

6-2015

Barriers to Services for Transitional Age Youth

Amanda Lucero

CSUSB, mandylucero06@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

Lucero, Amanda, "Barriers to Services for Transitional Age Youth" (2015). *Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations*. Paper 191.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Graduate Studies at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

BARRIERS TO SERVICES FOR TRANSITIONAL AGE YOUTH

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

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

by
Amanda Dolores Lucero

June 2015

BARRIERS TO SERVICES FOR TRANSITIONAL AGE YOUTH

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

by
Amanda Dolores Lucero

June 2015

Approved by:

Dr. Erica Lizano, Faculty Supervisor

Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, MSW Research Coordinator

© 2015 Amanda Dolores Lucero

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines the current barriers of services to transition age youth (TAY) who are newly emancipated from foster care. Data collection was derived from eight in depth interviews with local administrators within San Bernardino County with experience with youth and services within the TAY population. Study themes focused on how professionals suggested to engage TAY, tactics to instilling hope, highlighting successful services, and providing professional insight on working with the unique population. Present day research emphasizes the importance of the emotional capacity of TAY, which is a key theme within the present study. As current rates of homelessness, the dependency of government assistance programs, and mental health services increase for the TAY population, the need for improved services is apparent. Study results indicated five distinct themes pertaining to youth impediments and the need for foster system adjustments, and include: unmet mental health needs, available housing facilities, mistrust from the youth, the integration from Peer and Family Assistant's, and systemic barriers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the participants from San Bernardino and Riverside County agencies for their contribution to this study. I would also like to thank my internship supervisors Heather Sylvester and Sheree Summers for their wisdom and encouragement. Lastly, I would like to thank my researcher supervisor, Dr. Erica Lizano, for guiding me through my thesis project.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my work to my supportive family, thank you for providing me with a wonderful childhood and always believing in me. I would also like to thank God, please continue to guide my path.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Problem Statement.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice.....	7
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Introduction.....	9
Literature Review.....	9
Theories Guiding Conceptualization.....	14
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	
Introduction.....	16
Sampling.....	16
Data Collection and Instruments	16
Procedures	18
Protection of Human Subjects	18
Data Analysis.....	19
Summary	19
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS	
Introduction.....	20
Sample Description	20

Study Themes	22
Theme 1: Mental Health	22
Theme 2: Lack of Trust from Youth	26
Theme 3: Housing Facilities	27
Theme 4: Systemic Barriers.....	27
Theme 5: Peer and Family Assistant.....	29
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION	
Introduction	32
Discussion	33
Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy, and Research	38
Conclusion.....	40
APPENDIX A: TABLE DEMOGRAPHICS	41
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT	43
APPENDIX C: DEBRIEFING STATEMENT	45
APPENDIX D: THESIS QUESTIONS.....	47
REFERENCES	49

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Demographics	22
-----------------------------	----

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine barriers to services for transitional age youth within local community entities. For a comprehensive approach, the research includes the developmental implications of child welfare system. Although transitional age youth services are not limited to those who were in the child welfare system, the vast majority are foster care alumni. The researcher will evaluate the relevance of this topic to the field of social work and define the problem in its entirety.

Problem Statement

Each year, roughly 26,300 youth are emancipated from the foster care system in America (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Unfortunately, the rate of youth “aging out” of care has risen from 8% in 2003 to 11% in 2011 (Singer, Berzin, & Hokanson, 2013). In the foster care system, the term-emancipated youth is defined differently across the United States. Generally, emancipated youth are; those who completed the independent living program and refused an adult placement by their twentieth birthday, those who reached twenty one or twenty three and were no longer eligible for adult services, or those who reached the legal age of adulthood while in state custody and are discharged from foster care (Stott, 2013). In California, roughly 4,000 youth are emancipated out of services annually (Workforce Academy, 2014). Currently,

states disseminate federal funding independently and each state allocates their funds to programs based on their assessed need. In 2008, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act was passed in California, providing funding for various services to youth who qualify for state support ages 18-25 (California Fostering Connections, 2014). For youth who are not capable of meeting the general requirements for services are left to sustain themselves as self-sufficient adults. In their attempt, many soon discover a variety of challenges such as; unemployment, unplanned pregnancy, homelessness, involvement with the legal system, substance abuse, lack of mental health services, and low educational achievement (Singer et al., 2013). Currently, roughly half of youth who age out of care are unable to obtain a high school diploma, which contributes to unemployment rates. On a national level, approximately 25% to 50% of foster care youth are unemployed with even more experiencing chronic periods of unemployment (Stott & Gustavsson, 2010). Unemployment rates contribute the statistics found that the majority of young adults achieve incomes that rate below the national poverty line and it is reported that at least one third receive need-based government assistance (Stott & Gustavsson, 2010). The current homelessness rate among emancipated youth ranges from approximately, 10% to 40% with many reporting instability and early child bearing rates range from 30% to as high as 75% (Stott & Gustavsson, 2010). Unlike their peers, former foster care youth lack the support network of parents or relatives to provide assistance during this transitional stage to adulthood. General outcomes

for former foster care youth are vastly lower across life domains when compared to the general populations (Courtney, Dworsky, Lee, & Raap, 2010). Although foster care youth are non-comparable to their peers, former foster youth are faced with the same challenges and adversity as their peers.

Even though there have been some vast improvements in foster care system, the general outcomes for emancipated youth are a clear indication for the need of improvement. Services that are available to former foster care youth vary across the United States. In some states, youth who are in the child welfare system do not automatically qualify for immediate access to basic support such as food, housing, and healthcare (Stott, 2013). In some cases, emancipated youth and those “in care” experience similar challenges in fulfilling their basic needs. The most progressive legislation passed for the foster care system occurred in the mid 1980’s where states received additional funding towards child welfare services (Stott, 2013). In 1986 the Independent Living Programs was implemented nationwide to provide educational preparation classes for teens in foster care. Class material covered basic life skill topics such as taxes, higher education, maintaining finances, healthcare, and housing. The majority of funding for the child welfare system is currently spent on the preparation programs with little allocation to after care programming. However, there is little evidence to support the living improvements for emancipated youth or the effectiveness of Independent Living Programs overall (Jones, 2011). States received 45 million dollars for youth 16 years and older who were Title-IV E eligible (Stott, 2013).

General requirements for Title IV E foster youth; a court order confirming the need to remove the child from the home, a court order that confirms the states efforts in preserving the family, a valid agreement for voluntary placement and court authorizing continued placement, completed background check of new guardians, compliance with safety requirements, licensed foster care providers, needs-based test to confirm eligibility, and state responsibility for placement and care of the child (Children's Bureau, 2000).

Over the next twenty years states received additional funding from Promoting Safe and Stable families Amendments in 2002 and Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act in 2008, both of which included provisions for the states in the allocation of funds and increased eligibility requirements for youth. Unfortunately, due to some of the increased eligibility requirements some of the most vulnerable emancipated youth cannot qualify for services (Stott, 2013). The majority of state programming is geared towards daily living skills with less emphasis on the emotional development that is needed to implement these skills independently. With the passing of the Adoption Safe Families Act (1997), the child welfare system saw an increase in the number of adoptions. However, the increase was found to be for younger children rather than adolescents. In 2005, out of 51,000 foster care youth less than 15% were between the ages of 12 and 18 and only 7.65% were between ages 14 and 18 years old (Stott & Gustavsson, 2010). From a 2011 lawsuit, county mental health and county foster care agencies are now mandated to

collaborate in assessing and providing mental health services to all children in the foster care system (California Department of Health Care Services, 2014). Currently, some states have extended foster care services until twenty-one which, has shown to influence a positive long-term consequences (Stein, 2012). Considering almost half of young adults ages 18-24 are still living with their parents it would seem realistic to extend foster care services to disadvantaged youth (Stott, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

Among the vast amount of research and opinion, the current study attempts to provide insight from the administrative perspective on the effectiveness of the current services available to emancipated youth. Administrators who currently lead transitional age youth programs can provide expertise in areas of improvement while highlight effective programming. In the supervisory role, administrators retain a broader view of obstacles in program implementation and insight into potential resolutions. They are also advising and overseeing the relationships that are being established among youth and line staff. The importance of the client relationship is essential to client success and trust in government assistance programming.

The current study utilizes qualitative research methods to gain insight into the effectiveness of current programs available for emancipated youth from an administrator's stand point. Generally, current programs are organized around housing, employment, mental health, health care, and the pursuit of higher

education. Questions were targeted around why some programs are not reaching the basic needs of emancipated youth, what efforts are made to facilitate the establishment and maintenance of the worker consumer relationship, and view on the eligibility requirements for county services. Utilizing a qualitative method will allow for a more in-depth view into the organizational functioning of transitional age youth programs and exploration of possible expansion of current services or the development of new services.

Based on the current literature, the gap of services seems to be between the youth's ability to establish and maintain at least one reliable connection. This particular population has a unique lack of social support that creates a large absence of stability and safety. Social support encompasses multi levels of stability in terms of emotional support, tangible aid and resources, advisory guidance, and appraisal to assist with self-evaluations (Hiles, Moss, Wright, & Dallos, 2013). Additional support networks create a protective factor that ultimately contributes to the resilience of our youth. Salient relationships foster youth typically seek to maintain are with their biological family, foster family, peer networks, mentors, and professional relationships (Hiles et al., 2013). Unfortunately, the logistics of maintaining these relationships while in care can be difficult for some youth to maintain and visit because the lack of a mobility, insurance, money, and time. In some instances, due to availability, children are placed in homes that are further than the parents or relatives are able to reach. In addition, parents may also have limited visitation rights; coordinating scheduled

visits with work and court obligations, and children also lose the opportunity to maintain any normalcy they previously had. To ensure foster youth are creating these healthy relationships it is the role of professional staff to be that stable entity until there are alternative connections made. However, potential barriers of forming this relationship may come from the youths distrust in the system and the separation of authority may deter youth from allowing themselves to disclose information (Hiles et al., 2013). In addition, youth often experience multiple social workers due social worker turnover rates and case overloads. In a study conducted by Hiles (2013), that evaluated youth's experience of social support during foster care found what types of traits were the most desirable in professional staff. Some of these traits included; consistent and long-term staff, reliability with following through with promises, showing genuine interest and empathy, demonstrating a desire to help young person meet their individual needs, holding positive expectation and supporting them to reach goals, going above and beyond the job description, and access to support after hours (Hiles et al., 2013). Considering that these findings are realistic and basic for any person or adolescent, there seems to be a gap in services that are providing that emotional support that is necessary for foster youth to attain their goals.

Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice

The significance of this research study for social work practice is that we may better understand how social workers directly impact emancipated youth. As professionals, it is essential to understand the need for the client to provide

services that are reaching the needs of the individual. This study evaluates the barriers of engaging former foster youth and attempts make the transition to adulthood a smoother and successful process. Situations of homelessness, criminal history, the need for mental health services, and dependency of government assistance programs could potentially be reduced with preventative programming for former foster youth. Building upon our youth earlier could positively impact our communities and economic stability by impeding the cycle of child abuse and general neglect. Professionally, social workers may benefit with an increased knowledge in engagement skills with this unique population to ultimately provide more effective services.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The current empirical evidence provides supportive information pertaining to the various developmental impediments foster children experience while in care. Recent research creates a foundational platform that illustrates the need for additional support for transitional age youth.(Singer, Berzin, & Hokanson, 2013) The underlying theories that support the comprehensive understanding of this problem are included for reference.

Literature Review

In California, there are approximately 90,000 children in the foster care system in any given year (Workforce academy, 2014). Thousands of families are being separated, often times permanently, for situations of abuse, neglect, and inability to provide a safe home. Unfortunately, the majority of families that utilize foster care services are from lower economic backgrounds (Stott, 2013). Children entering foster care have often times experienced family substance abuse, mental health disorders and lack of services, witnessed dependence disorders, domestic violence, physical or sexual abuse, or incarceration of a parent (Stott, 2013). Long term abuse or neglect has been shown to negatively affect the biological stress system. These biological effects have proven to alter the rate and capacity for brain maturation and can cause long term maladaptive

experiences later in life (Avery & Freundlich, 2009). Various studies have found children who experienced abuse or neglect are more likely to develop mood disorders, experience severe depression, and possess anti-social personality disorders. Additionally, children with severe trauma experiences are twice as likely to develop forms of psychopathology later in life such as; anxiety and behavioral issues (Avery & Freundlich, 2009). Sub-consequences of these negative experiences impact the foundation of social and neurological development. School-age children with chronic stress have been found to have difficulties with memory, comprehension, and executive functioning's that may negatively impact the foundational development period (Avery & Freundlich, 2009). In a collaborative study conducted by Harvard Medical School, Casey Family Program, and state agencies in Washington and Oregon found former foster youth showed signs of post-traumatic stress disorder that are twice as high as United States war veterans (Samuels & Pryce, 2008). Children living with posttraumatic stress disorder can influence the social relationships formed, academic achievement, hinder sleep patterns that is essential for healthy development, and overall definition of self. In addition to the experiences of abuse in the home environment, which often times leads to long term psychological effects, studies suggest that the experience of entering the foster care system is yet another trauma induced experience (Samuels & Pryce, 2008). Children in foster care are first traumatized the hostile and inadequate living environment then to be separated from the only sense of familiarity to be placed

in an often times unfamiliar home. For in some cases, child protective services are able to place children with relatives however, transitioning to another home and way of life is difficult in any capacity.

In most cases, children entering foster care come with a host of various psychological and behavior disorders that haven't formally been addressed or treated therapeutically. Often times foster youth experience feelings of guilt and remorse about disclosing information about their home life. Children also may feel like they have been disloyal or even abandoned (Stott, 2013). The primary role of child welfare workers is to keep the child within the family circle, contingent they are able to meet the requirements for being a foster parent. It was found that children who are placed with families they are familiar with are less likely to acquire health problems, less likely to be infants, and less likely to have entered foster care due to physical or sexual abuse (Havlicek, 2011). Once all resources are exhausted, workers typically match children with foster parents that are close to their current family but unfortunately, this is not always possible to find. As a last resort, group home facilities are utilized for youth with major behavioral problems and criminal history that require twenty-four hour supervision. Unfortunately, those who 'age out' of foster care have some the highest rates of instability. With the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (AACWA) of 1980, states are required to make reasonable efforts to keep children with their families and establish a plan for long-term permanency outcomes and find the least restrictive placement. As outlined in the AACWA,

four types of permanency outcomes are identified in the legislation; reunification, adoption, guardianship, or long-term foster care (Stott & Gustavsson, 2010).

Youth who enter the system between 11-14 years old on average can experience 7-13 different placements. In one study, it was found that youth who experience five or more placements are six times more likely develop a need for mental health services in adulthood (Havlicek, 2011). Typically, the older the minor is placed into care the more likely he or she will experience instability in placements. Frequent movements often lead to poor academic performance as well as meeting different districts graduation requirements. For various unknown reasons, roughly 19% to as high as 56% of foster care youth are reported to have ran away from their placements contributing further instability (Havlicek, 2011). This constant transition may induce additional stressors due to inconsistency of completed services (Stott, 2013). In a study that examined foster care youth placement stability found a quarter of 16 to 17 year olds in care had changed schools five or more times due to placement changes. It also found that 30% had missed a month of school or more due placement disruptions (Stott & Gustavsson, 2010). Due to instability, foster care children often deal with stress that comes with being the new kid in school and enabling them to form lasting friendships as their peers. The ability to keep possessions, pictures, and mementos becomes harder to keep track of. Exposure to a variety of value systems from foster parents, peers, and other foster care children hinders the development of their own value system (Stott & Gustavsson, 2010). In a

quantitative studies, placement instability is often associated with behavioral problems, low educational achievement, identity confusion, low self-esteem, drug use, and social network disruption (Stott & Gustavsson, 2010). Leaving the comforts of home, foster care children often experience highly restrictive environments in their new placements. At the higher end of the spectrum of restrictiveness, group home facilities can limit average human interactions, level of participation in school related activities, and developmentally appropriate teen age experiences for example; attending school dances and receiving their driver's license (Stott, 2013). Foster care youth typically experience a trifecta of development barriers between multiple placements, socially restrictive environments, and a lack of accessibility to maintain and create new support systems (Stott, 2013).

The transition to adulthood has vastly changed over the decades in terms of complexity and the amount of time young adults take to transition through this stage (Avery & Freundlich, 2009). The age of reaching adult milestones such as marriage, completing school, and parenthood are being done later on in age than our predecessors. Over an eight year time period, the amount of emancipations has steadily risen 3%, roughly 26,300 youth in 2011 (Singer, Berzin, & Hokanson, 2013). Without a reliable connection to a supportive network the chances of a stable stress reduced lifestyle lessen. Youth who experience emancipation are said to endure two separate transitions, one from the child welfare system to autonomy and the second from childhood to adulthood, both

transitions potentially highly traumatic (Avery, 2010). In a study that examined outcomes for emancipated youth found that former foster youth are inclined to associate themselves with deviant peer relationships after exiting care. Those who exemplified characteristics of deviant behavior are said to be more likely to be fired from a job, possess a diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder, report higher levels of substance use, and to report being arrested than those who portray low or medium deviant behaviors (Avery, 2010).

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

The primary underlying theories that guides services for foster youth services is attachment theory, social capital theory, and emerging adult theory (Avery & Freundlich, 2009; Hiles et al., 2013). Attachment theory infers that the quality of early forming relationships, often with caregivers, greatly impacts the quality of relationships established throughout the lifespan. Understanding how our foundational relationships impact the establishments of healthy relationships assist professionals in providing services in these areas. Arnett (2007) developed an additional stage between young adult and adulthood described as Emerging adult during the period between 18-25 years of age. This transition is characterized as a period of exploration of adult concepts without the obligations of becoming a full adult. Additionally, this period is described a developmental period through three domains; cognitive, emotional, and behavioral for emerging adults (Avery & Freundlich, 2009).

Social Capital Theory can be described as resources that one may utilize to their lifestyles across the lifespan. This may include but is not limited to relational networks, social trust, and norms that are fundamental to social capital. Youth who possess high levels of social capital are correlated with those who have an overall more positive outcome, who show productive personal outcomes such as occupational solidarity, psychological well-being, and individual health (Avery, 2010). Social capital is formed by familial relationships that are integrated in social relationships, kinship interactions, and mezzo institutions. Those who are said to possess low levels of social capital are at a higher risk for homelessness. Influential factors that determine youth's ability to utilize social capital are related to their individual temperament, attachment history, and/or traumatic interpersonal experiences (Avery, 2010).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This research project utilized a qualitative design to examine Title IV-E professional's perception of the barriers to services for former foster care youth. Face to face interviews were conducted to gain an in depth perspective of this social issue. This chapter includes the study procedures, the rights of the participants, and plan for confidentiality.

Sampling

The sample of participants was selected from Title IV-E related agencies in San Bernardino who have experience with foster care youth. General criteria for this sample required participants to have working experience with the transitional age youth population. The intention of sampling from Title IV-E agencies was to draw professionals who could contribute first-hand knowledge about the child welfare system and barriers to services for former foster youth. The study consists of seven professionals who are currently working in Title IV-E related agencies San Bernardino and Riverside County.

Data Collection and Instruments

This qualitative study consists of interviews with seven administrators within local county agencies. Eight questions were asked to gain insight into

potential obstacles of providing services to former foster youth. The questions utilized for the interview process were influenced by current literature on transition age youth. The vast majority of questions were developed and tailored for the specific sample being interviewed. Central themes of the questions were focused on the services available for former foster youth and the characteristics that make this population unique to work with. Questions geared towards services intended to gain insight on what types of services are successful, how services are supporting the emotional development of former foster youth, the availability of services, and potential benefits of extending foster care and transitional age youth programs. Questions surrounding population characteristic attempt to gain insight for present and future professionals working in transitional age youth programs. Prior to asking questions based on services for emotional development of Title IV-E professionals will be read a statement from the literature to provide a basic framework of the concept. Tonia Stott (2013) highlighted a key barrier for former foster youth in her statement, “While skills training classes can provide them with knowledge competencies, many youth in care continue to lack the emotional, relational, and social competencies to be able to act upon that knowledge” (p. 218). This statement will set up the following questions addressing the presence of current services supporting psychological development and social competencies.

Procedures

Data collection occurred between a January and March of 2015. Dr. Susan Culbertson from California State University San Bernardino facilitated the interaction between the researcher and Title IV-E administrators from San Bernardino and snowball sample was attained. Interviews were conducted within county offices during work time hours with interviews lasting from 25-45 minutes. Data was collected via interviews with a tape recorder that were transcribed by the researcher at a later date for accuracy purposes. Interviews were conducted by, myself, as a student researcher to fulfill the graduation requirement for a Masters in Social Work. Once data was collected the researcher completed the results and discussion pieces until the end of June.

Protection of Human Subjects

Participants interviewed included professionals from Title IV-E agencies. Names and agencies are not included in analysis or reports to maintain confidentiality. Interviews were recorded utilizing a voice recording system and are kept in a locked box on researchers private property. Participants will be identified using a number system and will be referred in the analysis utilizing their assigned number. Prior to the interview process, participants were given an informed consent form that provided a brief overview of their participation agreement. Once the interview was completed participants were given a debriefing statement to address any concerns they may have with their participation in the study.

Data Analysis

The purpose behind the qualitative study was to gain insight to the barriers to provide services to the transitional age youth population. Interviews were analyzed by identifying common themes among responses. It is the hope of this research to identify the programs that are most successful in meeting the needs of former foster youth and the unique characteristics of transition age youth population that can potentially inform future professionals entering the field.

Summary

The graduate social work committee has over seen all procedures of this research project to ensure the quality and safety of participants for the research project. Obtaining professional insight about potential barriers for former foster care youth encounter can provide clarity for resolution in these areas. Information collected followed confidentiality laws to maintain the integrity of the study design. Processing data collection has highlighted the positive contributions of transitional age youth programs to emphasize the value of those interventions as well as identifying areas of improvement that can be considered in future programming.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The data collection and analysis portion of this study is discussed in the following content. The emerging themes are highlighted and supported by participant responses gathered from individual interviews. The five identified themes include: mental health, lack of trust from youth, housing facilities, systemic barriers, and integration of Peer and Family Assistants.

Sample Description

Individuals selected to participate in this research study were required to meet specific criteria. Participation criteria include: having experience working with transitional age youth however, there is no minimum amount of years required and having held a supervisory role in transitional age youth related program. The current research study sought out administrative professionals to create an adequate knowledge base of expertise of the local available services. The sample of participants within this study includes administrative staff from Riverside and San Bernardino Counties child welfare systems. A total of eight participants were interviewed. However, one interview was not included in data analysis due the inability to meet study requirements. After an evaluation of experience in an administrative role, participant number six was unable to meet study requirements. Although the participant possessed adequate involvement

working with transitional age youth as a population the lack of knowledge overseeing programming disqualified the participant's contribution to the current research study. The final count of documented interviews totaled seven participants. This allowed the researcher to maintain research standards by enforcing data collection from professional administrative staff.

Demographic data was collected from each participant to provide additional descriptive information of the sample. The demographic data gathered included: age, gender, and years of experience. Two male administrators and five female administrators comprise staff demographic with experience ranging from approximately 6-36 years working within child welfare, extended foster care, and transitional age youth agencies, referenced in table 1. Interviews lasted approximately 15-45 minutes and were later transcribed solely by the researcher to maintain confidentiality. However, one participant did not agree to be voice recorded therefore the researcher handwrote descriptive notes of the interview. Each participant was given a letter of consent and debriefing statement. Each participant kept a debriefing statement for his or her records and the research kept each participant consent form. The researcher gifted a Starbucks card with five dollars as a token of gratitude.

Table 1. Demographics

	N	%
Male	2	28.6
Female	3	71.4
Number of years in field (Mean Score)	22	
San Bernardino County	2	
Riverside County	5	

Study Themes

Through data analysis several salient themes emerged that highlighted specific barriers to services for transitional age youth. In the data analysis, two overarching themes emerged pertaining to the development of impediments by foster youth and systemic barriers of the child welfare system. There were also several programs that have been observed by administrative staff in providing hope to transitional age youth and others. Five major themes that were identified include; 1.) Mental health (pertaining to youth), 2.) General lack of trust from youth, 3.) The availability of adequate housing, and a 4.) Systemic barriers, 5.) The integration of alumni foster youth. Although the themes discovered have been reduced to five major themes, additional barriers to services were identified by administrators and will be included in the discussion portion of the study.

Theme 1: Mental Health

The prevalence of mental health disorders for transitional age youth is notoriously higher than their counterparts likely due to their childhood

experiences. In the United States, 19-23% of young adults with ages ranging from 18-24 have a mental health disorder (Jones, 2011). Approximately a third of former foster youth are reported to live with a diagnosed mental health problem (Jones, 2011). The prevalence of the mental health need was reflected in the administrator's responses as many of them observed mental health disorders hindering TAY youth's assimilation to services and programming. Although the need for immediate mental health services is evident, administrators struggled to identify which component of mental health services needs to be adjusted. Due to recent legislature, mental health services are now mandated to collaborate with child welfare agencies to assess foster youth for mental health disorders. Before the recent law, the majority of youth receiving mental health services were some of the most severe cases. Children receiving services from child welfare agencies are often removed from homes due to unfit environmental atmospheres. For many children, it is unknown if mental health disorders began in the homes or perpetuated while in the child welfare system.

Participant #3. Youth's mental health issues, I don't know which came first, the mental health has always been there but we weren't as aware or mental health issues have sort of been exacerbated in the last ten years or is it being over diagnosed now or are we so aware that we're over diagnosed mental health issues? Youth and families have a lot of issues and these were teenagers that were born in the era of drug exposed babies and things like that so they have all these kinds of things that I

don't even think we realize are going on with people yet because science hasn't caught up yet to their issues. (Personal communication, February 17, 2015).

County agencies are responsible for providing services for a large portion of the community leaving their services inundated with consumer need. Although the law now mandates mental health services for children within the foster care system, county budget has not accommodated to additional staffing to meet the influx of need. Initiating new systemic policies and expanding services in a large agency such as county systems takes a considerable amount of time to streamline necessary adjustments. Unfortunately, the developmental milestones for our youth do not always coincide with court appointments and system deadlines.

Participant #5. So let me give you an example, even those youth who are still county dependents called NMD (non minor dependents) so even those who are one program that are NMD, for instance we have one person with gender identity problems and bipolar issues, all these different mental health components and she has a psychiatrist and a therapist and both of them cancelled on her two weeks in a row and she went down there, our life coach took her down there and she said please could somebody see me because you can't cancel on me right now, I'm going through a crisis, the said nope sorry and this is someone who is still has a county contract for services.....but even when they are the system is

overloaded and that's why my young lady got bumped from both of her appointments, they doubled booked. (Personal communication, February 24, 2015).

Compounded in the mental health barrier, emancipated youth are often ambivalent to their own mental health needs making engagement in services more challenging. Children within the foster care system are not prone to vocalize their mental health needs and many of them are oblivious to the process of obtaining mental health services. As youth make the transition from extended foster care to transitional youth services many possess undiagnosed or untreated mental health disorders. Untreated mental health needs have negative implications for the success in future placements and endeavors for transitional age youth. Emancipated youth who live with untreated mental health disorders have difficulties maintaining housing placements, keeping stable sources of income, and completing a higher education.

Participant #1. I know one when there may be mental health issues that youth are in denial about that the worker wants to address may get in the way of giving services because if there's mental health issues and those are not addressed or treated than more than likely the TAY (transitional age youth) is not going to do well in services so it is really important that the worker and the TAY work through those issues in order for them to be successful... (Personal communication, February 12, 2015).

Theme 2: Lack of Trust from Youth

Youth who have lived through the foster care system and agree to continue on to extended foster care and transitional housing facilities will have gone through several social workers and placements. Due to the chronic instability, transitional age youth develop a protective exterior as a defense mechanism against future placement instability. The initial distrust with relationships begins in the home with their primary caregivers. Once in the foster care system, youth can have multiple social workers and several placements. The constant detachment and reattachment to those around them and their environment contribute to developmental delays and cognitive deficits.

Participant #4. Trust, no matter what the system has done the youth feels betrayed. They have different social workers and are bumped around different places, they build bonds and those bonds are frequently broken and sometimes the social worker is not always forthcoming with why they are moving or the foster parent may not want them. They are not dishonest but not forth coming, some kids may have 4-6 social workers in their lifetime. (Personal communication, February 24, 2015).

Transitional age youth are faced with such instability often live with a survivalist mentality that is developed as a coping mechanism over time. Social workers working with emancipated youth must work through that barrier to gain a trusting professional relationship and some may never be able to break that barrier.

Theme 3: Housing Facilities

Based on the theorist Abraham Maslow, who developed the hierarchy of needs, people have difficulties reaching their full potential, which he describes as self-actualization, when their basic needs are not fulfilled. The theorist described basic needs as physiological (food and water), safety, belongingness and love, self-esteem, and self-actualization (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2013). Transitional age youth who are chronically homeless or young adults who frequently run away experience high amounts of stress due to housing and food instability. Such stress and anxiety associated with such instability inhibits efforts towards establishing an independent future for themselves. Providing transitional housing placements for emancipated foster youth creates a reliable foundation to continue personal development.

Participant #1. Other barriers, not adequate, this is big in all counties.

Housing, that is a big issue, I mean if you don't have housing that's going to cause a lot of issues. If you don't have housing, how are you going to go to school? How are you going to work? How are you going to be successful? That is probably one of the big barriers and then when you do get housing, how are you going to keep it? Maintain it? (Personal communication, February 12, 2015).

Theme 4: Systemic Barriers

Historically, the child welfare system has been under scrutiny due to media perceptions and internal mishandlings of cases. Within the current

research study, participants were able to identify some of the barriers that have been observed within their programs. One frequently mentioned barrier was the feasibility of reaching each youth during the moment when they were willing to participate in services and are mentally capable to take advantage of the support. The child welfare system is taxed with the responsibility to make services generalizable for a diverse population. In doing so, young adults receiving services are left with unmet needs due to system deficiencies.

Participant #2. So the kids don't trust and the workers don't have time, so we add time then we add workload, workload is huge so we relate that to time. Social workers because of their workload and time they work towards short term gains and they work towards court dates and due dates as opposed to developmental timelines, we changed the whole developmental timeline for teens and it doesn't sync up with court timelines...so sometimes kids are ready to move and it's not at a convenient court time so it's extra work so those two aren't meshing up. (Personal communication, February 13, 2015).

As social worker caseloads exceed the adequate amount necessary to establish rapport with their clients, former foster youth are left without support. Frequent social worker burnout and turnover creates a further barrier that delays services for transitional age youth. Emancipated youth are limited to time with their designated social worker as worker turnover rates are high, leaving youth in a frequent transitional state.

Participant 3. Another barrier is if a social worker has a high caseload, they are only able to connect every so often. They can't connect daily, they can't even connect weekly... (Personal communication, February 17, 2015).

Theme 5: Peer and Family Assistant

The main component that separates transitional age youth from other vulnerable populations is the absence of a family and lifelong support. For those fortunate enough to maintain contact with their original guardians often return to lack luster environments within high crime and poverty communities. A recent source of hope has been discovered in the utilization of Peer and Family Assistants who are transitional age youth alumni. Many youth within the child welfare system and transitional programs experience hopelessness about their future success and happiness. Integrating alumni foster youth provides a real life example of success and possibility. The majority of administrators advocated for the effectiveness of Peer and family Assistant's with transitional age youth success.

Participant #1. Some have already received their bachelor degrees, some are in their MSW programs and they are former foster youth and they are county employees. They have an opportunity to mentor our youth and care but to do that for our extended foster youth that are considered transitioning out youth to be able to mentor to them and let them know that 'hey I was there once before, where I am now you can do the same thing,

my situation was probably worse than yours because when I was in the foster care system we didn't have the services you have available to you know' that I feel is very powerful having them with us. (Personal communication, February 12, 2015).

Peer and family assistants are brought in as a support resource to engage transition age youth who shut out engagement attempts made by professional staff. Similarly to how veterans are better able to identify with other professional staff with military experience, transitional age youth are more likely to find comfort connecting with alumni foster care youth than adults who do not have lived experience in foster care. Peer and family assistants model a lifestyle that most do not believe to be feasible and assist with encouragement to continue towards a better life.

Participant #3. For instance, we have this 13 year old girl who chronically runs away from her placement and then she comes back and reports that she's done drugs and been with men and we ask one of our younger ladies who is a peer partner to come in and meet with her and tell her I did that too and it didn't go that well for me and you can do more than that and be more than that and look at me let me talk to you and let me be the person you confide to, maybe your social worker is too old to understand or whatever, so it's a really cool program. (Personal communication, February 17, 2015).

The integration of alumni foster care youth is a new program in both Riverside and San Bernardino County. Each county has roughly six former foster youth however; each county has labeled the position differently based of preference. Approximately two years old, peer and family assistants have gained support from administrators and the hopes for the continuation of the program among alumni foster youth are high.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of the current research project was to seek insight into the barriers to services faced by foster youth from an administrative perspective. Local administrator participation provided support for the current research study. Traditional programming for transitional age youth is oriented around housing, vocational establishment, linkage to mental health services, health care benefits, and access to higher education. Based off current literature, the main barrier to services lies within the client and worker relationship. The collective response from administrative participants identified the primary cause of poor client and worker relationship as systemic barriers relating to high turnover rates of social workers, high caseloads, and frequent displacement of youth from stable placements. An alternative solution to the lack of professional relationship relied heavily on a newly established program utilizing alumni foster care youth as mentors for current foster care youth. These additional support networks provide foster youth with models of hope who provide an image for the youth to work towards. Local administrators contributed additional information on the accessibility of resources to transitional age youth and the vast majority identified the current eligibility requirements as realistic for emerging adults. The current programming within local county agencies target significant areas of needs for transitional age youth. Due to recent court proceedings, child welfare agencies

and outside entities are now offering more dynamic services that are more closely aligned with the biopsychosocial model. With the inclusion of mental health services now mandated by law, foster youth will now be screened for mental health services earlier and will hopefully act as a preventative measure. Although there has been strong progression in providing well-rounded services to foster youth there are clearly areas of improvement that are still necessary. As larger systemic adjustments are made between child welfare and mental health systems, youth are left on hold while internal processing is worked out. Unfortunately, the present information further supports prior research on the need for additional resources for child welfare systems to meet the increasing needs for children and emerging adults receiving government assistance.

Discussion

Within the administrator responses, a highly repeated theme was the lack of time that was readily available for transitional age youth with professional staff. The feasibility of the client's social worker to provide supportive care was reduced mainly due to the amount of work versus the available amount of workers. Within local counties, the caseload range was noted as being between forty and fifty clients and in others they are higher. The lack of funding available to hire additional staff is limited, leaving children within the child welfare system and transitional age youth programs left without proper care.

An exciting new addition to programming was the onboarding of past foster care youth to provide mentorship and hope to current children in the foster

care system. This program was identified as peer and family assistants who are county workers. It was estimated that the program was established roughly two years ago and currently employs six former foster care youth who have found successful employment or completed higher education programs. Enlisting the assistance of peer and family assistants has contributed to the establishment of long-term connections for foster youth and thus has created a support network. As county administrators continue to see a positive impact on youth within the foster care system the program will continue with available funding.

Extending foster care services has been a widely debated topic due to the costly nature that would lead to additional tax increases. In California, former foster youth are eligible for extended foster care for an additional three years or their 21st birthday. Post extended foster care, youth are then able to utilize transitional age youth services that vary across state. In order for former foster youth to receive services they must meet one of the five criteria. Based on participant feedback, 6 out of 7 participants agreed that the criterion was realistic and reasonable for emancipated youth to meet. Each former foster care youth must meet one of the following criteria; complete high school or equivalent program, or enroll in a college, community, or vocational education program, or be employed at least 80 hours a month, or participate in a program designed to promote or remove barriers to employment, or are unable to meet the above requirements because of a medical condition. The majority of respondents

agreed that if services were to be extended changes to the existing system must be made prior to extension.

Findings within this study are congruent to current literature on former foster care youth. The highlighted theme among current literature emphasizes the lack of emotional capacity that is necessary for transitional age youth to manage adulthood (Stott, 2013). Recent literature also indicated the desired qualities from professional staff from foster care youth as basic responsiveness and support (Hiles, Moss, Thorne, Wright, & Dallos, 2014). The findings indicate the lack of support can be attributed to the overwhelming need of additional social workers and not necessarily the lack of support given by individual social workers.

In the present study, each respondent acknowledged the developmental impediments that are characteristic of this population. Due to displacement from primary guardians to foster homes and treatment programs, transitional age youth experience compounded barriers towards healthy development. The vast majority of respondents highlighted the pervasiveness of mental health disorders and the implications of mental health disorders towards the establishment of independence. Although systemic changes to the collaboration of mental health and child welfare are in progress, the influx of consumers on an overwhelmed agency will negatively impact the quality of care provided.

The defining characteristic that is unique to transitional age youth is the absence of a stable supportive network to receive guidance and emotional

support from. Respondents were able to confirm the frequency of displacements within the child welfare system that inhibit the youth from forming lasting connections. Current literature also supports the utilization of mentorship programs to provide a positive role model in foster care, which directly relates to the integration of alumni foster youth (Hiles et al., 2013). Although the majority of participants were able to confirm the need of the facilitation of the development of life long connections, the programming did not seem to properly meet the need. Certain programs utilized within the county programs are used as an educational demonstration targeted towards independence, with fewer events centered on healthy relationships. Given that the establishment of long lasting connections is traditionally organic, the child welfare agency has the difficult task of recreating a natural opportunity for transitional age youth to meet a supportive network. Creating new relationships are naturally developed as both individuals are committed to maintaining that supportive relationship. Foster youth are a notoriously distrustful population and typically carry a poor example of healthy relationships, which contribute to types of connections developed in adulthood.

While conducting interviews, a very specific need was brought to the researcher's attention. Although there is not a significant need for them, youth with severe mental illness that require 24-hour care and assistance are sent to local board and cares. Unfortunately, youth with severe mental illness are grouped in facilities with all ages, leaving a younger population with significantly older population. With limited housing options for youth with mental health

disorders the risk of their mental disorders are at risk of increasing and becoming more complex over time.

Another significant finding is the integration of peer and family assistants within county agencies. A research respondent, who is a supervisor at a county contracted program, also advocated for the use of alumni foster youth. When professional staff members are unable to reach current foster or transitional age youth, county agencies seek support from peer and family assistants. This requirement not only serves as providing hope for current foster youth but it expands the work opportunity for foster youth to strive for.

When the majority of respondents stated the criteria to receive extended foster care services were realistic and reasonable, one participant in particular had an alternative perspective on the extension of services. Similar to extending health care benefits under the legal guardians, extended foster care was recommended to the age of 26. In the situation that a government entity becomes responsible for the upbringing of our youth at what age is the government no longer responsible? In recent years, a larger portion of emerging adults struggled to live without parental assistance due to economic shifts and limited job opportunity. As these shifts within the economic climate are made to what degree must the government agencies accommodate the needs of the consumers who lack the primary support? In addition, the instability that is inevitable within a large agency contributes to children developing poor boundaries, as stated by participant five:

...we've encouraged poor boundaries, we really have by the way we have placed them and so having worked both sides of it, that's something I see as well. We make them have poor boundaries, we send a bunch of social workers to make you safe and then that social worker changes in six months and that social worker changes in eight months and we wonder why they have trouble. (Personal communication, February 24, 2015).

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy, and Research

The current study has some limitations that are discussed below.

Limitations observed throughout the research process are related to the sample selection and the limitations of each participant as employee of the county.

Obtaining information from government agencies has proven to be very difficult and highly sensitive topic within agencies. Protecting the integrity of county programs and professional staff are among the concerns when participating in research studies. Due to the nature of the sample selection, participants' willingness to fully disclose all information about their programs may not allow for an accurate analysis of county programming. It is possible that due to self-report bias, current employees are more likely to disclose successful programs without accurate analysis of areas in need of improvement. Lastly, this qualitative research study selected participants utilizing a snowball sampling that inhibits the generalizability of the results to other agencies and programming.

A future area of research that would benefit of transitional age youth and children within the child welfare system can be the assessment of intervention approaches. I believe future studies should examine how supportive guardianship influences the therapeutic process and outcomes for transitional age youth. As children in foster care benefit from therapeutic services as they adjust to new environments, foster care families can also benefit from processing the addition of a new family member. Therapeutic support can potentially facilitate a smoother transition for both parties involved.

An additional area of research that can be examined includes identifying the programs and resources that are most beneficial to the success of foster youth. Sampling transitional age youth who have experience with chronic homelessness is another area research that has the potential to provide a lived experience and insight to successful programming and areas of improvement. In recent programming, wrap around programs are becoming alternatives for foster care systems. The primary goal of wrap around programs keeps children with their original guardians and surrounds the family with resources and support. This innovative programming educates family systems as the primary intervention than extracting the child. Presently, parents and children receive services separately and are later brought together where this approach works with the family as a unit. This can decrease future traumatization and empowers families to rely on their own skills to resolve problems. More empirical research in empowering families can secure future funding sources that will contribute to the

establishment of stronger communities. Lastly, findings in this research study further support the need of additional funding for increasing the amount of county social workers to reduce caseloads and increase the worker client engagement.

Conclusion

The steady increase of children in foster care and former foster youth requiring government assistance further implicates social work professionals to advocate for transitional age youth intervention. Families define our communities and represent our future leaders and innovators. Without proper care and investment in our foster care youth, the likelihood of future dependence of these youth on government assistance programs is increased. In addition, preventative interventions earlier in childhood have the potential to decrease the amount of transitional age youth receiving services. As one of the most vulnerable and difficult populations to gain trust, transitional age youth are among the most resilient populations with the most potential to manifest their hopes and dreams. It is with this unique potential that social service professionals would be doing society a disservice by neglecting the endless possibilities of our foster youth.

APPENDIX A
TABLE DEMOGRAPHICS

Table 1.

Demographics	N	%
Male	2	28.6
Female	3	71.4
Number of years in field (Mean Score)	22	
San Bernardino County	2	
Riverside County	5	

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent

You are invited to add your opinion to a study on the barriers for transitional age youth seeking services for independence. The study is being conducted by Masters of Social Work (MSW) student, Amanda Lucero, from California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) under the supervision of Professor Erica Lizano at CSUSB. The School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the CSUSB Institutional Review Board has approved the study.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to understand the difficulties former foster care youth face once they have ‘aged out’ of services seeking independence.

Description: If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked a series of questions in a interview regarding your perspective about the services that are available to newly emancipated youth and what can be done to increase their success rates.

Participation: Your participation is on a volunteer basis; you have the right to forego any questions you do not wish to answer or questions that you do not feel comfortable answering at any time.

Confidentiality: Any information that is shared will remain confidential. No record will be made or kept of your name or any identifying information. A random number will be assigned to every participant. The researcher, as well as the research advisor Dr. Erica Lizano, will only review information shared during the interview process.

Duration: Participation in the interview should last about 20-30 minutes.

Risks: There are no foreseeable risks to taking part in the study.

Benefits: This research can potentially provide insight into this long-standing social issue of supporting newly emancipated youth. Research will further support social workers with an in-depth perspective into successful strategies working this complex population. This could lead to better-facilitated services implemented by workers and agencies alike.

Contact: If you have any questions or concerns about this study you can contact Dr. Erica Lizano at (909) 537-5584

Results: the results of the study will be available at the CSUSB library after the summer of 2015.

APPENDIX C
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Debriefing Statement

The study that you have participated in was designed by Amanda Lucero to seek a better understanding of the barrier for transitional age youth pursuing independence from an administrator's perspective. This researcher was primarily interested in understanding which strategies were most successful in supporting our youth. The researcher was also interested in understanding how services are designed to support the emotional stability of former foster care youth. With your participation in this research it is hoped that services will be expanded and positive forms of interactions are highlighted between social workers and consumers.

Thank you for participating in this study. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you are advised to contact Erica Lizano at (909) 537-5584. You may also contact Pfau Library if you would like to obtain a copy of the findings of the study after it is completed.

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT: I have read the information above and agree to participate your study

(Place an X) Mark _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D
THESIS QUESTIONS

Thesis Questions

1. What are some barriers workers encounter when attempting to engage with transitional age youth?
2. Which services do you find the most beneficial for transition age youth success?
3. What are some specific characteristics that make transition age youth a unique population?
4. What is one way you suggest to instill hope for this population?
5. What is one service you wish you could provide but are unable to?
6. What are some successful services that build upon transitional age youth emotional capacity?
7. Do you believe the requirements for accessing services are realistic for transitional age youth to meet?
8. Do you believe it would be beneficial to extend transitional age youth services past 25years? Why or why not?

Once the recorder is out begin the recording with the following statement: "this is a recorded interview of participant number one on February xxx, 2015. Participant one would you please confirm that I have permission to record this interview." Then the person confirms. Say thank you and then say, okay now we can move on to some questions that I have prepared...

Off the record

What is one piece of advice you are willing to share with future staff intending to pursue a career with transitional age youth?

Created by Amanda Lucero

REFERENCES

- Arnett, J. J. (2007). *Adolescence and emerging adulthood: A cultural approach (3rd ed.)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson-Prentice Hall.
- Avery, R. J. (2010). An examination of theory and promising practice for achieving permanency for teens before they age out of foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review, (32)*, 399–408.
doi:10.1016/j.chilyouth.2009.10.011
- Avery, R. J., & Freundlich, M. (2009). You're all grown up now: Termination of foster care support at age 18. *Journal of Adolescence, 32*, 247–257.
doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2008.03.009
- California Foster Connections to Success. (2014). *California Fostering Connections*. <http://www.cafosteringconnections.org/extended-foster-care-general/>. Retrieved October 11, 2014
- Havlicek, J (2011a). Lives in motion: A review of former foster youth in the context of their experiences in the child welfare system. *Children and Youth Services Review, 33*, 1090–1100.
doi:10.1016/j.chilyouth.2011.02.007
- Hiles, D., Moss, D., Wright, J., & Dallos, R. (2013). Young people's experience of social support during the process of leaving care: A review of the literature. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*, (2059-2071).

- Jones, L. (2011). The first three years after foster care: A longitudinal look at the adaptation of 16 youth to emerging adulthood. *Children and Youth Services Review, (33)*, 1919–1929. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.05.018
- Samuels, G. M., & Pryce, J. M. (2008). “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger”: Survivalist self-reliance as resilience and risk among young adults aging out of foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review, (30)*, 1198–1210. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2008.03.005
- Singer, E. R., Berzin, S. C., & Hokanson, K. (2013). Voices of former foster youth: *Supportive relationships in the transition to adulthood, (35)*, 2110–2117.
- Stott, T. (2013). Transition youth: Policies and outcomes. *Children and Youth Services Review, (35)*, 218–227.
- Stott, T., & Gustavsson, N. (2010). Balancing permanency and stability for youth in foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review, (32)*, 619–625. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2009.12.009
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2012). *Child welfare information gateway*. Retrieved October 9, 2014 from https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/statistics/childwelfare_foster.cfm#state.
- Workforce Academy for Youth. (2014). *San Diego County*. Retrieved October 14, 2014 from <http://www.livewellsd.org/news/workforce-academy-for-youth-program-brings-hope-and-support-to-foster-youth/>.

Zastro, C. H., & Kirst-Ashman, K. K. (2013). *Understanding human behavior and the social environment*. Brooks/cole empowerment series.