and child welfare systems organizationally manage dual system youth. Specifically, the research explores the differences in processes, legal structures, and formal and informal policies observed at the state, local, and frontline levels. It also examines how these practices are creating racial and gender inequalities. To investigate, 36 semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with practitioners such as caseworkers, judges, officers, court administrators, attorneys, and others who work at the juvenile justice and child welfare nexus across three study sites. Additionally, three focus groups were conducted in each site to fill gaps in the individual interview data and confirm the accuracy of the findings. The research found that there is wide variation in how juvenile justice and child welfare services are administered for dual system youth populations. These practices have a far-reaching impact, including the continuation of inequalities based on race and gender, as well as how youth with complex behavioral needs are handled. The study proposes a comprehensive policy solution while recommending strategies for fostering collaboration and supporting families.

Defense of Dissertation Committee

Beth M. Huebner, Ph.D.
Christopher J. Sullivan, Ph.D.
Marisa Omori, Ph.D.
Megan Comfort, Ph.D.