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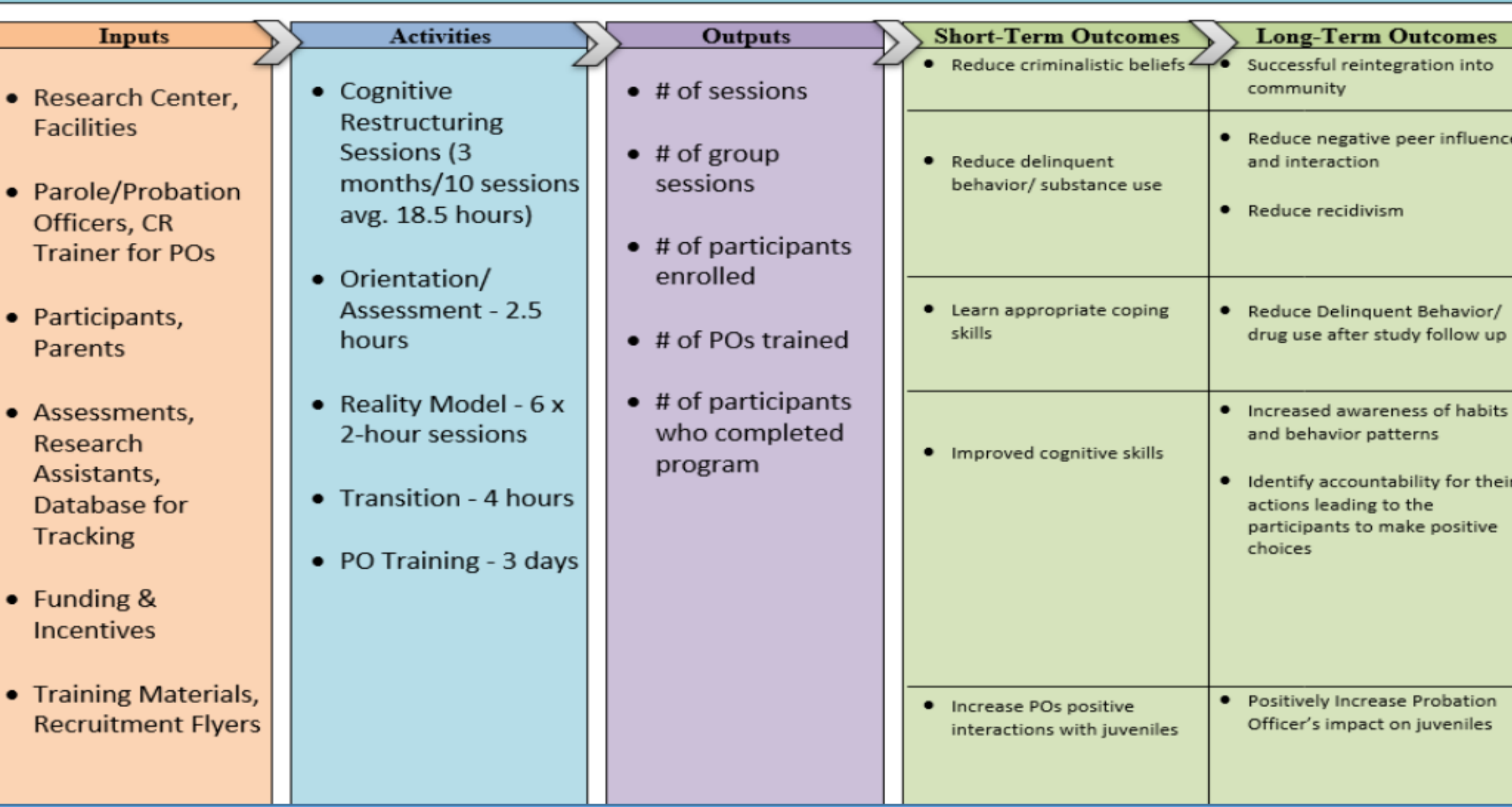
ABSTRACT

This study assesses the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring on reducing criminalistic and delinquent behavior among juvenile offenders with substance use disorders. This study followed a multi-site Pretest-Posttest Control Group design with random assignment to two study conditions per site. The sample included 187 youths aged 15-18 from Florida and Delaware. Criminalistic and delinquent behavior (violent behavior, serious property crimes, minor property crimes, and drug sales) were assessed with the YDS and YSR assessments. Youth's self-reported results failed to show that cognitive restructuring significantly reduced criminalistic or delinquent behavior better than standard aftercare treatment. There was insufficient data to determine if sex crimes were reduced. The study concluded that additional research is suggested to determine the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring on reducing problematic behavior in the juvenile offender population as well as studies on the topic of youth offenders suffering from a substance use disorder are needed, especially those emphasizing evidence-based practice interventions and their degrees of effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Criminal Justice Drug Abuse Treatment Studies (CJ-DATS) conducted a study (the Cognitive Restructuring Program) to address the multi-dimensional needs of youths re-entering the community after release from juvenile justice residential treatment facilities. The study provided various program activities aimed at juveniles and probation and parole officers. The Cognitive Restructuring protocol was administered over three months to the juveniles and consisted of three phases: Orientation, the Reality Model presentation, and Transition. The probation and parole officers completed a three-day training program on the use of the Reality Model and the Language of Supervision prior to program implementation. The intended outcomes for youth included reduced criminalistic, delinquent, and substance use behavior through learned healthy coping and cognitive skills. The intended outcome for the probation and parole officers was greater program effectiveness through increased positive interactions with the youth.

Juvenile Reentry Logic Model



EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- To what extent did the Cognitive Restructuring Program decrease criminalistic behaviors among juvenile offenders after returning to the community?
- What is the effect of the Cognitive Restructuring Program on the likelihood of re-offense six months after completion among juvenile participants?

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Studies have shown a significant degree of effectiveness in the use of Cognitive Restructuring Therapy for treating anxiety and substance abuse (Moffitt et al., 2012).
- Substantial aspects of criminalist thinking and beliefs can be reduced, reframed, and eliminated when utilizing the principles of Cognitive Restructuring Therapy, thus leading to a reduction in criminalist behavior (Knight et al., 2006).
- Within the world of incarceration, the use of Cognitive Restructuring Therapy has shown promise by reducing problematic inmate behavior (misconduct) and offering inmates the opportunity for greater post-release success and decreased protentional for recidivism (Baro, 1999).
- There are limited studies and literature on the use of cognitive restructuring especially within juvenile justice for youth suffering from substance use disorders.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

- Data revealed that
- Results showed that both the Cognitive Restructuring program and the Standard Aftercare groups reported significant decreases in all areas of criminalistic and delinquent behavior

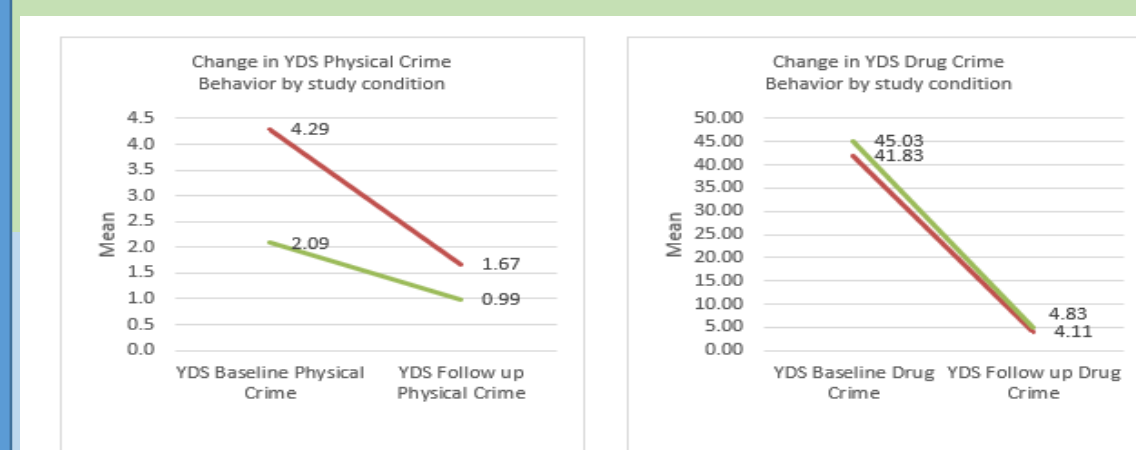
Inferential Analysis

For evaluation question pertaining to the extent to which the cognitive restructuring program decreased criminalistic behaviors among the participants:

- The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was performed to compare the Baseline and 9-month follow-up self-reported criminalistic behavior measured by the YDS for participants who received standard aftercare comparing them to those who received cognitive restructuring session
- For the Cognitive Restructuring group, mean at baseline was 50.68 (SD=72.48) compared to the mean score at follow-up of 4.11 (SD=18.13)
- A significant decline in self-reported involvement in drug-related crimes (YDS Drug Crimes) was found in the Cognitive Restructuring participants

For evaluation question pertaining to the extent to which the Cognitive Restructuring program had on reducing the likelihood for the juveniles re-offending six months post completion:

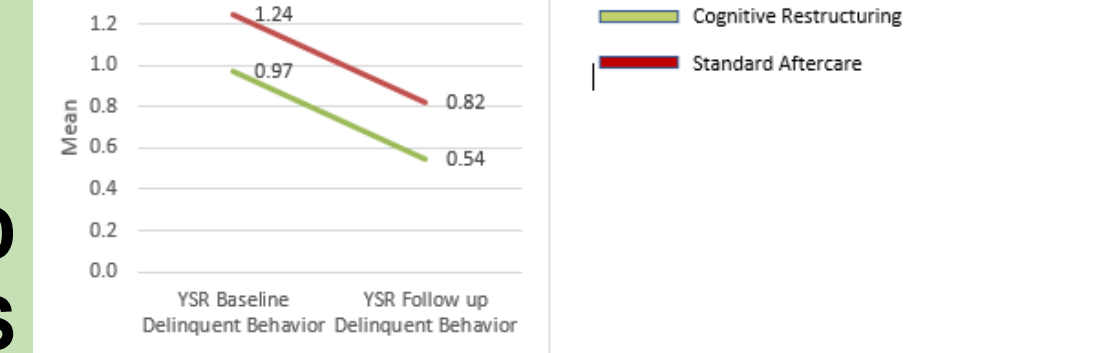
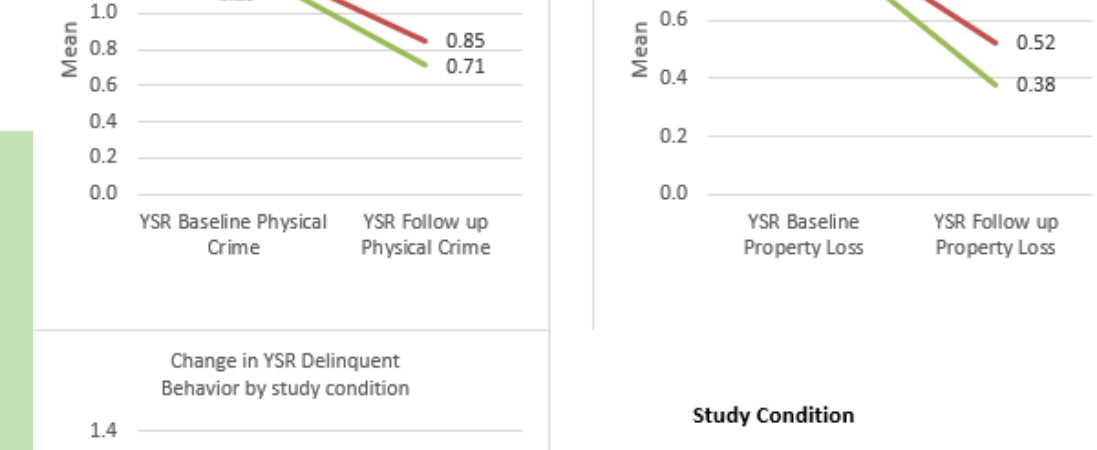
- The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was performed to compare the Baseline and 9-month follow-up self-reported delinquent behavior measured by the YSR for participants who received standard aftercare comparing them to those who received the Cognitive Restructuring session
- For the Cognitive Restructuring group, mean score at baseline was 1.27 (SD=1.39) compared to the mean score at follow-up of 0.81 (SD=0.93)
- The YSR Physical Crime showed an overall decrease in scores for both the Cognitive Restructuring and the Standard Aftercare groups



YDS BASELINE AND FOLLOW-UP RESULTS



YSR BASELINE AND FOLLOW-UP RESULTS



METHODOLOGY

Evaluation Design

- Multi-site pretest-posttest control group design with random assignment to two study conditions per site
- Utilized secondary data from CJ-DATS (ICPSR #30143)
- Data collection occurred at intake, 3-month, and 9-month

Sample

- Random assignment sampling used
- The 3-month Cognitive Restructuring program began with 187 youth and concluded the final data collection with 137 youth

Measures

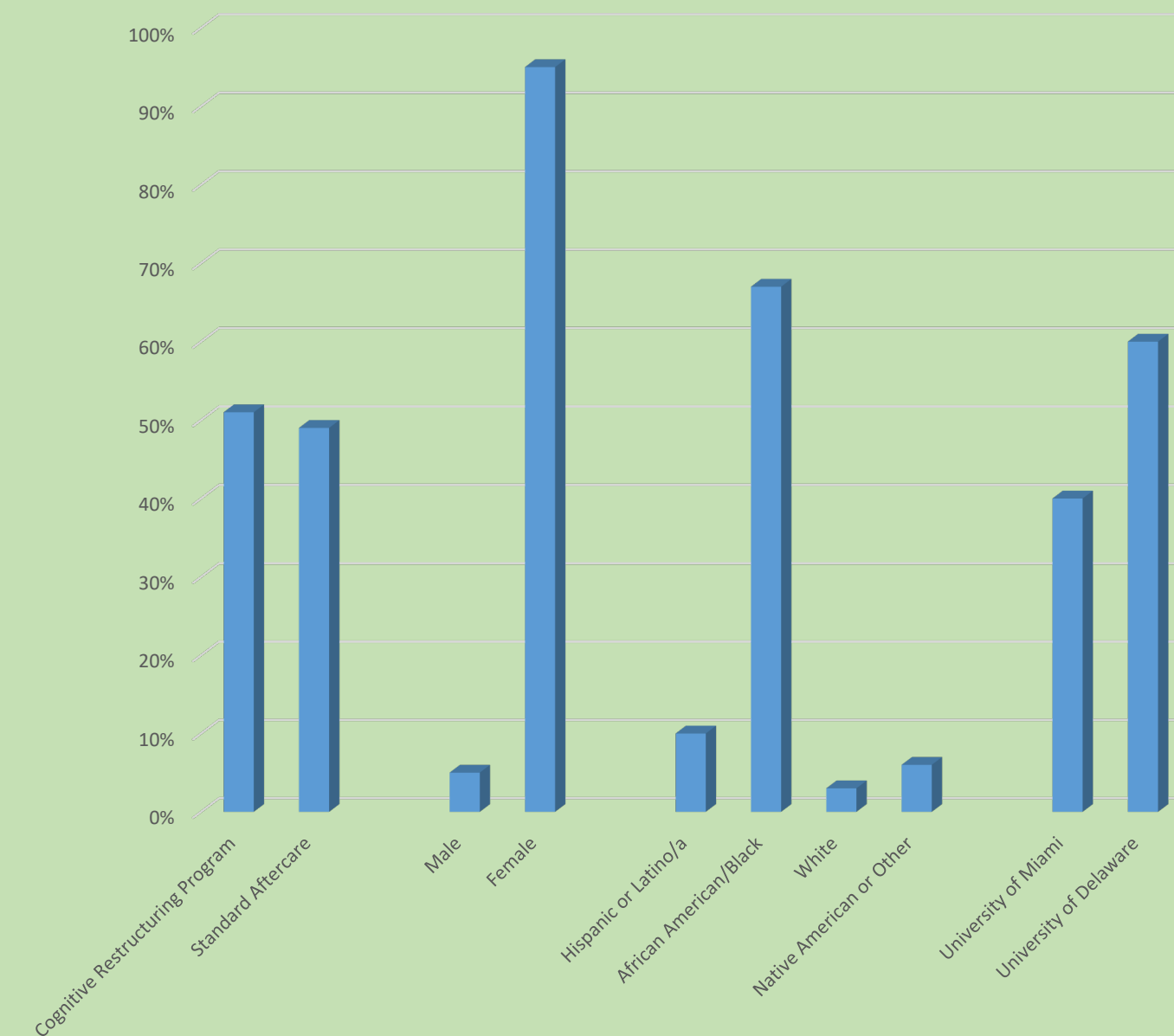
Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study is any criminal behavior (felony or misdemeanor)

Two assessment tools were used to capture youths' self-reported involvement:

- National Youth Survey Delinquency Scale (YDS) five categories of questions used to measure involvement in criminalistic behavior (23 questions based on Physical, Theft, Drug, Sex, and Delinquent Crimes)
- Youth Self-Report (YSR) three categories of questions used to assess externalizing and internalizing delinquent behavior (10 questions based on Physical and Property Crimes, and Delinquent Behavior)
- YDS continuous scores varied from 0 upward
- YSR is based on a 3-point Likert-type scale with total scores ranging from 0-20
 - (0) Not at all true; (1) Sometimes true; (2) Very often true
- For both categories, higher scores indicate increased engagement in criminalistic and delinquent behavior

Demographics



Independent Variable

- The effectiveness of cognitive restructuring on criminalistic and delinquent behavior

Data Collection

- Demographic information collected during initial screening
- CJ-DATS provided data collected from 2005-2008
- Face-to-face interviews between trained research assistants and the study-involved youth

DISCUSSION

Limitations

- Participants being compared were from two distinctly different sampling frames
- Large disparity in gender distribution – heavily weighted towards female participants
- Lack of follow-up data in several categories
- Repeatedly administering the same tests could have negatively impacted the participant's responses

Program Recommendations

- Extend study period to capture data on participants behavior as they enter early adulthood
- Include a third study condition for modality comparison
- Access to study protocol highlighting the overall aspects of standard aftercare activities and treatment as they compared to those of cognitive restructuring for clarification on similarities and differences between the groups

Implications for Social Work

- Findings reinforce the need for providing preventative mental health services to youth with substance use disorders to help mitigate possible progression to criminalistic or delinquent behavior
- Evaluating effectiveness of evidence-based practices for use in treating youth with substance use disorders was limited
- Evaluating availability of community programs for at-risk youth
- Research suggests that youth who receive treatment, regardless of type or length, fare better than those who receive no treatment

CONCLUSION

This study failed to demonstrate that participants receiving cognitive restructuring showed dramatically reduced criminalistic behavior or a markedly less likelihood of re-offense compared to those who received standard aftercare treatment. Additional research is suggested to determine the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring on reducing problematic behavior in the juvenile offender population.

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Knight, K., Garner, B. R., Simpson, D. D., Morey, J. T., & Flynn, P. M. (2006). An Assessment for Criminal Thinking. *Crime & Delinquency*, 52(1), 159-177. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001128705281749>

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