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EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG ADULTS IN EXTENDED FOSTER CARE: AN EXPLORTIVE STUDY

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EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG ADULTS IN EXTENDED FOSTER
CARE: AN EXPLORTIVE STUDY

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Elaine Marie Contreras

June 2014

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ABSTRACT

Currently, there are thousands of foster youth in the child welfare system. When they reach the age of 18, some of these youth emancipate from the system, while some of them participate in extended foster care. The extended foster care system was implemented to support and provide services to young adults passed the age of 18, to provide them a couple more years to obtain stability in their lives. In order to participate in extended foster care, they have to meet a few requirements, and sometimes this is the minimum level of commitment and effort they contribute. These requirements include: school enrollment, employment working at least 80 hours per month, enrollment in a program for employment readiness or a documented medical condition that hinders the youth from any of the above. These young adults in extended foster care do not always have positive experiences and positive results. This study was conducted to explore this topic.

This was an explorative study which conducted a qualitative analysis of interviews of young adults in extended foster care. These interviews were analyzed by using the Constant Comparative Analysis approach. The results provided a glimpse into the experiences of these young adults. Overall, their experiences are positive, but there is a need expressed by these youth, that more services and support would be helpful and in turn could produce more successful results for the extended foster care program, as a whole. Future research can build upon this study, by using a larger sample size, using a mixed

methodology, and using a consistent interview method, to explore areas of concern in order to be able to generalize the results to all youth and extended foster care programs across the state of California.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother, without whom nothing would be possible, Diane Contreras and to David Calderon, Jr., who has kept me grounded, through these tough years.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Thousands of youth are emancipated from foster care each year. They are expected to go into the world and become successful, functioning members of society. Many of these youth are not provided with the necessary tools, resources, and skills to survive, much less thrive on their own. These individuals are in need of guidance, support, and resources which are able to provide services when they become independent. According to Courtney, Dworsky, and Pollack (2007), 24,000 foster youth are emancipated each year because they become too old for the child welfare system, but they are usually not prepared to be independent young adults. The federal government became aware of the unpreparedness of these young adults and have since created a number of legislations to provide extended services, programs, and care to these individuals. Following is a description of each of these legislations and their intentions for foster youth.

In December of 1999 the Foster Care Independence Act was passed, which allowed states to use funding for room and board to young adults 18 to 21 years. This also allowed extension of Medicaid coverage up to the age of 21 (Stott, 2013). Stott (2013) also include the passing of Promoting Safe and Stable Families amendment in 2002, which provided secondary education and training for former foster youth, ages 18 to 23 years, with Education and Training

Vouchers (ETV).

In 2008 the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act was passed. This act was intended for extensions of services for foster youth soon to emancipate from the foster care system. One of the provisions of this law was to extend Independent Living Program (ILP) services and financial assistance with ETV for youth 16 and older. These youth had to be adopted or placed in legal guardianship after the age of 16. This act also allows young adults, ages 18 to 21, to remain in the child welfare system and to continue eligibility for placement and funds for care providers. These young adults were also allowed approval for placement in supervised independent living situations. In order for the young adults to take advantage of these extensions, they must be in school, be employed 80 hours per month, participate in a program which facilitates employment readiness, or be unable to take part in the above stipulations due to a medical condition. This also mandated social workers to create a transition plan for youth, within 90 days prior to their 18th birthday or emancipation, whichever came first. This transition plan should include resources for housing, education, employment, health care, and other services and other supports deemed necessary (Stott, 2013).

In the state of California, the Assembly Bill 12 (AB 12) was passed in 2010 based on the federal law of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, in hopes to provide the young adults of California with

extended services until the age of 21, with all of the stipulations and mandates of the federal law (Stott, 2013).

Programs which were placed in motion by the above mentioned laws and amendments include Independent Living Program and the Transitional Housing Program-Plus, which both provide assistance to the young adults for independent living after emancipating out of foster care. In the following sections, a broad overview of the issue will be discussed, as well as the purpose of this study, and the significance this issue holds to the social work practice.

Despite these legislation and programs some negative outcomes still exist. Midwest studies conducted by Courtney et al. (2011) over a span of over five years, have found both positive and negative outcomes with former foster youth of extended foster care. Because these negative outcomes continue to exist, this study hopes to explore how the system, with AB 12, can improve the experiences of the young adults emancipating from the child welfare system.

Problem Statement

Youth in foster care emancipate at the age of 18 years old. “In 2011, about 26,000 youth in foster care reached age of emancipation” (Courtney, Dworsky, & Napolitano, 2012, p. 1). When they reach this age they are intended to go out on their own and give their best attempt at success. The experiences of these youth, up until the point of emancipation, can include an unstable placement for a number of years, being taken away from their parents, their

homes, then being placed into the foster system, and the trauma which goes along each of these experiences. Not only have these young adults experienced trauma within the system, once they age out of the system their experiences do not improve much. These new experiences include homelessness, mental health issues, legal and criminal involvement, lack of employment and education, and most importantly, a lack of a support system to lean on and rely on (Courtney, Dworsky, & Napolitano, 2012).

Buss et al. (2008) suggest differences in support systems and preparation for independence during the transitioning years of the foster youth are attributed to the differences between them and non-foster youth. "Those who age out often face obstacles to developing individual living skills and building supports that ease the transition to adulthood" (Fernandes, 2008, p. 2).

Prior to any law extending foster care to the age of 21, youth were aged out of the system. These youth would be homeless on the day of their 18th birthday if they did not have residency or services in place. At the age of 19, one in five former foster youth had a period of homelessness within 12 months of emancipation (Pergamit & Johnson, 2009). Some social workers would drop the youth off at a homeless shelter with their belongings in one bag ("My so-called emancipation," 2010).

Developmentally these youth are not prepared to become independent at age 18. They need tools and skills but they also need to be mentally, physically, and emotionally prepared in order to absorb these skills. According to Arnette

(2000), at the time of emancipation they should be in Identity vs. Role Confusion stage up to the age of 19. The next stage of development is Intimacy vs. Isolation, which poses another issue because once they emancipate they may not have a support system in place (Hoare, 2013).

One of the proposed benefits of Assembly Bill 12 (AB 12) is to continue foster care until the youth are developmentally ready to take on their independence. This proposed benefit will provide the foster youth with resources and services along the way, as well as a support system so they are not making attempts at success on their own. AB 12 is intended to facilitate this issue of youth being emancipated too early, prior to them being prepared and developmentally ready, and allowing them to have better chances at success with resources and a plan for success. Young adults taking advantage of AB 12 are able to stay in foster care placement until they are 21 years old, as non-minor dependents. This extension allows them to make the transition to adulthood with more ease and more support (Stott, 2013).

This study will examine if AB 12 may be a constraint to the process of independence after emancipation. There is not a sufficient amount of data to show the success of extending foster care and a large number of these youth continue to be homeless, abusing substances, dropping out of school, and unemployed. The specific reasons are unknown.

This could be an area where the child welfare system and social workers can assist in helping the youth seek out and learn how to search for any resource

they need, for any situation (“My so-called emancipation,” 2010). With the legislation in place in California, it is mandated for social workers to prepare these young adults with necessary resources and leave them with a plan for success. Each foster youth is appointed a social worker and they are required to make monthly visits with their client. The social worker is to work with them on their independent living plans in an attempt to prepare them for emancipation. This study will attempt to find ways in order to improve social work practice in regards to this issue and the practices they are mandated to follow (Stott, 2013).

This study will look at the programs and services provided to young adults in extended foster care as well as the factors that contribute to their success after emancipation from the child welfare system. This study may be important to social work practice because this study will examine the services and practices of extended foster care, which are set in motion to prepare these individuals for independence. This study is also important for social work practice because social workers work closely with, and are mandated to provide resources to the foster youth within the child welfare system, per the Fostering Connections to Success and Increase Adoptions Act (Stott, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

Purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of youth in extended foster care. The specific clients are the foster youth in the child welfare system. 26,517 youth were emancipated from foster care in 2006. Sixty percent of these

youth were a member of a minority group, 52% were male (“Youth in Foster Care, 2009). There are large disparities between the gender and ethnicities of the youth in foster care. The target population is important to understand because it can guide the study to examine contributing factors to these young adults’ experiences.

In order to examine the experiences of these young adults, this study will conduct an explorative, qualitative study that will include interviews of current and former foster youth. This study proposes to examine the experiences in regards to education, employment, relationships, and support systems. This study will also examine the young adults’ perceptions of services, resources, and programs which are needed that may have improved their transition after emancipating from extended foster care. This issue will be addressed through a qualitative study because it will allow the researcher to create questions that will provide sufficient feedback and information in regards to their current status and experiences in relation to education, employment, criminal activity, legal involvement, and support systems within extended foster care. Some of the questions will examine practices and services that proved helpful to them or others which are still needed. This method will also allow the researcher to examine the data for trends such as what has happened in the past and what is happening currently as the youth are leaving the system.

For the purpose of research, this study will provide an exploration into this population, as they are a fairly new population of research in regards to

extended foster care. This research will provide new insight into the issue and will, hopefully, provide sufficient data to contribute to the field of research in social work. This study will also be a credible source and a starting point for future research in this area.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

This study is relevant to social work practice because all youth in foster care are appointed a social worker. Once they are accepted into the extended foster care program, they are appointed a new social worker which will work with them specifically on their transition plans. If this study is conducted, the results can be shared in order to educate social workers on possible new and improved ways of practice with this population. This study will also help social workers improve their practice methods with their clients on their caseload, which may be emancipating soon, but also the extended foster care social workers that work specifically with these young adults. If this can become a reality, the field of social work will benefit and the clients will also benefit because of an improved system. The results could also contribute to new policy being created in amendment to AB 12, which could potentially provide sufficient changes to be employed by other professional resources in the community, such as educators, counselors, probation officers, not just social workers.

This study is relevant to child welfare because it pertains to the youth in foster care, current and emancipated young adults. There is sufficient research

to show the young adults in extended foster care are experiencing positive and negative outcomes, despite the numerous legislations being passed to extend foster care beyond the age of 18. This study will focus on the negative outcomes being experiences by the young adults in extended foster care. The research question is: What are the young adults in extended foster care experiences and what services and programs are needed, if any?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature presented will provide a basis of understanding on the history of legislation which was passed prior to the passing of Assembly Bill 12. The current programs and practices currently being employed for extended foster care will be discussed. The research presented will focus on the negative outcomes experienced by the young adults in extended foster care. “Numerous studies reveal that foster youth face a greater likelihood of bad outcomes in the areas of education, health, mental health, criminal justice involvement, family life, housing, and employment” (Buss et al., 2008, p. 12). Theories that guide this area of practice will also be discussed to express and examine this topic in full scope.

History of Policy

In 1986, the Independent Living Initiative was passed and amended to include the Independent Living Program (ILP) which provides states with funding for preparation for independent living with Federal funding (Stott, 2013). Then, in 1999, the Foster Care Independence Act was put into play to provide room and board to youth emancipated at ages 18 to 21. This law also allowed for an extension of Medicaid coverage up to the age of 21 (Stott, 2013).

In 2002, a law was passed to provide the youth with an Education and Training Voucher (ETV). The ETV were federal funds which were provided for post-secondary education to youth 18 years and older. A few years later, Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act was passed in 2008. This allowed youth, who were adopted after the age of 16, to be eligible for ILP and EVT. The qualifications for this required the individual to be 18 or older, enrolled in school, employed at least 80 hours per month, enrolled or participating in a program for employment readiness or a documented medical condition that hinders the youth from any of the above. It is unclear whether mental health conditions qualify for these medical exemptions (Stott, 2013).

California's Fostering Connections Act: Assembly Bill 12

In 2008, the Bush Administration passed a federal bill to extend foster care to the age of 21 (Courtney et al., 2013). This law extended assistance and services to the youth federally, but it was up to each state to comply. In 2010, Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, passed the Assembly Bill 12 to extend foster care to the age of 21, but to also provide extended services and create a plan to assist in the transition to adulthood, also to provide resources, as needed, to these youth in the state of California.

Programs and Practices

Other programs similar to extended foster care include the Independent Living Program (ILP) and Transitional Housing Placement Plus (THP-Plus).

Pergamit and Johnson (2009) found that 54% of the individuals in their study obtained their high school diploma while in an Independent Living Program. ILP provides an apartment in a transitional housing complex and also provides access to support, services, and case management (Stott, 2013).

THP-Plus was implemented in 2001 and provides affordable housing, as well as services to emancipated youth, 18-24 years of age (Courtney et al., 2013). In a study conducted by Byrnes, Kimberlin, Lemley, and Lorentzen (2008) evaluating 485 youth in Transitional Housing Program-Plus (THP-Plus), they found higher rates of employment, education, and lowered criminal involvement along with other benefits. In 2001, when these programs were initiated, the THP programs were able to provide case management services, job training, assistance to pursue post-secondary education, as well as provide support and mentorship to the youth. According to Courtney, Hook, and Lee (2012) there is evidence to show benefits to foster youth in areas of higher education, higher earnings, and delay of pregnancies for the young females.

The potential benefits, for the youth of AB 12, are higher education, delayed pregnancy, job attainment or training, and services. These potential benefits were studied at by Courtney, Dworsky, and Peters (2009) using previous Midwest studies on their emancipated foster youth. They sought to review the studies' findings in regard to attainment of higher education by the sample, 18 to 21. They also looked at the earnings of these individuals to find a correlation between higher education and pay rate. They did not find any significant results

and they stated the costs of AB 12 outweighs the benefits of education and higher pay. The main limitation of this study is they used only one state, Illinois, and they used secondary data from a Midwest study previously conducted. The generalizability to other states outside of the Midwest may not correlate. Also if a study were to be completed in other states, then different results may be obtained.

Another potential benefit, to the young adults in extended foster care, comes from one of the amendments to AB 12 which allowed 18 to 20 year olds to receive CalWORKs, if they are living with an approved relative caregiver, which may also be extended until the age of 21.

Although there are a number of benefits to extended foster care and the passage of AB 12, there remains a vast range of negative outcomes experienced by these youth. “Persistent challenges lie in the low number of states that have taken up the option to extend the age through which youth can remain in care and a lack of evidence supporting existing approaches aimed at improving outcomes” (Garcia, Havlick, & Smith, 2013, p. 195). These challenges the authors discuss include mental illness, use of drugs and alcohol, delays in education and development, insufficient support from family and other adults. The following is evidence to the negative outcomes and the experiences of young adults in extended foster care. Stott (2013) states the following:

Tracking the outcomes from the early 1980’s through the passage of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, no marked improvements can be

seen in educational attainment, employment, annual incomes, prevention of homelessness, the delay of childbearing, or other indicators of well-being. (p. 221)

The youth in foster care experience a vast range of emotions at the time they are first introduced to the system and at each placement, thereafter. If the child is in foster care, their stay is not always permanent and they can be moved numerous times. With each move comes a traumatic experience because they are losing connections that are being made in such short amount of time. Not only do the foster youth experience trauma, but they experience depression, guilt, shame, and so many other emotions that can affect their school, social, and environmental functioning. “In terms of educational achievement, employment, and well-being, many continue to fare poorly in young adulthood” (Stott, 2013, p. 218).

Courtney et al. (2007) conducted a longitudinal study in Wisconsin and Iowa with 758 participants, aged 17. They used surveys and interviews to obtain their data. The purpose of the study was to determine how former foster youth were doing at the age of 21 in relation to education, employment, relationships, living arrangements, and criminal activity. The same study was conducted with the same youth at the age of 26, looking at the same variables. (Courtney et al., 2011). They found similar rates in both studies, some of the youth were doing well, but majority were struggling at the age of 21, soon after emancipating. The youth have issues with a number of areas discussed in the previous study, but a

focus will be on studies which show the trends in the topics of criminal involvement and mental health.

Education

Courtney et al. (2007) conducted a study review of the Midwest studies completed with 732 foster youth. They found the former foster youth were twice as likely to not have completed their GED or high school diploma versus their peers. 30% of the study participants had completed courses in college compared to 53% based on a national study of 21 year olds.

In another Midwest study conducted by Courtney, Dworsky, Lee, and Rapp (2009) with 602 participants interviewed at the age of 23 or 24 found 24.4% had no high school diploma or GED at the time of the interviews. Approximately 26% completed at least one year of college. Only 3.2% had a degree from a two year college and 2.5% had a degree from a four year college.

Similarly, Courtney et al. (2011) found only one fifth of their participants had completed their GED or high school with a diploma. They also found that 40% had completed at least one year of college and only 8% completed a post-secondary degree. Females were majority in completing high education compared to their male counterparts. When asked what prevented them from continuing their education, the most common responses were due to inability to pay for school, the need for work (males) and the need to care for children (females).

Living Arrangements

Courtney, Brown, Cary, Dworsky, Love, and Vorhies (2011) conducted interviews with 595 former foster youth when they reached the age of 26. When asked about their living arrangements, 185 (31%) of the participants lived on their own. Eighty two of the participants lived with a relative other than their biological parent and 31 were in jail at the time of the interview. Thirty percent had been in their current living situation for less than a year. Thirty one percent had been homeless or slept on someone's couch more than once, since their last interview and half reported being homeless for at least one month. Forty percent of these individuals reported being homeless or sleeping on someone's couch for over a month.

Courtney et al. (2009) found similar results when they conducted a similar study with 23 and 24 year old former foster youth. This study included 602 participants and 49% reported living on their own. Eighty five of the 602 were living with a family relative (non-biological parent). Thirty six percent were homeless or had slept on someone's couch since their last interview. Reports of the number of living arrangements showed that a large percentage of these individuals lived in more than one place within the time of their last interview, the results are as follows: 12.1% had only one, 19.3% had two, 19.4% had three, and 17.9% had four, with the highest number of places being seven, with 1.2% of the sample.

Criminal Behavior

Courtney, Hook, and Lee (2012) conducted a study in regards to extending foster care past 18 years of age and looking at self-reports of criminal and legal involvement. They state there are previous studies that document negative outcomes for youth that age out of the system that include criminal activity and the legal involvement. They conducted a longitudinal study beginning with youth close to exiting foster care at the age of 17. They interviewed the same youth at ages 19, 21, and 23. They used interviews and surveys and had a 95% response rate. Their sample size was 732 youth from Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois. They found higher rates of criminal activity and legal involvement in males than in females. They state there is a higher percentage of foster youth that report criminal behavior compared to a national sample. Also, they report 20% of the youth from foster care had been arrested since emancipation until the age of 19.

In a study conducted by Brookhart, Cuccaro-Alamin, Jackman, Needell, and Shlonsky (2002), data were collected from California department of corrections from 1992 to 2000. They looked at a sample of 11,408 former foster youth to find the number of youth that had entered into the correctional system. Of this sample of 444 participants, 44% of them entered into prison after emancipation. One percent of these youth were females that had a state prison record, six percent were males that had a state prison record. About half of the males had committed a violent or serious crime. Limitations to this study is the

sample was only looking at data pulled from the department in Los Angeles, California and may not be generalizable to all former foster youth in other cities.

Pergamit and Johnson (2009) conducted a longitudinal, multi-site evaluation of foster youth programs. They looked at four different Independent Living Programs and interviewed youth at ages 17, 18, and again at 19. They found by the age of 19, 22% of these youth had been arrested and 14% of them had been incarcerated. They stated males were three times more likely, than females, to be arrested and four times more likely to be incarcerated.

Mental Health

Garcia, Havlick, and Smith (2013) completed a literature review of 16 articles on previous studies. They were looking at the prevalence of mental health in emancipated foster youth. In their review, they noticed foster youth experience lifetime rates of mental health disorders between two to four times higher than the general population. They also state mental health conditions as a factor which may be contributing to poor projections in their transition to adulthood. It is also stated the use of mental health services by the youth start to decline when the rates of mental health onset are at their peaks. Limitations of this study include generalizability to the general public based on review of articles, the policies vary by state so practices may be different, and they conducted their study on previous data which may not be reliable.

Fernandes (2008) conducted a North West foster care alumni study with 479 former foster youth in Oregon and Washington. The sample consisted of 20

to 33 year olds, with majority of the sample being female. She found over 54% of the sample had at least one mental health issue compared to only 21% of the general population. She stated 25% of these former foster youth had Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which is greater than the PTSD in Vietnam and Iraq war veterans, which is about 15%.

In a continuation of the Midwest study, Courtney et al. (2009) extended their survey to their previous sample at the ages 23 and 24. The final wave of interviews were in 2009, using surveys to obtain their data. In regards to the use of mental health services after emancipation, they found only 19% of the participants had received behavior or mental health services. They stated these former foster youth were more likely to receive psychotropic medications and counseling services than the general population.

Courtney et al. (2007) conducted a descriptive study with 732 foster youth from Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa. They conducted a descriptive, longitudinal study with three waves of interviews and surveys. At the time of the last wave of interviews the youth were 21 years old. They compared their findings to a sample taken from a national study of a general population of 21 year olds. In relation to mental health service utilization they found 11% had received counseling, three percent received psychotropic medications, and four percent had received treatment for substance abuse. Males were twice as likely to have alcohol or drug diagnosis compared to females, and females were more likely to be treated for depression or PTSD.

Courtney et al. (2005) completed a longitudinal study with their first wave of interviews in 2001. They used 736 former foster youth from Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois. At the time of their last wave of interviews, the youth were 19 years old. In order to compare their findings to the general population the researchers also conducted a national survey of 19 year olds. In this sample, 70% of their participants were of ethnic minorities. In relation to mental health services, they stated that mental health issues are more prevalent in foster care youth than in general population sample. One-third of their sample had at least one mental health diagnosis with the most prevalent being PTSD, alcohol and substance abuse, and major depression. 21% had received counseling services and former foster youth were twice as likely to receive services for mental health.

In a study conducted by Brookhart et al. (2002), data were collected from Department of mental health from 1989 to 1990 and from 1998 to 1999. Their sample size was 5,695 children in foster care. They found out of the sample, a number of the youth were being treated for various disorders. Of these youth, 65% had received mental health services, 38% were treated for mood disorders, 24% were treated for behavior disorders, five percent for psychosis, 23% for anxiety disorders, and 31% for adjustment disorders. The limitation to this study were that the sample was only pulled from Los Angeles, California and may not represent all youth that are in foster care. The other limitation is the disorders may be diagnosed prior to entrance into the system and emancipation.

While the youth are in foster care, they experience a vast range of emotions. Once they emancipate, they may be experiencing these feelings and emotions built upon those feelings and emotions they are having of becoming independent and surviving on their own. These youth often get into situations where they cope with these emotions in negative ways and end up in more serious situations. These youth experience mental health issues, homelessness, and involvement with the law and issues with education and employment. Again, they are expected to survive and thrive on their own, because of their choices they now have a record or a mental disorder which hinders their ability to work or attend school.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Theories that guide this area of practice are the developmental theories. A number of theorists identified stages in which one should reach at certain points in their life. The theory most relevant to this study is the “Emerging Adulthood theory” by Jeffrey Arnette (Arnette & Tanner, 2009, p. 39). In this theory, he describes this period between the ages of 18 to 25 where the individual continues to grow and develop. Arnette (2000) states the years of 18 to 25 are typically a period of frequent change and exploration. “Emerging adults often explore a variety of possible life directions” (Arnette, 2000, p. 469). The youth emancipating from extended foster care fall into this age category. They are, developmentally, in a stage of exploration and transition. This theory could

explain a vast percentage of the behaviors that are reporting during this time period. In relation to housing, there are large number of youth which are homeless because of no education or lack of employment, but what if they are not ready, developmentally, to obtain a job, school, and a permanent residence. Arnette (2000) states these emerging adults have the highest rates of residential change compared to any age group. This is one theory that can possibly explain the trends in the emancipated youth.

According to Arnette (2007), the lives of most 20 year olds are vastly different from the lives of most 30 or 35 year olds, and he states it is not productive to place them all together into one stage of young adulthood. Emerging adulthood is a period that exists only in cultures that postpone the entry into adult roles and responsibilities until well past the last teens.

Erik Erikson developed stages of development as well. When the youth age out of the system at around 18 to 21 years, they are in the Identity vs. Role Confusion stage, according to Erikson (Arnette, 2000). In this role, they are trying to figure out who they are as an individual. Another theory is the social learning theory.

Social Learning Theory

The youth in foster care are expected to use their upbringing as a model for their adult life. When they emancipate from the system, they do not have a strong foundation to build upon. The theory that guides this area would be the

Social Learning theory by Albert Bandura (Bandura, 1971). According to Albert Bandura, individuals learn through modeling behavior.

This theory puts into play reinforcement, stimulus, and proper responses. Many of the foster youth do not have a positive model of how to be an adult, because the adults in their life may be inconsistent. They are not always able to make an attachment to a model citizen that can guide them through the process. Often times, their parents are using substances, involved in criminal activity, not employed, and did not further their education. This is what the youth see before they enter the foster care system. The question arises, once in the system, are they receiving a different behavior to model?

Buss et al. (2008) reported adolescents are in need of strong, long term relationships with adults in order to learn how to function independently. They may no longer have ties with their biological family and if they are bounced placement to placement, it does not allow them time to form strong bonds with adults. They also need strong relationships with peers in order to successfully achieve an understanding of themselves. "Observing adult models not only offers insight into behavior norms, but also facilitates acquisition of new skills or capacities" (Buss et al., 2008, p. 8). According to these theories, the youth need relationships and support systems in order for them to function independently.

Benson and Johnson (2009) conducted a longitudinal study with 134 middle and high school students in 80 different communities. The participants were given an interview and a questionnaire over the course of six years. They

were interested in the connection between formation of identity and family of origins. They found that is important to examine the parental support and the family stressors in relation to identity formation. The limitations of this study include the definition of family. In contemporary society, family is defined by various members and ideas. For the youth in foster care, should they look at their biological family or their foster family to make their connection to identity formation?

The foster youth that are leaving the foster care system are in need of services and support to become sufficiently independent. The system that discharges them may be responsible for not providing them with the necessary tools to survive and thrive on their own. This study can be a resource to find the gaps that need to be filled. Is the Assembly Bill 12 really helping the foster youth become independent at the time of emancipation?

Limitations to the Study

The limitations of these studies include sample size, sample selection, and self-reports. The limitations to all of the Midwest studies is they were only conducted with individuals from three Midwest states. Although, in a few of their studies, they compared their findings to a national survey completed with participants the same age as their sample which creates more reliability. The other limitation is the perception and stigma of receiving mental health services may be different in the Midwest than in other states.

Summary

The literature presented will provide a basis of understanding on the history of legislation passed leading up to the passing of Assembly Bill 12. The current programs and practices currently being employed for extended foster care will be discussed. The research presented has focused on the negative outcomes experienced by the young adults in extended foster care. Theories that will guide this area of practice has also been discussed to express and examine this topic in full scope.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

In this section the design of the study, the sample of the study, and how data was collected for this study will be discussed in this section. Also in this section, the procedures, protection of human subjects, and the data analysis will be discussed. This study conducted a qualitative research to answer the question, what are the experiences of youth in extended foster care? This study hopes to answer this question by conducting quantifiable interviews with former foster youth, ages 18 to 21. The interviews covered areas of demographics, experiences, placement types, relationship with caseworker, and services used. These interviews were transcribed to measure the responses in terms of those youth that are doing well in extended foster care and those youth that are not doing so well. The data will answer the research question of what the experiences are, of youth in extended foster care.

Study Design

In this study, qualitative interviews were conducted, in order to explore the experiences of youth in extended foster care. The researcher conducted interviews with participants who are in extended foster care. Their answers to the interview questions provided feedback on the services and practices being

implemented by the County of San Bernardino in regards to Assembly Bill 12 (AB 12). This is the best method to gain sufficient data from a large sample of extended foster care youth to provide a general consensus on what services are beneficial to the youth and which enriched to improve success of these youth. The research design is explanative by exploring the experiences of youth in extended foster care. The research question of this study is: What are the experiences of young adults in extended foster care?

Sampling

The study sample consisted of youth in extended foster care within San Bernardino County. The San Bernardino County provided a list of over 200 youth. A random sample of 100 participants was selected from the list. After the sample was selected, only twelve participants consented to conduct interviews with a California State University, Master of Social Work student or Dr. Carolyn McAllister. The sample was chosen from youth that are currently taking part in extended foster care services.

Data Collection and Instruments

The researcher conducted a face-to-face or phone interview with current youth in extended foster care in San Bernardino County. The participant was read the informed consent (Appendix A) and asked to give verbal consent to participate in the interview and to have the interview recorded. Once, the

provided consent, the interview began. The interview consisted of approximately 18 questions (Appendix B). The interviewer asked questions to obtain demographic information per participant. The questions obtained information about their knowledge and experiences, thus far, of AB 12 and extended foster care. A few questions asked about their current situations in regards to education, living arrangements, education, and goals in these areas. After completion of the interview, the researcher read the debriefing statement (Appendix C) and provided contact information. The participants' answers were then transcribed in order to identify current trends within the population.

The interview questions were created for this study with the purpose of examining the experiences of these youth and to gain an understanding of the practices and services utilized within the scope of AB 12. The same interview was used with all participants and the results were examined for reliability, measured by the responses of each participant. The interview questions were aimed to gain information and knowledge from the foster youth. The limitations of this instrument is the effect of the researcher's presence during the interview. Another limitation comes from the questions which may have guided the participants to answer in a particular way. Another limitation is the fact there were four different researchers, so there may be variations as to how the interviewer asks each questions, which can affect the way the participant responds.

Procedures

The data was gathered by conducting interviews with youth in extended foster care. Participation was voluntary, based on a list provided by caseworkers from San Bernardino County. Interviews were conducted by a Master of Social Work student or by Dr. McAllister at the San Bernardino County, Children and Family Services office, at the youths' home, or by phone, if a face-to-face interview could not be conducted. The interviews were conducted over the span of two months, once the sample of participants was selected.

Protection of Human Subjects

The participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary. Each participant was informed of the confidentiality by an informed consent form which they asked to acknowledge by placing an X in a box provided on the consent form or provided verbal consent. Each participant was informed that the interview was audio recorded and they acknowledged their permission by placing an X on the audio recording consent form or provided verbal consent. These forms were provided at the beginning of the interview and discussed, to ensure the participant understood the information. The information obtained from the interviews are only used for the purpose of this study, per the permission of the County of San Bernardino. Any identifying information is to be kept confidential with the use of encryption of each file on a password protected

computer. All of this data will be destroyed to protect the participants. A debriefing statement was given at the end of the interview.

Data Analysis

Qualitative procedures were utilized to study the research question. The Constant Comparative Analysis (Coleman, Dye, Rosenberg, & Schatz, 2000) was used to analyze for qualitative research. The interviews were conducted within a one to two hour timeframe. Each interview was recorded, per consent of participants, in order to obtain the necessary data for the study. The recording of the interview was then transcribed by the researcher in order to identify trends within the answers of the interview. The data answered the research question and examined services that may need improvement to enhance success of youth in extended foster care.

Summary

This study conducted qualitative research to answer the question, what are the experiences of youth in extended foster care? This study hopes to answer this question by conducting quantifiable interviews with former foster youth, over the age of 18 years. The interviews covered areas of demographics, experiences, placement types, and services used. These interviews were then transcribed to measure the responses in terms of what improvements can be made to ensure success of the youth in extended foster care. The data answers

the research question of: What the experiences are, of youth in extended foster care?

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The results of the qualitative study are discussed in the following section. This section will discuss the demographics of those who participated in the study. This section will also include a discussion of how the data was analyzed and the themes which emerged. The results of the analysis will be presented in this section, as well.

Demographics

The demographics of the 12 participants are as follows (see Table 1 in Appendix E): 25% were 19 years old; 66.7% were 20, four of which are almost 21; and one participant had just turned 21, after being interviewed. The living arrangements of the participants include 50% were living in a SILP; 25% were living in a foster home; 16.7% were living in a group home; and one participant was living with non-family. Of the 12 participants, 91.7% were currently in school and 33.3% were also working. The gender of the participants was evenly distributed 50% of the sample were females and 50% were males. Of the 12 participants, 58.3% identified as African-American; 58.3%; 25% identified as Caucasian; one participant identified as Hispanic and one identified as mixed/other (Hispanic/Italian). For the demographic question of “highest grade

completed in school”, 41.7% were in community college; 50% high school and one participant was attending a four-year university.

After transcription, the twelve interviews were analyzed using the Constant Comparative Analysis (Coleman, Dye, Rosenberg, & Schatz, 2000). In using this model, common themes were found in each interview; this was the first comparison. The initial comparison looked at the challenges and issues the youth were having during their time in Extended Foster Care. The first comparison found themes relating to school, work, relationships, and their social workers. A second comparison was conducted, using the results of the first comparison. During the second comparison, the following themes emerged with issues in the following areas: family and support system, school, work, peer family advocates, services, needed help and support, social worker, and Extended Foster Care as a whole. These themes were then examined to determine whether they could be collapsed into fewer themes that could encompass the concerns voiced by the young adults. The third, and final, comparison did just this, with the following three main themes of: need for services to better prepare foster youth for independent living (see Table 2 in Appendix E), improving communication between the young adult and their social worker (see Table 3 in Appendix E), and interacting with these youth with the understanding and empathy of where they are in their lives (see Table 4 in Appendix E).

Presentation of the Findings

Under the main theme of “need for services to better prepare foster youth for independent living”, 13 subthemes emerged (see Table 2 in Appendix E) and a few of these will be discussed. One of the subthemes is “college preparation services”. A representative sentiment which captures this is, “I am very frustrated because I am a senior and don’t know what I’m supposed to do for college” (Anonymous, personal communication, April 12, 2014). Another subtheme is “Inclusive and mandated services (similar to the services received prior to age 18)”. A sentiment which captures this is, “it should be mandatory that we go to counseling, like when I was in foster care” (Anonymous, personal communication, March 7, 2014).

The main theme “improving communication between the young adult and their social worker” produced five subthemes (see Table 3 in Appendix E). One of these subthemes is “social worker should be more helpful”. A couple sentiments which captures this is, “I just wish that my worker will be more helpful with me” (Anonymous, personal communication, February 25, 2014) and “my social worker doesn’t really help me.” (Anonymous, personal communication, April 12, 2014).

The main theme “interacting with these youth with the understanding and empathy of where they are in their lives” produced five subthemes, as well (see Table 4 in Appendix E). One of these subthemes is “no systems of support to turn to for assistance”; a sentiment which captures this is, “no, just by myself”

(Anonymous, personal communication, March 25, 2014) when asked “Do you have anyone in your life that is supportive?”

The results of the study show there are areas which can be improved in the extended foster care program. These areas are provision of more services or improved services, improving interactions between the young adult and their social worker, and using the social work practice of “starting where the client is” (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, & Strom-Gottfried, 2013,p. 46), when working with these youth by interacting with these youth with the understanding and empathy of where they are in their lives. The results provided positive feedback to the research question; the majority of the experiences of the young adults interviewed are positive experiences, with minimal areas of improvement.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this section the support of the research question will be discussed, the support of the findings and the studies presented in the literature review will be discussed, limitations to this study, and the implications this study has for social work practice will also be presented in this section.

The research question for this study is: What are the young adults in extended foster care experiences and what services and programs are needed, if any? The result of the study has shown positive experiences from the young adults who took part in the study. The young adults' participation was voluntary and they made the choice to participate, which could have contributed to the higher rates of positive responses in the interviews. Even though these 12 young adults conveyed their situations as positive, there continues to be services, programs, and support that may be helpful to contribute to higher rates of success of youth in extended foster care. The results of the study showed the need for more services, improved relationships with their social worker, and the need to improve interactions with these youth, by understanding and use of empathy to these young adult's lives, by their social workers. The results are based on the sample size of 12; which does not allow for generalizability of the results on a larger scale. This study also, only focused on the young adults in

one county. Future research can be conducted in other counties to allow for comparisons between practices, services, and experiences of the youth participating in extended foster care.

Limitations

One limitation of the study include the small sample size. The sample size of the study does not allow for generalizability; this insists there needs to be more research conducted in this area. Another limitation was the time constraint of not having enough time to conduct more interviews, as the process of contacting, scheduling and actually interviewing these youth was more drawn out as initially expected. Future research can be conducted with more time, in order to obtain more interviews, and possibly gain more access to a larger sample size.

By nature of doing a qualitative study, reliability and validity are questionable. Due to inconsistency and variance of subjects' responses, this affects the outcome and inferences cannot be made from only this study, because of this limitation to the study.

Another limitation comes from the analysis of the data, which can be effected by multiple variables, such as, the transcribing of the interviews which can be affected by researcher bias. Future research can use only one individual to complete the transcriptions and interviews to account for multiple researcher biases. Future research can also employ the use of a transcriber to complete all transcriptions of each interview. Another variable is how the interviews were

conducted; some interviews were conducted over the phone and some were conducted in person. This limitation can be affected by the presence of the researcher and wanting to provide certain answers, by the participants. Due to the inability to remain consistent, because of the participant's location, future researcher can conduct interviews using only one method. Future research can be conducted with all interviews being face-to-face or all phone interviews, which may alleviate some of the biases.

These mentioned limitations come with using qualitative methodology. This can be alleviated in future research, by using a mixed methodology of qualitative and quantitative, which may improve the reliability and validity of the results. If future research is conducted using a qualitative method then a standardized scale or method can be used to also increase reliability and validity of the study.

Implications

This study allows those working with young adults in extended foster care to increase their knowledge and understanding of the issues in which the young adults may be facing. This study also allows research the opportunity to take this area and broaden the research on a larger scale. Youth in extended foster care, around the nation, can have their voice heard and contribute to the improvements of the program. Although the results are not generalizable, the

can be used as a starting point of understanding of areas of improvement for social workers, counties, and those in the lives of these youth.

Conclusion

This study provided a glimpse into the lives of 12 youth in extended foster care. The interviews in which they participated in allowed the researcher to collapse their thoughts, opinions, and concerns into three main themes to provide an idea of what can be improved or what can be added to increase the number of successful cases of foster care youth who participate in extended foster care. The results of this study corresponded with the studies in the literature review in the aspect of preparing these youth for emancipation from the child welfare system.

APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

Experiences and Short-term Outcomes of Young Adults in Extended Foster Care

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to learn more about the experiences of young adults receiving Extended Foster Care services. This study is being conducted by Dr. Carolyn McAllister, Assistant Professor of Social Work, Dr. Janet Chang, Professor of Social Work, Dr. Herb Shon, Assistant Professor of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB), Nicole Chavarria, MSW Student, Elaine Contreras, MSW Student, and Denise Johnson, MSW Student, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: This study is seeking to learn more about your experiences while you have received Extended Foster Care (services after the age of 18) through San Bernardino County Children and Family Services.

DESCRIPTION: Your participation would consist of completing an interview with members of the research team. This interview would be audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to see the ways your responses are similar to and different from other participants. You have been identified to participate in this study because you are currently receiving Extended Foster Care services through San Bernardino County Children and Family Services

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is voluntary. A refusal to participate will involve no penalty of loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue or withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your participation in this study does not have any impact on your participation in Extended Foster Care. No employee of San Bernardino County Children and Family Services will be informed of your participation or refusal to participate in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: This is a confidential study, and all researchers will diligently work to ensure that any identifying information provided be kept confidential. The informed consent form and any other identifying information about you will be kept in a locked office. The digital audio files, transcribed interviews, and analysis will be kept on password protected memory drives, and will not contain any identifying information about you. Findings will be presented in aggregate (group) form. Any quotations used from interviews will not contain any identifying information about you or anyone else. Upon completion of this study, all audio files and identifying information will be destroyed.

DURATION: The interviews are expected to take 30-45 minutes. We may contact you for clarification as needed, however this is not expected.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you in participation in this research. However, some questions may be of a sensitive nature, and may elicit an emotional response to you. If these questions make you upset in any way, you can refuse to answer the question or stop the entire interview at any time.

BENEFITS: The findings of the research may assist San Bernardino and other counties to identify area for future training and support, as well as what is going well during the ongoing implementation of Extended Foster Care.

AUDIO: The interviews will be audio recorded for clarity and to ensure accurate data collection. These will be studied by the research team for use in the research project only. Please initial the following statement:

I understand that this research will be audio recorded, and agree to be recorded for use by the research team only. Mark_____.

CONTACT: If you have questions about the research or your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Carolyn McAllister, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work, at (909) 537-5559 or cmcallis@csusb.edu.

RESULTS: Results of this study can be located in the CSUSB Library after September, 2014.

SIGN: Please place a mark below if you agree to the conditions of this study and volunteer to participate.

Mark: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me (us) about your experiences in Extended Foster Care. I am going to ask you a number of questions about what you know about Extended Foster Care, what kinds of services you are using, what is working and what you feel could be improved about Extended Foster Care, what your plans are while you are using Extended Foster Care, and what your goals are during and after Extended Foster Care. If you choose not to answer any particular question, I can skip it. Although I will be discussing the findings with San Bernardino County CFS in general, I will not ever reveal your name or anything else that might let someone else know it was you I talked to.

The interview questions are as follows:

1. When did you first hear about AB12 or Extended Foster Care?
2. At what point did you decide to use Extended Foster Care?
3. Have you ever left Extended Foster Care and returned to it?
4. What do you currently know about Extended Foster Care?
5. Is Extended Foster Care different than foster care was before you turned 18?
6. What is your relationship like with your caseworker?
7. What is your current living situation?
8. How do you see your living situation by the time you leave Extended Foster Care?

9. Who in your life do you feel you can count on when you need help?
 10. Are there any reasons why you cannot work or attend school?
 11. Are you currently in school (or, when were you last in school, depending on the information given in the demographics)?
 12. What would you like to ultimately do for a job or career?
 13. What are your educational goals?
 14. Are you currently working (or, have you worked in the past)?
 15. What are your work goals?
 16. Do you have any other goals that you hope to meet before you leave Extended Foster Care?
 17. Overall, do you feel Extended Foster Care has been useful to you?
 18. Is there anything else about Extended Foster Care I forgot to ask?
- Anything else you feel would be helpful to know about Extended Foster Care?

Developed by Dr. Carolyn McAllister for this study.

APPENDIX C
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Debriefing Statement

Experiences and Short-term Outcomes of Young Adults in Extended Foster Care

The study you participated in is designed to learn more about the experiences of young adults receiving Extended Foster Care services. Your participation will help San Bernardino County Children and Family Services and other people working in child welfare learn more about what is working and what can be improved in Extended Foster Care.

Your interview is confidential, meaning that we will not tell anyone else about your participation in this study. Your participation also does not impact your services in any way. The findings from this and other interviews will be presented in aggregate (group) form, so no identifying information about you will be used.

If you have further questions about this interview, please contact Dr. Carolyn McAllister at (909) 537-5559 or cmcallis@csusb.edu. Results of this study can be located in the CSUSB Library after September, 2014.

APPENDIX D
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

INFORMED CONSENT
Experiences and Short-term Outcomes of Young Adults in Extended Foster Care

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to learn more about the experiences of young adults receiving Extended Foster Care services. This study is being conducted by Dr. Carolyn McAllister, Assistant Professor of Social Work, Dr. Janet Chang, Professor of Social Work, Dr. Herb Shon, Assistant Professor of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB), Nicole Chavarria, MSW Student, Elaine Contreras, MSW Student, and Denise Johnson, MSW Student, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: This study is seeking to learn more about your experiences while you have received Extended Foster Care (services after the age of 18) through San Bernardino County Children and Family Services.

DESCRIPTION: Your participation would consist of completing an interview with members of the research team. This interview would be audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to see the ways your responses are similar to and different from other participants. You have been identified to participate in this study because you are currently receiving Extended Foster Care services through San Bernardino County Children and Family Services

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is voluntary. A refusal to participate will involve no penalty of loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue or withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your participation in this study does not have any impact on your participation in Extended Foster Care. No employee of San Bernardino County Children and Family Services will be informed of your participation or refusal to participate in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: This is a confidential study, and all researchers will diligently work to ensure that any identifying information provided be kept confidential. The informed consent form and any other identifying information about you will be kept in a locked office. The digital audio files, transcribed interviews, and analysis will be kept on password protected memory drives, and will not contain any identifying information about you. Findings will be presented in aggregate (group) form. Any quotations used from interviews will not contain any identifying information about you or anyone else. Upon completion of this study, all audio files and identifying information will be destroyed.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
SOCIAL WORK INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE
APPROVED 1/29/14 VOID AFTER 1/29/15
IRB# 2014-32 CHAIR [Signature]

909.537.5501

5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

The California State University - Bakersfield - Channel Islands - Chico - Dominguez Hills - East Bay - Fresno - Fullerton - Humboldt - Long Beach - Los Angeles
Maritime Academy - Monterey Bay - Northridge - Pomona - Sacramento - San Bernardino - San Diego - San Francisco - San Jose - San Juan/Turkey - San Marcos - Stanislaus



College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

DURATION: The interviews are expected to take 30-45 minutes. We may contact you for clarification as needed, however this is not expected.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you in participation in this research. However, some questions may be of a sensitive nature, and may elicit an emotional response to you. If these questions make you upset in any way, you can refuse to answer the question or stop the entire interview at any time.

BENEFITS: The findings of the research may assist San Bernardino and other counties to identify area for future training and support, as well as what is going well during the ongoing implementation of Extended Foster Care.

AUDIO: The interviews will be audio recorded for clarity and to ensure accurate data collection. These will be studied by the research team for use in the research project only. Please initial the following statement:

I understand that this research will be audio recorded, and agree to be recorded for use by the research team only. Mark ____.

CONTACT: If you have questions about the research or your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Carolyn McAllister, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work, at (909) 537-5559 or cmcallis@csusb.edu.

RESULTS: Results of this study can be located in the CSUSB Library after September, 2014.

SIGN: Please place a mark below if you agree to the conditions of this study and volunteer to participate.

Mark: _____ Date: _____

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
SOCIAL WORK INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE
APPROVED 1/24/14 VOID AFTER 1/24/15
IRB 2014305 CHAIR [Signature]

909.537.5501
5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

The California State University • Bakersfield • Channel Islands • Chico • Dominguez Hills • East Bay • Fresno • Fullerton • Humboldt • Long Beach • Los Angeles
Maritime Academy • Monterey Bay • Northridge • Pomona • Sacramento • San Bernardino • San Diego • San Francisco • San Jose • San Luis Obispo • San Marcos • Sonoma • Stanislaus

APPENDIX E
TABLES

Table 1

Demographics

Age	19 years	25%
	20, almost 21	66.7%
	21	0.083%
Living Arrangement	SILP	50%
	Foster Home	25%
	Group Home	16.7%
	Non-relative	0.083%
School or Work	School	91.7%
	Work	33.3%
Gender	Female	50%
	Male	50%
Ethnicity	African-American	58.3%
	Caucasian	25%
	Hispanic	0.083%
	Other: Hispanic/Italian	0.083%
Highest Grade Completed in School	Community College	41.7%
	High School	50%
	Four-year university	0.083%

Table 2

Main theme: Need for Services to Better Prepare Foster Youth for Independent Living

Theme	Subthemes
Need for services to better prepare foster youth for independent living	Provide mentor services
	Provide college preparation services
	Provide job training program
	Provide structured services, similar to the services provided prior to 18
	Educate on how to maintain extended foster care
	Networking
	Any support or assistance would be useful
	Did not hear about extended foster care from their social worker
	Extended foster care is not useful or helpful
	Provide educational support
Familiarize youth with Peer Family Advocates	

Table 3

Main theme: Improving Communication between the Young Adult and Their Social Worker

Theme	Subthemes
Improve communication between the young adult and their social worker	Did not make them feel they had their best interests in mind Social worker seemed to be busy Social worker was not as helpful as would have liked them to be Social worker visits every six months Admission to extended foster care should be unbiased

Table 4

Main theme: Interacting with These Youth with the Understand and Empathy of Where They Happen to be in Their Lives

Theme	Subthemes
Interacting with these youth with the understand and empathy of where they happen to be in their lives	No support systems
	College and age of exit of extended foster care is a conflict
	School may not be a priority with everything weighing on them
	Negative events in life that hinder success
	Has a negative stigma

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ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

This was an individual project conducted by Elaine Contreras, but the author collaborated with another group on interviews and analysis of the data. The writing of the report and the presentation of findings was completed as an individual project. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

1. Data Collection:
Joint effort Elaine Contreras, Denise Johnson, and Nicole Chavarria

2. Data Entry and Analysis:
Joint effort Elaine Contreras, Denise Johnson, and Nicole Chavarria

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:
 - a. Introduction and Literature
Assigned Leader Elaine Contreras
Assisted by _____

 - b. Methods
Assigned Leader Elaine Contreras
Assisted by _____

 - c. Results
Assigned Leader Elaine Contreras
Assisted by _____

 - d. Discussion
Assigned Leader Elaine Contreras
Assisted by _____