



Washington and Lee University

Exploring Community Trends in Juvenile Justice

Kerriann Laubach and Jake Elijah Struebing

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Executive Summary

This study examines the need and effectiveness of alternative rehabilitative services for juvenile delinquents in the Rockbridge County school system and juvenile justice system. We believe that juvenile delinquency has negative repercussions in educational development, economic outcomes, and social interaction, consequently incentivizing the community to restoratively intervene in the public interest and on behalf of troubled youths. In order to test this hypothesis, we assess the theoretical framework behind juvenile justice systems, delinquency, and causal etiologies in the existing social-scientific research; we review the effectiveness of rehabilitative interventions in the juvenile justice system; and we administer a series of interviews to community stakeholders in order to gauge social attitudes and behavioral associations relating to the juvenile justice system in Rockbridge County. After considering the evidence, we conclude that certain youth in Rockbridge County face socioeconomic barriers to extracurricular and summer activities that may foster responsibility and keep them out of trouble. Moreover, both parents and juveniles engaged in the criminal justice system do not have access to alternative measures of support. Ultimately, we recommend both developing and funding activities for local youth, emphasizing accessibility for at-risk youth.

Introduction

Like so many other students in the high schools of Chester, Pennsylvania, Alex (*pseudonym) began forming friendships with the classic “wrong crowd.” Although not a group of serious delinquents, the boys frequently got into trouble in school. After a few members of the group got into a fight, Alex remained loyal and refused to divulge information to the school authorities,

even though he was not at all involved in the incident. Instead of getting kicked out of school (as would be typical), he appeared before a youth court – an alternative sentencing procedure using peer-to-peer discipline. Part of his restorative disposition was to serve on the court himself in the future. After discussing his situation with his peers and becoming invested in the court program, he shifted peer groups and changed his entire life track. Now, a second-year student at the Art Institute of Philadelphia, he acknowledges that, if it were not for youth court, he would instead be a part of a gang – as so many youth in Chester unfortunately are – and his youth court experience made him realize his own leadership and academic potential.

Alex's story is not atypical for a minor involved in delinquent behavior who is then afforded the opportunity to be sentenced by a Youth Court. In fact, youth courts achieve two critical

objectives in the juvenile justice system. First, they assign offenders restorative dispositions – such as community service or mandatory counseling – when the case may have otherwise resulted in a suspension from school or, even worse, juvenile detention. Second, youth courts cultivate leadership skills through service-learning and promote civic responsibility. In

Rockbridge County, we may be fortunate enough not to have gang violence, but youths in the area face challenges analogous to those in Chester – challenges that can be rectified through the juvenile justice or school systems. Educational attainment, for example, remains a problem at Rockbridge County High School (RCHS). The school has a dropout rate of 8.8 percent, higher than the state average of 6.5 percent (VA DOE 2012). From 2005 through 2009, 109 students dropped out while 887 graduated – equivalent to about 12.3 percent (Nardo 2012). Students here can clearly become disengaged from the school system, and with disengagement comes the risk for misbehavior in either the school or the community. With this framework, the idea of a disengaged youth like Alex falling into delinquency in Rockbridge is not so far-fetched.

Although suspension rates are well below the state average – 4 percent compared to 7 percent – RCHS suffered from 35 alcohol and drug offenses, 30 disorderly conduct offenses, 19 assault offenses, and 9 weapons offenses during the 2011 and 2012 school year (VA DOE 2012). With a student body of only 1,005 students, these numbers are still much too high. We do not know for sure why RCHS’s suspension rate is low, but it is probably due to some combination of underreporting and low infraction rates. This is certainly of interest for further study.

Nevertheless, suspensions at RCHS are still a pointed issue. A mother of students in Rockbridge County said that there are better solutions for such misbehavior instead of suspensions:

“something that is a more valuable thing that they can do with their time rather than 10 days

away from school” (qtd. in Nardo 2012). Even a student of RCHS remarked that “suspensions

act as a catalyst for students to further their misbehavior” (qtd. in Nardo 2012). John Reynolds,

the Superintendent of the Rockbridge County School System, adds that dropouts are a serious

issue for the local community: “Somehow some students don’t see the importance of being in

school with something down the road... That’s when the whole idea of dropping out comes into

the equation” (qtd. in Nardo 2012). Our study results also anecdotally confirm that youths in the

area do not have many extracurricular opportunities and may experience a sense of hopelessness

or despair growing up in a low-income rural community. So, if educational and social outcomes

can be improved for at-risk students in Chester, then students in rural Rockbridge County stand

to gain from alternative programs.

Poverty, Education, and Juvenile Justice

Despite the war on poverty initiated in the 1960s, poverty rates have remained relatively stagnant in rural areas, ~~although there have been~~ despite changes in composition. The official U.S. poverty rate in 2011 was a startling 15 percent, and, in Rockbridge County, one of the most rural and impoverished counties in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the average poverty rate between 2007 and 2011 stood at 12 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). In rural communities, the 1968 poverty rate of 16.3 percent has only marginally changed to 15.9 percent in 2006 (Meyer and Wallace 2009).

Educational opportunities, however, are some of the most widely accepted antipoverty strategies, whether it is in the United States or right here in Rockbridge County. Educational attainment inversely correlates with both the extent and duration of poverty in early childhood (Wood 2003).

Children growing up in poverty are particularly likely to lack quality educational experiences (Magnuson and Votruba-Drzal 2009). Even increasing family income by \$10,000 over the first five years of childhood correlates with extending educational attainment by almost an extra year for a child (Wood 2003). Although opposing sides may argue about the proper funding sources and responsibilities for quality education, few dispute the claim that education plays a critical role in equal opportunity and capability development. In a rural community like Rockbridge County, the relationship between poverty and education is particularly exacerbated – a quality education may be the only opportunity for poor students to escape the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

An effective education requires not only quality resources and a positive learning environment, but also engaged students who understand the value of schooling. A disturbing component of the

education system is the increasingly powerful school to prison pipeline, described by the ACLU as “the national trend of criminalizing rather than educating our nation’s youth” (American Civil Liberties Union 2008). Despite neuroscience research showing that juveniles are still developing judgment and decision-making, our national juvenile justice system (including school discipline) relies more on punitive justice and less on rehabilitative opportunities (Steinberg 2009). Instead of being enrolled in school, nearly 2 million youths are arrested each year (Sander et al. 2012).

Although juvenile crime and incarceration do not appear to be pervasive problems in Rockbridge County, at-risk local students closely resemble juvenile delinquents in the general population.

Unsurprisingly, low academic achievement and attainment function as risk factors for involvement in the juvenile justice system. As compared with 8% of the general population, 35% of juvenile offenders participate in special education (Sander et al. 2012). The average adjudicated youth is 15 years old, but reads at only a 4th grade level (Sander et al. 2012).

Research has estimated that 32 to 43% of incarcerated juveniles suffer from diagnosed learning disabilities and have lower overall IQ’s, even after controlling for race and income (Taifa and Beane 2009). Similarly, incarcerated youths have a history of struggling academic performance and misbehavior in schools (truancy, suspension, expulsion, and dropouts); these traits correlate to violent behavior in both juveniles and adults (Taifa and Beane 2009). Notably, even the severity of the crime correlates with the level of the offender’s deficits in math and reading (Katsiyannis et al. 2008). For arrested youths and other delinquents, delinquency closely correlates with low academic achievement and attainment, revealing a powerful connection between the educational system, juvenile crime, and poverty (Sander et al. 2012).

In a similar context, at-risk youth – the economically disadvantaged or racial minorities for example – struggle academically in RCHS. In 2011, only 65 percent of economically

disadvantaged students (defined by the VA Department of Education as students receiving a free or reduced price lunch or those up to 185% of the federal poverty line) and 75 percent of African Americans received a standard or advanced diploma (VA DOE, “Education Terms”).

Standardized reading scores are equally disturbing. Only 58 percent of economically disadvantaged are deemed proficient compared to the state average of 63 percent; blacks at RCHS are only 47 percent proficient compared to the state average of 66 percent (VA DOE 2012). Consequently, educational attainment and achievement remain a problem in rural Rockbridge County, exacerbating the vulnerability of these students to juvenile crime, as we explain later ~~on~~.

The National Juvenile Justice System

When the juvenile justice system was created in 1899, it was intended to rehabilitate juvenile offenders with a focus on their age, immaturity, and mediating factors of the offense. The separation of the juvenile and adult justice systems was meant to protect youth from adult punishment, instead focusing on behavior reform (Mazzotti and Higgins 2006). In Rockbridge County, the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court adjudicates both juvenile crimes and civil disputes on behalf of the Commonwealth. Yet the national juvenile justice system has drifted away from its original mission. Instead of reforming, educating, and protecting youth, the juvenile justice system punishes and detains youth – especially those from minority and low-income groups (Mazzotti and Higgins 2006). In fact, during the 1990s crime reduction, states passed laws excluding certain offenses from the juvenile justice system’s jurisdiction, integrating juvenile and adult sentences, allowing prosecutors more leeway in deciding whether or not to take cases to adult court, and placing adjudicated delinquents in custodial placement more

frequently (National Research Council 2001). The effects of such legislation have rarely been studied.

Although juvenile disciplinary systems should consider the rehabilitative needs of the offender in addition to accountability and public safety, traditional punishment or “scared straight” methods are the least successful in reducing recidivism among youth (Greenwood 2008). These “tough on crime” programs, because of the high cost of incarceration, also divert resources away from researching best practices in the juvenile justice field and implementing alternative programs accordingly (Taifa and Beane 2009). Effective interventions tend to be structured at the school and community level, before a juvenile comes into contact with the juvenile justice system or must be assigned to a residential placement (Greenwood 2008). Because Rockbridge County does not have excessive sentencing guidelines for juvenile crime and has limited resources in the criminal justice system, we focus on early, preventative interventions in RCHS and the surrounding community that subjectively target delinquent behavior.

Furthermore, neuroscience has shown that “adolescent decision-making capacity is less developed than in adults; youth are less able to resist coercive influences, and their character is not fully formed. “This causes youth to make errors in judgment that adults would not make” (Volz 2012). As a result, juvenile misbehavior may not justify the condemnation, isolation, or containment of troubled youth. After all, a Massachusetts state court found that between 50 and 80 percent of children in juvenile detention met the standards and guidelines for being handicapped under the federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act (National Research Council 2001). Intervention strategies should work to reform juvenile behavior, keeping them engaged in education and encouraging peer-to-peer interaction within schools. Schools require the programming and resources to help juvenile offenders re-enter the education system after

detention or suspension. Although schools in Rockbridge County have extracurricular activities – ranging limitedly from athletics to scout groups that facilitate positive social interaction and educational engagement – resources and programming to improve educational outcomes still require further development. Consistent and accessible programming for at-risk youth is even more problematic. Without this human capital investment or the appropriate, subjective after-care model, recidivism is increasingly likely (National Research Council 2001). By dismantling the school to prison pipeline and smoothing the re-entry of juvenile offenders into society, policymakers can make both the education and justice systems align more effectively with the public interest. Previous research in the fall of 2012 confirms that these systems are not properly aligned in Rockbridge County. In particular, the ongoing conflict between RCHS and the Commonwealth Attorney’s Office, regarding the handling of truancy cases, subverts the efficient and timely reentry of truant students into the classroom (Poverty 102, personal communication).

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School Discipline Systems

As education and socialization institutions, schools have a unique opportunity to intervene in the downward spiral of juvenile delinquency. Low-income and minority schools, which tend to send many youth into the juvenile justice system, also tend to provide a lower quality of education with fewer reformative opportunities for students (Mazzotti and Higgins 2006). Alarming, 3rd and 4th grade reading scores in an area are used to predict future incarceration rates and allocate resources to prisons accordingly (Swain and Noblit 2011). Yet instead of efforts to reform misbehavior and improve education, schools use zero-tolerance discipline – harsh penalties without regard for mitigating circumstances – to punish and exclude students. The goals of zero-tolerance discipline include improving school climate and demonstrating clear disciplinary

policies to the student body, but these disciplinary strategies rarely achieve these ends (Volz et al. 2012). Instead, school climates actually become less satisfactory, academic achievement decreases, and more students are unnecessarily referred to the formal juvenile justice system (APA 2008).

Zero-tolerance discipline becomes even more of an educational problem when combined with high-stakes testing. With strong incentive systems for meeting test performance standards, teachers and schools are more likely to practice selective discipline – expelling or suspending students who are at risk for failing the exams (Swain and Noblit 2011). Support for this was shown in Florida, where one researcher found that schools assigned more expulsions and longer suspensions during the testing period to keep low performers out of the process (Swain and Noblit 2011). Even exclusion to disciplinary outplacements within schools isolates students from mainstream schooling and disrupts their ability to gain a cohesive education (Casella 2003).

Combined with the arrival of school-based arrests, school climate control strategies are increasingly likely to push students out of school and into the justice system (Swain and Noblit 2011). Poor and minority students are overwhelmingly more likely than whites to be suspended, expelled, sent to outplacements, or arrested for the same offenses in schools with traditional disciplinary systems (Casella 2003). RCHS may not be vastly diverse, but uneven disciplinary procedures threaten to aggravate the already evident socioeconomic inequities that exist in the county. Moreover, youths who are arrested double their likelihood of dropping out, while a court appearance results in quadrupled chances for not completing high school (Volz et al. 2012). Because of the connection between high school dropouts and low academic achievement and adult criminal activity, every student pushed out of school by zero-tolerance discipline has a high probability of falling further into the criminal justice system – a fact of the school to prison

pipeline (Casella 2003). Considering the total economic cost to society of one career criminal is between \$1.5 and \$1.8 million, effective rehabilitation opportunities can save the significant expenses of incarceration as well as the societal costs of crime and high school dropouts. Once students fall out of the educational system, participation in further crime becomes an increasingly viable option, causing extensive harm to themselves and society.

Causal Theories

There are a few well-documented theories that can help explain the inverse relationship between a quality education and criminal activity. The first follows a human capital theory. A quality school with rehabilitative programs raises the marginal productivity of schooling investments as compared to criminal activity (Deming 2011). With a higher academic achievement and

attainment, juveniles can expect a higher wage when entering the job market, which raises the opportunity cost of crime and incarceration, lowering the optimal amount of criminal

involvement (Deming 2011). In one study, 80% of students arrested had dropped out before their first felony; the other 20% had chronic absences or suspensions before the crime (Deming 2011).

By ensuring quality academic engagement at all levels of performance, juveniles will be less likely to turn to criminality as a viable alternative. But investing in human capital for Rockbridge

County students is challenging, considering the limited labor market opportunities and

programming resources in the area. Our study results anecdotally confirm that a sense of

hopelessness and ineffectuality pervades in youth who cannot see the long-term benefit in

education (see study results section). In addition, through increased human capital returns to

education, criminal involvement and misbehavior can be delayed past the most common age of

offenses – thereby reducing the number of juveniles who fall into the school to prison pipeline

(Deming 2011). With zero-tolerance disciplinary programs that isolate, separate, and punish for minor offenses, schools are lowering the returns to education for misbehaving or low-performing students, lowering the opportunity cost of crime and misbehavior, and ultimately creating potential career criminals.

Beyond the human capital theory, the incapacitation theory and the peer effect theory may also explain the relationship between education and crime. The ~~I~~ncapacitation theory simply states that the more time students dedicate to school, the less time is available for criminal activity or misbehavior (Anderson 2010). The ~~p~~Peer effect theory, on the other hand, proposes that juvenile (and eventually adult) criminal activity depends on exposure to and interaction with other youth involved in criminal behavior (Deming 2011). One study found that youth who win a lottery for a high-quality school have reduced participation in adult crime as compared with lottery losers (Deming 2011). The researcher attributes this difference to the human capital framework for high school students winning the lottery, but to peer-effects for students transferring in middle school, indicating that social interaction is more important in early interventions (Deming 2011). In Rockbridge County, the effects of positive peer interaction may be largely absent. Geographic separation and resource limitations may inhibit the formation of diverse peer groups. For example, the expensive Woods Creek Montessori School (costing up to \$9600/year) may be inaccessible to lower-income families (Woods Creek Montessori webpage). Furthermore, the SES and academic achievement levels seem to be higher in the city (which is more affluent) than in the county schools, creating somewhat of a de facto segregation of socioeconomic classes (Poverty 102, personal communication).

The true causal relationship between academic achievement and attainment and juvenile crime most likely comprises all three of these theories as well as other mechanisms. Yet all three

support the need for increased returns to education. School programs and juvenile justice systems should engage all students and reform those committing minor offenses before they become disconnected with the education system – a sure way to fall into criminal activity. Because of crime reduction and the other positive externalities of education, government generally underinvests in rehabilitative programs that emphasize these causal theories. But because of the positive externalities of preventative measures – specifically quality educational programs that engage students and keep them in school – and the negative externalities of zero-tolerance discipline, schools should theoretically invest in more reformatory resources. Instead of using 3rd and 4th grade test scores to determine investment in prison beds, states should use the data behind these causal theories to determine the investment and development of early intervention, reformatory strategies.

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Rehabilitative Interventions and Youth Courts

Rehabilitative and preventive programs for juvenile delinquents can be largely broken down into four intervention strategies: peer-group based, school-based, parent-based and community-based. In accordance with the peer-effects theory, grouping at-risk juveniles with pro-social and high achieving students has been empirically proven to reduce delinquency, albeit this effect is more pronounced at younger ages (National Research Council 2001). School-based programs strive to keep kids in-school when in trouble and implement curricula that improves social awareness and civic responsibility. Parent-based interventions show great promise in creating a “marked improvement in child behavior” through “direct observation at home and school” and “institutional records (e.g. school truancy, police contacts, arrest rates, institutionalization)” – although they tend to be expensive and controversially paternalistic (National Research Council

2001). Our study results confirm that there are few programming and support opportunities for parents to become proactively involved in the lives of their children – even though parent attitudes and the home environment play a large role in the local context of delinquency.

Community-based programs are the least well-defined interventions and the most comprehensive in scope, comprising social services, policing, corrections, courts, economic development, and education. Specifically, vocational training and counseling are two of the most effective community-based measures for troubled youth (National Research Council 2001). Once again, the role of these alternative programs remains unclear in the Rockbridge area, considering that counseling and therapy services are expensive and may stigmatize low-income families.

A youth court program (also referred to as teen courts or peer juries) is one promising alternative school-level intervention. Youth court programs operate nationally in juvenile justice systems with over 800 courts and processing an estimated 100,000 cases annually (Butts et al. 2002).

Youth courts are mostly or entirely student-run courts, operating in a similar manner to traditional courts, but relying on peer-to-peer discipline. Students typically serve the roles of judge, jurors, jury foreperson, bailiff, and youth advocate (similar to the role of defense attorney). The jurors and judge can all ask questions of the respondent, with the youth advocate providing an opening and closing statement on the respondent's behalf. The goal is not to determine guilt, but to understand the context of the offense and assign an appropriate restorative, rather than punitive, disposition. Youth Courts resourcefully combine peer, school, parent, and community involvement – substantiating all three aforementioned causal theories. Unfortunately, however, youth courts have not been studied in great depth and remain relatively unknown to those outside progressive juvenile justice systems. According to the U.S.

Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice, 37 percent of youth courts are run by a court

or probation agency, 44 percent through a private or service agency, 12 percent directly through law enforcement, 5 percent in schools, and 3 percent in District Attorney offices (Butts and Buck 2001). Through positive peer pressure and more careful deliberation, youth courts are better able to impact delinquents because they better account for extenuating circumstances in assigning a restorative disposition. Interestingly enough, youth courts may actually give out more substantive, subjective punishments than law enforcement for first-time offenders specifically. A comparison study of cases known to have services and sanctions for juvenile delinquents found that a teen court in urban Montgomery County, Maryland used community services as a penalty 100 percent of the time compared to 42 percent by the neighboring Howard County Police who do not have a teen court, but are known for their early intervention in juvenile crime (Butts et al. 2002).

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Youth courts benefit both the respondents and the youth court members. Respondents are offered the opportunity to reform their behavior through educational and service opportunities, and are significantly less likely to re-offend than youth disciplined through traditional measures.

Recidivism rates vary in range due to the differing scope and design of youth courts, but they are generally low. A study by the El Dorado Superior Court analyzed re-offense rates for 324 youth in local teen courts compared to 136 youth under traditional juvenile probation. Recidivism of the comparison group exceeded that of the teen court group for each year over a five year period (differences ranging from 5 to 15 percentage points). Results were measureable but not statistically significant and there may have been selection bias because comparison group offenses were not selected for teen court (Butts and Buck 2001). In a case study of a youth court in Anchorage, Alaska, only 7 out of 114 cases recidivated in six months compared to 26 out of 114 in a control group; in Independence, Missouri only 10 out of 107 cases recidivated in six

months compared to 37 out of 131 in a control group – both differences were statistically significant at the .01 level (Butts et al. 2002). Admittedly, it is hard to control for confounding factors over such a limited range and both studies had some cases that were dropped from the analysis because offenders phased out of the age requirements.

Students serving on the youth court learn critical thinking, problem solving, public speaking, self-confidence, and judgment (Volz et al. 2012). They also become empowered to reform school environments and assist peers. Both members and respondents learn socialization skills, become more engaged with their education, and experience a positive interaction with the justice system (Volz et al. 2012). In Chester, with a less than 50% graduation rate, all of the regular youth court members graduated – many to attend college and some in the pursuit of a career in justice (Volz et al. 2012).

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Youth court programs also have a low cost of operation and are therefore very cost-effective intervention programs. Because they rely on student volunteers (or students receiving a minimal stipend) with few specially trained employees, they require very little financial backing (Volz. et al. 2012) Florida has the highest public appropriation for youth courts in the country at \$7-9 million annually, but the state also estimates that youth court programs save about \$50 million annually in justice costs (Volz et al. 2012). On a smaller scale, South Philadelphia High School students spend only \$180 on their approximate 200 cases each year – a cost of less than \$1 per case (Volz et al. 2012). In a survey of youth court program directors, perceived levels of support from community stakeholders is also generally high. Judges have a 92% very supportive or moderately supportive response to youth court programs while school officials and teachers have an 86% favorable response (Butts and Buck 2001). Given the limited resources of both the

schools and the criminal justice system in Rockbridge, the cost-effectiveness of youth courts is not of great concern.

Study Objective and Methods: Juvenile Justice in Rockbridge

The primary objective of this study was to analyze the rehabilitative juvenile justice system programming available in Rockbridge County, both through school discipline and the court system. We combined a literature review on best juvenile justice practices elsewhere with local stakeholder interviews to evaluate the functioning of Rockbridge's current system. The community stakeholders interviewed are either directly or indirectly involved in law enforcement, government administration, the court system, legal advocacy, or teaching. Because of difficulties in developing community partnerships, we used connections through Professors Beckley and Pickett and Marisa Frey to reach out to potential participants in the focus groups with a direct email invitation. Interviews were held in a reserved room at the Rockbridge Regional Library in Lexington, VA or scheduled at other times convenient for the contact. All individuals involved signed an informed consent form detailing the potential risks of our study. Questions asked are presented in Appendix I of this document. We collected information by taking hand-written notes on paper, and individual names were never associated with the notes. The data were transported from Rockbridge Regional Library in Lexington, VA to Washington and Lee University, stored in a lockbox, and kept in the Shepherd Poverty Program's offices in the Mattingly House. Our notes were then collated using Microsoft Word on a personal computer, and our notes of interviews and surveys were subsequently destroyed using a paper shredder. Limitations of this study process and our small number of interviews are described in the "Study Limitations and Challenges" section of this paper.

Study Results: Community Responses

General overview of school discipline and juvenile justice in Rockbridge County

Almost all respondents generally agreed that juvenile misbehavior is not a serious issue in this area, but is still a moderate problem worthy of consideration and further development. A more serious issue is the high dropout rate at Rockbridge County High School, but this relates to students losing touch in multiple ways – certainly one of which is discipline. A local government official said, “I feel strongly that we need more programs that rehabilitate rather than punish.” Another participant thought the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court’s caseload was high even though they adjudicate custody and child support proceedings. This participant also believed that misbehavior in the schools is not so much the problem as is getting youth to think about the next level/step in their lives. Right now, youth misbehavior tends to be subjectively self-destructive and personally inflicted. A local attorney mentioned that the infiltration of gang violence – a continual threat from the nearby cities – would make juvenile justice a serious problem. Cyber bullying, particularly through text messaging, is also a growing concern.

A participant involved in law enforcement concluded that “kids are kids” and that delinquency in the City of Lexington is not all that different from delinquency in the greater Rockbridge Area. This participant added that the only tangible difference is that “money covers up” the transgressions of affluent (typically city) students. One participant said that youth here suffer from peer pressure, want outlets from school and home, and want to gain acceptance from their peers – all the same as in an inner-city environment. An added problem here, however, is the long bus ride (up to an hour and a half) that students must take to school, losing study and extracurricular time. Interestingly, a local attorney stated that student behavior is comparatively better in Rockbridge County because there is more support and individualized attention in a

small-town. This participant emphasized the importance of holding each other accountable, referring to a time when good communication alerted parents of a party at their house with underage kids that was occurring while they were out of town. Similarly, another respondent said that our rural location is a major benefit because there is much less gang activity here than in nearby cities (youth are shielded from many dangerous opportunities). The participant noted, however, that youth have tried to start nationally operating gangs in this area, and national gangs have targeted Rockbridge as an opportunity for growth; it is still a risk. Youth also get more individualized attention in disciplinary proceedings, allowing more time to be thoughtful of their behavior and how to achieve a positive outcome. Otherwise, participants noted few major differences between Rockbridge's rural setting and a more urban environment.

Responses generally indicate that a lack of cooperation exists between the local school systems and the juvenile justice system, especially the local court system. One participant noted that there is no evidence of an effective partnership between these agencies because every remedial or alternative program that requires collaboration seems to be eliminated or rejected. Other participants brought up concerns about the lack of information-sharing between the county and the city; for instance, standard of learning (SOL) information is not shared, even though some students go through both school systems.

Nota bene – Participants immediately suspected a lack of cooperation between the schools and the justice system as a link to the effectiveness of disciplinary action. The question asked, however, was meant to objectively assess the effectiveness of handling misbehavior by the schools and the justice system independently. Of interest for further study is to examine how and why the partnership between schools and the juvenile justice system is both suggestive and provocative.

Common Offenses and Problems in Rockbridge

A participant involved in law enforcement stated that school-aged juvenile delinquents do “some drugs and alcohol.” This was confirmed by multiple other participants, although no one appeared to believe that drugs and alcohol were a serious or critical problem. Other than drugs and alcohol, truancy and bullying were the most commonly expressed misbehaviors. A participant mentioned that truancy is correlated with hatred of school and bullying. Seemingly, the same behaviors are issues in Rockbridge as in all high schools – including marijuana, other minor drugs, truancy, bullying, sexual harassment, and insubordination. A local attorney stressed that the area fortunately does not have any gangs, despite a presence of assault and battery. This participant said theft and petit larceny are not a large problem. Another participant verified that the typical offenses include: truancy, petit larceny, bullying (especially at the middle school) and assault/battery, and property crimes (minor vandalism). A county law enforcement official simply said that “generally, we are seeing basic disregard for laws and/rules.”

A local attorney described truancy as the “starting point for a deep fall into problem areas,” saying that schools need to react quicker to truancy. By the time a truancy case reaches the court system (typically a span of 6-7 weeks), the student has missed so much school that he or she has already failed that school year. Families with two working parents or a single parent particularly struggle with getting their children to school. The school board and superintendent can bring the parents before the court (in a civil proceeding), which is typically a faster method for addressing the problem.

A law enforcement officer said that bullying is prevalent in the local middle-schools, especially amongst girls and with the advent of technology and cyber-bullying. This officer expressed

regret that there is no “clothing allotment” or field-trip allowances for lower-income students. There needs to be a “pool of money” for these economically disadvantaged students and the opportunity to travel with their fellow students will only give them the knowledge that there is “another world outside Rockbridge County.” Another participant mentioned that an actual fight had broken out amongst local girls and made the news; bullying would likely occur across sub-communities such as Raphine, Lexington, and Natural Bridge and might not be as prevalent in elementary school when socioeconomic differences are not as pronounced.

One participant involved in higher education assumed that class differences must be the strongest factor in bullying scenarios due to the area’s socioeconomic demographics, followed closely by racial animosity. The “middle class is missing” in Rockbridge County, pitting “Appalachian culture against in-town professionals and educators.” This was confirmed by a local attorney who observed that bullies have fewer socioeconomic resources and take out their anger accordingly. Race used to be a serious factor, but is no longer as prevalent. A county law enforcement official attributed bullying to other causal factors: “I feel that bullying is definitely a challenging issue, as in many cases there seems to be a lack of parental supervision and support for the aggressor and parents teaching children to respect others.” A local government official explained the area’s “macho attitude” – male domination that tends to take out frustration with lack of resources on weaker targets (typically women). In young women, this can also create a “tough girl” attitude – both of which shape the dynamics between students. Notably, one participant pointed out that bullying is likely to be underreported, so the problem may be more pervasive than it seems.

A former prosecutor mentioned that the juvenile offense numbers are not “overwhelming” in this area, unlike more urban areas where offenders may receive less individualized attention. For a first-time misdemeanor or minor felony, the judge will take the case under advisement and the child is referred to juvenile services for community service, rehabilitative programs, etc. At this point, juveniles can follow two different tracks, depending on the nature of the offense, the youth’s demeanor, and the family support. With strong family support and respect for the justice system, the youth will typically reform quickly and continue on to be a contributing citizen.

Without a support system (the strength of which tends to correlate with socioeconomic status and resources), or without taking the process seriously (typically depending on the attitudes of peers and parents), offenders are likely to get a second charge while the first is under advisement. The participant stressed the importance of peer groups in shaping attitudes and behaviors: “you need

to choose friends carefully.” At this point, it is “significantly less likely they will remain problem-free.” Serious problems arise when the second offense is also taken under advisement

and for whatever reason consequences are not realized. This participant recommended convicting a youth after the 2nd offense because continual leeway and flexibility teaches juveniles that there will not be consequences for similar offenses once they turn 18. The participant mentioned that many youth take multiple years to complete the disposition, referencing a juvenile who had neither the money to pay the fine nor transportation to get to community service. For these youths, consequences are never seen and the disciplinary system seems inconsistent; these attitudes continue past their 18th birthday, when they have serious consequences. Although this problem may seem in opposition to the zero-tolerance literature cited earlier, it actually further emphasizes the need for consequences that are accessible, engaging, and flexible enough to work with different situations. Rehabilitative juvenile services are not meant to eliminate

consequences; they are meant to use consequences to teach, which cannot occur if the offenders are not able to complete the “stock” punishments in the area (community service, etc.).

To address typical punishments, a law enforcement officer mentioned that the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court administers volunteer work and paper-writing to offenders. Many students are sent to do community service at the recycling center. Fines are generally counter-productive because they hurt the parents who usually end up paying the penalty. Most rehabilitative measures such as volunteerism “depend on the kid” and there being enough quality volunteer opportunities in existence that can get kids interested – the SPCA for those interested in animals or the Free Clinic for those interested in interacting with others to name a few. The ability of the Court to make these connections remains unknown. Other available reformative programs described included a mentorship program and an alternative high school, but we were unable to gather more specific efficacy data on these offerings. Another participant suspected that Rockbridge’s cultural conservatism leads to a justice system that mandates a “pay the penalty” attitude for misbehavior. There is no “ingenuity” in reforming suspensions and incarceration. A local government official also mentioned that the Shenandoah Valley Juvenile Center in Staunton assesses the city of Lexington each year for its usage.

Risk Factors for Misbehavior and Criminal Activity

Generally, responses to these questions were both diverse and disparate in nature, perhaps implying that no single, pervasive risk factor exists that influences student behavior in the Rockbridge Area. One respondent simply replied “boredom,” asking “What do you do on a Saturday night as a high schooler” other than the drive-in or an athletic event? Community stakeholders involved in education gravitated towards socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and parental education. Another interesting factor mentioned that sometimes goes

unnoticed is ease of access to alcohol and drugs. A local attorney confirmed that socioeconomic status is a huge risk factor, but can be rectified with good values and role models. This participant suggested parenting classes as a solution, referring to classes that were formerly taught by the community services board.

Parental involvement and familial support continually came up as protective factors for youth. A local attorney commented that a lack of parent of support is a real problem. Kids need the desire for success and an understanding of why school is necessary – many do not see themselves going further than farming or mechanics. This participant also observes a lack of role models in the area. A county law enforcement official said that “parents/adults need to become positive role models for our youth, as well as provide a better support system for their children.”

A participant involved in local law enforcement also noted that “parents need to be re-connected” to the adjudicating procedures associated with both the schools and the juvenile justice system.

This will give parents a better idea of the ramifications of their child’s transgression. The participant mentioned parental education as a pivotal step in making the adjudication of juvenile cases more effective, questioning the accessibility of resources for parents. “If a parent has a question, where do they go?” Parent support groups, that meet either in the schools or in the juvenile system as their child’s case is processed, could possibly encourage more parental involvement and elucidate any existing resources that may be of assistance. A local attorney also related misbehavior, especially disrespect and mouthing off, to parental involvement and the home environment. Another participant followed up, saying attitudes depend on home environment – financial resources, stability, and guidance. One participant remarked that the schools, courts, and parents should be made to “work hand-in-hand.” A dissolved court-ordered program in Richmond was mentioned in which parents came into schools to supervise and

monitor their misbehaving children in order to foster a better educational atmosphere. The participant did not elaborate on the program's dissolution.

Recidivism also seems to be a trend in Rockbridge. One stakeholder replied that there is a small sample of reoffending youth who continue their criminal activity, but this is complicated by the absence of an active program that targets the initial problem relating to transgression. A local law enforcement officer explained that recidivism "depends on the support systems" in place. There is almost never any incarceration or detention for juveniles, especially school-aged youth. "Some kind of parent support system" may go a long way in promoting parental involvement and ultimately reducing recidivism. A local attorney stressed the importance of the home environment. This participant hears "about the same kids getting into trouble all the time" and sees no "avenue to get them back on track." A county law enforcement official agreed, saying recidivism "depends largely on the parental support and if the person wants to change their behavior." Even recidivism, then, seems to connect back to family life and parental engagement.

School Discipline and Success

Consistency in discipline seems to drive the success of school discipline systems. One topic that came up in discussion was the procedural discrepancies between in-school and out-of-school suspensions. A participant involved in law enforcement strongly favored in-school suspension because it does not separate kids from the school environment and their peers, making them more likely to atone for their mistakes as they see what they are missing out on. This participant cited a group of teachers, counselors, administrators, and court members that meet together in order to examine the needs of students and develop a strategy for reducing delinquency. The group was not identified and our impression was that this group was relatively ineffective and unproductive. Moreover, one practice that could be improved upon is mentorship. "Kids need

mentors,” said one participant, and it “should start in middle school” as kids finishing the fifth grade need a forward-looking trajectory. Most intervention for juvenile delinquency “happens too late” and, right now, “teachers are the only positive influence” in some kids’ lives. A local government official also verified this, saying that what happens at the high school often shapes youths’ lives. A strong teacher can act as an encouraging support system and make up for family instability. The dropout problem, known as the Silent Epidemic, is a trend around the country. A local government official emphasized early intervention for students who are “fading out,” but regretted that this area lacks the public will to pursue some of these alternative programs.

A local attorney said that degree of punishment is sometimes inconsistent at RCHS. A good student was suspended two-weeks for driving his grandfather’s car with an antique gun in the back. But countless students bring knives to school and do not get punished because they know how to “push the envelope” and “get around” the system. A county law enforcement official said “both [the school discipline and juvenile justice] systems should remain consistent within each system. The procedures for consistency are already in place.”

A participant also mentioned that the city middle school’s principal mandates a zero-tolerance policy, including a dress code. Student behavior perceptively changes for the worse when a substitute principal fills in. The former RCHS principal was not a disciplinarian, perhaps leading to 16 fights between girls within the first 30 days of school one year. With no “high bar” for expectations or respect for authority misbehavior was a serious problem. But this changed with the new RCHS principal who instituted a staff dress code, generated school spirit, got involved with students on the ground level, and “changed the environment 180 degrees.” A county law enforcement official said “There are times when misbehaviors are handled inconsistently, both at

the school level and with the criminal justice system. This certainly has an impact on the effectiveness of both systems.”

Opportunities for Improvement

A majority of participants indicated that students in the area view the criminal justice system and school disciplinary systems as threatening and inherently unfair. One participant remarked that youth remain ignorant of what happens to them in the judicial system. A local law enforcement official noted that in order to change youth perspectives, the criminal justice system needs consistency and equitable fairness. Youth think the criminal justice system is unfair; the widespread perception is that “certain kids get away with everything while others get caught for every minor offense” – although this may not be entirely true. The shaping factors include “who your parents are” and their ability to rectify the situation. The small-town atmosphere facilitates more gossip and opportunity to find out about misconduct. One participant, however, interestingly suggested that kids are not adverse to discipline – they look to “gangs and cliques” for control and regulation. The real question lies in finding out what disciplinary actions are youth most receptive to. Another participant stated that their children did not have a positive view of the entire criminal justice system – preventive measures, interventions, adjudication, probation, etc. One factor that requires additional research is mental health care for delinquents in the court system.

A local attorney, however, suggested youth generally have a positive view of the criminal justice system. Although some students have an antagonistic attitude, the local police are friendly and try to encourage students to do the right thing. School resources officers (SRO’s) are of particular importance here in facilitating these positive relationships. A county law enforcement official also said that kids have a positive view and the ones that do not are affected by

disciplinary “inconsistency and the general lack of respect shown to authority figures/adults.”

Another local attorney echoed these sentiments by saying that attitudes depend greatly on where the youth falls in peer structure – some are more negative than others.

Community stakeholders generally agreed upon a few key weaknesses in our area’s outreach to youth (particularly those at risk). Kids need summer activities and summer jobs that “teach responsibility and accountability.” Such activities are considered a preventive strategy for criminal activity in the juvenile justice system. One participant asked “what do they [local kids] want?” This participant emphasized that the solution to this summer “boredom” problem should involve youth feedback and should resemble a “program that kids could come up with on their own.” Another participant commented that only parents who can afford extracurricular programs get their kids into summer activities and non-athletes have no opportunities for recreation. A local government official expressed concern that kids will find things to do at friends’ homes (games, etc.) if they have the resources, but many do not have the option to travel or host friends.

Another participant mentioned leadership activities in the local schools including Beta club, a service-related organization, Girl and Boy scouts for those that get involved at a young age, and a program called “Too Good for Drugs.” This participant, however, indicated that hard drugs are not a serious problem because kids have no knowledge of street names or availability. This participant also recommended we contact the United Way director, and another participant pointed out the Mayor’s Youth Council as an opportunity for leadership.

A county law enforcement official believes that there is a need for programs enabling youth leadership and peer mentorship specifically in the local juvenile justice system and knows of no such existing programs. A local government official noted that such programs would have to work with and engage youth in the planning process to ensure adequate recruitment and

participation. One participant suggested that we put our “energy into opportunities before the justice system.” Leadership and peer-to-peer interaction should “start in middle-school” and college preparation should begin “before high school.” This participant, a law enforcement official, seemed to believe that high school intervention was too late in the development of youth.

Regarding the former local alternative high school YES program in the area, a law enforcement officer explained knowledge of the program for troubled high school students but did not know of its effectiveness or why it shut down. This participant did, however, observe that there was a lack of guidelines and protocols for each subjective case when an individualized education program (IEP) was probably needed. In addition, the officer worried about the stigmatization that might follow after being separated or segregated from the mainstream high school experience.

Another participant, conversely, said that the students in the YES program needed to be separated in order to receive more attention and not to disturb the learning environment of other students. This participant agreed that the program was not run effectively, as evidenced by Washington and Lee student volunteers who experienced difficulty in establishing a positive relationship with the organization. A county law enforcement official provided a different perspective: “I am familiar with the YES program. The program appeared to be successful, in that the program provided a smaller environment, which I thought catered to the needs of the students who were enrolled in the program. It also appealed to the students in the regular school environment—there were less distractions/incidents that were many times created by the students who were candidates for the YES program.” Similar future programming may be appropriate if managed properly and able to bridge the gap between individual attention and isolation.

One participant who was familiar with the youth court concept suggested that for such a program to be effective in Rockbridge County all juveniles should be processed by it. There should be two tracks for delinquents: on one hand, kids with a strong support group should be processed normally, while, on the other hand, a parental support group should be included in the deliberations. By bringing young or disadvantaged parents into the courtroom, you can directly change their mentality regarding their involvement, encourage them to support the schools, and increase their awareness in an attempt to reduce recidivism. A local attorney pointed out that, in cases where parental support and follow-up is lacking, a youth court may be able to compensate with positive peer pressure.

One participant commented that they would have a “comparatively better feeling” if their children were sentenced by a youth court than the traditional criminal justice system. Another respondent said that there is no reason not to have a youth court because it is both a leadership and educational opportunity provided to students “on the edge” of delinquency who possess a “lack of vision” about where their behavior might eventually lead. Engaging in peer-to-peer interaction is the most effective way of getting students to comply and self-governance instills a sense of personal responsibility and accomplishment. This respondent expressed concerns about court recruitment, advising that restorative dispositions should include active participation on the court. A local attorney said an honor seminar at VMI discussed the possibility of an honor court at local schools, deliberating on the many obstacles including respect for the system, voluntary admission, and self-referrals. RCHS would be big enough to ensure impersonal and objective punishment. Despite earlier saying that there is a need for student leadership opportunities in the community, a county law enforcement official was skeptical of youth courts: “Our youth are in

many ways overwhelmed by our education system and I think by implementing a Youth Court there would be added pressure to our youth who would be serving the court.”

Study Limitations and Challenges

A major limitation of this study is our small and limited sample that is biased towards higher socioeconomic status and accomplished individuals. Their age range was from approximately 25 to 69 (no minors), which limits our knowledge of diversity of opinion and experience in the area, as well as our ability to gain valuable information directly from youth in the area. One of our study participants even pointed out that the highest priority in a study such as this should be to speak with the youth themselves to discern what they would want. Too often, decisions are made without consulting the direct group to whom benefits would be delivered. Any future work on this subject must consult youth in the area directly. Our interview questions (see Appendix I) present another source of bias and may have skewed the responses from our participants; future work should include consulting a professional with interview experience to address this concern.

Our participants were veteran community stakeholders with insightful opinions and perceptions of local conditions, but our results must be interpreted as such and not as a representative sampling of community opinion. Even with these limitations, though, the results of this study can guide the research focus and methods for future work gathering such a representative sample.

The overwhelming challenge of this study has been our inability to form robust community partnerships. Community-based research projects are most successful when the community brings the concern, but we have brought a concern to the community while conducting this research project. For that reason, we have encountered many obstacles to assessing community opinion and have therefore chosen the present limited study design. Although juvenile justice

begins with school discipline, the local schools were quite hesitant to pursue a research partnership, even one where Washington and Lee University would take full responsibility for the effort, time, and costs required. We simply did not have the background relationship with the community institutions to support our inquiries, which were consequently met with a heavy dose of skepticism. Perhaps a partnership with a poverty-related CBR project entails an undesirable connotative meaning for some stakeholders concerned with their community reputation.

Obviously, criminal activity and juvenile delinquency also encompass sensitive issues that people are not entirely comfortable speaking about. Future community work should be managed very slowly and carefully, and only with an existing and trusting partnership. We continue to emphasize the importance of investigating sensitive topics locally and presenting viable alternatives from other areas, but we advise careful consideration of the community partners and

a very moderated approach. Certainly, Washington and Lee (both students and the institution) can do more to pursue such a general partnership and support local institutions, which may

further support research that will, in turn, aid community members.

Recommendations

After considering the evidence, we conclude that disadvantaged youth in Rockbridge County face socioeconomic barriers to extracurricular and summer activities that may foster responsibility and keep them out of trouble. Moreover, both parents and juveniles engaged in the criminal justice system do not have access to alternative measures of support. We believe that youth court implementation is an ineffectual starting point. Educational attainment and achievement are just not that bad to warrant a youth court under current circumstances. Nor do we find that the local juvenile justice system is burdened enough – or – has enough resources to

justify a youth court. The opportunity cost of continuing to seek a partnership with local schools is too high at this point in time, and alternative lines of communication should be pursued.

Specifically, we make three primary recommendations to future students interested in local education and criminal justice. First, better contact should be established with the local juvenile justice system. Perhaps finding service-learning or volunteer opportunities with the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court and the local probation office may provide profound insight into the local issues surrounding juvenile delinquency. Rehabilitative programming may be more welcomed and more accessible if explored through the justice system rather than through the schools.

Second, we recommend more research on the educational programs available for struggling parents. This research does not have to solely focus on juvenile delinquency, but can also study the comprehensive poverty implications of home environments and parental involvement.

Third, we recommend that students look into starting summer programs, sponsored and funded by Washington and Lee University, which provide outdoor and/or recreational activities for at-risk youth. Recruitment should seek to integrate both at-risk students with positive role models, keeping them out of trouble and orienting them towards a better future. The planning of these projects must include detailed and structured consultations with local youth (ideally those who may later be recruited). These projects could be small and numerous, for example, involving Campus Kitchen, the Outing Club, or the Lexington Office on Youth. Moreover, these programs might be funded by Bonner resources, Johnson grants, or McJunkin grants and accompanied by student research into summer programming for at-risk youth and families. The programming

could complement the classroom education for poverty students interested in family policy, education policy, and criminal justice policies. Based on the challenges faced by this study, we believe that a robust relationship with the community starts with youth outreach rather than coordinating from the top down within Rockbridge Area institutions.

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Washington and Lee University

Appendices

Appendix I *Focus Group Interview Questions*

Washington and Lee University
“Exploring Community Trends in Juvenile Justice”
Jake Struebing (716-445-9958) & Kerriann Laubach (724-413-4958)

*****Approved by the Washington and Lee IRB *****

Directions: Participation in this focus group is entirely voluntary. The session will take approximately one hour to complete. You are free to skip a question without penalty at any time by notifying the interviewer.

Pool of Questions for Community Stakeholders:

- 1) How effectively do you believe area schools and the local juvenile criminal justice system handle misbehavior?
- 2) In your opinion, are there any procedures or standard practices in these systems that should be addressed? How so?
- 3) What are the biggest challenges that students and youth in the local area?
- 4) Do you perceive any differences in student misbehavior and discipline because of Rockbridge’s rural or cultural setting? If yes, how so?
- 5) Do students and youth in the area generally have a positive view of the criminal justice system and/or the school disciplinary system?
- 6) What are the primary shaping factors of these relationships?
- 7) Are there opportunities in this area (through the school or the criminal justice system) for students to take on leadership roles in the justice system or to become involved in peer rehabilitation? If yes, can you describe these programs? If no, do you think there is a need or place for these opportunities in the Rockbridge Area?
- 8) Which behaviors most frequently get students and youth into trouble in this county?
- 9) Are there any factors in Rockbridge Area that make bullying a particularly challenging or troublesome issue?

- 10) Do you perceive a problem with recidivism in the Rockbridge Area? What typically happens to students after they are disciplined for serious misbehavior in the schools or enter the juvenile justice system? i.e., are they reformed or do they tend to fall further into misbehavior?
- 11) Is juvenile misbehavior a serious problem in the Rockbridge Area? If so, how prevalent is it?
- 12) What are the risk factors for student misbehavior or criminal behavior? What about socioeconomic status, academic achievement, academic engagement, race, parental involvement, or any other factors? Please elaborate.
- 13) What kinds of rehabilitative services are offered in the Rockbridge Area? Do you think these are effective?
- 14) Do you know anything about the alternative high school YES program that recently shut down? If so, what were your impressions?
- 15) Do you know what a Youth Court is?
- 16) Do you think there is a need or opportunity for a youth court in this area? Why or why not?
- 17) Do you think the restorative dispositions of a Youth Court would create greater compliance with agreements on judgments and penalties? What about creating lower re-offense rates?
- 18) What groups of students would be likely to join such a program?
- 19) Do you think that the diversity of students would be interested in participating? If not, why?
- 20) Do you foresee a problem with the types of students who would serve on this program compared with the types of students who would appear before the court? If yes, how might this be overcome?
- 21) How would you feel if someone you knew was sentenced by a Youth Court?

Appendix II

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN HUMAN RESEARCH PROJECT (Adult)

Washington and Lee University

“Exploring Community Trends in Juvenile Justice”

Poverty 423 & Sociology 403

Jake Struebing (716-445-9958) & Kerriann Laubach (724-413-4958)

You have been asked to participate in a research study at Washington and Lee University. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the need and effectiveness of alternative rehabilitative services for juveniles in either the Rockbridge Area criminal justice system.

If you consent to participate in this study, you will be part of a focus group in Rockbridge County consisting of community stakeholders in order to gauge attitudes on both the current juvenile justice system and potential renovations in the system. We believe this information will give us insight into the student conduct and demographics in the local community that will ultimately be helpful in determining the status of juvenile justice

You will be asked a series of interview questions, lasting approximately 10 minutes. Notes will be taken by the interviewers on your responses and written down. This information will be kept confidential by being stored in a manila envelope in a lockbox on the W&L campus. Information will eventually be transferred to a computer document and ultimately used as subjective evidence in our study. Names will never be associated with the data at any point in the process.

As with any humanities research, there are some possible risks to your participation. This research involves collection of information on sensitive aspects of the subjects' behavior, associations, reputation, and socioeconomic standing. If answering questions at any point during our study induces more than minimal stress, harm, or discomfort regularly encountered in daily life or the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations, then we recommend you cease the activity.

Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or may withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. You can skip any question without penalty. The interview should last no longer than 1 hour. The investigator may withdraw you from participation at his/her professional discretion. If, during the course of this study, significant new information becomes available, which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you by the investigator. Any information derived from this research project which personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

If at any time you have questions regarding this research or your participation in it, you should contact the investigators, Jake Struebing (716-445-9958) or Kerriann Laubach (724-413-4958), who must answer your questions.

If, at any time, you have questions regarding the conduct of this research, or if you wish to discuss your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB chair, Julie Woodzicka, at woodzickaj@wlu.edu or (540) 458-8834.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

I consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant (age 18 and older)

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Washington and Lee University

Appendix III

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN HUMAN RESEARCH PROJECT (Minor)

Washington and Lee University

“Evaluating Juvenile Justice in Rockbridge County”

Poverty 423 & Sociology 403

Jake Struebing (716-445-9958) & Kerriann Laubach (724-413-4958)

You have been asked to allow your child to participate in a research study at Washington and Lee University. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the need and effectiveness of alternative rehabilitative services for juveniles in either the Rockbridge School System or the local criminal justice system.

If you consent to have your child participate in this study, he or she will be part of a focus group in Rockbridge County High School consisting of students, teachers, and parents in order to gauge attitudes on both the current juvenile justice system and potential renovations in the system. He or she may also be asked a series of interview questions in which his or her responses will be recorded. He or she will be asked to take an anonymous and confidential survey, for our data only, about social attitudes and behavioral associations. We believe this information will give us insight into student conduct and demographics in the local community that will ultimately be helpful in determining the status of juvenile justice.

As with any humanities research, there are some possible risks to your participation. This research involves collection of information on sensitive aspects of the subjects' behavior, associations, reputation, and socioeconomic standing. If answering questions at any point during our study induces more than minimal stress, harm, or discomfort regularly encountered in daily life or the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations, then we recommend your child cease the activity. Information from the focus group will be kept confidential by being stored in manila envelopes in a lockbox on the W&L campus, and names will never be associated with the data at any point in the process.

Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to allow your child to participate or may withdraw your child from participation at any time without penalty. Your child can skip any question without penalty. The survey portion of this study should take approximately 15 minutes; if participating in a focus group, the interview should last no longer than 1 hour. The investigator may withdraw your child from participation at his/her professional discretion. If, during the course of this study, significant new information becomes available, which may relate to your willingness to continue to have your child participate, this information will be provided to you by the investigator. Any information derived from this research project which personally identifies you or your child will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

If at any time you have questions regarding this research or your participation in it, you should contact the investigators, Jake Struebing (716-445-9958) or Kerriann Laubach (724-413-4958), who must answer your questions.

If, at any time, you have questions regarding the conduct of this research, or if you wish to discuss your child's rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB chair, Julie Woodzicka, at woodzickaj@wlu.edu or (540) 458-8834.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

I consent for my child, _____, to participate in this study.

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Washington and Lee University

Appendix IV
Anonymous and Confidential Survey Questions (Students)

Washington and Lee University
“Exploring Community Trends in Juvenile Justice”
Jake Struebing (716-445-9958) & Kerriann Laubach (724-413-4958)

*****Subject to Washington and Lee IRB Approval*****

Directions: Please take approximately 15 minutes to complete the following survey. Note that you will not be penalized for skipping a question.

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Sometimes Agree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Getting into a good college is important to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. My parents are proud of me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I can talk to my parent(s) about almost anything.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I do a summer activity(s).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I think the criminal justice system works for the community's best interest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The police in my town do not like kids my age.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. My school handles misbehavior in a way that is in the students' best interest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Detentions are common punishment at my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Suspensions are a common punishment at my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Most suspended students have gotten in trouble in the past.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. The disciplinary system at my school is fair.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. The disciplinary system at my school deters misbehavior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Sometimes Agree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13. Treatment of students in Rockbridge County differs from other areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. My school administrators treat me fairly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. The police are usually fair to people my age.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I do volunteer work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Most of my friends are honest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Underage drinking is common in my community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Illegal drug use is common in my community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Bullying is a problem at my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. There are plenty of extracurricular activities for students in Rockbridge County.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Diversity inclusion is a problem at my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. I think people who get in trouble deserve a second chance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. The misbehavior of other students distracts me from learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please fill in or circle the appropriate information.

Age:					
Gender:	Male	Female			
Race/Ethnicity:	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other
Parents Employment:	Full-time	Part-time	Seasonal	Other	
Do you own a computer?	Yes	No			
Parental Status:	Married	Divorced	Cohabiting	Deceased	Other
With whom to live?	Parent(s)	Grandparent(s)	Brother/Sister	Other Relative(s)	Guardian(s)
Housing Status:	House	Apartment	Rental Unit	Other	

Appendix V
Anonymous and Confidential Survey Questions (Parents)

Washington and Lee University
“Exploring Community Trends in Juvenile Justice”
Jake Struebing (716-445-9958) & Kerriann Laubach (724-413-4958)

*****Subject to Washington and Lee IRB Approval*****

Directions: Please take approximately 15 minutes to complete the following survey. Note that you will not be penalized for skipping a question.

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Sometimes Agree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. My child cares a lot about school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The police are usually fair.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Sometimes it is hard to talk to my child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Our family spends a lot of time together.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I have a favorable view of the law and the criminal justice system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I have had a problem with my child’s school disciplinary system in the past.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I usually know where my child is at any time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Diversity inclusion is a problem at my child’s school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. There are plenty of extracurricular activities for students in Rockbridge County.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I am pleased with the discipline system at my child’s school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I think people who get in trouble deserve a second chance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I am an engaged and active citizen in my community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Sometimes Agree	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13. My child's school administrators are fair.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Bullying is a problem at my child's school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Treatment of students in Rockbridge County differs from other areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. My child has been suspended.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. My child has gotten detention.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Most of my child's friends are honest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Underage drinking is common in my community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Illegal drug use is common in my community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. I encourage my child to be involved in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I am concerned about the level of student misbehavior at my child's school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Washington and Lee University

Please Fill in or Circle the Appropriate Information

Grade of Child:					
Gender:	Male	Female			
Race/Ethnicity:	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other
Employment:	Full-time	Part-time	Seasonal	Other	
Do you own a computer?	Yes	No			
Marital Status:	Married	Divorced	Cohabiting	Relationship	Other
How many children do you have?	1	2	3	4	5 or more
Housing Status:	House	Apartment	Rental Unit	Other	
Education Status:	Did not complete high school	High School or GED equivalent	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate Degree