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# SOCIAL WORKERS PERSPECTIVES OF THE PROTECTIVE AND RISK FACTORS THAT AFFECT YOUTH IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

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

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

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by  
Guadalupe Citlalli Torres  
Victoria Vanesa Mariscal

June 2016

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## ABSTRACT

Youth who have experienced maltreatment and the dysfunction of multiple placements are at risk of engaging in delinquent behaviors. Studies from various professionals found specific risk and protective factors that affect youth from being involved in the juvenile justice system. The current study adds significantly literature by identifying the risk and protective factors that affect foster youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice system based on social workers perspectives. The results indicate almost 93% of the participants agreed that multiple placements, 74% agreed that physical abuse, 61% agreed that group homes, and 67% agreed that sexual abuse serve as risk factors for foster youth. Foster youth who have encountered risks factors such as psychical abuse, sexual abuse, severe general neglect, mental health issues, multiple placements, group home placements, substance abuse, and negative support systems are at risk of being involved with the juvenile justice system. In addition, approximately 99% of the participants agreed that a mentor, 98% agreed that after school activities, 91% agreed that early parent bonding, 90% agreed that monitoring youths behaviors, and 73% agreed that contact with birth parents serves as protective factors that prevent youth from being involved from the juvenile justice system. The results identify factors such as early parent child bonding, school activities, contact with birth family, parents or caregivers monitoring their behavior, a mentor or role model, school involvement, and involvement with

religious and spiritual activities serve as protective factors in preventing youth involvement in the juvenile justice system.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this project to my parents Maria and Tomas. Thank you for everything that you do for my brothers and me, for your support and words of encouragement, without you I would not be the woman I am today. To my brothers Tomas and Juan, thank you for putting up with my mood and demands during these two years. Tomas thank you for revising my papers even when you had your own to revise. To all my family members and friends, thank you for listening to me during times of frustration and for always providing me with words of encouragement. To my thesis partner, Victoria, thank you for putting up with me, you are truly a great friend and the best research partner, I'm bless to have you as my best friend. "You have brains in your head, you have feet in your shoes, you can steer yourself in any direction you choose, you're on your own, and you know what you know, and you are the guy who'll decide where to go – Dr Seuss "

Guadalupe Citlalli Torres

First of all, I would like to dedicate this study to all the foster youth that are in the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system that are in much need of love and support. To my parents Mr. and Mrs. Mariscal who have been the most supportive and inspiring as well as provided me with the most unconditional love and motivation. To my best friend Citlalli who has been supportive, encouraging, and inspiring as well as greatest thesis partner and an

unconditional friend. To all my friends who have provided her with support, strength, inspiring moments, and the most powerful and positive advice there could be. “If you can’t fly, then run, if you can’t run, then walk, if you can’t walk, then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward- Martin Luther King”.

Victoria Vanesa Mariscal



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Problem Statement

Children that have experienced maltreatment, have been neglected, emotionally, physically, or sexually abused become involved with the child welfare system. In the United States, approximately 3 million cases of child abuse or neglect are reported annually, without intervention, these maltreated youth are 38% more likely to commit violent crimes (Bender, 2009). These maltreated youth begin to acquire risky and delinquent behaviors. Based on their unstable environment and unstable placements, maltreated youth begin to experience psychological and behavioral issues. The psychological and behavioral issues displayed by the maltreated youth progress towards delinquent behavior. Those delinquent behaviors direct them to commit unlawful crimes and direct them towards the involvement with the juvenile justice system.

It is commonly known that foster youth involved in the child welfare system have higher risk factors of becoming involved with the juvenile justice system. At a national scope, a study demonstrated that two-thirds of youth referred for an offense during a year had experienced some form of child welfare involvement (Sickmund & Puzanchera, 2014). Astonishing, as it may seem, two-thirds of youth at a national level represents a large number of youth that had involvement with both, the juvenile justice system and the child welfare system. The evidence demonstrated that 6 in 10 youth referred as first-time offenders had a history of

child welfare involvement (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). At times, these youth enter the child welfare system as maltreated children then commit unlawful acts that impose them to enter the juvenile justice system. In some cases, the maltreated youth can become the offender, which is also why they become involved with the juvenile justice system. National reports demonstrate that 9 in 10 youth previously referred for an offense had some history of child welfare involvement (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). The statistics demonstrate that a large proportion of foster youth encounter involvement with the juvenile justice system.

There is a relationship or correlation between youth that have been involved with child protective services and youth involved with the juvenile justice system. Children that have been maltreated have a higher risk of becoming involved with the juvenile justice system. A study demonstrated that by age 28, nearly two-thirds of girls were investigated by child protective services for alleged acts of child maltreatment and over half became dual status youth (Colman, Mitchell-Herzfeld, Kim, & Shady, 2010). Although this study was specifically conducted with adolescent females, it demonstrates that over half of the adolescents involved with the child welfare system could potentially become involved with the criminal justice system. Youth involved with the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system become involved in what is called a dual system. It has been found that 8% of dually involved youth had at least one arrest before entering child welfare system, 32% experienced new reports of

maltreatment referrals subsequent to arrest, and 56% were charged with a second offense (Huang, Ryan, & Herz, 2012). Whether these adolescents become involved with the child welfare system or the juvenile justice system first studies show these adolescents will eventually become dual status youth.

Multiple individuals and agencies are concerned with this issue. The juvenile justice system would be concerned as to why their juvenile detention centers and courts are receiving a large amount of youth who are involved with the child welfare system. Probation officers and judges would be concerned as well. It would be beneficial for them to have a better understanding as to why a number of youths are entering their system while exiting or being involved with the child welfare system. Also, child welfare agencies are very intrigued and interested in these studies because of the numerous dual status cases. Since social workers are the ones that have constant communication with the dual status youth, the agency would be very interested to see the correlations and differences. These social workers that have constant contact with foster youth would be concerned and interested to know if the risk and protective factors they identify are similar to the ones previously identified by other professionals. The study is focused on identifying social workers perceptions of the protective and risk factors affecting youth in the child welfare system that leads foster youth to become involved with the juvenile justice system.

## Purpose of the Study

Although foster youth get involved with the dual system, social workers should be concerned with the risk factors that contribute to the foster youth's involvement with the dual system. Some studies have identified that group homes placements, placement instability, and weak social bonds are the most frequently identified factors associated with delinquency for adolescents in the child welfare system (Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, & Marshall, 2007). These are just some of the various risk factors identified that have an association with the delinquency of adolescents. Most studies identify a wide variety of risk factors and just very few protective factors for dual status youth. Many of the risk and protective factors identified are not from a social worker's perspective. Therefore, the purpose of this study would be to identify protective and risk factors that affect youth in the juvenile justice system and child welfare system from a social worker's perspective. Since previous studies identified other professionals perspectives but do not identify social workers perspectives regarding the protective and risk factors affecting youth in both systems. This study is intended to examine social workers perspectives and views on the protective and risk factors that affect youth in the dual system. In addition, to examine the correlations between previously identified protective and risk factors.

Agencies such as Children and Family Services (CFS) have social workers that promote the safety, well-being, and permanency of children. CFS mission statement states that the goal is to protect endangered children,

preserve and strengthen their families, and develop alternative family settings (Hagen, n.d.). Social workers duties at CFS are to provide a safety and permanency environment for foster youth. Although there is a large quantity of social workers at CFS in child welfare, there are not enough in the juvenile justice system. The juvenile justice system is composed of mostly probations officers, attorneys, public defenders, and the judges. There are very few social workers at the public defender's office, which is great because they get to interact with delinquent children, assess their needs, and ensure that their needs are being met. Social workers are great assets for both, the foster youth and juvenile delinquent youth because they are able to communicate with youth and advocate for their needs.

Agencies such as CFS, the public defender's office, courts, and juvenile detention centers are all encountering and interacting with dual status foster youth. These agencies may have specific interventions designed to be implemented with dual status individuals. It would be beneficial if CFS social workers perspectives were assessed and examined in order to identify the most important risk and protective factors that affect dually status youth. Once the risk and protective factors of dually involved youth have been assessed, then current interventions designed for this population can be evaluated and modified if needed. If any complication would occur then agencies could collaborate together in creating new interventions for the dually involved youth, which then could be utilized by the individuals in these agencies.



Specifically, this study focused on identifying the risk and protective factors affecting foster youth based on a social worker's perspective. The study was conducted through a quantitative and qualitative study approach. By distributing self-administered questionnaires to the social workers in the county of San Bernardino. Since the study is based on the perceptions of social workers the data source was a self-administered questionnaire distributed to social workers from San Bernardino County. Based on the study it is important to ensure that the majority of social workers completing the survey have experience working with foster youth in the juvenile justice system. The arrangement was to have a sample size of eighty social workers for the study. This ensured that enough data was collected in order to determine the social workers perceptions of the risk and protective factors for foster youth involved with the dual system.

#### Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice

Social workers have ongoing contact with these dual status foster youth; therefore it is important to learn about their perspectives of the protective and risk factors they identify that affect dual status youth. Social workers are one of the few professionals that have the most contact with these juveniles and have the appropriate education to identify the immediate risk and protective factors. The protective and risk factors that these social workers identify would be very resourceful in order to educate other social workers and provide the adequate interventions to eliminate or minimize those risk factors. Some of the research

identified that without intervention, these maltreated youth are 38% more likely to commit violent crimes and that is why it is important to find the appropriate interventions for these youth (Snyder & Merritt, 2009). If the appropriate protective and risk factors are identified by the immediate individuals that are in contact with these youth, then the appropriate interventions could be gathered and implemented in order to prevent youth from being involved with the dual system. Once the appropriate interventions and protective factors are identified, they could serve as a guide to educate other professionals and individuals, such as foster parents. It would be important that social workers and other individuals are aware and informed about the interventions available in order to enforce these implications and minimize the identified risk factors.

In order to identify the risk factors, protective factors, and adequate interventions it was important to utilize three steps from the generalist intervention model. The three necessary steps for this study were assessment, planning, and implementation. It initiated by assessing the social worker's perspectives of the different identified risk and protective factors for dually involved foster youth. Then identifying and planning new interventions that would be beneficial for the foster delinquent youth, as Janku & Yan (2010) suggests that a multisystem assessment instrument completed at a centralized assessment and screening center with protocols for notifying agencies of dual involvement. It would be a great implementation in order for individuals at the agencies to be notified of the dual status youth, in order to better assist them. It

would also be beneficial since all agencies would be working with dually involved youth together and could be notified simultaneously. Even if agencies collaborated together and coordinated case planning and supervision, which could include joint case plans, interagency liaisons, multidisciplinary case planning, and family-centered interventions (Janku & Yan, 2010). Therefore, identifying and implementing necessary interventions that would be beneficial for the foster delinquent youth is necessary in order for change to occur.

The findings of this study could be utilized as an initial step in creating policy changes and to further implement and develop appropriate interventions for dual status youth. Perhaps, introducing the changes of interventions or new interventions to the counties would be the first step towards making a significant change. Raising awareness of these interventions would be important for the agencies to create change and implement the identified interventions within their agencies. If the implementation is effective, then they could consider introducing it to legislation in order to make a statewide impact and change.

Overall, the purpose of the study is to identify social workers perspectives of protective and risk factors that affect youth in the juvenile delinquency and child welfare system. The topic highly relates to the child welfare system as well as the juvenile justice system. Most child welfare social workers would be able to quickly identify the risk factors that affect the dually involved foster youth. Although, it is more difficult for social workers to identify the protective factors that could prevent youth from being involved in both systems, most child welfare

social workers are able to quickly identify the risk factors that affect the dually involved foster youth. Therefore, it would be very beneficial for newly hired child welfare social workers to be educated on the protective factors in order to help implement them with the foster youths in their caseloads, by preventing and/or decreasing the number of foster youth that become involved with the juvenile justice system. The findings of this study would contribute to social work research by allowing social workers to identify if the current protective factors they are utilizing with dually involved foster youth delinquents are effective. The findings would contribute in allowing social workers to acknowledge which risk and protective factors affect foster youth delinquents and how to implement protective factors. The study is relevant to child welfare specifically because it is identifying the reasons why foster youth in the child welfare system develop involvement with the juvenile justice system. The study is also utilizing social workers from the child welfare system as the participants for this study. Overall, the study is focused on preventing children that are involved with the child welfare system from being involved with the juvenile delinquent system.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

Chapter two consists of an examination of the relevant literature review to this study. This chapter is divided into subsections that consist of risk and protective factors, educational and financial, and on the perspectives of different professionals associated with youth in the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system. The final subsection includes theories guiding conceptualization relevant to this topic.

#### Risk and Protective Factors

There is a close relationship between juvenile delinquents and their involvement in the child welfare system due to many different risk factors. Youth in the child welfare system tend to experience various types of child maltreatment, which can lead to problematic and criminal behavior that could impact the adolescent's life. It is relevant that youth, who engage in problematic behavior and offend as adolescents, continue to have these problematic behaviors as adults. Research suggests that youth served by the juvenile justice system may be at risk for the perpetration of abuse and neglect that would also associate them with the child welfare system. Colman, Mitchell-Herzfeld, Kim, and Shady (2010) found that prevalence of maltreatment perpetration and dual-system contact were lower in boys as only 16 percent were dual system client

compare to 53 percent in girls. The study demonstrated that individuals with a history of delinquency were more likely to engage in intimate partner violence and child maltreatment. These adolescents are at risk of having physically abusive behaviors and engaging in violent relationships. The empirical research is helpful in identifying the high-risk factors that adolescents with juvenile delinquency encounter. It intends to help identify how the problematic behaviors affect the juvenile delinquents' future as adults.

Studies have shown that victims of abuse are more likely to have a greater risk of being involved in the juvenile justice system. Huang, Ryan, and Herz (2012) reported that delinquency rates were approximately 47% greater for youth associated with at least one substantiated allegation of maltreatment. The youths reported having an encounter with the delinquency system by being at least once arrested and being detained or convicted of at least one offense. The focus of the study was to identify the timing of justice involvement for child welfare cases and the reports of maltreatment, as well as the risk of reoffending. The study found that the majority of youth entered the child welfare system before entering the juvenile justice system. A very important finding of this study was that sixty-six percent of youth who committed a criminal offense were in an out of home placement, compared to thirty-four percent were receiving in-home services at the time of the arrest (Huang, Ryan & Herz, 2012). From this information, it is associated that home placements serve as a protective factor and out of home placements serve as a risk factor for juvenile delinquents. This same study also

found that as the number of placements increase so does the delinquent behaviors. The study found that sixteen percent had been in one placement, thirteen percent in two placements, and fifty-five percent in three or more placements. This information associates multiple placements as a risk factor for delinquent behavior. The findings did confirm that youth involved in the dual system of child welfare and the juvenile delinquency system do experience a higher rate of maltreatment and continue offending.

It has been established that children and youth who experience neglect have an automatic high risk for delinquency. Snyder and Merritt (2014) conducted a study to determine which type of neglect affected delinquency behavior. The researchers examined supervisory neglect, physical neglect, and parental substance abuse. The findings identified important key factors or risk factors such as past victimization, running away from home, mental health problems, substance abuse problems, school disengagement, and association with deviant peers (Snyder & Merritt, 2014). These risk factors were mostly associated with supervisory neglect. The researchers also found that youth who experienced physical neglect tend to engage in criminal behavior as they associate with deviant peers for social support. Early parent-child bonding was suggested as a protective factor in reducing criminal behavior in youth. The study also found that out of home care increased nearly double the rate of delinquent behavior. Ultimately, it is important to identify the risk factors that link children of

maltreatment to juvenile delinquency and compare them to the risk factors identified by social workers.

Parenting is an important factor in reducing or increasing criminal behavior in adolescents as well as their engagement in substance abuse and violence behavior. Fagan (2013) found that different styles of parenting could have positive and negative effects on children; children who experience positive parenting skills are less likely to display delinquency or violent behaviors. The researchers found that children usually learn behaviors via interaction with others, especially their parents. The researchers argue that parents who actively monitor children's behavior, set and communicate clear expectations that delinquency is not acceptable and reward compliance instill high levels of self-control in children, which reduces the likelihood of youth offending (Fagan, 2013). Parents are important in influencing children's pro-social and antisocial behavior. Most children in the child welfare system have witnessed some type of negative behavior while in the care of their parents. Those negative behaviors can include the use of substances, domestic violence, gang-related behaviors, and physical abuse towards children. It is very important to learn how social workers can engage parents in providing their children with protective factors. Those protective factors can include: parents actively monitoring their children's behavior while in their care and rewarding children's compliance to positive behavior.



## Educational and Financial Factors

During the adolescence stage, youth tend to be at the most critical stage in life. During this stage adolescents are going through many transitions as well as experiencing change. Throughout this time, the risk factors increase and can pose a threat to the well-being of the adolescent. Mahatmya and Lohman (2011) suggested there is a link between maternal welfare, employment, lack of school care, and a child's tendency to engage in delinquent behavior. Sometimes low-income families and mothers do not have or cannot afford the appropriate after school care or activity involvement for their children. These transitions and the lack of after school care or activity involvement act as risk factors for negative outcomes and delinquency in adolescents. Other risk factors identified were for those adolescents that face economic hardship. They might also encounter social and emotional problems as well as poverty stress. Some of the findings of this study state that early increased participation in after-school activities served as a protective factor against late adolescent delinquency during a mother's transition off of welfare (Mahatmya, & Lohman, 2011). Involvement in after school activities was identified as a protective factor for adolescents especially those in urban areas that encounter economic hardship. This protective factor would be adequate for children in the child welfare system as well, since caregivers and foster parents may not be able to provide these children with after-school involvement.

## Placement and Community Factors

Group home placements are common in the child welfare system.

Children are placed in group-homes due to many different reasons. Children in the child welfare system will most likely experience at least one placement in a group home. Ryan, Marshall, Herz, and Hernandez (2008) explored the relationship between group home placements and the risk of delinquency. The researchers found that adolescents in group-homes tend to be older, more likely to be male, minority, and youth who experience a range of emotional and behavioral problems. The researchers found that African Americans youth had the highest risk of delinquency with sixteen percent, Hispanics with fourteen percent, Whites and Asians with nine percent. The study also found that adolescents who experienced physical abuse have a higher risk of delinquency with sixteen percent, neglect with eleven percent, and sexual abuse with ten percent. Runaway youth (AWOL's) also have high rates of delinquency at twenty-seven percent compared to twelve percent in none runaway youths. Another important finding is that adolescents with at least one group home placement are at an increased risk of delinquency. Twenty percent of youth in group-home placements are delinquents compared to eight percent of youth in a non-group home placement (Ryan, Marshall, Herts, & Hernandez, 2008). It is important for social workers to acknowledge and understand the importance of placement stability for foster youth. It is valuable to learn how to avoid group home placements and promote placement stability.

Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, and Marshall (2007) developed a study that shows that a large proportion of youth in the juvenile justice systems were associated with the child welfare system. This study was conducted in Los Angeles County and found that between 2002 and 2005 69,009 minors were arrested for the first time in Los Angeles County. The average age of those children was 15.5 years old. Of those 69,009, first-time offenders 4,811 entered the juvenile justice system via child welfare (Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, and Marshall, 2007). More than half of those youth entered the juvenile justice system through the child welfare system. The study stated that each year 1,200 adolescents in the Los Angeles County child welfare system experienced their first arrest. Statistics show that the majority of juvenile delinquents are also associated with the child welfare system, therefore, is important to understand the risk factors that contribute to the involvement of youth in the child welfare system with the criminal justice system. It is important to identify protective factors that prevent youth in the child welfare system from becoming involved with the criminal justice system.

Huang and Ryan (2014) conducted a study to investigate if specific neighborhood characteristics were associated with delinquency for children in the child welfare system. The study consisted of 2,360 foster youth in Chicago from birth to 16 years of age (Huang and Ryan, 2014). The authors report that in some cases out of home placements may also reduce the risk of juvenile justice involvement. The study encourages child welfare practitioners to take into

consideration neighborhood characteristics when placing children. Although an in-home placement is often the first priority for child welfare workers, it has been found that when children are left in gang infested neighborhoods children are more likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system. Some of the limitations are that this study did not examine the interaction effect between neighborhood placement and placement types such as kinship care. However, the article stated that kinship care is often associated with staying in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Another characteristic to take into account is the relationship these children had with their parents, and what kind of parenting styles these children received from their parents.

#### Practitioners' Perspectives

Michalopoulos, Ahn, Shaw, and O'Connor (2012) conducted a study to examine the perceptions of child welfare workers on the implementation of family-centered practice (FCP). The authors stated that implementation of FCP is to increase the positive outcomes for children who are part of the child welfare system. The principals of FCP are to build upon family strengths and experiences, respect cultural sensitivity, collaborate with communities, manage using data-driven practices, involve the family in the decision-making process, build community partnerships, and the recruitment retention of kinship community recourses (Michalopoulos, Ahn, Shaw, and O'Connor, 2012). This study was conducted with nine focus groups between the fall of 2010 and the spring of 2011

with a total of 64 social workers participating. The majority of social workers in the study did not believe that FCP increased positive outcomes and stability among families. Some of the limitations of this study were classified as the lack of training and knowledge of FCP among child welfare workers.

It is important to take into account the perspectives of other professionals who interact with foster youth in the juvenile justice system as part of their everyday job. Taking into account their perspectives will provide a better understanding of the protective and risk factors affecting foster youth. A study developed by Krinsky (2010) examined former prosecutors perspectives on foster youth and their path to the justice system. The study found that 75 percent of foster youth work below grade level in school, half of them do not complete high school and only 15 percent attend college. Due to these factors, foster youth become troubled youth and eventually become troubled adults. The study showed that 51 percent of emancipated foster youth will be unemployed, 25 percent will become homeless and 25 percent will be incarcerated. Prosecutors believe foster youth engage in delinquent behavior due to the lack of stable living environment, unattended mental health, substance abuse problems, and school absences or problems at school (Krinsky, 2010). It is not to argue that foster youth often experience unstable environments as they are often moved from one foster home to another. It is possible that by removing those risk factors it could possibly reduce the delinquent behavior among foster youth.

## Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Social Learning Theory states that behaviors are acquired by witnessing how actions of others are reinforced (Hutchison, 2013). Children in the social welfare system often witness violence behavior and substance abuse among their parents and in their neighborhoods. As the learning theory states, we learn from what we see. Children who enter the child welfare system may learn those behaviors from their parents or their neighborhoods before entering the system. Children may also witness good behaviors from their parents, other support systems, or role models before entering the system. This theory is important for this topic in order to learn more about the protective and risk factors witnessed by children in their homes before entering the system.

Attachment theory identifies the importance of positive attachments between children and their caregivers. Studies have shown that attachment security assessed in infancy has been shown to predict supportive social networks, including peer relationships, ego resilience, emotion regulation, positive self-concept, conscience development and pro-social behavior, emotion understanding, and empathic responsiveness (Turner, 2011). As research demonstrates children in the child welfare system are often moved from foster home to foster home, which disrupts any type of attachment that they might have acquired with their foster parents. Children's attachment is also disrupted when they are first removed from their primary caregiver. Attachment theory is very

important since it provides information in order to understand adequately the behaviors of children in the child welfare system.

### Summary

Based on the literature review, there are many protective and risk factors affecting youth in the child welfare system. Further research needs to be conducted in order to obtain the perspective of social workers on the protective and risk factors affecting youth in the child welfare system. The guiding theories for this study are social learning theory and attachment theory.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### Introduction

This section provides an overview of the research methods utilized in conducting the study. First, it discusses the study design and sampling methods utilized for the purpose of this study. Secondly, it describes the data collection process and the instruments utilized. Thirdly, it states the procedures conducted for the study and the protection of human subjects. Lastly, it illustrates and describes the data analysis.

#### Study Design

The purpose of the study was to explore and identify social workers perspectives on the protective and risk factors that affect youth in the juvenile justice system and the child welfare system. The protective factors identified based on the study will be utilized to educate professionals that interact with dual status foster youth. Subsequently, social workers could apply the protective factors that prevent foster youth from being involved with the juvenile justice system. The study was conducted through the use of a quantitative and qualitative self-administrated survey design. Other professionals have previously identified risk and protective factors affecting juvenile delinquents. A quantitative study would be appropriate in order to compare those identified risk and protective factors with the protective



and risk factors that the participants identified. The quantitative design was conducted through self-administered surveys sent via email to the participants. The study aimed to investigate what the social workers perspectives were in regards to the protective and risk factors that affect youth with the involvement in the juvenile justice system and the child welfare system.

A limitation that the study encountered was the limited number of responses by the participants. All social workers working throughout the CFS offices in the county of San Bernardino were identified as possible participants. Although it appeared to be a large sample there were a limited number of responses from the participants. Given the fact that the participants are social workers from CFS in San Bernardino County. Social workers from CFS are currently assigned to a high number of caseloads among many other obligations and tasks to complete. Therefore, the social workers did not have the time to complete the self-administrated survey. This was a limitation in receiving fewer responses than predicted from the participants.

### Sampling

A survey was created through the agency of CFS in San Bernardino. The survey was inputted and distributed through a select survey system by the county of San Bernardino. The survey was sent via email to all the social workers in the department of CFS. Since the study conducted utilized the social workers from CFS, a non-probability convenience sampling was conducted. Most of the social

workers at CFS are Social Service Practitioners (SSP), but they also employ Supervisor Social Service Practitioners (SSSP), Social Worker II's (SWII), Public Health Nurses (PHN), court officers, forensic interviewers, and clinical therapists. SSP's have cases of sexual abuse, severe neglect, physical neglect, and are more likely to have encountered foster youth involved with the dual system. There are also specific SSP's assigned to dual status cases. Therefore, SSP's and the SSSP's from CFS were the ideal participants for this study. However, due to the limitation of responses the survey was available to all individuals from CFS. A survey was emailed to all the prospective participants and the researchers received approximately 87 responses.

#### Data Collection and Instruments

A new instrument (see Appendix A) was utilized to examine social workers perspectives on the protective and risk factors affecting foster youth in the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system. A 20-item Likert-type scale was utilized to measure child welfare social workers perspectives. A four-point Likert scale was utilized with possible responses such as "strongly agree", "agree", "disagree" and "strongly disagree". Protective and risk factors identified in the literature were included in the Likert scale questions. The instrument also contained two open-ended questions. The two open-ended questions were utilized to allow social workers to identify additional protective and risk factors

that they believe affect youth in the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system.

Some demographic questions were asked of the participants. The participants responded to various questions such as gender, age, ethnicity, education background, and the number of years/months they have worked for San Bernardino County, CFS.

The survey was emailed to prospective participants during the months of January, February, and March of 2016. Completion of the survey by participants should have taken no longer than 5 to 10 minutes. An informed consent form (see Appendix B) was attached to the survey. Participants were advised that their participation was voluntary and that they reserved the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Both researchers created the instrument utilized for this study. The instrument included the risk factors and protective factors identified in the existing literature. A possible limitation of the instrument was that it was a completely new instrument, and it had never been utilized before. In order to pre-test the survey and explore more of its limitations, the researchers utilized the help of supervisors from CFS. The instrument was pre-tested by several supervisors from CFS. The supervisors tested the instrument, once tested, the survey was sent to a research analyst and uploaded into the counties survey system.

## Procedures

In order to conduct a study on the social workers' perspectives regarding the protective and risk factors that affect youth in being involved with the juvenile and child welfare system, a survey questionnaire was conducted. The survey questionnaire was sent via email to the social workers at the CFS offices throughout San Bernardino County. With the collaboration of CFS, their review, and approval of the survey questionnaire, the survey was distributed to the social workers. The survey questionnaire was self-administered and distributed via email to the participants. The survey should have taken no longer than 5 to 10 minutes. Once the surveys were emailed to the participant's, researchers destroyed any identifiable information.

Prior to the self-administrated questionnaire being emailed to the social workers, an informed consent form was provided to them. The informed consent maintained the participants anonymous by allowing them to place an "X" at the bottom of the consent form in order for participants to confirm participation. After the social workers completed the consent form and questionnaire, they were provided with a debriefing statement (see Appendix C). The debriefing statement informed the participants of the study conducted and reflected upon any thoughts or feelings they may have experienced. In order to increase the number of responses, the researchers also created a flyer (see Appendix D) to encourage social workers to complete the survey. The flyer was distributed among the different CFS offices.

## Protection of Human Subjects

The confidentiality of the participants of this study was a primary concern for the researchers. In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, the researchers limited the amount of personal identifying information collected that could link the surveys to the participants. To protect the anonymity of the participant's names, addresses, phone numbers, and signatures were not collected. This was accomplished by asking participants to not sign the consent form but instead, mark an "X" to indicate that they agreed to participate in the study.

The data was kept confidential in a password-protected computer; the accessibility to the data was limited to the researchers and the researcher's supervisor only. Once all the data was collected and entered into SPSS, the researchers destroyed all the data gathered.

Prior to completing the survey participants received an informed consent form. The informed consent advised the participants that the study was voluntary. Participants were also advised that they could withdraw from the study at any given time. If they experienced uncomfortable feelings or if they simply chose to stop answering questions. Participants were also advised that their responses would be maintained confidential and that only the researchers and the researcher's supervisor would have access to the data.

## Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis techniques were utilized for this study. The data collected from the surveys were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The data analysis included descriptive statistics in order to summarize and describe the characteristics of the data collected. The descriptive statistics were included, frequency distributions, and measures of central tendency. Inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the difference between the protective and risk factors identified in the literature with the protective and risk factors identified by participants.

## Summary

In summary, this chapter represents the different methods that were utilized in this study to recruit the participants and collect the data. This study utilized a quantitative and qualitative design. A new instrument was designed in order to conduct this study. It also includes the adequate procedures that were conducted by the researchers in order to protect the participants of the study. Finally, the appropriate data analysis for this quantitative research study was discussed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

This chapter discussed the findings of the study. Demographic variables were described such as gender, ethnicity, age, job title, and years of work experience as CFS workers in San Bernardino County. Participants were also asked if they had experience working with dual status youth. The results are categorized by risk factors, which included multiple placements, group home placements, sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, severe neglect, mental health diagnosis, and non-relative foster home placements. Protective factors, which included having a mentor or role model, after school activities, early parent-child bonding, contact with birth family, and parents or caregivers monitoring youth's behavior. The means and standard deviations were utilized to analyze the results.

#### Demographics

There were a total of 87 participants in the study. Nearly 85% of the participants were females and 15% were males. The ages of the participants ranged from 23 years to 74 years with a mean of 43 years (SD=12). Almost 28% of the participants reported to be between the ages of 23 and 33 years, 29% between the ages of 34 and 44 years, 24% between the ages of 45 and 55

years, and 19% between the ages of 56 to 74 years. Over 49% were white, almost 25% were Hispanic/Latino/Chicano, 21% were African-American, 4 % were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% were of other ethnicities.

Regarding the job title of the participants almost 75% were Social Service Practitioners (SSP), 8% were Supervising Social Service Practitioner (SSSP), 9% were Social Worker II's (SW II's), and 8% had a different job title. The participants' years of experience working for CFS ranged from 1 to 33 years of experience with a mean of 8 years of experience (SD=7). Exactly 50% of the participants had between 1 and 5 years of experience, almost 27% between 6 and 11 years of experience, 13% between 12 and 19 years of experience, and 10% between 20 and 33 years of experience. Nearly 71% of the participants indicated that they have experience working with dual status youth and 29% of the participants indicated that they do not have experience working with dual status youth. When participants were asked if they believed that 50% or more of foster youth would become a dual status youth, 1% strongly agreed with the statement, 15% agreed with the statement, 62% disagreed and 22% strongly disagreed.

Table 1. Demographics

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	13	15.3
Female	72	82.8
<b>Age</b>		



23-33	23	28
34-44	24	29
45-55	20	24
56-74	16	19
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	42	49.4
Hispanic/Latino/Chicano	21	24.7
African American	18	21.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	3	3.5
Other	1	1.1
<b>Job Title</b>		
SSSP	7	8
SSP	65	74.7
SW II	8	9.2
Other	7	8
<b>Years of Experience</b>		
1-5	50	41
6-11	27	22
12-19	13	11
20-33	10	9
<b>Have you worked with dual status youth?</b>		
Yes	61	70.9
No	25	29.1
<b>50% or more of foster youth will become dual status?</b>		
Strongly Agree	1	1.3
Agree	12	15.4
Disagree	48	61.5
Strongly Disagree	17	21.8

### Risk Factors

There were a total of eight risk factors presented to the participants. The six most identified risk factors that affect youth in the child welfare system and the juvenile delinquency system were multiple placements (mean=1.86), physical abuse (mean=2.17), group home placements (mean= 2.17), sexual abuse (mean=2.21), severe neglect (mean=2.24), and a mental health diagnosis

(mean=2.26). Approximately 93% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "multiple placements increase the risk of juvenile delinquency in foster youth" (SD=.560). Almost 74% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "youth who have been physically abused are more likely to display delinquent behavior" (SD=.621). Approximately 61% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "group home placements increase youth's delinquent behavior" (SD=.768). Almost 67% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "youth who have been sexually abused are more likely to display delinquent behavior" (SD=.671). Almost 67% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "youth who have experienced severe neglect are more likely to display delinquent behavior" (SD=.601). About 64% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "youth who have been diagnosed with a mental health problem are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior" (SD=.631).

The two least identified risk factors that affect youth in the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system were non-relative foster home placements (mean=2.75) and general neglect (mean=2.51). About 64% of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "non-relative foster home placements increase youth's delinquent behavior" (SD=.672). Approximately 55% disagreed with the statement "youth who have experienced general neglect are more likely to display delinquent behavior" (SD=.574).

Participants were provided with an open-ended question to identify additional risk factors that affect youth in the child welfare system and the

juvenile justice system. About 46 participants (52%) were able to identify one or more additional risk factors. Sixteen participants indicated that substance use is a common risk factor among foster youth involved with the child welfare and the juvenile justice system. Eight participants also identified negative support systems as a risk factor. Seven identified poverty as a risk factor, 6 participants indicated that poor parenting is also a risk factor, and 4 indicated that family history with illegal activity could also serve as a risk factor. At least 1 participant indicated that multiple schools, multiple social workers, gang involvement, limited access to resources, and age are also risk factors for foster youth. Participants indicated that older youth tend to display more delinquent behaviors. Six participants emphasized that having a mental health diagnosis, multiple placements, sexual abuse, and physical abuse are risk factors affecting youth in the child welfare system. Most participants indicated that the absence of the protective factors mentioned below pose as risk factors for foster youth.

Table 2. Risk Factors

Item	N	Mean	SD	Percentage %
<b>1. Multiple placements increase the risk of juvenile delinquency in foster youth.</b>	85	1.86	0.56	
Strongly Agree				22.4
Agree				70.6
Disagree				5.9
Strongly Disagree				1.2
<b>2. Youth who have been physically abused are more likely to display</b>	83	2.17	0.621	

<b>delinquent behavior.</b>			
Strongly Agree			10.8
Agree			62.7
Disagree			25.3
Strongly Disagree			1.2
<b>3. Group home placements increase youths delinquent behavior.</b>	77	2.17	0.768
Strongly Agree			18.2
Agree			50.6
Disagree			27.3
Strongly Disagree			3.9
<b>4. Youth who have been sexually abused are more likely to display delinquent behavior.</b>	86	2.21	0.671
Strongly Agree			12.8
Agree			54.7
Disagree			31.4
Strongly Disagree			1.2
<b>5. Youth who have experienced severe neglect are more likely to display delinquent behavior.</b>	80	2.24	0.601
Strongly Agree			22.4
Agree			70.6
Disagree			5.9
Strongly Disagree			1.2
<b>6. Youth who have been diagnosed with a mental health problem are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior.</b>	80	2.26	0.631
Strongly Agree			10
Agree			53.8
Disagree			36.3
Strongly Disagree			0
<b>7. Youth who have experienced general neglect are more likely to display delinquent behavior.</b>	80	2.51	0.601
Strongly Agree			3.8
Agree			58.8
Disagree			55
Strongly Disagree			0

<b>8. Non-relative foster home placements increase youth's delinquent behavior.</b>	77	2.75	0.672	
Strongly Agree				5.2
Agree				22.1
Disagree				64.9
Strongly Disagree				7.8

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### Protective Factors

There were a total of five protective factors presented to the participants. The three most identified protective factors that affect youth in the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system were, a mentor or role model (mean=1.60), after school activities (mean=1.65), and early parent-child bonding (mean=1.69). Almost 99% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "having a mentor or role model in a foster youth's life serves as a protective factor in preventing foster youth from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system" (SD=.517). Almost 98% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement " after school activities for foster youth serve as a protective factor in preventing foster youth from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system" (SD=.528). About 91% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "early parent-child bonding is a protective factor in preventing foster youth from becoming involved in the juvenile system" (SD=.628).

The two least identified protective factors that affect youth in the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system were, parents or caregivers

monitoring youths behavior (mean=1.81), and contact with birth family (mean=2.17). Nearly 90% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “parents or caregivers monitoring youths behavior serve as a protective factor in preventing foster youth from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system” (SD=.689). Almost 73% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “contact with birth family serves a protective factor in preventing foster youth from becoming involved in the juvenile justice system” (SD=.727).

Participants were provided with an open-ended question to identify additional protective factors that can prevent children in the child welfare system from becoming involved with the juvenile justice system. About 48 participants (56%) were able to identify one or more additional protective factors. About 16 participants emphasized that having a mentor or role model serves as a protective factor in a youth's life. Ten participants emphasized and identified the importance of extracurricular and afterschool activities as a protective factor. Six participants identified education as a protective factor in youth's life. Five participants stated that early intervention such as individual and group counseling also serves as a protective factor. Five participants stated that youth's involvement in religious and spiritual activities serves as a protective factor. Two participants indicated that a youth's personality and their resilience may also serve as a protective factor. At least one of the participants identified that contact with birth parents, early parent-child bonding, parents or caregivers monitoring youth's behavior, involving youths in the decision-making process, activities that

foster self-confidence, and additional support and protection after abuse disclosures serve as protective factors for foster youths.

Table 3. Protective Factors

Item	N	Mean	SD	Percentage
				%
<b>1. Having a mentor or role model in a foster youth's life serves as a protective factor in preventing foster youth from becoming involved in the juvenile system.</b>	83	1.6	0.517	
Strongly Agree				41
Agree				57.8
Disagree				1.2
Strongly Disagree				0
<b>2. After school activities for foster youth serves as a protective factor in preventing foster youth from becoming involved in the juvenile system.</b>	83	1.65	0.528	
Strongly Agree				37.3
Agree				60.2
Disagree				2.4
Strongly Disagree				0
<b>3. Early parent child bonding is a protective factor in preventing foster youth from becoming involved in the juvenile system.</b>	80	1.69	0.628	
Strongly Agree				40
Agree				51.2
Disagree				8.8
Strongly Disagree				0
<b>4. Parents or care givers monitoring youth's behavior serves as a protective factor in preventing foster youth from becoming involved</b>	83	1.81	0.89	

<b>in the juvenile system.</b>			
Strongly Agree			31.3
Agree			59
Disagree			8.4
Strongly Disagree			1.2
<b>5. Contact with birth family serves as a protective factor in preventing foster youth from becoming involved in the juvenile system.</b>	69	2.17	0.727
Strongly Agree			14.5
Agree			58
Disagree			23.2
Strongly Disagree			4.3

### Summary

This chapter presented the data that was gathered from the participants. The tables included detailed information of the data gathered. The demographics of the participants were included as well as the participants' responses to the identified protective and risk factors. Additional protective and risk factors identified by the participants were also included.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

This chapter reviews and discusses the significant results of the study. It discusses the inconsistent results with previously identified studies, as well as the correlations with identified risk and protective factors that affect foster youth. There were six risk factors that were strongly identified by the participants. There were two risk factors that the participants did not identify as risk factors for foster youth. The participants were able to identify other possible risk and protective factors through open-ended questions. An unanticipated response from a risk factor converting into a protective factor in the study is discussed. Other identified protective factors from the participants were identified. The various limitations faced by the participants were indicated. Lastly, further research such as identifying youth's perspective on risk and protective factors, as well as implications such as implementing new training on the results of the study were discussed.

#### Findings

Findings of the study demonstrated that social workers from CFS do not believe that foster youth would become involved with the juvenile justice system, and become dual status youth. The findings were inconsistent with those of

Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, and Marshall (2007) that indicated a large proportion of youth that were involved with the juvenile system had previously been involved with child welfare. Based on previous literature other professionals did indicate relevance with foster youth involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Participants from the study articulated that "50% or more" of foster youth in the child welfare system would not become involved with the juvenile system.

Perhaps the percentage of "50% or more" was high due to participants not agreeing that a large number of foster youth would become dual status youth.

The study was in disagreement with previous studies stating a high percentage of foster youth would become involved with the juvenile justice system, and become dual status youth.

### Risk Factors

Overall, the study found that 6 out of the 8 risk factors identified in previous literature were also associated with risk factors identified by the participants. A majority of participants strongly agreed or agreed that foster youth who have been physically abused, sexual abused, encountered severe general neglect, encountered a mental health diagnosis, placed in multiple placements, and placed in group home placements have a higher risk of being involved in the juvenile justice system. According to the participants, these factors pose as risk factors for foster youth in becoming involved with the juvenile justice system. This finding was consistent with a previous study of Snyder and Merritt (2014), which

determined that physical neglect, sexual abuse, and severe neglect in foster youth is associated with delinquent risky behaviors. It appears that foster youth involved in the child welfare system and that have been previously abused poses as a risk factor for juvenile delinquency. Again, this study is consistent with Ryan, Marshall, Herz, and Hernandez (2008) that explored the relationship between group home placements and multiple placements, having a higher risk for delinquency. Foster youth with at least one group home placement or multiple placements have an increased risk of delinquency. Multiple placements is a risk factor that was also identified by the participants. Snyder and Merritts (2014) study indicated important risk factors such as past victimization, running away from home, and in particular mental health problems affect foster youth. It appears that foster youth who encounter a mental health diagnosis have a higher risk of being involved in the juvenile justice system.

Participants of the study disagreed that general neglect and non-relative foster home placements are risk factors for youth. The finding is consistent with Ryan, Marshall, Hertz, and Hernandez (2008) were only eight percent of youth in a nongroup home placement have an increase of risk in delinquency compared to twenty percent of foster youth in group placements. Demonstrating that foster youth in non-relative foster home placements have a lower risk of encountering delinquency. General neglect was also found to be a low-risk factor for foster youth, in encountering delinquency. Again, a previous study determined that supervisory neglect, physical abuse, and parental substance abuse are risk

factors for delinquency with the exception of general neglect (Snyder & Merritt, 2014). General neglect is perceived as a low level of abuse and is not identified as a risk factor for foster youth being involved with delinquent behavior. Overall, the participants did not identify general neglect and non-relative foster home placements as risk factors for foster youth.

In the study, there was an open-ended question that allowed participants to address additional risk factors. Several of participants reiterated some of the risk factors that were previously listed on the survey such as mental health diagnosis, multiple placements, sexual abuse, and physical abuse. Again, a study found that placement instability and unattended mental health is the most frequently identified factors associated with delinquency for adolescents in the child welfare system (Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, & Marshall, 2007). The results of the study reflect a correlation upon previous risk factors identified. Most of the participants did identify additional risk factors such as negative support systems, poverty, poor parenting, family history with illegal activity, multiple schools, multiple social workers, gang involvement, limited resources, and age. Even though these factors were not included in the survey due to the limits of having a short survey, some were identified in pervious literature. Fagan (2013) found that different styles of parenting could have positive or negative effects on children, and those negative behaviors can include the use of substances, domestic violence, gang-related behaviors, and physical abuse. The additional risk factors identified by the participants correlated with those identified by previous studies.

## Protective Factors

Most participants in the study agreed or strongly agreed that the six protective factors previously identified by other studies serve protective factors in preventing foster youth from being involved in the juvenile system. Participants agreed that foster youth that have early parent-child bonding, participate in after-school activities, have contact with birth family, have parents or caregivers monitoring their behavior, and have a mentor or role model serve as protective factors for foster youth. A high number of participants agreed that these six factors pose as protective factors for foster youth. Fagan (2013) indicated that parents, who actively monitor children's behavior, reduce the likelihood of the youth offending. Participants believe monitoring youth's behavior serves as a protective factor for foster youth and prevents' them from becoming involved in the juvenile system. Again, as a previous study emphasized that early increased participation in after-school activities served as a protective factor for foster youth (Mahatmya & Lohman, 2011). Maintaining youth in after-school activities and having supervision is a protective factor in preventing delinquency. As previously mentioned, early parent-child bonding was suggested as a protective factor to reduce criminal behavior in youth (Snyder & Merritt, 2014). It appears that social workers foresee that early child bonding in foster youth prevents them from being delinquently involved. Hutchison (2013) suggested the social learning theory effects youth based on good behaviors from their parents, other support systems,

or role models. Participants validate that foster youth who have a role model or mentor deviate from delinquent behavior.

Although, a previous study established that contact with birth parents serves as a risk factor for delinquency in foster youth. There was an unanticipated result from the study. Results found that participants believe contact with birth parents serves as a protective factor for foster youth.

Participants agreed that foster youth who have contact with their birth parents are to steer away from delinquency. A current study for adolescents in foster care emphasizes that promoting a sense of family membership and family availability are key aspects in helping establish a secure base environment (McWey, Acock, & Porter, 2010). Social workers acknowledge that if foster youth have a strong attachment bond with their parents and maintain positive contact with them, it prevents them from becoming involved in the delinquency system.

The participants in the study also exhibited interest in stating additional protective factors that deviate youth from delinquency. On the open-ended question participants of the study mostly reiterated previous factors listed in the survey such as having a mentor or role model, participating in extracurricular activities, contact with birth parents, early child bonding, and parents monitoring youth's behavior. Again, as previously stated involvement in after school activities and the monitoring of their activities was identified as a preventive factor in delinquency (Mahatmya & Lohman, 2011). Participants were accurate about reiterating the fact that these factors are preventive for foster youth

involvement in delinquency. Also, the participants identified additional protective factors such as early intervention, individual and group counseling, involvement in religious and spiritual activities, youth's personality and resilience, involving youth in the decision-making process, activities that foster self-confidence, and additional support and protection.

### Limitations

The study intended to exclusively have social workers from CFS agencies, as the participants. Having CFS social workers as the participants was a limitation. CFS social workers are known to have high case management caseloads. Therefore, having the lack of time and availability to complete the survey made the recruitment of participants difficult. In the beginning of the study within a two weeks' time frame only about forty participants had completed the survey. Then a flyer was created in order to promote the study. The flyer was sent via email to the participants, as well as placed in their mailboxes and desks. Within the next week the participation of participants increased to 60 participants. Since the initial required sample size of the study was 80 participants. The researchers then decided to expand the participants to other professionals such as court officers, forensic interviewers, public health nurses, child welfare service managers, and clinical therapists. By allowing other professionals working at CFS to participate in the study a sample size of eighty-seven was gathered.

The fact that the participants have a lack of time and availability to complete the survey due to their high case management caseloads, a short survey questionnaire was created which posed as a limitation to the study. Since it was a foreseeable factor that the participants would not have the time to answer a long questionnaire. The researchers had to limit the number of questions on the survey, in order to recruit participants. There were other risk factors identified by other professionals such as substance abuse, no interventions, poverty, past victimization, unattended mental health, running away (AWOL), school disengagement, association with deviant peers, gang involvement, different styles of parenting, and disadvantaged neighborhoods (Snyder & Merritt, 2014). Other professionals identified these risk factors as those affecting foster youth in being involved with the juvenile justice system. Since the survey questionnaire was intended to be short, the additional risk factors were not supplemented in the survey. Although the researchers would have preferred to incorporate all the identified risk factors they identified the most valuable risk factors and incorporated those in the survey. Even though, the survey did not have all the risk factors identified in previous studies some of the participants did identify these risk factors during the open-ended questions section.



## Further Research and Implications

In future research, the ideal would be to include all the protective and risk factors mentioned by the participants of the study. The risk and protective factors mentioned by the participants were validated by previous studies. Therefore, if the risk and protective factors are conducted in another study with the same participants, the results may be impactful. Another possibility for future research would be to conduct a study where the foster youth serve as the participants. By conducting a study where the foster youth are the participants, it would provide more validity as to their ideals of the risk and protective factors that affect them. Further research needs to evaluate foster youths' personal perceptions of the protective and risk factors affecting and leading them to involvement with delinquent behaviors. It is significant to identify all the possible risk and protective factors that affect foster youth in being involved with the delinquent system. Identifying all these risks and protective factors that affect foster youths' can be beneficial and helpful to improve awareness for social workers.

The result of the risk and protective factors that were identified by the study were impactful and it is important to educate others about the results. In particular, in bringing awareness to other social workers about the risk and protective factors that affect foster youth. An implication that would be beneficial to the social workers would be training on the risk and protective factors that affect foster youth. The training can be conducted during the academy CORE

training that new hired social workers need to complete. According to the CFS training guide (n.d) CORE addresses the state mandated training requirements for the first 12 months and some of the training required within the first 24 months of hired. So then this training on risk and protective factors that affect foster youth would be a state mandated training conducted during CORE training. The core training has two tiers of training. The training on risk and protective factors that affect foster youth would be implemented on tier one. Tier one has workshops on “the framework for child welfare practice in California, child and youth development in a CW context, child maltreatment identification: neglect, physical abuse and emotional abuse, sexual abuse, critical thinking in child welfare assessment: safety, risk and protective capacity, as well as many other subjects” (CFS training guide, n.d). The ideal would be for training on risk and protective factors that affect foster youth to be implemented in conjunction with the child and youth development in a child welfare context. So in that matter social workers are trained on the risk and protective factors that affect and prevent foster youth from becoming dual status youth. The goal would be to educate as many social workers as possible by making it a state-mandated training in all counties of each state.

## Conclusion

Ultimately, there were numerous of identified risk factors and protective factors that affect foster youth in the juvenile delinquent system. Overall, the

study identified youth who have been psychically abused, sexually abused, encountered severe neglect, encountered mental health diagnosis, placed in multiple placements, placed in group home placements, substance abuse, and negative support systems have a higher risk of being involved in the juvenile justice system. Factors such as early parent-child bonding, participating in after school activities, having contact with birth family, having parents or caregivers monitoring their behavior, having a mentor or role model, school involvement, and involvement with religious and spiritual activities serve as a protective factor in preventing youths' involvement with the juvenile justice system. Although, there were several limitations in the study the participants did identify risk and protective factors that were previously identified in previous studies, validating and supporting those previous findings. Nonetheless, it is important to promote awareness upon social workers in regards to the identified risk and protective factors. Social workers that are educated on these risk and protective factors are able to make assertive decisions that could be impactful towards preventing foster youth from becoming dual status youth.

APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE

**Survey on the Social Workers Perspectives of Protective and Risk Factors that Affect Youth in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Delinquency System**

This voluntary survey is designed to learn more about social workers perspectives of protective and risk factors that affect youth in the juvenile delinquency and child welfare system. There are no right or wrong answers, and your responses will remain anonymous. Please circle or write your answer. You may skip questions or stop taking the survey at any time. Please answer each item as carefully and accurately as you can.

**Demographics**

Please circle the answer that most applies to you.

1. What is your gender?
  1. Female
  2. Male
2. What is your ethnicity?
  1. African American
  2. Asian Pacific Islander
  3. Hispanic/Latino/Chicano
  4. White
  5. Other, specify \_\_\_\_\_
3. How old are you? Age: \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your job title? \_\_\_\_\_
5. For how many years have you been a CFS worker for the county of San Bernardino? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Have you worked with a dual status youth (241.1 -Child Welfare and Probation)?
  1. Yes
  2. No

The following questions are to gain your perspective about protective and risk factors affecting foster youth in the juvenile justice system.

7. The majority of foster youth (50% or more) will become dual status youth by the age of 18.
  1. Strongly agree
  2. Agree
  3. Disagree
  4. Strongly disagree
8. Youth who have been physically abused are more likely to display delinquent behavior.
  1. Strongly agree
  2. Agree
  3. Disagree
  4. Strongly disagree
9. Youth who have been sexually abused are more likely to display delinquent behavior.
  1. Strongly agree
  2. Agree
  3. Disagree
  4. Strongly disagree

10. Youth who have experienced general neglect are more likely to display delinquent behavior.
1. Strongly agree      2. Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly disagree
11. Youth who have experienced severe neglect are more likely to display delinquent behavior.
1. Strongly agree      2. Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly disagree
12. Multiple placements increase the risk of juvenile delinquency in foster youth.
1. Strongly agree      2. Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly disagree
13. Non-relative foster home placements increase youth's delinquent behavior.
1. Strongly agree      2. Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly disagree
14. Group home placements increase youth's delinquent behavior.
1. Strongly agree      2. Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly disagree
15. Youth who have been diagnosed with mental health problems are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior.
1. Strongly agree      2. Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly disagree
16. After school activities for foster youth serves as a protective factor in preventing foster youth from becoming involved in the juvenile system
1. Strongly agree      2. Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly disagree
17. Contact with their birth family serves as a protective factor in preventing foster youth from becoming involved in the juvenile system
1. Strongly agree      2. Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly disagree
18. Parents or caregivers monitoring youth's behavior serves as a protective factor in preventing foster youth from becoming involved in the juvenile system.
1. Strongly agree      2. Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly disagree

19. Early parent child bonding is a protective factor in preventing foster youth from becoming involved in the juvenile system.

1. Strongly agree      2. Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly disagree

20. Having a mentor or role model in a foster youth's life serves as a protective factor in preventing foster youth from becoming involved in the juvenile system.

1. Strongly agree      2. Agree      3. Disagree      4. Strongly disagree

21. Can you identify any other protective factors aside from the ones mentioned above?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

22. Can you identify any other risk factors aside from the ones mentioned above?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Developed by Guadalupe Citlalli Torres & Victoria Vanesa Mariscal (2015)

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT





California State University, San Bernardino  
 Social Work Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee  
 APPROVED 1/22/2019 VOID AFTER 1/17/2019  
 IRB# 361611 CHAIR *J. Garcia*

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
 School of Social Work

**INFORMED CONSENT**

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine social workers perception on the protective and risk factors that affect youth in the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system in the San Bernardino County. Guadalupe Torres and Victoria Mariscal are conducting the study, under the supervision of School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino, under the supervision of Dr. Zoila Gordon, California State University, San Bernardino. The study has been approved by the Social Work Sub-committee of the Institution Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the study is to examine social workers perception on the protective and risk factors that affect youth in the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system

**DESCRIPTION:** Participants will be asked of a few questions on protective factors and risk factors affecting foster youth in the juvenile justice system and some demographics.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation in the study is totally voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

**CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY:** Your responses will remain anonymous and data will be reported in group form only.

**DURATION:** It will take 15 to 20 minutes to complete the survey.

**RISKS:** There are no foreseeable risks to the participants.

**BENEFITS:** There will not be any direct benefits to the participants.

**CONTACT:** If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Zoila Gordon at (909) 537-7222

**RESULTS:** Please contact the Pfau Library at California State University, San Bernardino after December 2016.

This is to certify that I read the above and I am 18 years or older.

909.537.5501

5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

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APPENDIX C  
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

## **DEBRIEFING STATEMENT**

This study you have just completed was designed to investigate protective and risk factors affecting youth in child welfare system and the juvenile justice system. We are interested in assessing what kind of risk and protective factors have been identify by social workers working with these youth. We are also interested in finding ways to improve the edibility of protecting factors and reducing the risk factors. This is to inform you that no deception is involved in this study.

Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Dr. Zoila Gordon at 909-537-7272 if you would like to obtain a copy of the group results of this study, please contact the Pfaul library after December 2016

APPENDIX D  
RECRUIMENT FLYER

**Are you a Social Worker who has worked with Dual Status Youth?**



*Help us identify the Protective and Risk Factors that affect youth in the child welfare and juvenile delinquency system.*

**Seeking:** Social workers who have previously or are currently working with dual status youth.

**Duration:** A 5 to 10 minute online survey.

**Survey Link:**

<http://hss.sbcounty.gov/selectsurvey/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=m8LM4n8>

**Any questions or comments contact:**

Guadalupe Torres (909) 386-1372

[Gudalupe.torres@hss.sbcounty.gov](mailto:Gudalupe.torres@hss.sbcounty.gov)



**We Need You!**

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much. – Helen Keller

Developed by Guadalupe Citlalli Torres & Victoria Vanesa Mariscal

APPENDIX E  
SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY LETTER OF APPROVAL



## Children and Family Services

Marlene Hagen  
Director

Date: November 19, 2015

Address: 5500 University Parkway  
San Bernardino, CA 92407

Dear Dr. Zoila Gordon,

This letter is to notify California State University San Bernardino, that Guadalupe Torres and Victoria Mariscal are authorized to conduct research at San Bernardino County Children and Family Services. The approved title of the research project is Social Workers perspectives on the protective and risk factors affecting youth in the social welfare system and the juvenile justice system.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at (909) 386-1393.

Sincerely,



Laura Lee, Deputy Director

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## ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE

This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. However, for each phase of the project, certain authors took primary responsibilities. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

1. Data Collection:

Team Effort: Guadalupe Citlalli Torres and Victoria Vanesa Mariscal

2. Data Entry and Analysis:

Team Effort: Guadalupe Citlalli Torres and Victoria Vanesa Mariscal

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings

- a. Introduction and Literature

- i. Team Effort: Guadalupe Citlalli Torres and Victoria Vanesa Mariscal

- b. Methods

- i. Team Effort: Guadalupe Citlalli Torres and Victoria Vanesa Mariscal

- c. Results

- i. Assigned Leader: Guadalupe Citlalli Torres

- d. Discussion

- i. Assigned Leader: Victoria Vanessa Mariscal