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ASSESSING 4-H AND ITS CIRCLE OF COURAGE IN A PSYCHIATRIC RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITY: A CASE STUDY

Elizabeth Steering
University of Kentucky, esteering@gmail.com
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Elizabeth Steering, Student

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ASSESSING 4-H AND ITS CIRCLE OF COURAGE IN A PSYCHIATRIC
RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITY: A CASE STUDY

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Family Sciences in the
College of Agriculture, Food and Environment at the University of Kentucky

By

Elizabeth Steering

Lexington, Kentucky

Co- Directors: Dr. Nichole Huff, Professor of Human Environmental Sciences,

and Dr. Ken Culp III, Professor of Family Sciences

Lexington, Kentucky

2023

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

ASSESSING 4-H AND ITS CIRCLE OF COURAGE IN A PSYCHIATRIC
RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITY: A CASE STUDY

This 4-H case study takes place in a psychiatric residential treatment facility (PRTF) in Kentucky. The PRTF provides clinical services to youth that are not able to be safely maintained in their homes due to having demonstrated unsafe or harmful behaviors. Youth admitted to the PRTF stay for an average of three to six months while they receive intensive therapeutic and psychiatric care as well as medical treatment and public schooling. The current case study incorporates programming from 4-H, which is the youth development program of the Cooperative Extension System (CES) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), into the treatment plans of four PRTF youth. The four-week 4-H program was facilitated by 4-H personnel who adhered to the principles of positive youth development and the Circle of Courage model (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2014). The primary aims of this study were to assess the impact of 4-H youth development programming within a PRTF setting and to demonstrate how the Circle of Courage can be applied to PRTF programming to promote positive youth development. Qualitative findings suggest significant shifts in participants' understandings of the Circle of Courage constructs following their 4-H participation.

KEYWORDS: PRTF, Youth Development, 4-H, Circle of Courage, Youth Programming, Residential Treatment

Elizabeth Steering
(Name of Student)

Date: 4/17/23

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By
Elizabeth Steering

Dr. Nichole Huff
Co-Director of Thesis

Dr. Ken Culp III
Co-Director of Thesis

Dr. Hyungsoo Kim
Director of Graduate Studies

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Date

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1.1 POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

A youth who is "at-risk" can be understood as having been exposed to a disproportionate amount of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) (Krish & Rajamanickam, 2021). ACEs can include, but are not limited to, abuse, neglect, and poverty. Individuals who have been exposed to high levels of ACEs are at high risk for experiencing both mental and physical illness, academic difficulties, substance abuse, poverty, and incarceration (Taussig et. al., 2019). The term "at-risk" implies that even if youth are not currently exhibiting any dangerous or maladaptive behaviors, they are still at higher risk for encountering various difficulties as they grow older. Historically, children have been considered to be "at-risk" if they were perceived as being likely to experience some type of failure at school, in life, or both (Krish & Rajamanickam, 2021). Youth activity programming that is designed around a positive youth development framework is one type of intervention that has demonstrated efficacy for subverting these ACE-induced life outcomes (Edington & Randall, 2005).

Positive youth development is a strengths-based approach to youth programming in which activities are designed to create positive experiences that build social, emotional, and life skills. By improving the participant's sense of safety, self-efficacy, and self-worth, positive youth development activities can directly combat the adverse impacts of ACEs (Edington & Randall, 2005). Positive youth development programs have been shown to be more efficacious in providing positive outcomes for at-risk youth when compared to approaches that focus on deficits or scare tactics (Moore, 2017). A positive youth development program attempts to utilize a youth's strengths as opposed to

eliminating their weaknesses. The program goals are designed to bring out the best in each child rather than to achieve a reduction or cessation of problem behaviors.

Moore (2017) highlights three studies that have contributed to the growing collection of empirical support for positive youth development programming. One study examined the effects of positive youth development approaches in elementary afterschool contexts. Findings suggested that including positive youth development at the program level translated into longitudinal positive youth development outcomes. Another study demonstrated that a positive youth development program for Latino and African American adolescents appeared to markedly reduce their problem behaviors. The third study discussed the ways in which a positive youth development program centered around the cultivation of an equitable school climate can effectively promote civic engagement and positive attitudes amongst participants (Moore, 2017). Importantly, Moore (2017) also insists that working towards positive youth development outcomes is worthwhile based on the growing body of evidence supporting the malleability, resilience, and neurological plasticity of children and adolescents.

The results of a study by Snyder et al. (2013) suggest that elementary-aged students who participated in a positive youth development program were markedly less likely than non-participants to exhibit negative behaviors related to substance use, violence, and voluntary sexual activity. Participation in positive youth development activities has also been linked to increased school performance and retention, decreased demonstration of risky behaviors, and increased levels of both empathy and self-efficacy (Campbell et. al., 2013). Fostering Healthy Futures (FHF), a nine-month positive youth development program focusing on mentoring and skill development, was found to

improve the mental health functioning and quality of life of a sample population of 426 children in foster care (Taussig et. al., 2019). Specifically, FHF significantly reduced participants' needs for mental health services as well as symptomology associated with anxiety, depression, and trauma. Another important takeaway from the FHF study is that the positive youth development program was able to maintain a retention rate of 92% throughout the nine-month program; something that is historically difficult to do with a population as mobile and vulnerable as youth in foster care (Taussig et. al., 2019).

      An article by Kelly (2003) unpacks the psychological principles that influence positive youth development by introducing a framework known as health realization. A key concept from health realization is that the prevention of damaging or delinquent youth behavior comes from helping youth unlock their inner strengths and naturally occurring state of mental well-being. Furthermore, the health realization framework posits that this latent ability to mentally and emotionally self-regulate can be revitalized in even the most at-risk youth populations to promote an increase of non-criminal, reasonable, and mature behaviors (Kelley, 2003). Health realization asserts that youth who have healthy relationships with positive adults have increased levels of psychological well-being, as demonstrated by improved attitudes, problem solving abilities, and pro-social behaviors. More specifically, research suggests that adults who reliably engage with youth in positive, empathetic, and optimistic ways are significantly more capable of leaving lasting positive impacts such as reducing drop-out rates and promoting youth's abilities to exercise meaningful insight and self-reflection (Kelley, 2003).

1.2 POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT FACILITIES

Youth development literature provides empirical support for the efficacy of a positive youth development framework when working with the PRTF population (Lanier et al., 2020). The work of Haynes (2017) suggests that when PRTF staff consistently adhered to a strengths-based theoretical model of youth engagement, the youth residents were able to demonstrate a statistically significant overall reduction of problem behaviors. A similar intervention, Positive Alternatives to Restraint and Seclusion (PARS), was implemented by the New York State Office of Mental Health. All three of the mental health facilities that participated in the PARS program reported a significant reduction in the amount of documented restraint and seclusion incidents of the youth participating in the program (Wisdom et al., 2015). Another PRTF study by Duppong et al. (2017) discussed how the relative frequency of positive interactions from staff members appeared to be directly connected to the youth's relative levels of behavioral and emotional functioning. This finding, as well as those of Haynes (2017) and Wisdom (2015), highlight the power of positive, strengths-based engagement, even in the absence of an extracurricular activity program.

While the principles of positive, strengths-based engagement can be successfully applied to the PRTF setting, the inclusion of structured, activity-based positive youth development programs has been shown to provide additional benefits. For example, the social and emotional experiential learning program Strong Teens (Marvin et al., 2017) was provided to a PRTF sample population of adolescent females. The Strong Teens participants demonstrated increased levels of resilience and decreased levels of

psychological discomfort after their participation (Marvin et al., 2017). Further, a PRTF population of adolescent females who were enrolled in the sports-based positive youth development program, Do the Good, appeared to benefit from their positive youth development program experience as noted by significant reductions in both internalizing and externalizing symptoms as well as time-outs and restraints (D'Andrea et. al., 2013). Additionally, the contemplation-based intervention, Mindful Life: Schools (Felver et al., 2017), was applied to a group of 10 PRTF youth. In the 24 hours following the youth's participation in the program, the likelihood that they would be involved in any form of restraint or physical intervention was significantly reduced (Felver et al., 2017). These studies further demonstrate the potential of strengths-based, child-centered interventions for improving the psychological well-being and behavioral regulation of youth residing in PRTFs.

1.3 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN AND BEYOND KENTUCKY

4-H, the youth development program of the Cooperative Extension System (CES) and NIFA/USDA has active clubs in all 120 Kentucky counties. The organization also has a current total of 227,298 youth enrolled as 4-H Kentucky members; 56.2% of those members are in elementary school, and 40.7% are in either middle or high school (4-H Kentucky, 2022). The four "Hs" of 4-H are Head, Heart, Hands, and Health. These four components represent 4-H's holistic approach to promoting positive youth development by focusing on cognitive, emotional, social, and physical well-being. 4-H emphasizes the importance of being youth-centered and promoting life-skill development through the process of learning by doing.

4-H activities promote life-skill development, leadership development,

volunteerism, and self-efficacy by preparing youth to become healthy, competent, and engaged citizens (4-H Kentucky, 2022). Because 4-H is intentionally participant-centered, the specific content of 4-H activities and curriculum can vary greatly depending on the demographics and specific needs of each localized community. Many rural communities, for example, involve 4-H youth in agriculturally-oriented activities, while urban 4-H participants may focus more on topics such as life skills or leadership development. While 4-H activities may vary, they are typically carried out within organized 4-H clubs. Kentucky 4-H defines a 4-H club as "an organized group of at least five youth from three different families who meet regularly with adult volunteers or staff for a long-term, progressive series of educational experiences" (4-H Kentucky, 2022).

Research suggests that youth enrolled in 4-H programs are four times more likely to positively contribute to their communities and two times more likely to be civically engaged than non-4-H youth (4-H Kentucky, 2022). Further, 4-H members are two times more likely to make healthy lifestyle choices than non-4-H members (Rennekamp, 2014). Participation in 4-H has been found to increase a youth's levels of social competency, academic achievement, and connection with positive adults (Samuel & Hughes, 2014). Additionally, the National Research Council has acknowledged 4-H as an empirically supported program for preventing school dropout due to its ability to promote intrinsic motivation and a sense of belonging among youth (Samuel & Hughes, 2014). According to the 4-H Thriving Model, "youth who participate in 4-H programs that provide a high-quality developmental context will thrive, and thriving youth achieve key developmental outcomes" (Arnold, 2018).

1.4 THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE

Kentucky 4-H posits that "all youth should have opportunities for positive youth development in our four guiding concepts: mastery, belonging, independence, and generosity" (4-H Kentucky, 2022). Together these four constructs comprise the theoretical model of positive youth development known as the Circle of Courage. The Circle of Courage is a theoretical model for working with at risk youth (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2002). Since its conception, the Circle of Courage has gained sufficient empirical support and recognition to become "the foundation of positive youth development" (Rennekamp, 2014). Further, research suggests that when the Circle of Courage is applied to youth development programming, there is a statistically significant increase in positive youth outcomes such as school performance, positive self-image, and forming healthy relationships. (Kress, 2003). The model identifies four needs as essential elements of life: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity (Brokenleg & James, 2013).

Belonging is integral to positive youth development because youth require healthy and meaningful relationships with both peers and adults to successfully navigate their journey from childhood to adulthood. Instead of an environment that cultivates belonging, at-risk children often come from troubled family backgrounds and experience rejection both at school and among their peers (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2005). Youth who experience loneliness and isolation are significantly more likely to exhibit problematic behaviors such as suicidality and substance-abuse (Rennekamp, 2014). Providing youth with a supportive social environment that promotes a sense of belonging allows them to accumulate corrective attachment experiences that directly

combat the effects of previous experiences of rejection or isolation. The Circle of Courage honors the power of belonging to contest previous experiences of isolation by providing opportunities to connect with others and establish trustful bonds between youth and positive adults (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2005).

Mastery contributes to the Circle of Courage by providing opportunities for youth to meet their own goals and solve their own problems (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2005). Mastery honors the ambitious element of human nature by providing a sense of accomplishment and self-satisfaction. Adults often make assumptions about a child's capabilities based on the child's perceived ability to meet the rigid expectations of a school environment (Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern, 2005). Youth who are seen as high achievers may take on too much and become bogged down by stress. Youth who are seen as underachievers may tend to give up easily when presented with challenges or difficulties (Brendtro, Mitchell, & Jackson, 2014). It is the self-efficacious youth who continue to push themselves after having experienced failure who begin to build new neurological pathways that are related to increased levels of intelligence (Brendtro, Mitchell, & Jackson, 2014).

Independence can be understood as an individual's ability to choose wisely, advocate for themselves, and experience both agency and influence over their own life (Rennekamp, 2014). At-risk youth are often robbed of the power to make decisions for themselves (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2005). Youth who are deprived of agency often compensate for their loss of power through pursuit of destructive and deviant pathways (Rennekamp, 2014). By emphasizing the importance of independence, the Circle of Courage allows at-risk youth to experience autonomy, responsibility, and

self-control. Youth activities informed by the Circle of Courage provide children with opportunities to demonstrate their ability to self-regulate and make good decisions, which then improves their overall level of independence (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2014). The Circle of Courage model intentionally cultivates youth's sense of independence by building up their level of self-efficacy; their belief in their own ability to be successful (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2014).

Generosity is the exercising of caring and empathetic action by using one's own resources to better the lives of others. When youth contribute to their communities, they learn about the values of collectivism and about the interdependent nature of happiness (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2005). The Circle of Courage model emphasizes the centrality of the prosocial, empathic elements of human nature (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2014). Youth activities informed by the Circle of Courage promote a sense of generosity by providing opportunities to demonstrate a sense of respect and compassion for others. Through exercising a sense of caring and concern, the Circle of Courage directly honors youth's developmental needs to promote goodwill and positively contribute to their communities (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2014).

The Circle of Courage model is applicable for implementation in a wide variety of social environments including the home; school, faith-based or spiritual settings; mental and physical health treatment settings; as well as the justice system (Brendtro, Mitchell, & Jackson, 2014). First Voice, a curriculum and educational package for those working with youth in the foster care system, has embraced the Circle of Courage as its guiding theoretical framework (Reid & Ross, 2005). A special education school in New Zealand has adopted the Circle of Courage as its model for approaching student-centered

transition planning (Espiner & Guild, 2011). The welfare system of South Africa has deeply invested in the Circle of Courage by requiring that all government youth care centers systematically promote the Circle of Courage principles in their day-to-day operations (Chimange & Bond, 2020).

L3, a therapeutic residential school for indigenous children in the American Midwest, operates with the Circle of Courage as a core philosophical foundation (DeJong & Hektner, 2006). Additionally, a mental health day treatment center for children in New Jersey has explained its use of the Circle of Courage to inform the design of its Levels System, which tracks patients' day-to-day behaviors and provides opportunities for advancement towards increased access to privileges and rewards (Harper, 2005). A PRTF for children in Nashville, Tennessee, has incorporated the Circle of Courage into all aspects of their operation. The guiding concepts of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity are factored into the organization's approach to functions including new staff orientation, staff supervision, and continuing staff education (DeSalvatore et al., 2009).

CHAPTER 2: THE CURRENT STUDY

2.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This current case study explores the efficacy of 4-H positive youth development programming when applied to a PRTF sample of youth. While existing academic works discuss the application of positive youth development programming in PRTF settings, the availability of research that documents the use of 4-H interventions within PRTF populations is non-existent. Conversely, there is significant empirical evidence to support the benefits of 4-H participation, and as a federally-funded youth development organization, it is widely accessible to youth in both rural and urban areas across the U.S. (4-H Kentucky, 2022). Additionally, 4-H operates from the Circle of Courage (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2014) theoretical framework, which has demonstrated to be effective when applied in PRTF settings. Therefore, the primary aim of the current case study is to assess the impacts of 4-H youth development programming with a sample population of PRTF youth. Additionally, the case study seeks to demonstrate how the Circle of Courage can be applied to PRTF programming to promote positive youth development.

2.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study utilizes a mixed-methods approached to addressing the following research questions:

1. *Qualitative RQ*: How does participation in 4-H activities influence the participating youth's understanding of the four Circle of Courage constructs?

2. *Quantitative RQ*: Does participation in 4-H youth development activities increase PRTF youth's competencies in the four Circle of Courage constructs.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

3.1 PARTICIPANTS

A total of seven youth residing in a residential cottage at a PRTF participated in at least one of the 4-H activities. Both informed consent documents and paired pre-/post-data were successfully collected for a total of four of those youth. Those four youth make up the participants in this case study. All participants are female, and were born between 2010 and 2013, ranging in age from nine to 12 years old, with a mean age of 10.5. All participants were Kentucky residents, and their racial identities included Black (n=1), biracial (n=1) and white (n=2). Participants were in the legal custody of their biological or adoptive parents, or of a relative or kinship guardian. None of the participants were wards of the state at the time of the study. All youth were admitted to the PRTF level of care as a result of demonstrating an inability to be safely maintained in their home. Each participant presented at least two documented psychiatric diagnoses. The diagnoses observed among participants included: attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (n=2), bipolar disorder (n=1), depression with psychotic episodes (n=1), mood disorder (n=1), oppositional defiant disorder (n=1), post-traumatic stress disorder (n=2), and reactive attachment disorder (n=1).

3.2 INFORMED CONSENT

Research procedures were assessed and approved by both the University of Kentucky Institutional Review Board, and by the participating psychiatric residential treatment facility. Facility leadership provided a signed letter of support for the research project to be conducted on their campus. The participating cottage was selected by facility staff, who then provided email addresses for each of the youth residing in the

cottage. The guardians were emailed a link to an informed consent document hosted on a secure Qualtrics server housed at the University of Kentucky. The online questionnaire began with a detailed description of the study's aims and methodology, then prompted the user to indicate either their consent or refusal to consent to their child's participation. For users who chose to consent, they were then prompted to complete a voluntary demographics survey that collected data including their child's gender identity, date of birth, diagnoses, and race. Guardians were assured that providing this information was optional, and that all identifying information would remain anonymous throughout the course of the study and aggregated at the conclusion of the study.

In addition to eliciting informed consent from parents and guardians, the participants were asked to provide consent via an assent form read at the start of both the pre- and post- data collection activities. The assent script detailed the scope of the data collection activities and informed youth that their guardians were aware of their participation. It was explained to participants that they were free to ask the researcher any questions they may have about the study, and that they were free to stop participating at any time. They were also informed that there would be no consequences for refusing to participate, and that they could later notify the researcher or a staff member that they did not want their data to be used. Four youth chose to sign the assent form and move forward with both the pre- and post- data collection activities.

3.3 4-H ACTIVITIES

Participants received four weekly 30-minute lessons from a 4-H staff member. Each of the four 4-H activities was from the 4-H Expressive Arts curriculum. The

following description of the program activities was provided by the participating county

4-H staff member who led the 4-H activities:

> During the first meeting, the youth made circular drawings with an image inside
> that represented their personal idea of happiness. During the second meeting, the
> youth used the Matisse method of collage making. While listening to music, they
> cut out pieces of paper; their moves being guided by the feel of the music. They
> then took their pieces of paper and glued them to a canvas to create a piece of
> abstract art. During the third meeting, each child used clay to create small pieces
> of art that they could use to decorate their personal space. The group also talked
> about positivity, what brings them joy, and how they can spread kindness. During
> the fourth meeting, youth made "All About Me Boards." They drew pictures and
> wrote down what they love about themselves and what they enjoy doing. They
> also spent time talking about how everyone matters and is unique and special in
> their own way.

3.4 QUALITATIVE MEASURES

For the qualitative portion of the study, each participant was asked to complete a

pre- and post- version of the Circle of Courage Worksheet, which was adopted from the

Espiner and Guild (2011) article, *The Circle of Courage in Transition Planning*.

Completing the Circle of Courage Worksheet involved thinking about each of the four

Circle of Courage elements in the context of Now, Action, and Dream. For example,

youth were asked to think about the ways that the constructs of Belonging, Independence,

Mastery, and Generosity were present in their lives *now*. They were then asked to think

of a "*dream*" for how they would like these constructs to impact their lives in the future.

Finally, they were asked to think of what *actions* they could take to make their way from

"now" to their "dream." The youth were provided with colored markers and were allowed

to either draw or write in their responses. Upon the completion of the post- Circle of

Courage worksheets, the researcher compared the pre- and post- versions of the

documents and developed a qualitative coding scheme that identified patterns and

subtleties in the youth's responses. The coding scheme then underwent a confirmability audit by the researcher's thesis chair to ensure its validity and applicability for the current study.

3.5 QUANTITATIVE MEASURES

Lee and Perales (2005) conducted a PRTF study in which they consulted one of the Circle of Courage founders, Dr. Larry Brendtro, to develop an instrument to measure participants' levels of competency in each of the four Circle of Courage constructs. Lee and Perales (2005) then administered the Circle of Courage survey instrument to a sample population of PRTF residents at two different intervals throughout their treatment. Their work revealed that the participants' levels of competencies in each of the four Circle of Courage constructs were significantly impacted by the nature and the duration of their PRTF experiences. The Circle of Courage Relational Scale was adapted from the work of Lee and Perales (2005) and has been modified for the purposes of this study (see Appendix A). The researcher facilitated the administration of both the pre-participation and post-participation scales, which each took about 15 minutes to complete. During these sessions, each youth completed their own copies of the scales in a group setting. The researcher explained the meaning of each item on the scale and answered any questions posed by participants.

The researcher created large visual guides for each of the seven possible Likert values available for each item and taped them to the wall during the data collection activities to ensure the youth understood how to complete the assessment. Following post-data collection activities, the researcher calculated cumulative pre- and post-averages for each of the four Circle of Courage construct subscales. Four total items, one

for each of the four subscales, were reverse-coded due being phrased negatively rather than positively. By comparing the pre- and post-cumulative averages for each of the four constructs, the researcher was able to identify any apparent increases or decreases in the youth's Circle of Courage competencies.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 QUALITATIVE RESULTS

A total of four youth completed both the pre- and post- Circle of Courage worksheets, which assessed the constructs Belonging, Independence, Mastery, and Generosity along three levels: Now, Action, and Dream. The researcher found that all the youth's responses could be understood as relating to each construct on either a societal, familial, peer/staff, or personal level. An example of a *societal* level response would be how one youth wrote, *"No more homeless people"* for their Generosity Dream. An example of a *familial* level response is how another youth wrote, *"At my mom's home"* under Belonging Now. An example of a *peer/staff* level response is how a youth wrote, *"Stop bullying others"* for their Belonging Dream. Finally, an example of a *personal* level response would be how a youth wrote, *"Practice singing"* for their Mastery Action. By coding the youth's responses as occurring on either a societal, familial, peer/staff, or personal level, the researcher was able to observe the ways in which the youth's understanding of each of the constructs deepened or shifted following their participation in the 4-H activities.

Figure 1.1

Participant 2 Worksheets

Participant 2: Pre
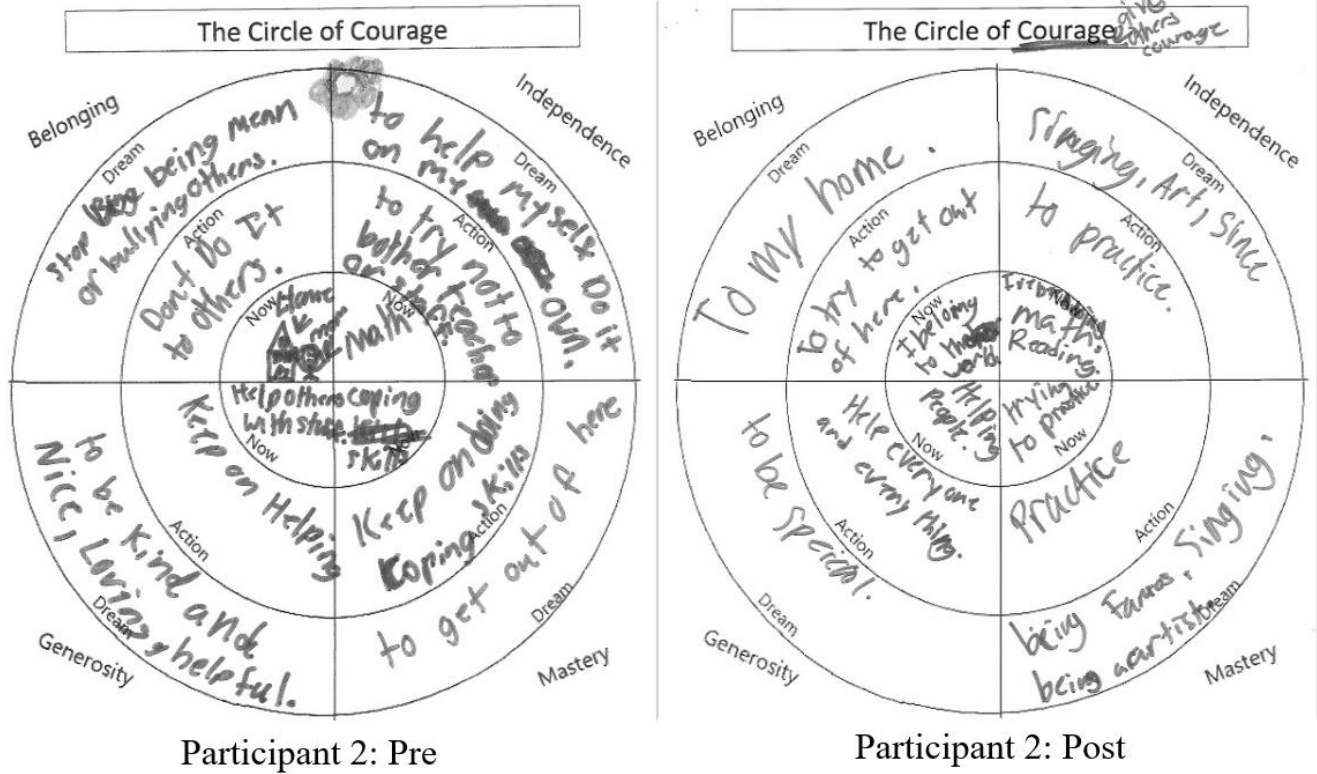
Participant 2: Post

Belonging. Figure 1.1 depicts the pre- and post- worksheets completed by

Participant 2. Participant 2 shifted in their understanding of *Belonging* from one

perspective to another for all three of the *Now, Action*, and *Dream* areas. For pre-

participation in Belonging Now*,* they wrote, *"At home with my mom,"* a familial level

response. For post-participation Belonging Now, they wrote, *"I belong to the world,"* a

societal level response. Another notable shift for Belonging Now was demonstrated by

Participant 3, who moved from personal (*"Working on my treatment"*) at pre-assessment,

to familial (*"I belong at home"*) at post-assessment. It can be observed in Figure 1.1. that

for Belonging Action*,* Participant 2 began at the peer/staff level (*"Don't do it to others"*)

at pre-assessment and moved to the personal level (*"Try to get out of here"*) at post-assessment. Interestingly, Participant 4's Belonging Action responses moved from the societal level (*"Picture of a person of color with a raised fist"*) at pre-assessment, to the familial level (*"Help my dad"*) at post-assessment. Figure 1.1. also depicts how Participant 2 shifted in their relation to Belonging Dream from the peer/staff level *("Stop being mean or bullying others"*) pre-assessment, to the familial level (*"To my home"*) at post-assessment. Another interesting Belonging Dream shift is Participant 3's transition from familial (*"Go home"*) at pre-assessment to societal (*"I want to help the homeless"*) at post-assessment.

Figure 1.2

Participant 4 Worksheets
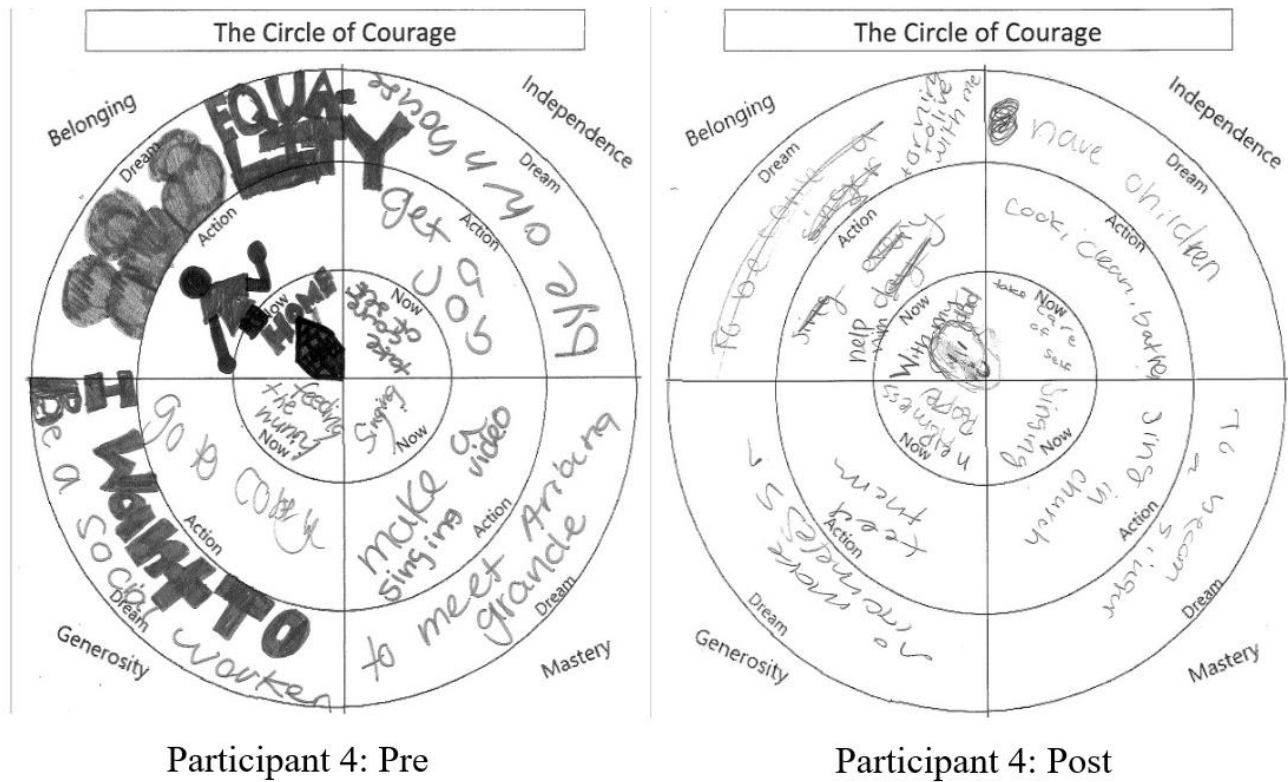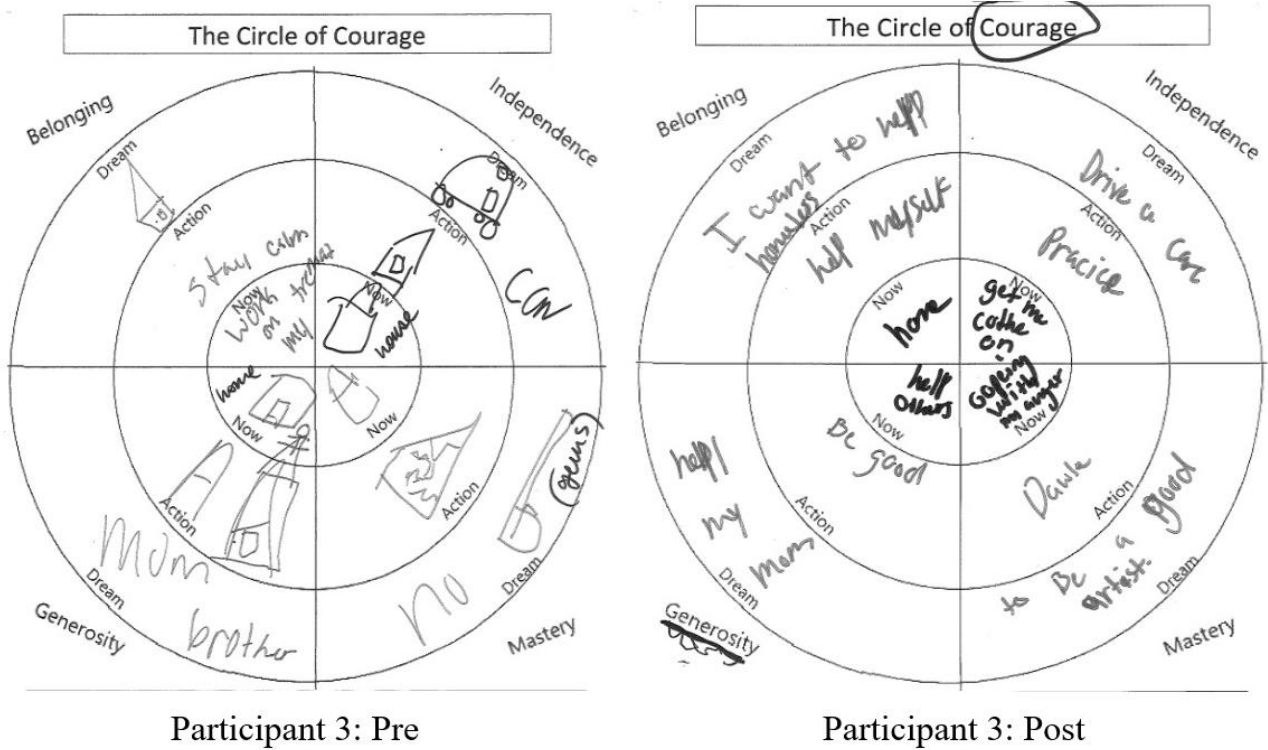

Participant 4: Pre   Participant 4: Post

Independence. Figure 1.2 displays Participant 4's pre- and post- Circle of Courage worksheets. For Independence Now, they remained at the personal level by writing, *"Take care of myself"* at both pre- and post-participation. For Independence Action, they also remained at the personal level both before (*"Get a job"*), and after (*"Cook, clean, and bathe"*) their 4-H participation. It is the Independence Dream of Participant 4 that demonstrates a shift in their perspective. Figure 1.2 shows how their Independence Dream began at the personal level (*"Buy my own* house") at pre-assessment and shifted to the familial level (*"Have children"*) at post-assessment. While most participants remained at the personal level between pre- and post-assessments for Independence Now, Action, and Dream, several other notable shifts did occur. For example, Participant 2 responded to Independence Action at the peer/staff level (*"Try not to bother the teacher or staff"*) at pre-assessment, and the personal level (*"To practice"*) at post-assessment. Additionally, the Independence Dream for Participant 1 began at the peer/staff level (*"Help others with their skin care"*) at pre-assessment and moved to the personal level (*"Have really good skin care products"*) at post-assessment.

Figure 1.3

Participant 3 Worksheets

Participant 3: Pre   Participant 3: Post

Mastery. Figure 1.3 depicts the pre- and post- participation Circle of Courage worksheets for Participant 3. It is notable that for Mastery Now, Participant 3's response was at the familial level (*"Home"*) at pre-assessment, and at the personal level (*"Coping with my anger"*) at post-assessment. Furthermore, Participant 3 identified with Mastery Dream on a societal level (*"No guns"*) at pre-assessment and a personal level (*"Be a good artist"*) post-assessment. The remainder of the participants remained at the personal level at both pre- and post- for Mastery Now, Mastery Action, and Mastery Dream.

Figure 1.4

Participant 1 Worksheets

Participant 1: Pre
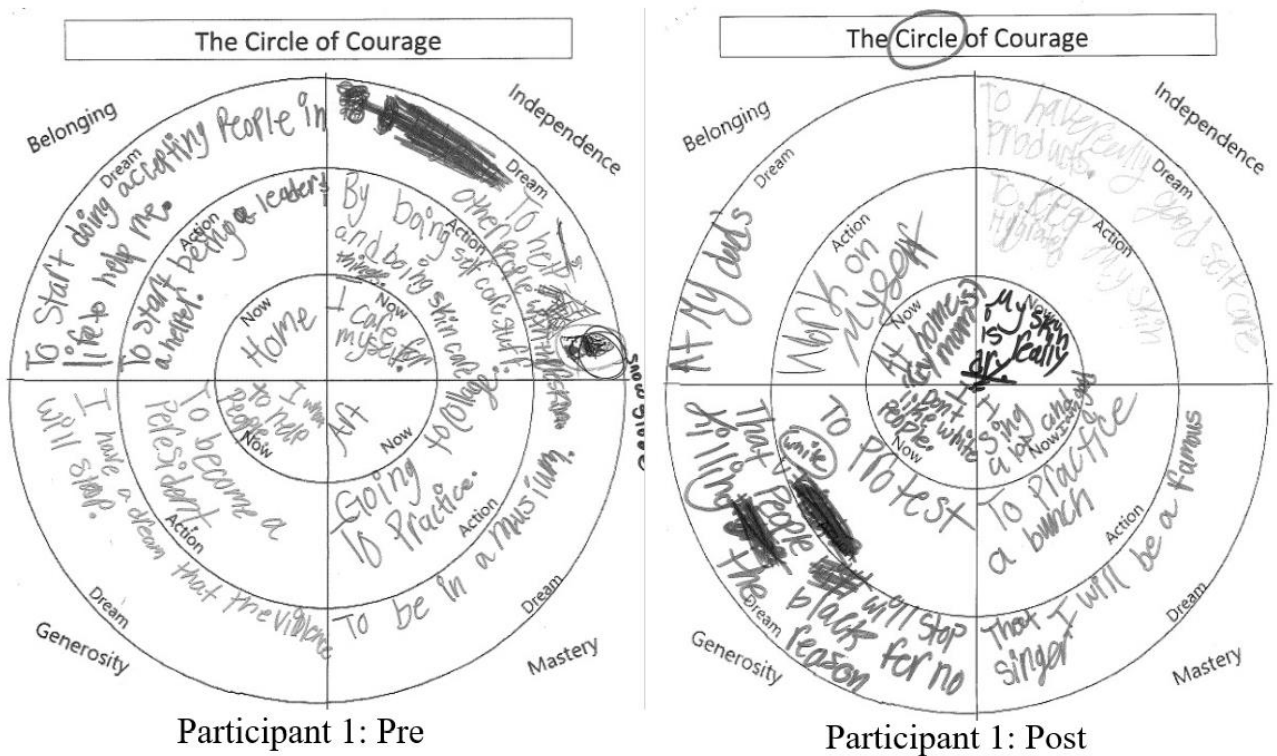
Participant 1: Post

Generosity. There was a significant amount of variation amongst the pre- and post-responses for Generosity in comparison to Mastery. Pictured above, Figure 1.4 highlights how Participant 1 related to Generosity almost exclusively on a societal level. For Generosity Now, Participant 1 stated, *"I want to help people"* (societal) at pre-assessment, and *"I don't like white people"* (societal) at post-assessment. For their pre-participation Generosity Action, they answered, *"Become a president,"* which could either be categorized as a personal or societal level response. Their post-participation Generosity Action was stated as, *"I will protest."* Again, this response indicates individual actions directed at evoking societal change and can be understood as either personal or societal in nature. Finally, Participant 1's Generosity Dream was, *"I dream*

that the violence will stop" at pre-assessment, and *"White people will stop killing black*

people for no reason" at post-assessment. A similar trend was observed in the responses

of Participant 4, whose Generosity Dream was, *"I want to be a social worker"* (personal)

at pre-assessment, and *"No more homeless"* (societal) at post-assessment.

4.2 QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Quantitative results were obtained first by calculating each participant's average

score for all four of the Circle of Courage subscales (i.e., Belonging, Independence,

Mastery, and Generosity). Individual subscale averages were then combined with those

of the other participants and divided by four to reveal the cumulative average scores for

each construct. This was done at both pre- and post-participation in the 4-H activities, and

all apparent differences in their cumulative pre- and post-average subscale scores were

examined.

The total item average for Belonging was 4.35 (pre) and 3.73 (post). There was a

0.61-point average decrease in the Belonging subscale score from pre- to post-

participation. The total item average for Independence was 4.7 (pre) and 4.53 (post). The

results indicate a 0.16-point decrease in the average Independence subscale score. The

total item average for Mastery was 5.9 (pre) and 5.73 (post). The results indicate a 0.16-

point decrease in the average Mastery subscale score. Finally, the total item average for

Generosity was 6.1 (pre) and 5.53 (post). There was a 0.56-point decrease in the

Generosity subscale score from pre- to post-participation.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current case study was to assess the ways in which 4-H youth development programming impacts a sample population of PRTF youth. The qualitative findings can be extrapolated to draw some potential conclusions about the impacts of the 4-H Expressive Arts curriculum that was used. For the Belonging construct, the shifts observed from the peer/staff level to the societal level may indicate a deeper internalization and application of a sense of belonging. For the Independence construct, the shifts observed from both the peer/staff and familial levels to the personal level may indicate an increased sense of personal accountability. For the Mastery construct, the shifts observed from the familial and societal levels to the personal level could indicate an increased understanding of mastery and a greater ability to apply it to one's own life. For the Generosity construct, the shift observed from an individual to a relational perspective may indicate a more thorough understanding of the application of generosity.

Interestingly, references to social justice and/or racial issues presented in all the Circle of Courage construct areas aside from Independence. Participant 4's societal-level pre-participation *Belonging Action* (*"Picture of a person of color with a raised fist"*) may be referring to the actions that need to be taken in order to secure a sense of belonging for people of color. Participant 3's societal-level post-participation *Belonging Dream* ("I want to help the homeless") may indicate their desire to promote a sense of inclusion for unhoused individuals who are often made to feel as if they don't belong. Participant 3 also introduced a societal-level issue in their pre-participation *Mastery Dream* by responding

with, "No Guns". This response may be drawn from a belief that our society will have achieved *Mastery*-level functioning when gun violence is no longer a critical political issue.

References to racial and social justice issues were most pronounced in the *Generosity* construct sections. Participant 1's responses to *Generosity Now* moved from a more general response ("I want to help people") at pre-participation to a focus on racial justice ("I don't like white people") at post-participation. Their affinity for activism was apparent in their responses to *Generosity Action,* where they responded with, "Become a president" at pre-participation, and "I will protest" at post-participation. A common thread between these two responses is the desire to be in an empowered position in which they can express their beliefs and actively promote societal changes. Participant 1's responses to *Generosity Dream* further emphasize their desire to rectify the racial and social injustices that mar the current societal landscape. Their *Generosity Dream* was, "I dream that the violence will stop" at pre-participation, and "White people will stop killing black people for no reason" at post-participation. These responses are layered with implications about Participant 1's beliefs towards their society and the world around them. They clearly understand violence as being a pervasive and ongoing societal issue. It is also apparent that they hold white people accountable for committing senseless acts of violence against black people. Connecting these beliefs to Participant 1's understanding of *Generosity Dream* suggests that in their mind, the ultimate realization of *Generosity* involves racial equity actualization and the dissolution of societal patterns of racism and inter-personal violence.

An additional aim of the current case study was to demonstrate the applicability of the Circle of Courage to the PRTF environment. Upon analyzing the changes in the quantitative data from the pre- and post- participation Circle of Courage relational scales,

it appears that the youth's competencies in all four Circle of Courage constructs mildly decreased following their participation in the 4-H activity series. The average point reduction observed across all four constructs was a decrease of 0.37. Therefore, while all four constructs presented with reduced competency scores at post-participation, they were only reduced by less than half-a-point on average. The small sample size resulted in a small data set, therefore yielding quantitative results that are not statistically significant enough to draw meaningful conclusions.

A potential anecdotal explanation for the receding Circle of Courage Relational Scale scores observed between pre- and post is that the post-participation scores were collected after participants had been living in the PRTF for one month longer than at pre-participation. The qualitative findings support the supposition that some of the youth may have been experiencing increased levels of homesickness or frustration with the treatment process at the time of post-participation data collection. These sentiments may be observed by comparing Participant 3's pre- ("Working on my treatment") and post- ("I belong at home") participation *Belonging Now* responses. Elements of homesickness and frustration may also be identified in the comparison of Participant 2's pre- ("Don't do it to others") and post- ("Try to get out of here") *Belonging Action* responses. Additionally, there were three new youth admitted to the PRTF cottage between the times of pre- and post- data collection who did not participate in the current study. It is possible that the addition of these youth to the cottage milieu impacted the participants' ability to relate positively to the Circle of Courage constructs of *Belonging, Independence, Mastery,* and *Generosity*.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS

While the sample size of the participating PRTF population was small, the current case study does highlight some important implications about the potential applications of 4-H youth development programming. Anecdotally, several outcomes came to the attention of the researcher that should be considered cautiously, but not be entirely overlooked. The first is that at the time of the post-participation data collection, the youth expressed their delight to the researcher about having participated in the 4-H Expressive Arts activities and asked the researcher to try to keep the activities going as a regular part of their weekly routine. The second anecdotal outcome is that several weeks after the conclusion of the study, a PRTF staff member reached out to the researcher and shared that a participant had specifically mentioned the 4-H activities as being a helpful part of their treatment on a discharge satisfaction survey.

The selection of an Expressive Arts curriculum may have added an additional layer of impact to the youth's 4-H experience. Many of the youth included on their Circle of Courage worksheets that their Mastery Dreams involved artistic pursuits including becoming professional singers or having their art displayed in museums. A third anecdotal finding is that the 4-H staff member who facilitated the activities expressed having sincerely enjoyed her time spent with the participants and seemed to have no significant issues with behavioral management or safety concerns. Aggressive and problematic behaviors are expected to occur in a PRTF environment, and yet these 4-H activities appeared to provide a space in which the youth felt no need to act out or attempt to seek negative attention. These anecdotal findings provide meaningful context to and support for the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of the current case study.

Finally, it became clear that directly engaging with the Circle of Courage constructs through the use of the Circle of Courage Worksheet provided a space in which youth were able to process their thoughts and feelings about the racial and social injustices taking place in the world around them. The participants made use of opportunities to document their beliefs and opinions about social justice issues including racism, racial violence, gun control, and the homelessness epidemic. The combination of the Circle of Courage content and the 4-H programming appears to cultivate an affirming environment that invites youth to express their political views and vocalize their dreams and desires for their futures. As previously mentioned, a study by Moore (2017) found that positive youth development programs which focus on cultivating equitable social climates result in youth exhibiting more positive attitudes and increased levels of civic engagement. The findings of the current study introduce an opportunity to expand upon Moore's (2017) findings by further exploring the abilities of 4-H and the Circle of Courage to promote increased levels of social activism and leadership development amongst participants.

5.3 LIMITATIONS

While the current case study did introduce a previously unincorporated population of youth to the existing 4-H program, it comes with significant limitations that hinder the generalizability of its results. The small sample size of only four participants is a substantial hindrance to the statistical validity of the study's quantitative findings. Furthermore, all four of the participants were female, which adds an additional layer of question as to how applicable the results may be to other populations of PRTF youth. The number and duration of the 4-H activities is another potential shortcoming of this study.

With each activity lasting for 30-minutes and the length of the program running for four consecutive weeks, there is room for future studies to expand both the duration and frequency of 4-H programming.

Additionally, there were three youth who were newly admitted to the facility between the occurrences of pre- and post- data collection. The parents of one youth did not respond to the researchers requests for informed consent, and while informed consent was secured for the two additional youth, their post-participation data was never used due the absence of paired samples of pre-participation responses. This issue speaks to the challenges presented by ever-changing matriculation levels found in PRTF's. New youth are frequently admitted, and while discharges are typically scheduled in advance, they sometimes occur suddenly due to parental requests or referrals to higher levels of care. These fluctuating admission and discharge patterns create barriers to implementing program interventions that reliably begin and end with the same composition of participants.

Finally, it is imperative to note due to facility safety concerns as described below, participants in the current study completed their pre-participation Circle of Courage Relational Scales and Circle of Courage Worksheets one week following their participation in the first 4-H activity of the program. The researcher was unable to visit the PRTF campus prior to the beginning of the 4-H program due to a participant exhibiting dangerous behaviors that posed a threat to the researchers' safety. While this issue does compromise the validity of the study's pre-post analysis methodology, it also introduces an important consideration for those looking to introduce youth development programming to the PRTF environment: The unstable conditions and unpredictability of

the PRTF environment may add significant complications to the process of implementing consistent and complete programs and interventions.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The current case study sought to apply the advancements in positive youth development research and 4-H programming to a small sample of hard-to-reach youth in order to demonstrate their applicability to the PRTF population. The qualitative findings indicate a tangible shift in participants' understandings of the four Circle of Courage constructs following their participation in the month-long 4-H activity series. Specifically, qualitative results suggest that engaging with the Circle of Courage allows youth to explore ideas around structural racism, the homeless epidemic, and social justice activism. Furthermore, anecdotal results provided in the form of observations by the researcher and feedback from the participants indicate that the 4-H programming was appreciated and well-received not only by the participants but the 4-H staff facilitators as well. This study is encouraging in its suggestion that 4-H programming may be a useful untapped resource for PRTF populations and indicates a need for further exploration of how these youth services organizations can work together towards their shared goal of youth empowerment.

THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE RELATIONAL SCALE

The Circle of Courage Relational Scale						
Belonging						
1) I feel like I am part of the ████████ Community.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
2) I feel like I am accepted in my cottage.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
3) People that I live with at ████████ like me.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
4) I do not have an adult on campus that I trust.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
5) People at ████████ have helped me feel like I belong here.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree

Independence						
11) I complete tasks without being asked.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
12) I can speak up and say what I think.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
13) I can learn to take care of myself.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
14) I am easily misled by other kids.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
15) People at ████████ care about what kids think.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree

Mastery						
6) It's not important for me to do my best.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
7) I am usually successful at most things I try.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
8) People at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ have helped me find success.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
9) I like to learn new things.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
10) I am getting good at solving problems.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree

Generosity						
16) I am too busy to help others.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
17) Others come talk to me about their problems.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
18) When others are upset, I want to help them.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
19) In the last week, I have helped someone else.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree
20) People at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ have helped me find ways to help others.						
1: Strongly Disagree	2: Disagree	3: Somewhat Disagree	4: Neither Agree nor Disagree	5: Somewhat Agree	6: Agree	7: Strongly Agree

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VITA

Elizabeth Steering

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

M.S., Family Sciences   Expected May 2023
    Emphasis in Couple and Family Therapy
    University of Kentucky
    Lexington, KY

B.S., Sociology   May 2016
    Portland State University
    Portland, OR

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Intern Couple and Family Therapist   August 2021 – May 2023
    University of Kentucky Family Center   Lexington, KY

Care Navigator   June 2020 – November 2022
    Bellewood and Brooklawn   Louisville, KY

Youth in Development Volunteer   January 2018 – February 2020
    Peace Corps Thailand   Ranong, Thailand

Africa House Youth Department Instructor   January 2017 – December 2017
    Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization   Portland, OR