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FOSTER YOUTH AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Natalie Renee Hoover

California State University - San Bernardino

Samantha Coyne Martinez

California State University - San Bernardino

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FOSTER YOUTH AND HIGHER EDUCATION

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

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

by
Natalie Renee Hoover
Samantha Coyne Martinez

June 2017

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Approved by:

Dr. Carolyn McAllister, Faculty Supervisor, Social Work

Dr. Janet Chang, M.S.W. Research Coordinator

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ABSTRACT

In this study, 10 former/current foster youth were interviewed about their foster care experiences by examining factors that contributed them from pursuing higher education and factors that may have influenced them from not pursuing higher education. Data collection occurred throughout Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. The results of the study found that there were four themes, which presented to be factors that are influential in foster youth pursuing or not pursuing higher education. These themes are centered on the environment, support factors, the foster youths drive and types of services that they received while in foster care. The results of the study imply that there are significant barriers to foster youth pursuing higher education and there are influential factors that foster youth experience in pursuing higher education. This study recommends that there should be an expansion of the research conducted to continue to access which areas can influence foster youth to pursue higher education.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Children in the foster care system often have to overcome difficult circumstances, and many times, as the foster youth become older they have continued to suffer academically. Many foster youth experience high dropout rates, and Gillie and Gillie (2004); and Newberger (2001) found that 50% of foster youth dropout of high school, and 13% of foster youth enter college, however, only 3% of those 13% graduate (as cited in Bruster & Coccoma, 2013, p.389). According to Nixon and Jones (2007), foster youth have a desire to obtain higher education but there are only about 4% of foster youth who receive a four year degree (Kirk, Lewis, Nilsen & Colvin, 2011). A recent study found that there are a number of barriers that foster youth encounter which can prevent them from pursuing higher education. Some of the barriers foster youth face are: lack of adult support, not graduating from high school, lack of financial resources, mental health challenges, and not being provided with adequate resources (Salazar, Roe, Ullrich, & Haggerty, 2016). Additionally, another study found foster youth have lower rates of completing high school than the general population, they do not have steady adults to advocate for them, they transition early into adulthood, and they have burdens to full-time employment (Geenen, Powers & Philips, 2015). What happens when youth do not attend postsecondary school?

Bruster and Coccoma (2013) researched a task force that was assigned to see what challenges foster youth face upon exiting foster care. In a 2013 study, it was found that “within 18 months, 40% to 50% of the youths were homeless, had a high rate of unemployment, and had a yearly income below the poverty level. Twenty-five percent had been incarcerated within 2 years of exiting care” (Bruster & Coccoma, 2013, p. 389). In order to decrease negative experiences, it is important to examine the different struggles foster youth may encounter that can hinder them from pursuing higher education. Research supports that in the County of Los Angeles, there has been an underrepresentation of foster youth who pursue a higher education. The County of Los Angeles, Department of Children and Family Services reported that many youth who emancipate from the child welfare system end up on the streets (Children’s Law Center of California, 2014). In addition to understanding the different barriers foster youth face, there is also a need to examine the current positive support systems that are in place that help foster youth pursue higher education. As research has been presented, it is important to understand the different challenges foster youth can have in wanting to pursue higher education.

Bruster and Coccoma (2013) found that there were factors that influence foster youth to pursue higher education. One of the suggestions they made was to first identify mental health issues and then treat the mental health issues to help foster youth (Bruster & Coccoma, 2013). Recently, in schools, there have been different assessment tools developed to screen children for mental health

service needs. One of the original Bills that implemented the screening tools for children was SB 933 which made it essential for those children who are in out of home care to receive mental health screenings (California Institute for Mental Health, n.d.).

Although there is research that has been found to help foster youth obtain a higher education, it is also important to understand the factors and barriers that prevent them from achieving this goal. Thus, it is important to examine the factors that present to be barriers of obtaining higher education as well as finding out what factors have been influential in foster youth obtaining higher education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the contributing factors that have assisted or have hindered foster youth to enroll in post-secondary education. As previously mentioned, foster youth enroll in post-secondary education, and 3% of the 13% graduate (Bruster & Coccoma, 2013). The data gathered on enrollment and graduation rates for foster youth indicates there is a significant issue with this population advancing to post-secondary education. The reason these foster youth are not advancing is not due to one particular factor. Rather, every situation is influenced by many factors. The issue becomes significant when thousands of foster youth emancipate from the foster care system each year but have no means to support themselves. As previous data reported on emancipated foster youth, there is high poverty among this population. The

basic needs to survive are in jeopardy, and a high amount of this population has either committed crimes or is homeless. Statistics have shown that, by obtaining a higher education, there is a higher chance of being employed and having the means to support oneself.

Child welfare agencies have evolved over time to what they are today. With research, their policies have changed to provide better care for these youth and children. However, these agencies do not change their practices without research and new interventions to better address these issues. These child welfare agencies are responsible for foster youth until the age of 18 or 21, however, the responsibility should not stop there. These foster youth need help laying the foundation to the rest of their lives. By conducting this study, agencies, caregivers, and professionals will have the education and resources to support these foster youth during this transitional period.

This study utilized a qualitative approach. The researchers conducted individual interviews with the former/current foster youth because there are many contributing factors regarding their experience enrolling or not enrolling in post-secondary education. There are different variables that can effect the foster youth's attendance to a post-secondary school which can determine the needs of these foster youth. In order to thoroughly assess these variables, an approach that directly deals with the participants was essential. Additionally, the study had a limitation on time, the participants were identified and interviewed within a short time frame. To identify the participants, this study utilized purposive and

availability sampling. As this population is specific to current and former foster youth between the ages of 18 to 35 that have currently, previously, or never enrolled in post-secondary education, the sampling was specific to meet that demographic. Furthermore, because this population was limited and difficult to identify, the researchers utilized snowball sampling in order to obtain sufficient data.

Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice

By conducting this study, the social work profession benefits from the results by better understanding which interventions and resources would be significant to foster youth obtaining a higher education. There was not one particular factor to foster youth obtaining higher education. However, learning about what influenced the foster youth's decision to pursue a higher education will better equip social workers to provide the most appropriate services. In turn, effective services will empower the foster youth, their family and community. Additionally, if further programs are needed to provide more resources, then this type of research will assist policy makers creating and implementing new policies at these agencies.

As the social workers utilize and learn from the research conducted about foster youth, they will be more competent and have the appropriate skills to assess for any barriers or strengths. They will be able to work alongside the foster youth to plan and implement for their transition to higher education.

Furthermore, this study hopes to contribute to child welfare by examining the importance of foster youths' perceptions of services that are beneficial. In addition, this research examined child welfare workers' contributions that help the youth overcome obstacles to pursue education after high school. There are government funded programs that help increase foster youth's resiliency in the path towards obtaining a higher education. The Foster Care Act of 1999 helps provide financial assistance to foster youth by funding programs that "provide assistance for obtaining a high school diploma, post secondary education, career exploration, housing, vocational training, job placement and retention" (Social Security Administration, 1999). According to Salazar, Roe, Ullrich, and Haggerty (2016), one of the types of government funded programs is the Independent Living Skills program that helps provide assistance to foster youth in preparing them for college by showing them how to apply and assist them in preparing for the costs of college.

The question of the study was: Are there challenges and resiliencies foster youth face on obtaining higher education?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter Two is composed of recent literature which is relevant to this study on foster youth and higher education. The first half of the chapter is organized by the theories that guide the understanding of this topic. The second half of this chapter is broken up into sections that consist of exploring previous studies that examine foster youths perceptions on how they view the factors that influence and hinder their development, the social workers impact on foster youth, and the differences between youth who have the desire to attend higher education and youth who do not have the desire to attend higher education.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (2011) can be used to understand the complex situations that foster youth encounter throughout their lifetime. The theory helps design interventions that can be helpful for foster youth to become resilient by understanding the different systems that affect the youth. As Bronfenbrenner proposed in his theory there are five different systems that affect children and their development. The five systems are all interrelated and have an effect on each other, these five systems that affect the child's development are the microsystem (direct contact relationships with individuals such as parents, friends and teachers), mesosystem (cross relationships such as

parents talking with teachers), exosystem (individuals indirectly associated with the child such as health care workers), macrosystem (culture and society) and chronosystem (reminds us that relationships shift throughout a lifetime) (Leonard, 2011). By knowing how these systems interact, it can be helpful in understanding how the systems can play a role in the foster youths' desire to obtain a higher education or the systems that can play a role in foster youth's decision not to pursue college.

Leonard (2011) asserts that development occurs at the microsystem level, and that individuals in the youths microsystem can positively or negatively affect their system. Leonard (2011) examined a 60 year partnership at an urban high school and used Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to assess student development and the variables that effect graduation, school dropout rates and attendance (Leonard, 2011). The findings in his study suggested, in regards to foster youth and education that foster youth need to have opportunities directed at them on the micro level. Looking at the ecological systems theory, Leonard (2011) advocates that the education community should be responsible at addressing the needs of the adolescents (Leonard, 2011). It is important to understand the different systems that are in place in the foster youth's life and how each system can play a direct role in the child's development. Furthermore, there are many systems that interact with foster youth that can negatively or positively impact their attitudes on higher education.

The ecological theory examines the various systems that impact an individual and families (Farineau, 2014). These systems of micro, meso and macro continuously interact with each other to influence human development. As the focus of this research is foster youth, this study will look into the foster care system, the school system, and family/friend support system that interacts with the foster youth, in order to identify any gaps or need for improvement. One of the benefits of the ecological theory is that it doesn't look at one person; this theory looks at the multiple systems that interlace with each other that affect the foster youth. The ecological perspective is relevant in understanding how each system affects the foster youth in their daily lives.

The microsystem of ecological theory is a system that includes foster family, biological family, peers, foster care system, school, and any other settings the foster youth is involved in. This system has important factors within it, as the foster youth's most impactful relationship is between their caregiver and their self (Farineau, 2014). Additionally, in this system, the foster youth will more than likely experience several foster families, neighborhoods, school settings and peers. All of these relationships that are established, affect the stability and the ever-changing environment for the foster youth. The disruption between systems and their environment does not always result in an adaptive foster youth, as everyone does not possess resiliency.

The ecological theory's mesosystem includes interactions between microsystems. For instance, the foster youth's foster parents interacting with the

teacher in their school setting is considered meso interactions. This level of the system is important for the foster youth, as the impact of these systems collaborating together influences the foster youth's choices. Understanding the mesosystem of the youth is important when assessing the foster youth's needs.

In the various systems that interact, research has suggested while the foster youth, the school setting, the foster families, and the child welfare system are all working together to ensure that the foster youth is receiving all of their needs. The article written by Scannapieco (2015) demonstrates how the foster youth's environment interacts; however, it is not in an effective way. The example written was regarding three systems, the child welfare system, family, and school system, and how they impact the foster youth's education from transferring the foster youth to many schools (Scannapieco et al., 2015). On average, foster youth are transferred between schools three times per year (Kirk & Day, 2011). Foster youth have lower standardized test scores and face other educational deficits (Scannapieco et al., 2015), which impacts their educational success.

Lastly, of the ecological theory is the macrosystem, which refers to the greater society and culture. Farineau (2014) stated the stigma of foster care to the larger society could lead to foster youth feeling disconnected and leading to problem behaviors. The change of environment and the instability in placements may lead to an increased risk for delinquency (Farineau, 2014).

According to Farineau (2014), youth with a history of maltreatment are 55% more likely to be arrested, 96% more likely to commit a violent crime, and there are over a half of a million children in the foster care system due to maltreatment. After foster youth exit foster care, they are more prevalent to commit a crime or become incarcerated (Farineau, 2014). This example displays how the meso (foster care) and macro (justice system) systems interacted with each other in a less than ideal way for the foster youth.

Another theory this research will be utilizing is the strengths perspective. This theory is mainly practiced in the social work field. The premise of this theory is to understand and recognize the inherent strengths the client possesses to promote change and resilience. The client focuses on their strengths and self-determination, rather than looking at their weaknesses (Saleebey, 2011).

As social workers working with foster youth, they will need to be able to identify the strengths of the foster youth, along with being able to determine what components will complement those strengths and ensure the effectiveness of the child welfare system's resources and connections. The child welfare system can be effective for these foster youth by identifying which supportive systems are beneficial and where the gaps of support lay to better utilize the foster youth's strengths for a productive and functional life.

Foster youths' perceptions on factors that are beneficial and barriers, to pursue higher education

The literature gathered gives an understanding of the perceptions foster youth have on the different support systems that have been beneficial in their success. Hass and Graydon (2009) conducted a study and a survey was given to former foster youth. Questions were asked such as, "who had helped the most and why". The foster youth reported that their mentors and faculty from their school helped them when needed. These foster youth were aware of the support that was out there and were willing to ask for assistance when needed. However, not all foster youth have the same awareness or strengths to recognize when help is needed and know where to turn to when faced with challenges. The population of foster youth are all made up different, therefore, there will not be one solution to transitioning foster youth, however, the more research conducted, the more support and resources can be made available to this population.

There have been programs developed to help support and help influence foster youth to obtain a higher education. One of the programs that have been developed to help foster youth succeed are ILP programs. Bruster and Coccoma's (2013) study examined whether mentoring programs with foster youth in ILP programs would help make them develop awareness and educate them in higher education. The study project was called, Mentoring for Educational Success The Program Project and was completed at a state

university in Florida (Bruster & Coccoma, 2013). The study method used to conduct was pre and post surveys with the foster youth that participated in the pilot program. The pilot program used three sets of participants; the foster youth who were the mentees, social work students who were the mentors and social work students who reviewed and collected data (Bruster & Coccoma, 2013). The goal of the project was to inform the foster youth of higher education opportunities as a way to prepare and encourage them for life after high school. The study had some limitations due to the change of the design and the foster youth being picked up early by the ILP program (Bruster & Coccoma, 2013). The mentees were exposed to campus life with the mentors and were able to discuss majors, minors, campus activities as well as be informed of the local colleges in the surrounding area. The study found that preventative programs such as mentoring programs can be effective measures at helping the foster youth plan for life after high school (Bruster & Coccoma, 2013).

There are different elements that can be used to facilitate foster youth's success upon entering adulthood. A very recent study by Salazar, Roe, Ullrich and Haggerty (2016) examined interventions that are helpful for youth when they are entering into adulthood. The study was geared towards how to effectively implement different interventions on foster youth obtaining higher education. The study design was focused around (1) professional educational advocacy, (2) mentoring, and (3) substance abuse prevention programming (Salazar et al., 2016). The researchers used a qualitative design in which 37 participants were

engaged in focus groups. The participants ranged from former foster youth, child welfare workers, independent living skills professionals and individuals from college and non-profit organizations, all of which were stakeholders in the study (Salazar et al., 2016). The focus groups found that the development of interventions should be adaptable, reliable, focused around youth's interests and should be unbiased. Furthermore, for interventions to be successful the developers should collaborate with all parties, such as former foster youth and other stakeholders (Salazar et al., 2016). Finally, another important finding was that if the interventions discussed sensitive topics, then they should be led by individuals who are skilled in the subject and do not present a threat to the individuals that received the intervention (Salazar et al., 2016). All of the findings in this research study could help further future interventions that are designed to help foster youth in transitioning to adulthood, and especially with designs that are geared towards fostering higher education of foster youth (Salazar et al., 2016).

Social workers impact on foster youth

One of the themes of research that can be impactful to foster youth is the presence and support of individuals in their life, such as social workers. Social workers have the duty to follow their core values of; service, social justice, ensuring dignity and worth of the person, maintaining the importance of human relationships, having integrity and being competent in their practice (Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers, 2008). Contrary to the

social workers values, research has found that, many times the dynamics of the social worker's role can be a barrier to foster youth's success. One of the challenges foster youth face entering post-secondary education is the amount of social workers a foster youth had over their time in the child welfare system. According to Davis (2006), "the high turnover rates of overworked and underpaid professionals who work with youth in foster care reduce any chances for children to receive consistent college-going messages" (Davis, 2006, p.12). By new social workers obtaining these foster youths' cases, there is a transitional period where the social worker is adjusting and learning about the foster youth's past and needs. This time period isn't within a few days, and the social worker has a high case load, so the foster youth may slip through the cracks regarding educational needs, as educational needs are not urgent enough for the new social worker to initially address. If a foster youth is constantly receiving new social workers, then there is no structure for the foster youth and their chances to receive college-attending messages are not put in place (Davis, 2006). This may be a theme to explore, as role models and social support has been reported as influencing foster youth to enroll in post-secondary college. Additionally, foster youth look to people in their lives, like social workers, for answers. Social workers are the one constant role in their lives. Depending on the circumstance, foster youth have one social worker, even if they have changed multiple placements.

Foster youth vs. non-foster youth desire for higher education

All foster youth do not have the same life experiences and access to the same support systems, which may impact their desire to obtain or not obtain higher education. Kirk, Lewis, Nilsen and Colvin (2011) used an exploratory study to look at the difference between foster youth and non-foster youth's desire to obtain education. They reviewed data of 1,377 youth, all whom lived throughout Kansas state. The youth were surveyed on key areas of educational aspirations such as goals, perceptions, and social support systems (Kirk et al., 2011). The goal of the study was to find the gap between aspirations and expectations of foster youth compared to non-foster youth (Kirk et al., 2011). The importance of the study was to find out why there is a gap between foster youth and non-foster youth regarding educational aspirations and educational expectations. Nixon and Jones (2007) found that many foster youth aspire to attend college or universities. As stated previously, many foster youth express a desire to attend higher education but there are less than 4% of foster youth who receive a 4 year degree (as cited, in Kirk et al., 2011). The results of the study found that having parents who support the youth's academic perception of themselves were the highest predictors of educational aspirations and expectations. It was found that foster youth have lower aspirations for education than non-foster youth (Kirk et al., 2011). Many foster youth do not have supportive parental figures in their life or a positive self perception of academics, which has shown to play a big role in their educational aspirations and

expectations (Kirk et al., 2011). The research study suggests that there should be interventions that are geared towards helping foster youth and non-foster youth access ways to pay for college, increase the level of support systems, and work with youth starting at a young age to build a positive self perception on academics (Kirk et al., 2011). It was shown that foster youth who go through many placements have lower levels of aspirations partially due to not having the parental and social supports needed (Kirk et al., 2011). Some of the limitations of the study were based on self reports and the researchers may not have gotten accurate measures of the opinions of the youth sampled. There was missing survey data, and all of the youth that were sampled were youth in low income areas which may not be generalizable (Kirk et al., 2011).

As research supports, foster youth experience different levels of aspiration, the levels of aspiration may be in response to the difficulties they face, such as completing high school. Day, Riebschleger, Dworsky, Damashek, and Fogarty (2012) conducted an exploratory study that examined the disparity and obstacles foster youth face in completing high school and entering into college. The study transcribed testimonies of 43 foster youth and former foster youth, from all over Michigan, who spoke on a panel directed at policymakers (Day et al., 2012). In the researchers' review of the testimonies, they found 8 themes that the foster youth presented in regards to obstacles they face in completing high school and entering into college (Day et al., 2012). The 8 themes were: (1) The youth's desire to have positive relationships with adults, outside of school, that

can help support them with their educational needs; (2) youth need teachers that understand their personal needs that the foster youth may have, and they want the teachers to be accessible during the school day; (3) many youth in the foster care system suffer from learning disabilities, and they want teachers who can educate them with an individualized approach; (4) youth express in order to be successful in school they need their basic schools needs met such as, appropriate clothing and school supplies; (5) the youth want to have access to be involved in extracurricular activities and afterschool programs such as sports; (6) foster youth need to know that they are safe in and outside of school because unmet safety can have a negative impact on their school performance; (7) when foster youth have unmet mental health needs such as being treated for depression, it can have detrimental effect on high school completion and college entrance; and (8) Foster youth expressed they need an added support with transition from high school to college by having access to independent living skills training (Day et al., 2012). Some of the limitations to this study are that it was small, included only those youth who were interested in obtaining a higher education or were already in a college program, and the majority of the sample size was African American and White (Day et al., 2012).

Summary

There were two theories that were identified that help guide our understanding of foster youth and higher education. The first theory examined

was the ecological systems theory, which research supports that foster youth are impacted by the different systems in their lives. The second theory examined was strengths perspective which can help guide interventions around individual traits that foster youth have, helping promote resiliencies. The second half of the chapter examined studies that found significant correlations of potential barriers that can impact the advancement of education of foster youth such as lack of available social workers and unmet mental health needs. The chapter also looked at services that help promote foster youth to achieve higher education. Some of the support discussed were mentoring programs in ILP programs, accessibility to extracurricular activities and supportive adult figures. Furthermore, it is apparent that there are differences in foster youth experiences, and it is beneficial to have a deeper understanding of what leads foster youth to pursue higher education and what leads them not to pursue higher education.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

The contents of this chapter present the methods used to study the resiliency and challenges of former foster youth and post-secondary education. This section includes the study's design, sampling method, data collection, interview instrument, procedures, protection of human subjects, and qualitative data analysis.

Study Design

The purpose of this study was to explore the challenges and resiliencies current and former foster youth experienced regarding attending or not attending post-secondary education. This study utilized a qualitative design for collecting data. Former or current foster youth engaged in face-to-face interviews, at an agreed upon location, and safe environment. The interviews conducted were with 10 former or current foster youth individuals in the Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. This exploratory qualitative design was effective in allowing for former or current foster youth to freely express their views on the issues rather than using an approach that would have limited the responses of the participants to a predetermined set of data. The participants had the opportunity to explore the causes, needs, and barriers they faced in transitioning

into adulthood and attending post-secondary school. Additionally, the participants had a chance to discuss what worked well with transitioning into adulthood.

There are a few limitations this study experienced. The time allowed for the interviews and the duration of collecting the data were the primary limitation. The interviews were time limited to between 25 minutes to 60 minutes each. The duration of the study was limited to 7-8 weeks, which limited the amount of interviews that were able to be conducted. Additionally, this study had limitations with identifying the participants. As these participants were not easily identifiable, and this limited the amount of participants interviewed.

Sampling

The sampling this study used was purposive, availability, and convenience sampling. As this population was difficult to identify, the sampling developed into a snowball sampling size. Sampling criteria for the purpose of this study included current and former foster youth, from the ages of 18 to 35, in the counties of Riverside and San Bernardino, 3 participants that have not enrolled in post-secondary education and 7 participants that have enrolled in post-secondary education. Additionally, participants were not limited to the following: gender, cultures or ethnicities.

Data Collection and Instruments

The study utilized face to face interviews with approximately 10 questions developed by the researchers. Demographic information was collected on education level, age, gender, ethnicity, amount of social workers, amount of placements, and years in foster care. The demographic questions were given and collected prior to the interview. Participants were asked open ended questions and they were encouraged to expand on their answers, in order to get an in-depth perspective on their experience in areas such as: foster care, higher education, and services that were offered. The researchers obtained data on two populations; current or former foster youth who have or have not pursued higher education. The researchers obtained information on what areas the participants felt influenced them to pursue higher education, and also obtained information on what areas they believed hindered them from pursuing higher education. The researchers encouraged the participants to expand on barriers that may have impacted them to pursue higher education and the participants were encouraged to expand on areas that they believed helped them to pursue higher education.

Procedures

The participants were recruited from January through March 2017. The participants were recruited through availability, convenience, snowball sampling and internet databases. Participants were recruited through peers, by posting fliers in various agencies, and online. The participants were interviewed in public

settings such as coffee shops and parks. Some participants were also interviewed on the phone. Once the researchers identified the candidates who were former or current foster youth between 18-35 years old, they asked them to participate in the study. Once participants agreed to be a part of the study, the researchers provided them with the informed consent. The volunteers were interviewed approximately 20-80 minutes to answer questions designed by the researchers. Once the interviews were completed the researchers provided the participants with a gift card as an incentive to participating in the study.

Protection of Human Subjects

Both of the researchers made appropriate accommodations to allow for the protection of the volunteer participants in the study. All of the participants that were interviewed in the study agreed to volunteer as participants. The researchers provided the participants with an informed consent. Additionally, the researchers reviewed the informed consent with the participants and upon completion the participants marked the informed consent with an (x) as their signature to participate in the study. The researchers informed the participants that their participation in the study is confidential, voluntary and could be stopped at any time. The study maintained the participants' confidentiality by number coding the interviews, and not using any identifying information that could link the participants to the study. Upon completion of the research, the data collected was stored in a pass code protected computer that will be disposed after one

year. Participants were informed that some questions may make them feel uncomfortable and that they did not have to answer all of the questions. The participants were informed that they can resign from the study during any point of the interview. No participants dropped out of the study and no participants declined to answer any of the questions.

Data Analysis

The study used a qualitative data analysis technique. The researchers took notes during the interview as well as used audio tapes to obtain the information from the interviews. The researchers transcribed each of the interviews. The researchers developed a coding method to align and organize the data collected. The researchers utilized a systematic method to attempt to find patterns, in the data collected, of similarities and differences that the participants had, and the researchers utilized the codes to record the patterns.

Summary

The chapter presented the methods of the study that were used to guide the study. The study utilized the qualitative design method, along with availability, convenience, and snowball sampling. The researchers interviewed the participants using an interview guide and conducted them face to face. The researchers utilized a coding system to ensure that the participants'

confidentiality was protected. Finally, the data analysis was discussed that was used in the research method.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents data obtained through the participants' responses from a self-administered questionnaire and interviews. The questions asked of the participants were designed to explore the experiences of current and former foster youth to determine which factors assisted and hindered the youth from enrolling in post-secondary education. The researchers' data collection and analysis of this study is disseminated in the following sections. There were four emerging themes that were present during the collection and analyzing of data, as a result of the individual interviews. The four themes are: environment, support, drive and types of services. In each of the identified themes, the researchers will discuss the similarities and differences between foster youth that enrolled in higher education and foster youth who did not enroll in higher education.

Presentation of the Findings

Self – Administered Questionnaire, Demographics

The sample was drawn from current and former foster youth between the ages of 18-35. There were a total of (10) participants, which (7) of the participants had reported enrolling in post-secondary education and 3

participants that reported not enrolling in post-secondary education. Before the interview was conducted, the participants were given a self-administered questionnaire to gather demographic information. The questions asked were regarding gender, age, current or former foster youth, number of years in the foster care system, number of social workers, number of placements, education level, and ethnicity. There were (4) male and (6) female participants from the age of 19-35. A total of (2) participants were current foster youth and (8) participants were former foster youth. There was (1) participant that was in foster care for 1 year, (1) participant that was in foster care for 5 years, (2) participants that was in foster care for 6 years, (1) participant that was in foster care for 7 years, (1) participant that was in foster care for 10 years, (1) participant that was in foster care for 16 years, (2) participants that was in foster care for 18 years, and (1) participant that was in foster care for 20-21 years. The number of social workers a participant had was (2) participants had 1 social worker, (1) participant had 3-6 social workers, (2) participants had 4 social workers, (2) participants had 5 social workers, (2) participants had 6 social workers, and (1) participant had 13 social workers. There were (3) participants that did not complete high school, (1) participant that obtained some college, and (6) participants that had a college degree. A total of (4) participants are Black/African American, (3) participants are White/ Caucasian, (1) participants is Hispanic/ Latino, (1) Native American and (1) participants is black/African American and White/Caucasian.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender (N=10)		
Male	4	40
Female	6	60
Age		
19	2	20
21	2	20
22	1	10
23	1	10
24	1	10
26	1	10
31	1	10
35	1	10
Current or Former Foster Youth		
Current	2	20
Former	8	80
No. of years in Foster Care		
1	1	10
5	1	10
6	2	20
7	1	10
10	1	10
16	1	10
18	2	20
20-21	1	10
No. of Placements		
1	1	10
2	4	40
3	2	20
5-10	1	10
22	1	10
Not Answered	1	10

No. of Social Workers

1	2	20
3-6	1	10
4	2	20
5	2	20
6	2	20
13	1	10

Education Level

Did not complete		
High School	3	30
High School Diploma	0	0
Some College	1	10
College Degree	6	60
Trade or Vocational School	0	0

Ethnicity

Black/African American	4	40
White/Caucasian	3	30
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0
Hispanic/Latino	1	10
Native American	1	10
Other	0	0
Black/African American & White/ Caucasian	1	10

Qualitative Interview Data

After the participants completed the self-administered questionnaire, they were interviewed and asked 11 open-ended questions. The interviews ranged from 18-83 minutes and averaged a total of 38 minutes. The questions ranged from asking about the participants experiences with support, services, drive and environment.

Themes

Through the researcher's data analysis of participants' responses, there were several themes that emerged which could be seen as barriers to receiving higher education and also themes in which can be shown as impactful for going on to higher education. The four themes that were identified affected both populations that were sampled. This study found similarities and differences in experiences with the foster youth that went on to higher education and between the foster youth that did not go onto higher education. The four major themes include: 1) Environmental: type of placement, stability of placement, and friends/family pursuance of higher education, 2) Support: caregivers, social workers, counselors, financial, 3) Participants Drive: high school academics, behavior, plan to go to college, friend/family member embedding them to go to college, and 4) Types of Services: educational, mental health, transitional services.

Theme 1: Environmental

Youth in foster care have varying experiences when it comes to their placement changes, stability of their placements, and what types of placements they receive. There have been some similarities in placement changes with some of our participants and some differences. Participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 spent the majority of their foster care placement in one home. All of these participants also went on to higher education. Three of the seven participants that went onto higher education were under guardianship care.

At some point during my toddler years my biological mother gave guardianship to my mother and that was my second mother, infancy I had one foster mother and then after toddlers I had the second foster mother. Never went through the adoption process it was always just guardianship. (Participant 4, personal communication, higher education)

Many times in foster care, foster children have unstable living environments, at times, being bounced from foster homes and group homes. The study found that the participants had different experiences in their foster care placements. One of the participants that went on to higher education went through 22 different placements.

I was in 22 different placements but three placements I was there more than once. There were three homes where I stayed there two or three times. I kind of bounced around 26 times but there are some homes that I double booked on when I was eleven and thirteen stuff like that (Participant 8, personal communication, higher education).

This participant described that most of the times his placements only lasted between six to eight months, but the last foster placement he had lasted over a year. All three of the participants that did not go onto higher education differed from those that went on to higher education in regards to placement. All three of the participants experienced foster care placements and group home placements. Whereas only two of the seven foster youth that went on to higher education experienced a group home like setting, in which one described being

in a shelter. Other forms of care that were described by the foster youth who were apart of the group that did not go onto higher education were: consistent exposure to juvenile hall and repeated trips to the psychiatric hospital for extended holds. One of the participants reported, “I was in Juvenile hall most of my high school years and when I did get out, it wasn’t easy for me to transition because I was used to being in the halls” (Participant 6, personal communication, no higher education).

When I first went into services I started getting bullied, I didn’t want to wake up to go to school cause my first foster mom, which is part of the issues we had together and when I moved I went to another school and I didn’t want to go to school anymore and I didn’t wake up so I didn’t go to school cause it was group homes and they didn’t make you. If you’re not ready at this time and they leave at this time, they wouldn’t take us... And I think i was going to so many different schools I kept learning the same thing over and over. I swear, I read Romeo and Juliet over 5 times, yeah so it was like I wasn’t learning anything new and I wasn’t getting credit for what I had done. I was in and out of psychiatric hospitals until I think my last group home (Participant 2, personal communication, no higher education).

Aside from the differences in foster placements, there are other environmental factors that seem to play a role in the pursuance to higher education with the sampled foster youth. The foster youths friends and family

members exposure to higher education or lack of exposure to higher education has been shown as a factor that influence the youth to pursue higher education. The majority of the foster youth that went on to higher education reported that they had friends or family members who went on to higher education as well. Whereas, the participants that did not go onto higher education did not report that they had influences that pursued higher education, "Where I come from most people are either in jail or dead" (Participant 6, personal communication, no higher education). When participant 9 was asked, did you have friends or family that attended higher education, "Yes, my family did. My mom and dad but I don't talk to them, my mentors, they all attended college" (Participant 9, personal interview, higher education).

My sister did like 2 years at a community college and then she did a trade school, she is now a licensed vocational nurse but my younger brother went for like 2 years to University and I had a lot of friends that went off to college (Participant 3, personal communication, higher education).

When asked, was most of the knowledge about college you got from your sister? The participant responded, yes, we also kind of had this thing that we saw where our parents were and we wouldn't want to be like that, so we wanted to do everything they didn't do. And I think my sister doing it made it attainable. I knew I just had to do it (Participant 5, personal communication, higher education).

Theme 2: Support

Participants were asked about their experiences while in foster care regarding support from their caregiver, social worker, mentors, teachers, counselors and financial support. Two out of the three participants that did not go on to higher education reported that they felt like they did not receive support from their social workers, and one reported that their social worker was supportive. Out of the seven participants that went on to higher education: four of the participants had both supportive and non-supportive social workers throughout their time in foster care, one of the participants felt supported and two of the participants did not feel supported by their social worker.

[Social Workers] didn't care. They had a job, they had a lot of paper work, they needed it to be quick. They needed it to be one word to describe what we felt was going on. A lot of [social workers] don't take action and the best ones somehow disappear (Participant 6, personal communication, no higher education).

I remember [the social worker] was pretty good at gathering resources and making sure we had what we needed. It was the social worker that actually bought our family our first computer. I was using it mostly for school. My last social worker, took me when I was like thirteen to this black college expo and exposed me to college. It was very influential for me to go to college (Participant 3, personal communication, higher education).

Two of the participants that did not go on to higher education reported that they were partially supported by their caregivers, and one reported their caregiver supported them. Four out of the seven participants that went on to higher education reported that they did not feel supported by their caregivers, and three reported that they partially felt supported by their caregivers.

A participant that did not go on to higher education reported, their caregiver was partially supportive. The caregiver threatened to kick the youth out of their home if the youth signed up for a program called Gateway to College, however, after the youth moved out with a roommate and the living arrangement didn't work out, then that Caregiver allowed for the youth to move back. Another participant that went on to higher education reported that he had 22 placements where he was abused in some form, from emotional to physical. He learned fast to not trust or rely on his Caregivers. He was constantly worried about reporting the abuse or concerns in the placement to his social worker, in fear of two things: one being, to go to a worst placement and two, fear of the social worker reporting the concerns back to the Caregivers and receiving additional consequences and abuse.

Out of the participants that did not go on to higher education, they all reported having mentors that supported them. The participants that went on to higher education, all reported that they had a mentor that was supportive to them.

The participants had mentors such as family members, renaissance scholar program staff members, group home youth, and probation officers that reportedly provided support with guidance to the participants to find resources, apply for college, obtain financial aid and find housing.

[Renaissance Scholars] made me who I am today, I came in very angry and like I knew it all, they taught me everything. You cant even explain it, it's the best thing that I have ever been a part of from growing professionally and mentally and emotionally. They just gave me so much support. They still check on me, its like a lifetime support. It's the reason why I got through college (Participant 5, personal communication, higher education).

The new principal (of high school) came in, she had this model she started to change the culture of the school, it was, failure was not an option. It was really big. We had a teacher that had us bring in our college acceptance letters and all those students that brought in the letter; he took to dinner. I feel like my senior year of high school, I was really encouraged, and they were really supportive with help with applications (Participant 3, personal communication, higher education)

Theme 3: Participants Drive

The foster youths drive, and motivations appeared to be impactful for those who went onto higher education. There were some similarities of the interviews, of those foster youth who went onto higher education, which was their

own determination to excel and the influence of family/friends words of inspiration that the foster youth expressed drove them to pursue higher education.

Furthermore, some of the experiences of foster youth who went onto higher education and those who did not go onto higher education had similar behavioral experiences and lack of desire to do well in high school. Participant 9 was asked, what helped you to enroll in higher education? Their response was, “determination to prove people wrong” (Participant 9, personal communication, higher education).

I mean even without the social worker, I still excelled in school. High school I got a 3.8 so I pretty much just focus on myself....I’m considered first generation college student, my biological parents they only went to High School and they didn’t graduate. So I want to make a name for a tradition for our name, and you know I actually wanted to go to college there’s personal reasons to, I love education, I love to learn, I love to grow... I really remember this word for word, I was 3 years, and I remember getting my first talk with my mother, I remember my mother saying these words, I want you to be the first person in the family to attend college and doing something you love to do (Participant 1, personal communication, higher education). When participant 10 was asked, did you struggle with grades in high school? They responded, “I struggled but when I was in foster care I struggled more with it because I was away from home. I would say it affected my grades. I would say I acted out more

when I was in foster care” (Participant 10, personal communication, no higher education).

When asked how did you come up with the decision to enroll in college?

She responded: I don’t know, it was just kind of the thing you did, my parents were full of flaws but specifically my dad used to always tell us you guys need to go to college. I think that’s why I always have because that’s what I needed to do. Life, if I didn’t do anything else I had to have good grades (Participant 5, personal communication, higher education).

I had a lot of struggles. Reflecting back on it, I think I had a lot of issues with relationships and attachments. I think it affected me a lot with issues of promiscuity, struggle with the relationship. I got into a lot of fights, I struggled with my identity a lot (Participant 4, personal communication, higher education).

Theme 4: Types of services

The services offered to foster youth ranged from mental health services, transitional and educational services. The ten participants experienced and were offered different services, if any. The three participants that did not enroll in higher education reported: all three were offered some sort of assistance with education and mental health services. Two out of three participants reported being offered transitional services. The seven participants that enrolled in higher education, six out of seven reported that they were offered educational services

in high school. Four out of seven reported being offered mental health and transitional services.

Mental Health

The participants that were offered mental health services received therapy and wraparound services in high school. The participants that received these services reported them as being beneficial. The participants that did not receive mental health services reported that looking back, they would have benefited from receiving mental health services, as they did not have anyone to open up to or were not as trusting with the people in their lives.

Educational Services

Participants reported the services they obtained while in foster care were tutoring, high school counselors talking to the youth about how to apply to college, independent educational plan (IEP), social workers buying youth computers to complete school work, finding resources such as grants and scholarships to aid in going to college.

A participant that did go onto higher education reported that he had 22 placements, which meant that he had many elementary schools he attended. He reported, in ninth grade he was at a fourth grade reading level and was put on an independent educational plan (IEP). However, the same participant reported that he felt after being put on an IEP that he didn't receive any interaction with the school until a school counselor became more involved.

There was a school counselor there that was really awesome and he would kind of take me under his wing because he saw that my grades were so far behind that he helped me get my grades above a 2.0 by enrolling me in summer school. The social worker didn't offer me a tutor because I only saw them like twice in four years (Participant 8, personal communication, higher education).

Transitional Services

Transitional service programs such as Aspiranet, Renaissance Scholar programs and Independent Living Programs offered by Child Welfare are beneficial to foster youth. The participants that were able to participate in these services report that having assistance with learning how to cook, apply for college, financial aid and housing has helped them transition into adulthood and college. Although there were two participants that did not go onto higher education, those participants reported transitional services assisted them with finding housing when they were on the verge of being homeless, receiving bus passes, and preparing for employment.

The participants that did go onto higher education and received transitional services reported receiving assistance with applying for financial aid, receiving priority registration for classes, having a mentor that would assist with any issues, and assistance with housing. One participant stated she received ILP services after high school that helped her with housing, and connecting her with the college's Renaissance Scholar program. The participant stated ILP would

have been beneficial to receive during high school, however, she learned about applying for college through her high school Avid program, which prepares students for college.

Summary

This chapter presented the finding from data collected from the responses of the participants. The responses were obtained from the self-administered questionnaire and the individual qualitative interviews. The study is exploring the experiences the participants encountered while in foster care and the factors that influenced enrolling or not enrolling in post-secondary education. The themes that were identified were environmental, support, types of services and the participant's drive.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter identified the major themes the participants experienced in foster care and reported during this data collection and qualitative interview. The participants did not all have the exact factors between the ten participants, however, the factors that influenced the participants while in foster care are significant in researching the various barriers foster youth face in pursuing higher education and it also aimed to examine areas that influence foster youth to pursue higher education. This chapter provides the limitations of the research.

Discussion

The researchers found that there was an overarching theme between the foster youth who did not attend higher education; which was the type of foster placement they received. The foster youth that did not go onto higher education had experienced different types of placements such as foster homes, group homes, time in juvenile hall and psychiatric hospitals.

Furthermore, the research showed a correlation of foster youth who went onto higher education which was the foster youths drive and desire to go onto higher education.

This research parallels with the recent research centered on foster youth and higher education. Previous research found that former foster youth who pursued higher education, were individuals that had characteristics of being gifted in school and having academic achievements (Haas & Graydon, 2009). In this research, findings showed that there were little implications to whether or not independent living type programs are effective in helping foster youth transition into higher education. In this current study, there were participants from both of the sample sizes that received different types of independent living programs and/or transitional services. Research into these programs align with this study, in that, there is little evidence to support what ILP services are effective and what types are ineffective (Salazar, Roe, Ullrich, & Haggerty, 2016).

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. The first limitation was the amount of participants recruited was not a significant amount for both foster youth that enrolled and did not enroll in post-secondary education. The researchers sought out to sample twenty participants for the study but due to access to the sample population and the willingness of the individuals to participate, the sample size that was collected was ten. There was limited representation in the sample size of participants that did not enroll in postsecondary education. The current research suggests that the majority of foster youth do not pursue higher education and the data collected represents

foster youth that did enroll in post-secondary education. Secondly, the participants may have their own biases with discussing the care, services and support with their experience depending if they last had positive or negative encounters. The third limitation was the recruitment, as the majority of participants were recruited by snowball and availability sampling from a demographic that enrolled in postsecondary education, which was not representative of the population. There was a difficulty in recruiting participants that did not enroll in post-secondary education.

Lastly, the participants' ages ranged from 19 to 35, and the focus of the child welfare system could have improved throughout that time frame. And, three out of our ten participants sampled, experienced guardianship care while in foster care, which can be seen as a subpopulation to the general foster youth population.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy, and Research

Social Work Practice

Foster youth have a lot of barriers to overcome and the data gathered from this study suggests that these youth need professionals such as social workers, therapists, school personnel, and caregivers to be aware of the struggles the youth encounter. Participants reported being uncomfortable discussing their needs with their social worker. They stated that they did not trust their social worker to confide in them, and they did not have the time to listen to

their needs as they rushed their visits. If the youth are unable to trust the one person in their life that should remain constant and assist with their needs, then they are missing out on valuable information to support their needs. The youth that had positive experiences with their social workers reported their social worker took the time to listen, they felt like they cared about them and were helping them with services. The take away from interviewing these participants is, to take the time to build rapport, and engage your clients (youth), as the youth are attentive to the social worker's communication. The youth are learning by example, this is their life that social worker's are involved in, so it is difficult for them to open up when they have had difficult experiences.

Social workers are not in every setting with their foster youth, so it is important that in the school setting, the professionals there are providing educational resources and information to the youth. The school faculty has a great influence on these youth, as some of the participants considered their teachers and coach's mentors. If the schools and child welfare department could collaborate to keep each other informed on the youths progress, and the child welfare system could provide additional resources to the schools such as informative workshops. By communication between agencies, school personnel can assist or promote to the youth the resources and options that are out there for them.

Policy

As policy is a big factor in the way programs and services are provided to foster youth, it is important that policy is updated at the Child Welfare agencies to incorporate the factors that hinder foster youth receiving services. Social workers have high caseloads, which prevents them from taking their time to get to know their youth. Social workers need to build rapport with these youth to gain their trust, and to be able to figure out what the youth need to transition into adulthood, specifically post-secondary education. These youth are used to people coming in and out of their lives, and these youth have experienced some sort of trauma where it is difficult to open up and trust these professionals. Child Welfare agencies would benefit from decreasing the caseloads of the social workers, so they can spend more time with their youth.

Child Welfare agencies often times cannot decrease case loads, however there may be another option. Rather than these agencies giving social workers caseloads with children and youth, it may be beneficial for these agencies to assign social workers caseloads with targeted age groups. For instance, if a social worker had a caseload of children from 0-5 years of age, or 14-18 years of age, then the social worker could concentrate on the developmental stage, resources, and services available to this population. The social workers could be the expert with that particular age group. Many times social workers have clients at all stages of development, which means that the social worker would need to have the knowledge of all the services that those children or youth would benefit

from while in care. The Child Welfare agencies could be more successful when their workers are trained and experienced in targeted caseloads.

Additionally, if Child Welfare agencies could get their social workers to commit to their caseload, then the rapport building and relationship would develop over time. For instance, the agency offers the social worker a commitment plan, where the social worker remains in a specific unit with a caseload that will on average be the same clients (such as the youth from 16-21, that would be transitioning to adulthood), then the social worker and client could work together on their relationship and services. There wouldn't be a revolving door of social workers, where the communication gap could take place. The commitment of years and incentive could be developed by the agency and social workers.

Research

The study suggest that it would be valuable for future research, on foster youth having access to and pursuing higher education, which could be focused on programs such as independent living skills workshops, Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP), and Transitional Independent Plan (TILP) programs, because of the recent laws and the accessibility of these programs. It would be beneficial to examine how supportive the transitional programs are to the foster youth and to see how effective they are in helping foster youth pursue higher education. These programs are designed to help foster youth become more successful when aging out of care and this research study has shown

inconsistencies on whether or not these programs have benefited the foster youth to pursue higher education. Furthermore, future research could be focused on what are the motivating factors that drive foster to pursue higher education because from the interviews, the foster youth's motivation to succeed play a substantial role in their pursuit to higher education.

Based on the previous research there are many barriers foster youth face such as; educational disabilities, suffer more from mental illness, and having financial disparities from the general population (Hass & Graydon, 2009). The information gathered from the participants interviewed, found varying similarities and differences between foster youth who went on to higher education and foster youth that did not go onto higher education.

Many factors seemed to play a significant role in the foster youths pursuance to higher education. The participants all had their unique experiences in the foster care system, ranging from one placement to 22 different placements. Some of the meaningful data that was collected from the foster youth who went onto higher education was their motivation to excel and having consistent caregivers during their high school years. Furthermore, the participants revealed that the type of foster care placements they received and the amount of support they had while in foster care played an important role in their educational development. Due to the recent laws changing to extend the time in foster care, and have additional transitional services offered for foster youth, it would be beneficial to continue to examine what factors are shown to be proactive in

increasing foster youth to pursue higher education and to be successful once aging out of care.

Conclusions

Only a very small percentage of foster youth will go on and receive a Bachelor's degree. This study has shown that there are different factors that play a role in foster youth pursuing higher education. Foster youth are part of our most vulnerable population and without adequate support and efforts going into making these foster youth successful, than their likelihood of going onto higher education will continue to have a notable gap. It is important to put effort into increasing the success of foster youth because (to name a few) foster youth are at risk of homelessness, relying on government funding and prison, when transitioning into adulthood

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Questions

1. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Non-binary/ Third gender
 - Prefer to self describe: _____
 - Prefer not to say
2. How old are you? _____
3. Current or former foster youth? _____
4. Number of years in foster care: _____
5. How many foster homes did you live in? _____
6. How many social workers did you live in? _____
7. Education level:
 - Did not complete high school
 - High school diploma
 - Some college
 - College degree
 - Another type of higher education (trade or vocational school)
 - Other _____

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

- How many placements did you have? How many years in foster care? How do you feel about your foster parents/ caregivers? Did they support you?
- How many social workers did you have?
- Were you comfortable to discuss your needs with your social worker?
 - Was your social worker involved in your academic success? If yes, how? If no, please explain.
 - Was your social worker beneficial to you and your needs?
- What kind of services were you offered:
 - Did you struggle with your academics in high school? Did anyone help you? Did you get any services in high school (tutoring, counseling, etc)? Any services that pertain to higher education?
 - What was offered to you from foster care in your high school years? That pertain to transitioning into adulthood? Any services you would have liked to be exposed to that you were not?
- Have you enrolled in a higher education? Who helped you to enroll (if anyone)?
 - How did you come up with that decision (to enroll)?
 - What knowledge did you have about higher education? Where did you get that from?
 - Why did you want to enroll in higher education?
- Do you have friends or family who attended higher education? Are there people in your life that encouraged you to go on to higher education? Please elaborate...
- Can you think of any obstacles that prevented you from pursuing a higher education?
- Are there any services that you have found helpful in obtaining access to college?
- Did you receive mental health services in high school? (Talking to a school counselor, IEP assessments centered around mental health)
- What are your career goals-?
 - Is there any higher education needed for it?
 - Do you believe higher education is important?
 - Employment or education status now

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT



California State University, San Bernardino
Social Work Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee
APPROVED 1/23/21 VOID AFTER 1/22/21
IRB# SW1922 CHAIR [signature]

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

INFORMED CONSENT

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

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to learn more about the experiences of adults who were/are in foster care. This study is being conducted by masters of social work students; Natalie Hoover and Samantha Martinez. The study will be supervised by Dr. Carolyn McAllister, Associate Professor in the School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). This study has been approved by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the study is to examine what things have assisted or hindered foster youth to enroll in post-secondary education.

DESCRIPTION: Your participation would consist of completing an interview with members of the research team. This interview would be audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to see the ways your responses are similar to and different from other participants. You will be asked questions centered on your experience in foster care. You have been identified to participate in this study because you are either currently receiving foster care services or you have been in foster care in the past.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you refuse to participate there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue or withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

ANONYMITY: All documentation will be recorded as anonymous. No identifying information will be obtained. The digital audio files, transcribed interviews, and analysis will be kept on password protected memory drives, and will not contain any identifying information about you. Any quotations used from interviews will not contain any identifying information about you or anyone else. Upon completion of this study, all audio files and identifying information will be destroyed.

DURATION: The interviews are expected to take 45-60 minutes. We may contact you for clarification as needed, however this is not expected.

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

909.537.5501 • fax: 909.537.7029 • <http://socialwork.csusb.edu/>

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Maritime Academy • Monterey Bay • Northridge • Pomona • Sacramento • San Bernardino • San Diego • San Francisco • San Jose • San Luis Obispo • San Marcos • Sonoma • Stanislaus



College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

BENEFITS: The findings of the research may assist in understanding what factors that may help or hinder foster youth to pursue higher education.

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

I understand that this research will be audio recorded, and agree to be recorded for use by the research team only. _____ Yes _____ No

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

RESULTS: Results of this study can be located in the CSUSB Library website Pfau Library Scholar works (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/>)

SIGN: Please place an (X) below if you agree to the conditions of this study and volunteer to participate.

_____ Date: _____
Place an X mark here

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APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPLICATION

**California State University, San Bernardino
Institutional Review Board**

Application to Use Human Subjects in Research

1. PROJECT REVIEW

The Faculty Advisor(s), Student Researcher(s), and External Researcher(s) MUST complete the CITI Course in Human Subjects Online Training before submitting IRB application (see policy at <http://irb.csusb.edu/>). Include a completed copy of your CITI Training Completion report with the IRB application.

- ☒ New IRB Project (ID # assigned by IRB):
☐ IRB Resubmission project (Enter IRB ID # assigned): (IRB# _____)
For resubmission include date of most recent previous review: (MM/DD/YYYY)

2. DATA COLLECTION DATES: From (01/01/2017) to (06/30/2017)

Required information; data collection dates should give time for the IRB to review your protocol. Please allow two weeks from the date you turn the application in as the protocol start date (Example: if today's date was June 1, 2XXX please use June 15, 2XXX as the start date).

3. INVESTIGATOR(S) (copy and paste additional investigator names as needed. If a student project the faculty advisor should be listed as a Co-Investigator and as the approving faculty advisor).

Investigator Name: Natalie Hoover and Samantha Martinez
Department: Social Work Phone: (909)537-5501
CSUSB Email: hoovern@coyote.csusb.edu, 004213338@coyote.csusb.edu

Faculty Advisor Name: Carolyn McAllister MSW, Ph.D.
Department: Social Work Phone: (909)537-5559
CSUSB Email: cmcallis@csusb.edu

For students, this research is for:

- ☐ Graduate Thesis (master's) ☐ Independent Study
☐ Dissertation (doctoral) ☐ Course:
☒ Project (master's) ☐ Other: (describe other project here)

4. PROJECT TITLE: Foster youth and higher education

5. PARTICIPANTS (approximate number and all applicable categories):
Number of participants proposed: (20 purposed participants)

☒ Female ☒ Male ☐ Other:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children (17 or younger) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adults (18 years of age or older) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patients in institutions | <input type="checkbox"/> CSUSB students |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prisoners | <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty or external reviewers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant women | <input type="checkbox"/> Child Development Center |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: (describe population here) | |

6. FUNDING: Project period from (MM/DD/YYYY) to (MM/DD/YYYY)

Are you seeking funding for this research? ☒ No ☐ Yes
If yes, submit one copy of the proposal summary or abstract with the application.

Does the funding agency require IRB approval? ☐ No ☐ Yes ☒ N/A

If yes, provide all relevant forms, instructions, etc. with this application.

7. **REVIEW CATEGORY:** Please mark all items that apply.

Note: Most research with children cannot be reviewed under administrative review. The protocol would require either expedited or full board review. See OHRP regulations.

☐ **Administrative Review** (based on the following categories):

- ☐ Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.
- ☐ Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.
- ☐ Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph (b) (2) of this section, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.
- ☐ Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.
- ☐ Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (i) Public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.
- ☐ Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

☒ **Expedited Review** (See OHRP Expedited Review Criteria List):

Note: Submit original and one copy of all application materials.

- ☒ Collection of data from voice, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes
- ☐ Moderate exercise, muscular strength testing, body composition and flexibility testing from healthy volunteers (excludes x-rays, or microwaves)
- ☒ Non-manipulative, non-stressful research on individual or group behavior
- ☐ Collection of biological specimens by noninvasive means (see full list at link below)
- ☐ Collection of blood samples by finger prick, heel stick, ear stick or venipuncture
- ☐ Study of existing data, documents, records, or pathological or diagnostic specimens
- ☐ Other: (see expedited link above and describe here)

- ☐ **Full Board Review:** Involves vulnerable populations including children, prisoners, pregnant women, neonates, and fetuses. Note: include original application and one copy

8. **ATTACHMENTS:** All relevant project materials and documents, including

- ☒ Surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and measurement instruments
- ☒ Informed Consent Form
- ☐ Assent script (for children when applicable)
- ☐ Include letters of approval/permission on letterhead from cooperating agencies, schools, board of education, school districts, and other agencies
- ☒ Debriefing statement or explanation sheet if applicable
- ☐ Participant recruitment materials (e.g., fliers, advertisements)
- ☐ Other: (describe other documents submitted here)

9. **AFFIRMATION OF COMPLIANCE:**

Note: Investigators or researchers are required to notify the IRB of substantive changes to protocol, unanticipated adverse, serious events experienced by participants, and project completion. Projects lasting longer than one year require an annual Request for Continuation (Protocol Renewal) or Notice of Project Ending by emailing the Research Compliance Officer at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Failure to submit may result in disciplinary action under the University Policy on Misconduct in Research and Authorship. The consent forms and data must be kept at least three years after the study ends.

I agree to follow the procedures outlined herein and to ensure that the rights and welfare of human participants are properly protected. I will commence the study only after receiving approval from the IRB (or departmental Human Participants Review Board) and having complied with required modifications. I will promptly report additions, changes, or problems involving the rights or welfare of human participants to the IRB by contacting the Research Compliance Officer at mgillesp@csusb.edu. If the project continues for more than one year from the approval date, I will submit the required documentation.

I affirm that I have read and reviewed the accuracy of this application and accept responsibility for the ethical conduct of this research, supervision of human participants, and maintenance of data and informed consent documentation as required by the IRB. (Cut and Paste additional investigator signature lines as needed).

Signature of Investigator



CSUSB E-mail Address: hoovern@coyote.csusb.edu Date

11/30/16

Signature of Co-investigator



CSUSB E-mail Address: 004213338@coyote.csusb.edu Date

11/30/16

APPROVAL OF FACULTY ADVISOR OR SPONSOR:

I affirm that I have proofread and reviewed the accuracy of this application and accept responsibility for the ethical conduct of research, student supervision, and documentation maintenance. (Copy and paste additional faculty advisor approval signatures and contact information lines as needed below.)

I agree to follow the procedures outlined herein for my student(s) and to ensure that the rights and welfare of human participants are properly protected. I will ensure the study does not commence until the study has been approved by the CSUSB IRB or from the Psychology or Social Work IRB committees (administrative and expedited review approval only) and having complied with required modifications. I will promptly report additions, changes, or problems involving the rights or welfare of human participants to the IRB by contacting the Research Compliance Officer at mgillesp@csusb.edu. If the project continues for more than one year from the approval date, I will submit the required documentation. (Cut and paste additional faculty advisor signature lines as needed).

Printed Name of Faculty Advisor
Carolyn McAllister

CSUSB Department
Social Work

Phone
(909)537-5559

Signature of Faculty Advisor

CSUSB E-mail Address
cmcallis@csusb.edu

Date

1/23/17

10. RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS:

Participants will be recruited from various locations including community, supermarkets, churches, and other locations. Participants who are eligible for the study must be 18 to 35 years of age who identify as former or current foster youth and who reside in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. Participants for the study expect to be of diverse ethnicities, both genders, and in relatively good physical and mental health. In terms of participant recruitment, master level social work students will approach potential participants in the community and make a brief introduction of themselves and presentation on the important aspects of the study including the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, and risks and benefits to participants. If the participant agrees to participate, he/she will be given an informed consent form and a date for a scheduled interview by the researchers.

11. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT:

The purpose of the study is to examine the contributing factors that have assisted or have hindered foster youth to enroll in post-secondary education.

The study will use a qualitative design for collecting data by face to face interviews. As a research project, the researchers will utilize different forms of social media and go out to various locations in the community to recruit participants for the study. The study will employ a purposive and availability sampling. The researchers will attempt to recruit 20 participants, 10 participants who attended post secondary education and 10 participants who did not attend post secondary education. Participants will be asked questions on their current educational enrollment status, service providers, support systems, mental health diagnosis, foster care involvement, high school impact, and some demographic information will be collected. After the completion of data collection, data will be transcribed, coded and analyzed. The demographic data will be coded and inputted into the SPSS program. The results of the study will be reported to the SB DAAS.

12. **CONFIDENTIALITY OF DATA:**

The researchers will take measures to ensure the confidentiality of data. First, identifying information (e.g., name, address, phone number) will not be asked of participants and they will remain anonymous. After the data is collected, data will be coded and transcribed with no identifying information. Demographic information will be anonymously entered into the SPSS computer program. The data will be identified only by a study supplied identification number. Once the study is completed, the researchers will destroy the audio tapes and the transcriptions.

13. **RISKS AND BENEFITS:**

There should not be any immediate or long-term risks to participants who participate in the study. Participants could have some slight discomfort resulting from the questions asked in the interview. Some participants may be uncomfortable to answer certain personal questions focused on their foster care experience or family relationships. Participants will be given a debriefing statement regarding their participation in the study. Participants will be debriefed about being able to refuse to answer questions or to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Participants will be given information about local community colleges in the area.

There are no direct benefits to the participants. This research could help researchers, the Department of Public Social Services; Children and Family Services and other agencies that serve foster youth to better understand what benefits and what hinders foster youth from pursuing post secondary education.

14. **INFORMED CONSENT:**

Informed consent is attached

15. **DEBRIEFING STATEMENT**

Debriefing statement is attached

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ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE

This was a two-person research project, where the researchers collaborated throughout the project. The responsibilities were assigned as the following:

1. Data Collection:

Done by: Natalie Hoover & Samantha Martinez

2. Data Entry and Analysis:

Done by: Natalie Hoover & Samantha Martinez

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:

Done by: Natalie Hoover & Samantha Martinez