

California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

2012

Perceptions of group homes among former foster youth: a needs assessment

Moraima Davalos

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



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Davalos, Moraima, "Perceptions of group homes among former foster youth: a needs assessment" (2012). *Theses Digitization Project*. 4011.

<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/4011>

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

PERCEPTIONS OF GROUP HOMES AMONG FORMER FOSTER YOUTH:
A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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
Moraima Davalos


June 2012

PERCEPTIONS OF GROUP HOMES AMONG FORMER FOSTER YOUTH:
A NEEDS ASSESMENT


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

by
Moraima Davalos
June 2012

Approved by:


Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Faculty Supervisor
Social Work

5/5/12
Date


Dr. Rosemary McCaslin,
M.S.W. Research Coordinator

ABSTRACT

There are large numbers of children placed in group homes, which is a concern because group homes have been viewed as negative. Children that reside in group homes tend to have negative experiences, outcomes, an increased likelihood of delinquency behavior, and homelessness. This research study attempted to see how former foster youth perceive group homes. Participants ranged from 18 to 43 years of age and had resided in at least one group home while in foster care. A qualitative method was used in order to allow the participants to have all their opinions heard. The study found that former foster youth view the group homes as having negative consequences to their adult lives. It was also found that some participants saw their experience in the group home as positive, but that was due to residing in a family style group home. This study shows that there should be strict requirements for all group homes to ensure all foster children receive quality care.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Problem Statement.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	5
Significance of the Project for Social Work.....	8
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Introduction.....	11
Theories Guiding Conceptualization.....	11
Group Home Experiences.....	14
Outcomes for Children in Group Homes.....	15
Positive Perceptions on Group Homes.....	16
Summary.....	17
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	
Introduction.....	19
Study Design.....	19
Sampling.....	21
Data Collection and Instruments.....	22
Procedures.....	23
Protection of Human Subjects.....	25
Data Analysis.....	26
Summary.....	27
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS	
Introduction.....	28

Presentation of the Findings.....	28
Summary.....	42
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION	
Introduction.....	44
Discussion.....	44
Limitations.....	50
Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research.....	52
Conclusions.....	54
APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHICS.....	56
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	58
APPENDIX C: FLYER.....	60
APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT.....	62
APPENDIX E: DEBRIEFING STATEMENT.....	64
REFERENCES.....	66

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an overview of the foster care system, specifically looking at children who were placed in group homes. Key terms that are used throughout the research study will be defined. Ways in which this project will contribute to social work are shown in this section as well.

Problem Statement

As of September 2009, there were an estimated 423,773 children in foster care nationwide (Child Welfare Information Gateway). Of those children in foster care, six percent were placed in group homes. According to the Adoption & Foster Care Analysis Report System (AFCARS), there were 58,343 children in the foster care system in California as of September, 2010. Of those children, 18,416 were placed in group homes. With so many children in the foster care system ending up in group homes, there needs to be research conducted addressing their perceptions of group homes.

At the moment, research suggests that there is a lack of training of staff in group homes, making it an unpleasant placement for children (Foster, 2001). Group homes are meant to help children address emotional or behavioral issues in order to get back into a foster home placement, which is a less restrictive environment. Foster care is meant to provide a place that is a safer home environment and provides better experiences than their family can accomplish; however, "too often foster children experience physical and emotional damage within the system that is intended to protect them" (Foster, 2001, p.8). The most damage is apparent in children who have had at least one placement in a group home, since 40% of those that have had a placement in a group home become involved with delinquency and arrests (Ryan, Marshall, Herz, & Hernandez, 2008). Looking at how the foster children view group homes is a good strategy to find out how to make group homes a better place in which to reside.

The important key terms in the research are: foster care, foster youth, group home/care, child well-being, and quality of care. For foster care California defines it as, "24-hour out-of-home care provided to children in need of temporary or long-term substitute parenting because their

own families are unable or unwilling to care for them" (California Department of Social Services). Foster youth are children that are currently placed in the foster care system, whether they reside in group homes or foster family homes.

Group homes are licensed homes that provide 24 hour care and supervision using paid staff. The group homes range from, "small homes of six foster children to larger institutional settings that house more than 100 children" (Youth Law Center, 2007, p.4). It is also important to note that group homes are also referred to as out-of-home care, residential treatment, group care, and residential placements.

Child well being includes health, safety/behavioral concerns, educational attainment, and emotional well being. Quality of care is having staff that is trained to work with the type of children that will reside in the group home where they work. They will also provide more than the minimum level of sufficient care required by the state. These are terms used throughout this study.

Group homes have a negative stigma associated with them because many children that reside in that type of environment tend to have negative outcomes, such as

delinquent behavior, running away, and psychological issues (Courtney & Zinn, 2009; Johnson & Leopard, 1996; Ryan, Marshall, Herz, & Hernandez, 2008). Most research that has been done on group home care has been negative stating that foster children residing in group homes view the whole system negatively, feel more unsafe than those in foster homes, and are more likely to fail school (Dunn, Culhane, & Taussig, 2010; Fox & Berrick, 2007). There was a study that found family style group homes to have a slight positive effect on children, by being favorably discharged, returning to biological family sooner than those in foster care, and not being likely to return to formal placement, which is all dependent on the child (Lee & Thompson, 2008). By seeing how foster youth perceive group homes social workers can use the information to promote change or ways to enhance the situation in group homes in order to make it a more positive place to reside.

Money seems to be an issue when people talk about providing good living arrangements for foster youth. Group homes get more money per child than foster homes do. Group homes get paid enough money per child per month in order to provide the necessary services that address the issues children are facing. According to the California

Department of Social Services, the average amount of money a group home gets per child per month is \$7500 while foster homes get an average of \$520 per child per month. With the amount of money that group homes receive, they have adequate funds to address most of the children's needs. Group homes, in many states, are easily licensed, so when anyone looks at group homes they go for price instead of quality care (Child Welfare). Government creating a harder licensing process for becoming a group home can help with making sure children end up in a quality group home.

Purpose of the Study

There is a need for people to understand the perceptions of foster youth in group homes because children in general that are placed in foster care are at risk of living a hard life. It is estimated that of the children in the foster care system 45% will drop out of high school, 51% will be unemployed, 50% will be homeless, 29% will spend time in a psychiatric hospital, 25% will be incarcerated, and only three percent will attain a bachelors degree after aging out of the system (Foster, 2001). Since 32% of children that are in foster

care are placed in group homes, there is an opportunity to help children get to a place in their life where they can function better after they emancipate.

The children that are placed in group homes are usually there because they, "lack age-appropriate skills, have trouble complying with rules, are verbally and/or physically aggressive, or are depressed and suicidal" (Foster, 2010, p.24). Not addressing these issues adequately will leave the children at a disadvantage because they still have these issues to deal with after emancipation. If group homes provide better quality of care children are less likely to run away and end up in the juvenile delinquency system or homeless. By working on the issues these children exhibit, they will have a better chance of living a "normal" life when they emancipate. It is also a good opportunity to see from a child's perspective what they believe a good group home consists of since they are the ones that are in the environment. This is a possibility for the children to get their voice heard, which does not happen often.

A qualitative research design would work best in getting former foster youth perceptions. Adults who have been in the foster care system often times do not get

their voice heard and this is an opportunity for them to give their opinion. By using a qualitative research design participants have the opportunity to give their opinion more in depth compared to a quantitative study. Former foster youth from San Bernardino County that have resided in a group homes will be the main source of research participants. The participants, more specifically, will be former foster youth that have utilized Walden Family Services after care program.

Recruitment will be done by placing fliers in Walden Family Services office and having participants contact the researcher. For that reason snowball sampling will be used, since former foster youth are more likely to know others with similar backgrounds. They are also more knowledgeable about what the group home environment is like and they are willing to talk (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011). The sample will consist of half females and half males to have their gender perspectives to compare. The independent variable is aspects of group home care and the dependent variable is foster youth's perception.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

Foster youth are an oppressed population that does not have much power over where they are placed. Children that are placed in group homes already have issues that they have to deal with and research shows putting them in group homes creates more harm than good. These children deal with psychological issues, academic issues, and peer pressure from the other children. Having an environment that helps them deal with these issues will help in enhancing their well being. This is an issue that social workers have to take seriously because one of the government goals is to provide children with an environment that enhances their well being.

With the findings of this study social workers can see what is going on in group homes through the eyes of the people residing in them. It is also a way to find out what group homes do well and do not do so well. Social workers can benefit from seeing how foster children view group homes because the children are the ones that they are trying to serve. These findings can be used to create a plan for necessary changes to the group homes in San Bernardino County. If appropriate changes to the way group homes function are made, there will be better fit

children to live in society when they emancipate or go back to their biological families. This study contributes to social work practice because it is taking a unique view on a topic that is perceived as negative. Social workers can take into account what the results say that can make other group homes a better place for foster youth.

The results of this study can ultimately create change in legislative policy. By showing how youth perceive group homes will show if the group homes are truly as bad as past research has shown or if it has been misrepresented. If the results are negative legislation can adopt new policies on prerequisites group homes have to complete in order to be licensed, such as staff training, set standard of rules, and quality services to be offered to the youth. This will ensure that group homes are being created for the best interest of the child and not as a way to profit. This will impact social workers because they will be the ones to assess the group homes.

This study has contributed to social work research by providing a unique view on group homes. Former foster youth are not usually asked for their opinion when it

comes to placement. The research that has been done using children also addresses the issue that foster children are not being asked for their thoughts. Since the children are the ones directly affected by the placements, they should have more voice in creating better living environments. With this study other researchers may also want to start getting the perceptions from foster youth.

From this study the assessment phase in the generalist model will be more informed. By understanding through a former foster child's perception what makes quality group homes, social workers will be able to assess the effectiveness of certain group homes. Social workers being able to acknowledge which group homes are not providing adequate care can then strive to help the group home to change. Also, taking former foster youth's opinion more seriously will help with the individual's overall well being. The main purpose of this study is to see how former foster youth perceive group homes.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In the foster care system government does not always fulfill the need for children to be placed in a safe environment where they can get better rather than get worse. Social workers try their best not to place children in group homes; however, many times there are no other choices. Most research suggests that group homes need more attention because a majority of the children have negative experiences in group homes. It also has been suggested that family style group homes do better than treatment group homes. This chapter focuses on the characteristics of children living in group homes, foster children's group home experiences, outcomes for children placed in group homes, and positive perceptions of group homes.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) can explain how youth came to have the perception they have on group homes. "TRA states that individual behavior is driven by behavioral intentions where behavioral intentions are a function of an individual's attitude toward the behavior

and subjective norms surrounding the performance of the behavior" (Furneaux, 2005, p.1). This theory fits the research project because foster youth behavior can be attributed to what their group home environment is like. If the children believe they are not respected by staff members then their behavior will reflect that perception. To them an outcome may be worth the behavior they exhibit, even if it is bad. It is also important to note because if a child had a bad experience in one group home they will believe that all group homes are bad and are the same.

Field theory focuses on the interaction of the person and environment and what kind of effect that has on their behavior (Lewin, 1951). More specifically, "genetic predispositions, acquired characteristics, uniqueness, and behaviors of the individual have an impact upon and are affected by events and people in the environment" (Schwartz, 1993, p.5). Children residing in group homes act based on what is going on in their environments. As interactions increase children start to build who they are based on the interactions they have been having. In group homes they not only have interactions with staff, they also have interactions with

other foster children. What the other foster children do can have a huge effect on their behavior, along with the staff members.

Characteristics of Children Living in Group Homes

Group homes tend to be comprised of certain types of children. Of sampled children in group homes in Johnson and Leopard's (1996) research 47% were females. The ethnicity of the children being tested was "64.9% Anglo-American, 29.1% African-American, 1.4% Latino- American, 2.0% Native-American, and 2.7% other" (Johnson & Leopard, 1996, p.36). Of all the children only 22% lived with both biological parents before going into the group home (Johnson & Leopard, 1996). They also found children who did not live with both real parents prior to going to the group homes have psychological disadvantages due to that background (Johnson & Leopard, 1996). Children that are placed in group homes have problems from their home lives that they bring to the group home. There are many things that children going into group homes are subjected to: "unclear expectations for behavior, inconsistent or harsh discipline, conflict with parents, lack of religious training, high levels of family antisocial behaviors including jail and family alcoholism" (Johnson & Leopard,

1996, p.43). Having more knowledge of these children is essential for achieving the goal of working on the child's well being in group homes.

Group Home Experiences

Foster children have different experiences depending on the type of placement they have. Children that were placed in group homes over a foster home or living with kin felt they would have been better off staying with their biological families (Dunn, Culhane, & Taussig, 2010). Other common experiences for being in group homes were less stability, lower rates of adoption, and there was a greater probability of staying in the system longer for young children (Berrick, Barth, Needell, & Jonson-Reid, 1997). Green and Ellis(2008) found that in the group homes they researched there was a lack of healthy communication between the youth and staff, clothing allowance money was not given in a timely manner, and support for regular exercise for youth was not present in staff. Children in group care did not feel as safe in their placement as the children in foster homes (Fox & Berrick, 2007). Not only did children have issues about residing in the group homes, they also felt like they

were never involved in child welfare decisions (Dunn, Culhane, & Taussig, 2010).

These studies had negative findings when it came to foster youth living in group homes. Not only did the children feel like it was a bad place to reside in, it also shows that there are negative consequences to living in a group home environment.

Outcomes for Children in Group Homes

Another area of interest to look at was the outcomes of children that were placed in a group home at one point in their lives. One specific area is the link between being placed in a group home and exhibiting delinquent behavior. Compared to foster homes juveniles that have been placed in a group home have a relatively higher likelihood of being delinquent (Ryan, Marshall, & Hernandez, 2008). A reason for this is children are easily influenced by their peers and grouping together troubled teens creates more behavioral issues (Child Welfare). Not all group home programs are effective with every type of child. Therapeutic community approaches, community-based group homes for child welfare-supervised youth, and wilderness programming were less effective

with all foster youth (Lee, Bright, Svoboda, Fakunmoju, & Barth, 2011). Evidence shows that group homes do not have good outcomes for the children residing in them.

Positive Perceptions on Group Homes

Not all research has been negative, some has found positive aspects of group homes. Delinquency has been an issue for children in group homes and Lee et al. (2011) found that Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care was a better choice for decreasing delinquency than group care.

MTFC is a structured 6- to 9-month treatment foster care model that emphasizes high levels of supervision, behavior monitoring, therapeutic services for youth, biological family, and treatment family, and minimal exposure to deviant peers by having a single child in a foster home placement in which social experiences are closely monitored (Lee, Bright, Svoboda, Fakunmoju, Barth, 2011, p.178).

Being in family style group home is beneficial for a lot of children, and "[g]roup care youth were more likely to be favorably discharged, more likely to return home, and less likely to experience a subsequent formal placement"

(Lee & Thompson, 2008, p.753). They also mentioned that although they had favorable outcomes, children in group care had more issues with delinquency compared to those in foster homes (Lee & Thompson, 2008).

Group homes are beneficial for certain types of children, however, not all children would benefit from this type of placement (Anglin, 2002). These studies were able to describe programs that showed effectiveness and suggested them for further investigation. These articles acknowledge that there are negative outcomes associated with group care, however, they found that there are possible solutions to make group care a positive experience.

Summary

Children in group homes are being put through a home that evidence shows causes them harm. The experiences that children have in group homes are experiences that the welfare system did not intend foster children to have. With so many sources of negative outcomes from group homes, new regulations would be best to ensure quality group homes. There are possibilities for how group homes can be changed in order to be more effective.

More studies need to be done to see what works in group homes. This study attempts to see how the children perceive group homes, good and bad

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter describes the method used to see how former foster youth perceive group homes. Included in this section are explanations of the study design, sampling procedures, data collection, human subject protection and data analysis. Since former foster youth were the ones being used in this study, confidentiality and privacy were specifically important.

Study Design

The purpose of this study was to see how former foster youth perceive group homes. This study particularly asked participants about every aspect of group home living. Most of the literature available looks at group homes by outcomes of foster youth and rarely looks at their perception. The research question this study attempted to answer is: how do former foster youth perceive group homes? The hypothesis was that former foster youth would perceive their time residing in group homes negatively. The results from this project will

increase knowledge of former foster youth's perception. A needs assessment of group homes from the perception of former foster youth was conducted in order to accomplish the goal of increasing knowledge on this topic.

A qualitative study design consisting of open ended interview questions was used to get a clear assessment of group homes from the participants view. The interviews were conducted with the participants face-to-face. Using this method allowed former foster youth to have all their opinions heard. Also, using a qualitative method allowed the researcher to ask participants probing questions when appropriate, which would not be possible with a quantitative survey.

With interviews conducted face-to-face there was a possibility that the participants would answer what they believe the researcher was looking for. When conducting interviews, the researcher clarified that there were no right or wrong answers and no one would know what each participant stated. A small sample of participants was used due to limited time for research.

Sampling

This study obtained interviews from six former foster youth between the ages of 18 and 43 years old. Since this study looked at the perceptions of former foster youth who have resided in a group home at least once, only former foster youth that have resided in a group home were used. Children younger than 18 years old may not be able to understand the questions being asked due to lack of maturity, therefore, children who have aged out the system were used. The study aimed to use the end age is 22 years old because the latest group home reform was signed by the California governor in 2007 (San Francisco Examiner). The reform states that group homes will work with non-profit community services to see what is most helpful with each individual youth. This reform has the possibility to make perspectives of group homes more positive than before. However, due to the difficulty in finding participants between the ages of 18 and 22, the end age was eliminated when looking for participants.

This study was dependent on participants identifying themselves, therefore the size of the study sample was small. Another factor that contributed to the small sample size was that interviews were done between January

and April 2012. With time limitation, getting more participants was not possible.

Data Collection and Instruments

To see how former foster youth perceive group homes, participants were asked interval demographic questions (Appendix A) followed by nominal questions about their experience in group homes. The open ended questions were set up for the participants to be able to expand on their experience in group homes. (See Appendix B) The questions were designed to allow the participant to talk about both negative and positive outcomes.

.This study was a needs assessment for a placement type that has been widely portrayed as negative. Literature on group homes rarely uses former foster youth's thoughts and opinions as data. As a result, there is no standardized instrument available for this study. A list of questions was assembled by reviewing current literature and past thesis with similar topics. The questions used for the interview were borrowed from Fimbres and Solomon (2008) who wrote a thesis researching group homes from a strengths based perspective. Since this research was about looking at both the positive and

negative aspects of group homes, some questions were omitted and parts were added to other questions. Approval of the questions was given by the faculty advisor supervising this study. With these interview questions, the participants can express what they viewed as positive and negative about group homes. Even though special attention has been given to the type of questions being asked, there was still the possibility that participants were not be able to express their opinions entirely. This topic can be a touchy subject for many, therefore participants had the ability to decline an answer to any questions or stop the interview altogether if they were not comfortable.

Procedures

Data were gathered by conducting face-to-face interviews. The data collection period was from January 2012 to April 2012. Flyers (Appendix C) were distributed at the Walden Family Services after care program to get voluntary participants. The flyer outlined the requirements for eligibility and contact information to volunteer. Once contact was made preliminary questions were asked to see if the participant was eligible. The

questions were, "have you resided in a group home at least once while in foster care", and, "how old are you." These questions ensured that the participant was what the researcher was looking for.

Once appointments were made, the interviews were administered in study rooms inside libraries located near the participant. This allowed the participant to easily make it to the appointed times. The researcher collected all the data and conducted all the interviews herself. The interviews were taped in order to later be transcribed online.

Completing the interview took each participant 20 to 40 minutes, depending on how much the participant wished to share. Prior to conducting the interview reasons for the research and the informed consent (Appendix D) were discussed with the participant. When the participant agreed to continue on with the interview, the researcher began to audio record the interview. The participants were asked questions from the interview guide and the researcher used probes in order to get more information and/or get clarification.

At the end of the interview the participants were given a Debriefing Statement (Appendix E) where more

information was given about the research study. Participants were also given an incentive, a ten dollar gift card to Subway, for completing the interview. Information on how to obtain results was also given if they were interested on what was found.

Protection of Human Subjects

Foster youth are a vulnerable population, even after they have aged out. Extra precautions were taken to ensure their confidentiality and privacy was maintained. Participants were given informed consents (Appendix D) and they were asked to mark a check mark if they agreed. The participants were also informed that they can choose to skip any questions and/ or stop taking the survey at any time. By taking these precautions the confidentiality and privacy will be ensured for this population.

Interviews were performed in study rooms inside libraries close to the participants. The interviews were scheduled on different days for participants in order to minimize the risk of the participants running into each other. Since the researcher administered the interviews in person remaining anonymous was not a possibility, however, the responses remained confidential.

The interviews were recorded on a digital recorder. Once the interviews were complete the researcher transferred the audio recording onto the researcher's computer in a locked file. Only the researcher has access to that computer and files in order to ensure confidentiality. Each file was marked with a number in order to keep the demographics and interview responses together. The collected demographics were kept in a locked box in the researcher's home.

Debriefing statements (Appendix E) were given to the participants once the interviews have been completed. Information on the research project was given along with when and where they can review the completed project.

Data Analysis

In this study there were two types of data that were collected. The first type of data collected was the interview transcriptions. These data were analyzed for themes and trends that appeared across all the interviews. What the participants viewed as positive about group homes was a construct that was specifically analyzed. Likely to emerge from the interview analysis were the following constructs: positive and negative

aspects of group homes, the role of workers in the group homes, and resources available to them.

The second type of data collected were their demographics. At the end of the interview, the participants were asked to complete a brief demographics survey in a written format. Demographics included current age, gender, and how many group homes they resided in. With these data the researcher can see if there is a difference between males and females or by how many group homes the participants have resided in. It also allowed the researcher to see if there were any apparent skewing in the sample.

Summary

Overall, the study aimed to gain the knowledge of former foster youth's perception of group homes. It was done by conducting interviews and collecting data on the participants demographics. This way the researcher could get the participant's perception of various aspects of group homes. With this information possible improvements or modifications can be suggested to group homes.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The data gathered from six former foster youths interviews were reviewed by the researcher and discussed with the faculty supervisor to reduce the risk of bias. The data demographics given by the participant will be discussed first followed by grouped responses for each of the interview questions. Also included will be quotes from the interviews conducted with the participants. This will show more clearly individual feelings and thoughts that occurred in the interviews.

Presentation of the Findings

Interviewed for this study were six former foster youth. The interviewees consist of five females and one male. All the participants felt comfortable to answer the interview questions and the follow up questions when appropriate. Four of the participants were six years within aging out of the system while the other two had been out of the system for over eighteen years. Four of the six participants were placed in San Bernardino County

group homes and two had placements in northern California as well as in San Bernardino County. At the time of the interview all the participants were residing in San Bernardino County. Two of the participants received after care services from Walden Family Services, another two had help from the Independent Living Program, and two did not receive transitional services at all. This was due to the fact that it was not available when they were exiting the system.

Number of placements and ethnicities varied for the participants as well. Three of the participants were African American, two were non Latino White, and one was Hispanic. For the group home placements three participants had experience in three group homes, two had experience in one group home, and one had experience in two group homes. From the variation the researcher could see if there is a correlation between gender, ethnicities, and number group home placements with the perceptions of group homes.

There were a total of eight open ended questions the participants answered. The first question was more of a request, "tell us about your group home experience." The answers from the participants varied, however, four of the participants mentioned things about staff, while the other

two participants viewed the experience as positive and different. Of the four participants that mentioned staff members, three had negative responses and one had a positive response.

One of the participants stated the staff was not professional, specifically stating the group home "was semi-unprofessionally run" (Participant 1, personal communication, January 2012). This comment went along with another participants statement, "[l]ike 80% of the time we weren't supervised" (Participant 2, personal communication, February 2012). The last participant that mentioned a negative aspect of group homes stated that he was treated like a criminal in the group homes he resided in.

On a positive side, there was one participant that viewed the experience with certain staff members as a good one. The participant even attributed her success to her house parents. House parents are typically a couple who reside inside a group home to make it resemble a 'normal' family household. The participant's view of the house parents was, "[they] were very nice and they helped me stay on task...were very helpful with my homework and helped me bring all my grades up" (Participant 6, personal

communication, April 2012). Another aspect the participant stated that she appreciated was the structure the house parents had in the home. The participant even stated the reason graduating from high school was a possibility was due to having, "a set schedule to follow" (Participant 6, personal communication, April 2012).

The other two participants had a positive and a neutral experience in the group home environment. The participant that viewed the group home as positive felt like it was a learning experience stating, "I learned a lot and I also experienced a lot" (Participant 3, personal communication, March 2012). The other participant viewed the experience as being different and full of rules, "the environment was very different... a lot more kids than I ever experienced living with...eventually I learned to abide by the rules" (Participant 4, personal communication, March 2012).

The second question in the interview was, "what were the benefits, if any, of being in a group home?" Answers from the participants were mixed, with four participants having something positive to share and two sharing the limited benefits of being in a group home. One of the participants stated that a benefit was not having to

attend school. The reason the participant stated that it was a benefit was because, "it would have been a bad area...to go to school in" (Participant 2, personal communication, February 2012). Another participant simply stated, "it kept me off the streets" and did not wish to elaborate (Participant 1, personal communication, January 2012).

Two of the participants found the benefit of being in a group home was learning how to form a bond with an adult. One of the participants spoke about how even though the bond was not appropriate it was important for their well being at the time.

I was able to form bonds, that others could have seen as being negative, but it was important to me at that time. I was able to establish a bond with an adult person that I can trust and that is something I had struggled with (Participant 3, personal communication, March 2012).

Another participant found that creating a bond with her house parents allowed her to learn how to trust people again stating, "I was not very trustful of adults... they

slowly worked their way into creating a bond with me"

(Participant 6, personal communication, April 2012).

Two participants found that they learned positive qualities that help them as adults. One participant shared that she learned how to be responsible, which has contributed to her basic survival. "I know how to clean and cook basic things. Without the group home I might not know how to do these basic things" (Participant 4, personal communication, March 2012). Another participant stated he appreciated that the staff allowed him to walk away when feeling angry and that technique was learned from a group home staff. The participant stated, "the therapist showed me how to not blow up... instead I just walk away and count until I can think clearly," which is a technique he still uses (Participant 5, personal communication, April 2012).

The third question in the interview asked, "what were the disadvantages, if any, of being in a group home?" Half of the participants mentioned not having contact with family and the other three varied but were related to staff behavior. The participants that mentioned family had similar issues in that they felt the group home kept them sheltered from their families. One participant even

stated, "my family would send me letters but I would not receive them until weeks after they sent them"

(Participant 6, personal communication, April 2012). When I asked one participant this question she appeared to be upset and stated:

I was not able to have contact with my family. Since they moved me to a group home that was far from my family it was hard for them to visit me... I complained many times to staff members but it was like I never said anything because in the entire time I was there no one ever tried to help me see my family

(Participant 4, personal communication, March 2012).

Other disadvantages mentioned involved staff members actions including gossiping, not providing structure, treating them like criminals, and not having boundaries. One of the participants mentioned that the staff would talk to each other about the children, but the one time that it affected her most was when she overheard the therapist talking about one of the residents, "I walked in one time [to the office] and all the staff were talking about what another kid stated to the therapist. Ever since then I would never open myself up to the therapist"

(Participant 1, personal communication, January 2012). The participant who stated not going to school was a benefit also stated that it was a disadvantage because the group home, "wasn't a real structured setting" (Participant 2, personal communication, February 2012).

One of the participants was in juvenile hall prior to entering a group home and he felt that the staff members treated him like a criminal specifically stating, "[the staff members] saw me as a criminal and treated me like one" (Participant 5, personal communication, April 2012). The oldest participant shared instances she viewed as unethical in regards to having relationships with staff members. She recalled, "I became very bonded with [the staff members] and was under the understanding that I might be adopted by the two staff members that worked in the home. Then one of the staff members died" (Participant 3, personal communication, March 2012).

The fourth question of the interview was, "how were you treated by staff in the group homes?" The answers varied, two participants found it was negative, two found it positive, and the other two gave a neutral answer. A participant stated, "I tried to limit my interaction with

the other staff members because they were not as nice as my house parents" (Participant 6, personal communication, April 2012). Another participant contributed his actions to how the staff treated him stating. "The staff always asked me why I act the way I do but I acted that way because that is how they expected me to act" (Participant 5, personal communication, April 2012).

Two of the participants found their interactions with staff to be pleasant. One participant was very fond of the staff members stating, "[the staff members] treated me very respectfully, almost like an adult" (Participant 3, personal communication, March 2012). The participant also went on to explain, "it was nice to be able to talk to someone and actually be listened to and not be judged for statements that I made or feelings that I had" (Participant 3, personal communication, March 2012). One participant felt she was treated well because the group home was very structured. "We were told the hours that we had to be up, we were fed three meals a day, we got to go on outings, and that was it" (Participant 2, personal communication, February 2012).

Two participants stated that staff were nice enough and as long as they did what was expected no one would

bother them. The participant that stated the staff members were nice enough later went on to elaborate, "the staff was nice, though some of the staff were too nice and have wanted to have a relationship with me" (Participant 1, personal communication, January 2012). Another participant stated, "I eventually figured that if you did what you were supposed to do the staff left you alone but if you acted out then the staff would treat you badly" (Participant 4, personal communication, March 2012).

The fifth question asked, "do you feel that your group home experiences positively or negatively contributed to your life as an adult now? How?" All the participants had a mixture of feelings but they all mentioned trust with people, both as being negative and positive.

Three participants found that living in group homes contributed to their trust issues. One participant expressed the staff gossiping had a negative effect on her ability to trust others by stating, "staff members caused me to have trust issues" (Participant 4, personal communication, March 2012). Another participant stated it contributed to his life as an adult, "negatively because as an adult I have issues with trusting people"

(Participant 5, personal communication, April 2012). He went on to state, "[the staff members] treated me differently because of my background and now I do not share my past with anybody" (Participant 5, personal communication, April 2012). One participant simply stated, "it negatively contributed to my distrust of adults." The participant did not want to give more information on the subject.

Three of the participants found positive contributions in that it taught them how to have trust for adults, how to get along with people, and how to create a bond. One participant stated, "I believe it made me have trust for adults, it made me trust people, it made me feel comfortable speaking openly with other people and not be judged" (Participant 3, personal communication, March 2012). Another participant found that being surrounded by the unfamiliar turned out to be a good thing, as she stated, "I was surrounded by people who were different from me and I had to learn how to get along with everyone" (Participant 2, personal communication, February 2012). One participant stated it was positive because, "it helped [her] create a lifelong bond" (Participant 6, personal communication, April 2012).

The sixth question in the interview was, "were there opportunities to get involved in extracurricular activities in your group home experience? What were they?" Three of the participants stated there were opportunities, two stated there were not any, and one stated that they did not know. The participant who stated he did not know stated this as the reason: "I was in trouble so much that I have no idea about the fun things" (Participant 5, personal communication, April 2012). The other two participants quickly stated they did not recall any extracurricular activities being offered.

The extracurricular activities the other three participants talked about were varied and included "GED courses," "going to the park," "watching movies," "sports and dancing," and "swimming during the summer." One participant talked about her opportunity for an extracurricular activity, "[the staff] helped me get a scholarship to a summer horse camp. There I learned how to ride horses and how to feed them and clean them" (Participant 6, personal communication, April 2012).

The seventh question in the interview was, "are there any other experiences or aspects about your group home experience that you would like to share?" Four of the

participants answered this question and their answers varied with two talking about rules and the other two talked about staff gossiping, and group homes not being the right fit for every child. One participant wanted to share how she learned how to do 'adult' things, such as paying bills. She stated, "I had a staff member that taught me how to pay my bills... what to look for when I bought a car... it taught me rules" (Participant 3, personal communication, March 2012). Another participant stated, "I think that there needs to always be clear rules in a house setting where there are adults and children" (Participant 2, personal communication, February 2012).

One participant found from her experience that, "group homes are not meant for everyone" (Participant 4, personal communication, March 2012). When the participant was asked to expand on that thought she stated, "group homes are very structured and you feel like you are living with babysitters" (Participant 4, personal communication, March 2012). Another participant felt uncomfortable with staff stating, "they sat and did a lot of cross talking about the children in their offices" (Participant 1, personal communication, January 2012).

The last question in the interview was, "if you could share any suggestions with group home administrators, staff, social workers, etc. for how to improve the well being of children in group homes what would it be?" All the participants shared a suggestion, with four being related to staff members and two about the style of group homes.

One participant suggested that group homes should be a single gender by stating, "there shouldn't be coed group homes because it seems to cause a lot of problems. The girls would always want to be around the boys even though they would always get in trouble for that" (Participant 6, personal communication, April 2012). Another participant suggested creating a family style group home if a child has to be placed in a group home. That participants biggest suggestion was, "try not to place children in group homes because it feels like a loss of freedom, at least compared to a foster home" (Participant 4, personal communication, March 2012).

Two participants had similar views that staff should not treat children differently from each other. One of those participants stated, "don't treat children differently because of the mistakes they have made.. I

think I behaved worse because people looked at me like I was a bad kid" (Participant 5, personal communication, April 2012). Another participant had similar views stating, "[don't] view all the people going into group homes as criminals... all the kids shouldn't be stereotyped when they go into the homes" (Participant 3, personal communication, March 2012).

The next two participants made suggestions relating to having boundaries and allowing children to see outside therapists. "I think structure is important for kids, boundaries are important," was a suggestion made by a participant (Participant 2, personal communication, February 2012). Another participant stated,

if someone is asking to see a therapist they need to be allowed to see a therapist that is outside of the home. There is a lot of cross talk so what is shared with one therapist generally is shared like it is some kind of soap opera (Participant 1, personal communication, January 2012).

Summary

Six former foster youth participated in one on one interviews. There were five females and one male

interviewed. The participants answered questions regarding their experience in group homes, including benefits and disadvantages, how they were treated by the staff, availability of extracurricular activities, and suggestions for professionals. At the end of interview the participants shared their demographics.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the themes found within the interviews conducted with six former foster youth. Limitations will also be addressed including availability, sample size, area of residence, age differences and gender inequality. Recommendations for social work practice, policy, and research are also made.

Discussion

A major theme that arose from the interviews conducted with six participants was the creation of bonds and trust in adults. All the participants either had a positive or negative experience with trust and bond building. The ones that found it difficult to trust the staff members in their group home experiences are still suffering from trust issues as adults. This affects them because they find it hard allowing other adults into their lives. Part of the distrust had to do with the inappropriate bonds staff attempted to create with some of the participants.

On the other hand, some participants found that they learned how to create bonds from their experience in group homes. What was common with these participants was the type of group home they resided in and the point in their lives they were in. One participant was in a group home that resembled a family style home and she found this most helpful. She was able to create a bond because she felt the staff members treated her like family, instead of a child in the foster care system. The other participant was in her third group home and was distrustful of adults, but she met two staff members that showed her not all adults were bad. Even though the relationship was questionable, she found it has helped her in learning how to form bonds with adults.

Another theme that was apparent was the structure inside the group homes. Some participants found there was a lack of structure in the group homes they resided in, while others found that it was a good aspect of the group home. The participants that were in group homes that lacked structure found that it was damaging to their well being. The reason they emphasized the structure as important was because they felt the lines were blurred when it came to adult roles and child roles. With

structure adults and children know what is expected of them. They also felt that with no structure it felt like adults were paid to simply babysit the children.

The participants that found the structure to be positive attributed that factor to their success as adults. They found that with the structure they were able to learn basic skills that helped them survive after they exited the system such as cleaning, cooking, and paying bills. Another participant found the structure helped her learn how to be responsible. The structure even helped one participant graduate from high school. These participants felt the structure works for some children but was not an ideal situation for most children.

Family contact was an issue for three of the participants. They found the inability to talk to their families made the experience of being in the group home worse. These participants had permission to have contact with family and not getting that caused them to feel their rights were being violated. As prior research has shown many children still want contact with their family even if they have been abused. It was apparent by the tone of voice from a particular participant that not having contact with family was something that affected

her in the group home. A feeling of isolation from their family was shared by these three participants. One participant even brought up the issue with staff members in the group home, however, she never saw results. This shows that family is a very important aspect of children's well being, especially in a place where they are surrounded by strangers.

From the statements made by these participants it appears there are issue with the way staff conduct themselves while working. Staff sharing information about the children to each other and what the participants viewed as stereotyping was an issue discussed. Half of the participants have experienced overhearing staff talking about the children in the group homes. There were also instances that private thoughts of children were discussed among the staff members. This type of conduct has caused a participant to be distrustful of therapists.

Two of the participants were adamant about the negativity they felt from staff stereotyping them. One participant admitted that he has made mistakes in his life, but the way the staff treated him made him behave even worse. He understood they were treating him this way because he was in juvenile hall but he thought the staff

members should have given him a chance to show how he was as a person before being treated a certain way. He felt like they treated him like a criminal because of where he came from. Another participant was never in juvenile hall but witnessed staff members treating the children as if they were criminals. It appears that staff in group homes are helping children feel like they are the reason they are in out of home placement, even though a majority are there because of parent error.

Extracurricular activities in group homes was particularly paid attention to because the researcher wanted to see if there was a correlation between extracurricular activities and experience in group homes. Only half of the participants had the ability to be involved in extracurricular activities, which included swimming, watching movies, visiting the park or mall, and participating in sports. One participant was even able to partake in a special summer camp. From these participants there was no obvious positive or negative correlation to how they viewed group homes. All the participants that had extracurricular activities offered to them also had some negative experiences with group homes.

From the suggestions to professionals made by these participants it is apparent that the type of group home in place and staff conduct was a big factor. Coed group homes came up in two participant's interview and it appears that the males and females interact unhealthily even if the group home is structured. If all group homes were a single gender the children residing in them would not get in as much trouble in the participants opinion.

It was also apparent from these interviews that group homes are not the right placement for all children. While some benefitted from the structure, a majority that were interviewed found that being in the group home negatively contributed to their lives as adults. Even the participant that benefitted from the structure stated that group homes should be the last placement choice for children.

Other suggestions appear to suggest that staff need to be trained on how to work with foster children. So much of the information provided was about misconduct from staff members, either by gossiping about the children, treating the children differently from one another, or not having boundaries. It appears that the staff members have a huge impact on the children's lives

and if they worked better with the children, there would be more positive perceptions of group homes.

With all the participants have shared, it became apparent that all the group homes were different. There were no two participants that had similar experiences. Even the types of extracurricular activities offered were different for each of the participants. The difference in the type of group home setting they were in can contribute to the negative experience they felt towards the group home. The participant with the most positive experience was the one who was in a group home that closely resembled a family setting. The one thing that did appear to be similar was the unprofessionalism from the staff members. There is limited amount of research that has been conducted on the former foster youth's perception of group homes, therefore there are no validations for the trends this research study found.

Limitations

There were many limitations faced with this research study. One of the limitations was the sample size of the study. With only the participation of six former foster youth it is difficult to generalize to the former foster

youth population in San Bernardino County, much less in the state of California.

Availability of participants and their location of residence was another limitation in the study. The researcher relied on the participants revealing themselves and that was difficult. Only two participants were found from the flyers placed in the agency while the other four were recruited by word of mouth. All the participants were located in the high desert and that causes the data to be less generalizability to the former foster youth population due to the differences in opinion that can be caused from areas of residence.

The differences in age is an aspect that limits the study. The participants that exited the foster care system within the last six years appeared to have different experiences than those who exited the foster care system over eighteen years ago. Even though this was a limitation, it was also beneficial to see that there are still some aspects that need to be addressed about group homes, such as staff conduct. It also showed that some things have changed, such as the requirement of all children to attend school.

Due to the limited availability of former foster youth willing to do an interview, there were a substantial number more females than males. With five females and one male participants, it is difficult to assess whether males perceived group homes differently from females.

By coming into the one on one interview with set questions, it was difficult to get a full experience of the thoughts from participants. After the interview took place, it was apparent to the researcher that there could have been many other questions explored with the participants in order to get a clearer picture of their perceptions of group homes.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

Research using former foster youth as participants is very limited. Although the information gathered is limited in its generalizability to this population, it shows that this is an area that should be further explored by other researchers.

Social workers should look at the way children feel in the group homes because it is the government's goal to help the child's well being. This study shows that group

homes are causing more harm than good. Not all of the aspects of the group homes have been viewed as negative, however, a majority still have issues that they contribute to the group homes they have resided in. This study corroborates past research stating group homes should be the last choice of placement, which is something all the participants agree on. Social workers should research group homes and attempt to place children in the type of group home they believe the child would benefit most from if being placed in a group home is the only option.

There should be changes made at the legislative level. Group homes do not have to abide by any policies in order to be licensed and that creates the issue of not having adequately trained adults to care for a vulnerable population. A majority of the former foster youth perceive the group home setting negatively. This should be enough reason for the government to put policies in place for prerequisites to be licensed as a group home. Some of the features that should be included in the mandatory prerequisites are staff training, set standard of rules, and quality services to be offered to the youth. With this being a requirement statewide the

experience of children placed in group homes can be more positive because the requirements ensure that all the children's needs will be met based on what was found in this study.

There are many former foster youth that have resided in a group home that have never had the opportunity to share their thoughts about them. With larger studies conducted, other researches can find what makes a good group home. With this study , a few positive aspects were found, however, with more participants more positive aspects can be found. It would also be helpful to see if former foster youth from other counties view group home similarly to determine if this is an issue found only in this area or in the entire state. There is a lot of research that can be done in this area.

Conclusions

From the results this study found, it is apparent that there needs to be more regulations on group homes. Trainings for staff members on how to work with foster youth would be a great first step. All the data was not negative and it showed that having family style group homes are beneficial. It also showed that some children

do well in this environment while others do not. Taking all of this in consideration, the best that can be done for these children is to create change at the legislative level. From there social workers can work to ensure that group homes are abiding by the rules put in place. Further research can help in the process of creating change on a legislative level.

APPENDIX A
DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics

What is your age _____

What is your gender _____

How do you describe yourself? (please check all that apply that best describes you)

American Indian or Alaska Native

Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Asian or Asian American

Black or African American

Hispanic or Latino

Non-Hispanic White

How many group home placements have you had _____

Developed by Moraima Davalos

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview guide

1. Tell us about your group home experience.
2. What were the benefits, if any, of being in a group home?
3. What were the disadvantages, if any, of being in a group home?
4. How were you treated by staff in the group homes?
5. Do you feel that your group home experiences positively or negatively contributed to your life as an adult now? How?
6. Were there opportunities to get involved in extracurricular activities in your group home experience? What were they?
7. Are there any other experiences or aspects about your group home experience that you would like to share?
8. If you could share any suggestions with group home administrators, staff, social workers, etc. for how to improve the well-being of children in group homes, what would it be?

Fimbres, L.A. and Solomon R.K. (2008). *A strengths-based perspective on group homes*(Unpublished master's thesis). California State University, San Bernardino, San Bernardino, CA.

APPENDIX C

FLYER

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!

Are you between the ages of 18 and 22?

Have experience with the foster care system?

Have you resided in at least one group home?

Graduate student is looking for volunteers to be interviewed as part of a research project. Participation will be confidential. You may not have had a chance to talk about your experiences and opinions; don't let this opportunity pass by!

If interested, please contact Moraima Davalos at (951) 663-2019 or davam302@coyote.csusb.edu to set an appointment and let your voice be heard!

This research study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, faculty member of CSU San Bernardino, and has been approved by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the CSUSB Institutional Review Board. The results of this study will be presented as a final research project for the Masters of Social Work program at CSU San Bernardino in June, 2012.

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Informed Consent for Interview

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate perceptions of group homes among former foster youth. This study is being conducted by Moraima Davalos under the supervision of Doctor Rosemary McCaslin, Professor of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

In this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview about the characteristics of group homes you have resided in. The interview should take about 20 to 40 minutes to complete. All responses will be confidential. Your name will not be reported with your responses. All information from the interview will be reported in group form only. You may receive the group results after September of 2012 at Walden Family Services.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to stop your participation at any time during the study without penalty. You are free to skip any of the questions asked during the interview. When you have completed the questions, you will receive a debriefing statement describing the study in more detail. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with participation in the study. Possible benefits from the research are adjustments made to group homes in order to increase their effectiveness as well as furthering the knowledge of group homes.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Professor McCaslin at 909-537-5507.

☐ *By checking this box, I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and that I understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate, I also acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.*

☐ *By checking this box, I agree to be audio taped during the interview.*

Date: _____

APPENDIX E
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Debriefing Statement

The interview you have just completed was designed to understand the characteristics of group homes from the viewpoint of former foster youth. The purpose of this study is to see if group homes are good placements for foster youth. By identifying strengths and/or weaknesses, group homes can gain knowledge of and build upon assets or make changes in order to meet the needs of children in the child welfare system.

Thank you for your participation in this interview. Your contribution is greatly appreciated. I would like to offer you this \$10 gift card to a fast food restaurant for allowing me to interview you. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Doctor Rosemary McCaslin, faculty supervisor, at 909-537-5507. If you would like to obtain a copy of the group results of this study, you can access the Pfau Library at California State University San Bernardino after September Of 2012.

REFERENCES

- Anglin, J. P. (2002). Historical and contemporary issues in residential care for children and youth. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 24(1/2), 5-21.
- Berrick, J., Barth, R. P., Needell, B., & Jonson-Reid, M. (1997). Group care and young children. *Social Service Review*, 71(2), 257-22735. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- California Alliance of Child and Family Services (2007, October 12) California Alliance Applauds Governor's Support of Group Home Reform for Foster Youth. *San Francisco Examiner*. Retrieved on November 20, 2011 from <http://www.cacfs.org/materials/Governor%20Support%20Group%20Home%20Reform.pdf>
- California Department of Social Services, Children and Family Services Division, The World of Children, <http://www.childsworld.org/>
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2011). *Foster care statistics 2009*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.
- Child Welfare League of America (2011). *National Survey of public and private residential group care facilities and their capacities*. Retrieved September 27, 2011, from <http://www.cwla.org/programs/groupcare/outcomes.htm>
- Clark, H., Crosland, K., Geller, D., Cripe, M., Kenney, T., Neff, B., & Dunlap, G. (2008). A functional approach to reducing runaway behavior and stabilizing placements for adolescents in foster care. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 18(5), 429-441. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Commentary of residential group care. *Child Welfare*, 89(2), 15-20.
- Courtney, M. E., & Zinn, A. (2009). Predictors of running away from out-of-home care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31(12), 1298-1306. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2009.06.003

- Dunn, D., Culhane, S. E., & Taussig, H. N. (2010). Children's appraisals of their experiences in out-of-home care. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 32(10), 1324-1330. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.05.001
- Fimbres, L.A. and Solomon R.K. (2008). *A strengths-based perspective on group homes*(Unpublished master's thesis). California State University, San Bernardino, San Bernardino, CA.
- Foster, L. K. (2001). Foster Care Fundamentals: An Overview of California's Foster Care System. *California Department of Social Services*, 1-62.
- Fox, A., & Berrick, J. D. (2007). A response to no one ever asked us: a review of children's experiences in out-of-home care. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 24(1), 23-51. DOI: 10.1007./s10560-006-0057-6
- Furneaux, F. (2005, September 17). *Theory of reasoned action*. Retrieved from <http://www.istheory.yorku.ca/theoryofreasonedaction.htm>
- Green, R. S., & Ellis, P. T. (2007). Linking structure, process, and outcome to improve group home services for foster youth in California. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 30(3), 307-317. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Grinnell, Richard M. Jr. & Unrau, Yvonne A. (2011). *Social work research and evaluation: Foundations of Evidence-Based Practice* (ninth edition). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, N. P., & Leopard, K. (1996). Characteristics of children living in group homes. *Journal of Health & Social Policy*, 7(3), 35-45.
- Lee, B. R., Bright, C. L., Svoboda, D. V., Fakunmoju, S., & Barth, R. P. (2011). Outcomes of Group Care for Youth: A Review of Comparative Studies. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 21(2), 177-189. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

- Lee, B. R., & Thompson, R. R. (2008). Comparing outcomes for youth in treatment foster care and family-style group care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30(7), 746-757. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Lewin, k. (1939). Field theory and experiment in social psychology: concept and methods. *American Journal of Sociology*, 44, 868-896.
- Ryan, J. P., Marshall, J. M., Herz, D. D., & Hernandez, P. M. (2008). Juvenile delinquency in child welfare: investigating group home effects. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30(9), 1088-1099. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Schaffner, L. (1999). *Teenage runaways: broken hearts and "bad attitudes"*. Binghamton, NY: Routledge.
- Schwartz, L. L. (1993). The interaction of field theory, family systems theory, and children's rights. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 21(3), 267-273.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2010). *The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2009 Estimates as of July 2010 (17)*. Retrieved October 12, 2010 from [www.acf.hhs.gov/ programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report17.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report17.htm)
- Youth Law Center (July 2007). *Overview of the Foster Care System in California*. Youth Law Center. Retrieved May 16, 2011, from <http://www.ylc.org/pdfs/OverviewFosterCareSystem2011.pdf>