

California State University, San Bernardino

**CSUSB ScholarWorks**

---

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

---

2012

## **Fostering resiliency in emancipated foster youth: What they need to transition successfully**

Olga Cherie Phillips

Maria Guadalupe Martinez

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



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Phillips, Olga Cherie and Martinez, Maria Guadalupe, "Fostering resiliency in emancipated foster youth: What they need to transition successfully" (2012). *Theses Digitization Project*. 4026.  
<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/4026>

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](mailto:scholarworks@csusb.edu).

FOSTERING RESILIENCY IN EMANCIPATED FOSTER YOUTH:  
WHAT THEY NEED TO TRANSITION SUCCESSFULLY

---

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  
Olga Cherie Phillips  
Maria Guadalupe Martinez  
June 2012

FOSTERING RESILIENCY IN EMANCIPATED FOSTER YOUTH:

WHAT THEY NEED TO TRANSITION SUCCESSFULLY


---

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


---

by  
Olga Cherie Phillips  
Maria Guadalupe Martinez  
June 2012

Approved by:

  
Dr. Jennifer Pabustan-Claar, Faculty  
Supervisor Social Work

6/7/12  
Date

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

## ABSTRACT

This research study focused on resilient emancipated foster youth that perceived themselves to be successful. Resiliency was defined as the ability to bounce back, recover and overcome struggles in the face of adversity. The purpose of this project was to discover emancipated foster youths' perceptions of the characteristics of resiliency. This study used a face-to-face qualitative methodology approach; fifteen participants were interviewed; six categories emerged that provided a more detailed understanding of resiliency. The results of this study showed that lifelong connections with supportive adults, sibling relationships and self-determination were predominant characteristics that led to youth becoming resilient.

Recommendations for future research include quality parenting for substitute care providers, improved coordination and delivery of services for emancipated foster youth, the recognition of the significance of sibling bonds and a deeper examination of what it means to have a family of their own.

The limitations of this study include small sample size, inability to generalize nationwide, absence of a

comparison group and a better comprehensive interview questionnaire. In conclusion, resiliency is a complex phenomenon composed of various characteristics that a person needs in order to overcome obstacles to transitioning from foster care to adulthood.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank God for giving me the strength, patience, and determination to complete this project. To my research partner Olga thank you for the assistance from beginning to end you mean the world to me. To my parents Julia and Belem I am infinitely grateful for teaching me the value of hard work and to never give up you have inspired me to become successful. To my siblings Erica, Diana, Alejandro, and Adela thank you for supporting and loving me. To my nieces & nephews Adrian, Camila, Pancho, Amanda, and Maribel thank you for your admiration and being my cheerleaders. To my mentor Debbie Flores thank you for believing in me and helping throughout various stages of my life. Finally, to Dr. Jennifer Pabustan-Claar thank you for the support, guidance, and understanding.

Guadalupe Martinez

First honors to God for giving me inner strength, inner peace, and the resiliency to survive foster care. I would like to thank my partner Guadalupe Martinez, research is no joke, but thanks to you I had loads of fun and lots of laughs throughout this long and arduous process. I couldn't have done it without you. To my

siblings, Regina, MonaLisa, Ludolph and Odette who endured foster care and survived; and to my sisters Yolanda and Carmelita who did not; you are my inspiration and the reason this project exists. To my niece Crystal, you helped me more than you'll ever know. And, most importantly, to my husband and best friend, Ernest John Phillips, Jr. and my daughters, Mary Elizabeth and Katherine Louise, thank you for your patience, understanding and love. I'm back.

Olga Phillips

## DEDICATION

We would like to dedicate this thesis project to emancipated foster youth. Your stories are valuable and your voices have been heard. We are honored to have crossed paths with you and are infinitely amazed by your determination to succeed.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	x
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Problem Statement .....	1
Policy Context .....	4
Practice Context .....	6
Purpose of the Study .....	8
Significance of the Project for Social Work .....	11
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Introduction .....	15
Current Policy Governing Emancipating Foster Youth .....	15
Outcomes of Emancipating Foster Youth .....	22
Resiliencies of Foster Youth .....	30
Theories Guiding Conceptualization .....	46
Summary .....	49
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	
Introduction .....	51
Study Design .....	51
Sampling .....	52
Data Collection and Instruments .....	54

Procedures .....	55
Protection of Human Rights .....	56
Data Analysis .....	58
Summary .....	59
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS	
Introduction .....	60
Demographic Information .....	60
Presentation of Findings .....	62
Category I: Family .....	63
Category II: Abuse History .....	65
Category III: Environment .....	69
Social Supports .....	69
Educational Background .....	71
Employment History .....	74
Services Offered at Emancipation .....	75
Category IV: Individual Characteristics .....	79
Category V: Overall Health .....	84
Category VI: Vision for the Future of Foster Care .....	87
Summary .....	90
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION	
Introduction .....	91
Discussion .....	91
Limitations .....	99

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research .....	101
Conclusions .....	105
APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE .....	107
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT .....	110
APPENDIX C: DEBRIEFING STATEMENT .....	112
APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHICS .....	114
APPENDIX E: EMANCIPATED FOSTER YOUTH EDUCATIONAL STATUS .....	116
REFERENCES .....	118
ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE .....	127

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents .....	61
--	----

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Emancipated Foster Youth's Hierarchy of Needs .....	106
--	-----

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the problems foster youth encounter during emancipation is presented. Included is an introduction to the research focus, research paradigm, and significance of the project for social work practices including policy and practice.

#### Problem Statement

Adolescence marks a milestone in which teenagers enter the world of adulthood. Society defines the role and expectations of young adults. It is common knowledge that age eighteen is the landmark year in which a child is legally declared an adult. For children living in foster care, an eighteenth birthday also marks the termination of child welfare services and the beginning of emancipation. Many children exiting foster care are unprepared to cope with the stressors associated with adult life. Emancipated foster youth lack self-sufficiency skills, support systems and familial ties (Courtney & Pilianvin, 1998).

The fate of emancipating foster youth has continued to be a nationwide problem. As of August 2010, more than

408,000 children lived in foster care in the U.S. (Child Information Gateway, 2011). According, to the National Foster Care Month database in 2000-2009, the trends revealed that national foster youth populations had decreased from 544,000 to 424,000 in 2009 a 23 percent decline (Child Trends Data Snapshot, 2011). However, the number of children entering foster care varies per state with some experiencing declines while others experience increases. Particularly, California has the largest foster care population than any other state with over 100,000 children in foster care per year. Finally, California Fostering Connections report approximate 20,000 to 27,854 foster youth exit foster care each year (California Fostering Connections, 2010). These numbers portray the significance and need emancipated foster youth represent.

Emancipated foster youth face multiple challenges upon exiting from the foster care system. In the state of California, 65% of youth exiting foster care do not have a place to live. Eventually, more than 50% of former foster youth become homeless within 18 months of emancipation (Geenan & Powers, 2007). In terms of employment, less than half of former foster youth are

employed and only 38% maintain employment for at least one year. A majority of emancipated foster youth lack transportation or do not have sufficient skills to transport from one place to another (Rosalind & Day, 2011). Educationally, emancipated foster youth lag behind with only one quarter completing high school, and less than one third enrolling in a community or vocational college. These educational deficits continue into adulthood years with only 1% of foster youth receiving a 2-4 year college degree (Brandford & English, 2004). Finally, 25% of emancipated foster youth are incarcerated within 2 years of emancipation and 5% of foster youth die as a result of inability to successfully adapt to adulthood (Freudelin & Morris, 2004).

Additionally, females exiting the foster care system are six times more likely to give birth before the age of 19 compared to females that are not in foster care. Emancipated foster youth of both genders are likely to rely on public assistance programs such as food stamps and cash aid as a primary income for their household (Courtney & Piliavin, 2001). Consequently, emancipated foster youth are more likely to be stigmatized due to prior or current involvement in child welfare services

and likely to be rejected by peers. Foster youth face many challenges while in the child welfare system and after exiting the system. However, despite such challenges foster youth's ability to navigate adversity and successfully make it to become competent adults is a prime example of resiliency (Resnick et al., 1997). Few emancipated foster youth are strong enough to overcome struggles associated with self-sufficiency and life skills. Extended after-care programs may assist in fostering resiliency and increasing positive outcomes. For example, resilient emancipated adults are able to achieve academic success, become professionals, attain social competence, develop identity, and become competent and caring adults. Despite its importance, foster youth's resilience has received little attention in academia and the child welfare system. Thus, this study tries to fill the gap in the area of resiliency of emancipated foster youth within the child welfare system.

#### Policy Context

An effort to address the plight of emancipated foster youth in California has led to the passage of Assembly Bill 12 (AB 12) in 2011. This bill becomes effective in January 2012, and aims to extend services

and funding to foster youth until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. California politicians have recognized the needs of foster youth and the importance of adult support in assisting in the transition to adulthood. Support to foster youth is offered in a variety of levels, ranging from intensive support to minimal support. There is a belief that increasing life skills and reinforcing independence allows emancipated youth the opportunity to successfully thrive.

This bill demands specific guidelines that must be followed by emancipated foster youth in order to participate in this program. Emancipated youth must be involved in completing high school, enrolled in college, actively seeking employment or poses a medical condition preventing them from completing the previous tasks. Participation in this program is voluntary and foster youth have the opportunity to decide if it is in their best interest to participate. The California Department of Public and Social Services (DPSS) will develop rules and regulations to carry out the intended goal of affording emancipated foster youth the opportunity to successfully transition to adulthood. Overall, AB 12 is legislation that will help foster youth develop

independent living skills, while building permanent connections with committed and caring adults. Most importantly there is mutual agreement among emancipated foster youth and child welfare agencies in working together towards fostering successful outcomes in transitioning to adulthood.

#### Practice Context

Emancipated foster youth are a vulnerable population that continues to grow each year. Despite the fact that in 1998 a decrease in foster youth exiting care was reported (3,573), in 2010 there were over 4,017 youth exiting the child welfare system (Needell et al., 2011). Similarly, this data reveals that the numbers of emancipated foster youth have not significantly changed over the past 10 years. Based on this data, in the year 2012 emancipated foster youth will continue to face the same challenges as in previous years.

These children all share similar characteristics and circumstances that brought them to the attention of child welfare agencies. A majority of children enter foster care as a direct result of substantiated allegations of child abuse or neglect (Resnick, Bearman, Blum, et al., 1997). In addition, other potential risk factors include

low socioeconomic status and exposure to trauma and trust issues. Child welfare agencies were actively involved in fulfilling the absence of the parent role firmly believing it takes a community to raise a child. Therefore, the child welfare system is ultimately responsible for the safety, stability, and placement of children.

Child welfare agencies understand the implications of underfunding and to that end use resources, skills and available programs to act on behalf the child's best interest. Children living in intact families receive guidance, financial and emotional support from the family as whole, while children living in foster care rely on child welfare agencies to provide resources and opportunities to gain life skills (Geenen & Powers, 2007). Due to higher numbers of youth in foster care, child protective agencies are forced to provide the minimal level of care necessary for that child to successfully survive. Unfortunately, foster youth are frequently moved from one placement to another in which life skills are inconsistent, interrupted, or unlikely to develop (Courtney & Bath, 1996).

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess emancipated foster youth's views on challenges, resiliencies, and coping strategies associated with aging out of foster care. This study used a qualitative study consisting of face-to-face interviews with 15 emancipated foster youth. According to Grinnell and Unrau (2008), qualitative research has a variety of advantages that are useful in understanding complex phenomena such as resiliency. One of the most notable advantages is deeper understanding of subjective data and differences in perspectives. This study was unique since the personal experiences of emancipated foster youth shed light on understanding how resiliency develops. In addition, invaluable details of how emancipated foster youth cope with the challenges of aging out of foster care were discovered along with the meaning each youth perceives contributed to their success in overcoming those challenges. Finally, explanations of factors responsible for emancipated foster youth's success were provided. This study used convenience non-probability snowball sampling. The reason for using convenience sampling is due to the difficulty in accessing emancipated foster youth.

This study seeks to identify resiliencies or qualities which helped former foster youth overcome their struggles while in the child welfare system. Historically, children's traumatic experiences bring them into the child welfare system. A majority of these experiences were not positive. For example, parents are usually incapable of providing safety, protection and for the well-being of children. Also, these parents were involved in the maltreatment of children resulting in abuse or neglect. Neglect is the type of child maltreatment most frequently reported to Child Protective Services in the United States. It is also the type of referral most frequently substantiated and most frequently associated with child placement (McSherry, 2007). This is due to the profound developmental deficits occurring from neglect than any other form of maltreatment. In the fiscal year 2009, the total number of referrals in the U.S. for abuse and neglect was 3.3 million, with 6,000,000 million children receiving services (McSherry, 2007). Nearly 2 million referrals were processed for investigation or assessment (3.7 million children) and 24 percent of the referrals were

substantiated. Of these, 70 percent were for neglect (United States Health and Human Services, 2010).

In California, in 2009, 352,000 referrals were received, involving 470,000 children. Of those 84,000 were substantiated for abuse or neglect. Almost 75% of these cases were substantiated for neglect. Furthermore, the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), a data collection and analysis program operated by the federal government since 1990 reported that there were more than 3.3 million referrals directly involving over 6 million children in 2008. In screening these referrals 24% of investigated referrals were determined to be substantiated, 70% of the substantiated referrals were for neglect; 15% for physical abuse; 9% for sexual abuse; 7% for psychological maltreatment (United States Health and Human Services, 2010).

The placement of youth in foster care may also contribute to interruptions in childhood development (Erikson, as cited in Lesser & Pope, 2006). For example, a child entering foster care at the trust/mistrust stage of development may be at risk of having problems in attaching to foster parents and subsequent problems building relationships with peers and significant others.

This study revealed that resiliency was a part of development and that social service agencies need to recognize how to build programs that can serve the developmental needs of transitional foster youth.

Also, increasing the successful outcomes of foster youth prevents society from ills such as crime, unwanted pregnancies, lack of education, unemployment, and personal attainment for the foster youth. Currently, transitional foster youth are at risk of not receiving needed services especially mental health services. In understanding the dynamics of resiliency foster youth who need special services may be identified so that intervention can begin earlier. Providing assistance to transitional foster youth may give them an equal chance of succeeding in adulthood.

#### Significance of the Project for Social Work

This study is important to emancipating foster youth and the child welfare system because it may assist transitional programs identify foster youth requiring special services related to deficiencies in their development, specifically the absence or presence of resilience. Due to the limited number of studies

conducted on resiliency, particularly on the positive outcomes of foster youth, this study aims to discover what factors allow foster youth to become successful. Emancipating foster youth have rarely been a focus of attention, therefore, little is known of factors responsible for overcoming challenges after exiting foster care.

This study examined factors contributing to successful outcomes of foster youth aging out of the child welfare system. In addition, this study contributed to social work practice by identifying, and understanding the strengths of resiliency and possibly creating a tool to assess the needs and provide better services for emancipated foster youth. The unique experience each emancipated foster youth provided will increase social workers knowledge in what needs are being met and which services are required for their successful outcomes. This study may also help facilitate better decision-making when it comes to foster youth, specifically in strengthening protective factors such as self-confidence, adequate thinking skills, and self-esteem (Masten, 2000). Similarly, the information gained from this study will assist social service agencies in conducting needs,

safety and risk assessment and interventions necessary to serve at-risk transitional aged foster youth as well as competent foster youth transitioning to adulthood (California Advocacy Institute, 2000).

Similarly, policy makers will have an increased knowledge of theory, programs, and services designed for this at-risk population based on resiliency. This knowledge will assist policy makers in their decisions on planning, allocation of resources, and creation of programs. Finally, this study revealed that not all foster youth have the skills necessary to emancipate. This study was relevant to child welfare agencies because being prepared for adulthood is an important factor that can change emancipated youth's outcomes. Youth that are more prepared are more likely to experience success in adulthood compared to those youth who lack life skills. Training child welfare social workers to recognize factors of resiliency in transitional foster youth can impact the way social workers prepare their clients to think, behave, and develop skills to overcome their difficulties. By intervening earlier in the foster youth's life emancipated youth may develop coping strategies that will be helpful in adulthood.

This study presented the following research question: What are emancipated foster youth's perceptions on challenges, resiliency, and coping strategies?

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This chapter introduces literature relevant to current policy governing the emancipation of foster youth in the U.S. and California. The characteristics and outcomes of emancipating foster youth are examined as well as the concept of resiliency as it relates to foster youth. The theories of conceptualization guiding this study are reviewed in literature relating to human development and strengths perspective.

#### Current Policy Governing Emancipating Foster Youth

On the whole, foster care is meant to be a temporary means to an end. The overall goal of the welfare system is to reunify the foster child with their family of origin, a relative or to find adoptive families for them (McCoy-Roth, DeVoght, & Fletcher, 2010). The unfortunate reality is that many foster youth do not reunify but instead age out of the foster care system when they become eighteen years old (THP Plus, 2010-11). The number of emancipating foster youth has risen in the years since

1998 to over 29,000. However, according to McCoy-Roth, DeVooght, and Fletcher (2011) since 2007 there has been a decline in those figures and as of 2010 the numbers of emancipated youth has dropped to 27,854.

Despite this downward trend in the number of foster youth aging out of the child welfare system, foster youth who exit the system at eighteen face many hardships and obstacles as they enter adulthood (Honoring Emancipated Youth, n.d.). Emancipated foster youth are reported to have negative outcomes in adulthood more often than not. They are more likely to have dropped out of high school and are less likely to have permanent stable homes (Brandford & English, 2004). Additionally, emancipating foster youth may have difficulties forging meaningful, long-lasting relationships (Osterling & Hines, 2006).

Osterling and Hine's 2006 article reports that their exploratory study was conducted in two phases and used data from an independent living program. The study was comprised of a sample of 52 emancipating foster youth and 18 advocates of a foster youth emancipation program. The sample was comprised of mostly female participants (58.8%), and the average age of participants was approximately 16 years old (Osterling & Hines, 2006). The

first phase of this study utilized quantitative methodology to address the characteristics of emancipating foster youth and advocates and the second phase of the study addressed the experiences emancipating foster youth and advocates had while participating in the targeted mentorship program. This study was conducted over a period of two years and the overall results favored the mentorship program and the advocates of emancipating foster youth.

In terms of their relationships with their mentors, participants felt that they had a positive meaningful relationships with mentors of their independent living program and that their mentors helped them significantly (p. 249). The study also reveals positive findings in areas of improvement in living conditions of emancipating foster youth, with the assistance of mentorship, advocacy and assistance in preparing for adulthood through learning independent life skills, such as, budgeting, employment assistance and assistance with education (p. 249).

Literature relating to current policy on the emancipation of foster youth reveals that foster youth can benefit from staying in care beyond the age of

eighteen (McCoy-Roth, DeVoght, & Fletcher, 2011). Specifically, the study, *"Number of Youth Aging Out of Foster Care Drops Below 28,000 in 2010"* (McCoy-Roth, DeVoght & Fletcher, 2011), examined data on the more than 300,000 youth who aged-out of foster care between 1998 and 2010. The study analyzed data on foster youth from 55 U.S. States, including California during this twelve-year period to measure the average placement of youth in foster care. Also measured were case goals for youth emancipating from foster care, the average length of stay in foster care and outcomes for youth who age-out of the system.

Overall, findings of this study revealed that older youth in foster care can benefit from having the option to stay in care longer (p. 5). Regarding their outcomes, the study revealed that foster youth exiting care at 18 experience more negative outcomes in transitioning to adulthood including homelessness, unemployment and incarceration (p. 3). Regarding policy related to youth emancipating from foster care, McCoy-Roth, DeVoght, and Fletcher, (2011) cite the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 with providing matching state funding for programs and

services to assist youth aging out of foster care to age 21 (p. 5). California is one of the participating states approved to offer extended foster care to emancipating youth.

However, with insufficient funding, foster youth were more than likely forced to leave care unprepared for adulthood. In an effort to ease the difficulties that foster youth experience in emancipating Assembly Bill 427 was passed in California in 2001. AB 427 allowed for extended services to youth sixteen to twenty-one years through independent living programs. This extended care program, Supportive Transitional Emancipation Program (STEP), offers the continuation of funds to emancipating foster youth who agree to continue the practice of life-skills learned in independent living programs (State of California-Health and Human Services, 2010).

More recent studies showed that until the passage of Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 underfunding for extended foster care remained an issue (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004; John Burton Foundation, 2010; McCoy-Roth, DeVoght, & Fletcher, 2011). Data for these studies are derived from National Data on foster youth served in the U.S. and the

negative effects associated with states' inability to finance extended foster care. The John Burton Foundation's research in their 2010-11 Annual report reveals that in their fiscal year, 2009; 2,209 foster youth were served by its THP-Plus programs. However this report also found that over 3,600 youth did not receive transitional youth services such as housing, employment and education (John Burton Foundation, 2011). The Burton Foundation report suggests that the implementation of California Assembly Bill 12 will allow foster youth to remain in foster care and receive transitional youth services until the age of 21 (p. 5).

According to a study conducted by Fostering Connections (McCoy-Roth, DeVoght & Fletcher, 2011), AB 12, the Fostering Connections law, will provide states with the opportunity to obtain federal reimbursement for foster care and extended transitional youth services (p. 5).

It should be noted that some states, including California made provisions for foster youth to remain in foster care beyond the age of eighteen. This form of extended foster care is noted as being conditional and is

offered at the discretion of the state (McCoy-Roth, DeVooght, & Fletcher, 2011).

The latest policy effort of California Fostering Connections to Success has culminated in the passing of Assembly Bill 12. Signed into law in the fall of 2010, AB 12 will allocate funds necessary to allow foster youth to remain in foster care between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one years. Moreover, AB 12 funding will allow foster youth who choose to leave foster care at eighteen to return to extended care until they have reached the age of twenty-one. This new legislation, scheduled for implementation January 1, 2012, marks a milestone in public social services to foster youth who have little choice but to remain wards of the state until adulthood. Further review of this foster care reform reveals that the implementation of AB 12 may not only extend care for emancipating foster youth transitioning to adulthood but will also impact social work policy and procedures in regards to assisting transitional foster youth (California Fostering Connections to Success Act, 2011).

## Outcomes of Emancipating Foster Youth

Data on the characteristics of the approximately 400,000 foster youth in the U.S. reveal a picture of the average foster child in terms of age, race/ethnicity, gender and percentage of those foster youth emancipating from the child welfare system. Research comparing data from 2000 and 2009 showed that as of September 30, 2009 the average age of children in foster care was 9.7 years; In terms of gender, there was a higher percentage of boys than girls. Males accounted for 53 percent of the foster care population while females comprised 47 percent. Forty percent of foster youth were white/non-Hispanic; 30% were black/non-Hispanic; 20% were Hispanic and 10% were multiracial (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2009).

It should be noted that although this data shows an increase in white/non-Hispanic and Hispanic foster youth since 2000, there is a difference in the overall percentage of black/non-Hispanic population (13%) compared to the majority white population and these numbers do not reflect the disproportionate number of black/non-Hispanic children in foster care. In terms of emancipation, the data reveal 11% of all youth leaving

foster care age out of the system at eighteen years or older (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2009).

Reports on the outcomes of foster youth transitioning out of care are numerous. Overall, studies reporting the outcomes of emancipated foster youth often highlight the negative experiences of this population (as cited in Casey Foundation Programs, 2004; Children Advocacy Institute, 2010; Masten, 2000; Yates, 2009). Generally, the negative outcomes discussed are in the areas of mental health, substance abuse, homelessness, unemployment and developmental problems. The Casey Foundation report cites studies conducted by the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (Casey Foundation, 2004). Youth who are emancipated from foster care without a permanent family are at high risk for many poor outcomes.

One longitudinal study of youth aging out of foster care found numerous challenges as these youth were transitioning to adulthood (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith, 2001). The longitudinal study, Foster Youth Transitioning to Adulthood followed the lives

of 141 young adults between the ages of 17 and 18 (at the start of the research) who had emancipated from foster care. The study was conducted in Wisconsin between 1995 and 1996 and examined the lives and experiences of the participant sample during the initial year to eighteen months post emancipation (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith, 2001).

Overall findings of this study reveal that one in five (22 percent) emancipated foster youth had lived in four or more placements within 18 months of aging out and greater than one-third (37 percent) had been physically or sexually victimized, incarcerated, or homeless during that time period. It was also discovered that participants experienced more mental health challenges than others in the same age group. In addition, more than one third (37 percent) had not completed high school, and unemployment after 18 months was common for more than 60% of participants (Courtney et al., 2001). A recent study conducted by the Children's Advocacy Institute (CAI, 2004) reported that emancipated foster youth experienced higher rates (than that of youth in intact families) of unemployment, not completing high school, incarceration,

substance abuse and having children out of wed-lock among other risk-factors.

In relation to mental health, research showed that former foster youth are at greater risk of developing mental illness than the general population of youth transitioning to adulthood (CAI, 2010). Specifically, California Advocacy Institutes study findings (2010) revealed the rates of post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) among former foster youth at 21.5% exceeding the percentage experienced by U.S. war veterans of Vietnam (15%), Afghanistan (6%) and Iraq (12-13%).

The California Advocacy Institute study findings were based on the findings of the Casey National Alumni Study (2003). This study compared the rates of mental illness of 1,087 Casey alumni and 3,547 adults from the general population over the previous 12-month period. The participants were of similar race, age, and gender. Quantitative and qualitative findings of this study revealed that the mental health of the participants were very poor compared to the general population.

The Foster Care Alumni Studies also reported that Alumni experienced more than "seven times the rate of drug dependence and nearly two times the rate of alcohol

dependence" (The Foster Care Alumni Studies, 2003) than the general population. In terms of employment, emancipated foster youth were reported to earn less than other youth in general and they had a more difficult experience attaining any type of employment (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Reports on employment also note that within five years of aging out of foster care these youth had great difficulty securing a job (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Incarceration was reported to be a great source of concern for former foster youth. Twenty-five percent of emancipated foster youth were subject to being arrested for a crime within the first two years of emancipation. Educationally, it was noted that former foster youth fare poorly.

Reports indicated less than fifty percent of foster youth graduated from high school (CAI, 2010). Research, conducted by Honoring Emancipated Youth (n.d.), also showed a mere 1% of former foster youth earn a college degree. The John Burton Foundation for Children without Homes September 2008 policy brief cites a study conducted by the University of Chicago (Dworsky 2006). This study compared the outcomes of emancipated foster youth with the general public. Among the 600 participants, aged 19,

it was found that emancipated foster youth in this study were nearly three times more likely than their peers to be unemployed (Fostering connections, 2012). Numerous reports (Children's Advocacy Institute; Human Rights Watch, 2010; McCoy-Roth, DeVoght, & Fletcher, 2010; THP-Plus, 2010-11) illuminated the reality of homelessness faced by many emancipating foster youth. Reports from Honoring Emancipated Youth (n.d), comprised of data from various studies, showed that former foster youth were generally homeless within the first eighteen months of aging out (League of Women Voters after Foster Care, 2002, as cited in Honoring Emancipated Youth (n.d)). Additionally, the Honoring Emancipated Youth report (n.d.) indicated that "nationally, 27 % of the homeless population spent time in foster care" (California Department of Social Services, 2002, as cited in Honoring Emancipated Youth in California).

It was also reported that more than half of the foster youth released on their own at eighteen did not have secure transitional housing (California Department of Social Services, 2002, as cited in Honoring Emancipated Youth, n.d.). A report by the John Burton Foundation (2010-11) also portrayed a dismal future for

emancipated foster youth. The report examined the outcomes of emancipated foster youth participants of transitional living programs. Data on the outcomes of transitional aged foster youth not participating in transitional living programs were not specifically noted in this report (THP Plus, 2010-11), except for data that revealed more than half of emancipated foster youth did not receive services due to budget constraints. A report on how these 3,645 Californian youths were progressing in their emancipation was not fully addressed in the THP Plus annual report (2010).

These omissions created gaps in information relating to the fate of transitional aged foster youth who were mentally ill, had developmental delays or were otherwise ineligible for admission in transitional housing programs. It is naturally too early to begin a review of how and if AB 12 will curve negative outcomes for emancipating foster youth. However, it will be a note-worthy endeavor for researchers to follow the development of AB 12's policy and procedure within California's child welfare system. This is especially important due to variables that could be viewed as obstacles, such as a possible increase in social worker

caseloads and, most importantly, the incorporation of meaningful mental health services for emancipating foster youth.

A 2009 article by Children's Voice was also reviewed. This article featured Campaign 2020, a strategy design to support emancipating foster youth. The 2020 Vision, as it is referred, aims to decrease the number of foster youth aging out of the child welfare system by fifty percent by the year 2020. This campaign's goals are based on research from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Studies (as cited in Children's Voices, Sanders, 2009) and focuses on improving outcomes for emancipating foster youth in areas of education, employment, and mental health (Casey Foundation Programs, 2004).

Additionally a 2010 report by Children's Advocacy Institute will be included in this section. This report also identifies mental health issues as paramount in improving the outcomes of former foster youth from research based on the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Studies. In this report CAI evaluated and graded 38 counties in California in an effort to determine if community service plans funded by Proposition 63 were

being used to assist emancipating foster youth identified with mental health issues.

Grades were based on a set of criteria developed by CAI and the results were included in their report. Unfortunately, most counties including Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Diego received an F grade. San Bernardino and Orange County received a D grade. These failing grades represent the inability of California's child welfare agencies to create programs for transitioning foster youth population with mental health needs. Overall, report findings show emancipating foster youth with mental illness face unique challenges and require special programs to assist them in transitioning to self-sufficiency. However, these needs are not being met by the State's child welfare system (CAI, 2010).

#### Resiliencies of Foster Youth

Very few studies have been conducted pertaining to the concept of resiliency among foster youth. In general, resilience was explained as the ability of an individual to successfully overcome adversity and hardships and emerge stronger for having done so (Dacey & Travers, 2006; Lesser & Pope, 2006; Masten, 2000). Rutter (2007)

suggested that resilience is a type of resistance to pressures brought on by obstacles a person may experience in life. Of particular interest is the reported correlation between resilience and human development (Masten, 2001).

In Rutter's commentary on resilience (2007) he posits that resilience is not a trait that can be observed in people. He continues to suggest that while people may be resilient in some areas of adversities in their life they may not be resilient with other adversities. In essence, Rutter (2007) suggests that a person may be able to deal with overcoming the stresses associated with physical abuse but not be able to cope with the loss of a significant person in their lives.

Rutter, (2007) points to three key considerations that he notes are necessary to the study of resilience. One is a life span perspective. Here, Rutter, (2007) indicates that life experiences shape a person's perspective on adversity and how they will react to that experience.

The second consideration is that "resilience cannot be equated with individual psychological traits" (p. 1). Rather, it is suggested that resiliency can be attributed

to either "genetic effects on susceptibility to environmental risk, or more generally to environmental change" (p. 1). The third consideration is in dealing with the factors that cause resilience. Specifically, Rutter, (2007) points to self-determination or what a person does in order to cope with challenges as factors in resiliency.

Resilience was also defined as a theory. Resilience theory, according to Van Breda, (2001) "Addresses the strengths that people and systems demonstrate that enable them to rise above adversity" (p. 14). Van Breda, (2001) noted resilience has been studied as a theory for approximately 70 years. Many studies were conducted outside of the U.S. Most notably stands the work of Rutter and colleagues conducted in England, in which foster youth were followed to understand elements responsible for continuity or discontinuity in their life.

Qualitative methodology was used to discover factors that helped change the course of development in a more positive way. The results were based on interviews of both men and women participants living in institutions. The study revealed that resilient foster youth had a

strong belief in realizing their ability to control their life and overcoming barriers to success in transitioning to adulthood (Rutter & Quinton, 1984; Rutter et al., 1995).

Additionally, Losel and Bliesener, (1994) studied characteristics of resilient teenagers living in foster care centers in Germany. The researchers compared two groups of high-risk adolescents that encountered disorder prone circumstances while in foster care. They compared youth that demonstrate social or behavioral problems to those that did not. The researchers created a detailed description of the concept of resilience that was given to educators and social workers working with foster youth. The findings revealed characteristics of resiliency in teenagers were associated with intelligence, flexibility, positive self-esteem, self-efficacy, and the ability to control their own lives.

In addition, teenagers that had a more realistic view of the future were more successful compared to those that did not. By using longitudinal and cross section methods the findings reveal significant relationships with social influences (friends, large social network)

and youth's ability to access personal resources (effective coping skills, flexible temper, intelligence, positive self-esteem) were vital in increasing resilience.

Further, Losel and Bliesener (1994) reported that connection with a significant adult outside the family was a strong indicator of resiliency in teenagers while in foster care. Youth that had a strong significant connection with an adult in their life were more likely to succeed compared to youth that did not.

Few studies have examined the processes contributing to resiliency especially in the protection of youth. In one study, Jackson and Martin (1998) focused on understanding the development of resiliency in childhood. Jackson and Martin (1998) assessed resiliency on the basis of the absence or presence of academic school achievement. One hundred twenty-nine school age students were selected to participate in a five-year longitudinal study. The criterion to participate in this study included being in the child welfare system or in the care of the local authority.

Detailed questions were asked about family of origin, placement experiences, and education. It was

discovered that children that were considered resilient had a significant adult role model that valued education, had hobbies, and peers that excelled in school. In addition, resilient adults were those that perceive better health compared to non-resilient adults who were also placed in foster care during their childhood. Jackson and Martin (1998) concluded that school success was a factor in the social integration among disadvantaged foster youth.

Further, Jackson and Martin (1998) noted that certain criteria need to be met in order for children to be considered resilient. The child must experience two critical conditions: (1) exposure to significant threat or trauma in their environment and (2) the achievement of positive adaptation despite major assaults on the development process. Garmezy (1993) investigated the relationship between schizophrenic mothers and their children. Schizophrenic mothers were recruited from mental institutions and examined on a case-by-case basis. It was discovered even though these mothers engaged in maladaptive behaviors they were capable of adapting positive behaviors as well. Researchers discovered that schizophrenics with the least severe courses of mental

illness were able to gain skills to achieve competence in work, social relations, marriage, and the capacity to fulfill the parent role. The children of schizophrenic mothers were also examined once the mothers were released back into the community.

There was substantial evidence that shows that these children thrived despite the high risk the mother posed (Garmenzy 1993). Although these children had risks within their family they were able to resist and adapt to their environment (Garmenzy, 1993). Research expanded to examine familial risk and other multiple adverse conditions as well. These conditions included socioeconomic disadvantage, parental mental illness, child maltreatment, poverty, community violence, chronic illnesses, and catastrophic life events. Despite children experiencing these risks children showed resistance and adaptation (Garmezy, 1993)

Other protective factors associated with fostering resiliency included individual, family, and environmental factors (Garmezy, 1993; Masten & Coatworth, 1998; Werner, 1993). Individual factors are those associated with genetics such as intelligence, social skills, self-esteem, internal locus of control, hope, and

empathy. Family factors were those associated with positive relationships with family members, positive parenting styles, parental mental health, and strong connection with extended family members including siblings.

Specifically, Wulczyn and Zimmerman (2005) contend that "when a child enters foster care, placement with siblings can be critical to maintaining a child's sense of continuity with his or her family" (p. 742). Siblings can suffer adversely when they are not in direct contact with their brothers and/or sisters. This may be due in part to the difficulty siblings have in adjusting to foster care without someone they have known their whole life. Downey and Condren (2004), suggest sibling relationships also serve as a protective factor because siblings stimulate development and foster positive peer interaction as cited by Wulczyn and Zimmerman (2005). It is also noted that siblings help each other adapt to difficult situations such as those experienced in foster care.

Environmental factors were those associated with supportive adults, involvement with institutions that provided support systems and a sense of meaning in life.

Environmental factors assisted in the development of resiliency and protected children from risks associated with vulnerabilities. Environmental factors included social workers, CASA workers, clergy, and school where children have access to supportive adults like teachers, counselors, and principals that ultimately guide and protect them. These "protective factors," appear to alter or even reverse potential negative outcomes and enable individuals to transform adversity and develop resilience despite risk (Bernard, 1991).

Another study conducted by Henry (1999), focused on understanding resiliency among youth in the child welfare system in relationship to placement. The researcher interviewed seven youth that had experienced multiple placement changes while in foster care. Youth reported each placement disruption was a loss of a "safe environment". Resilient youth were identified as those that were able to develop coping skills to adapt to these "unsafe" environments. Many youth used aggression as a coping skill to survive and adapt to unfamiliar environments. The researcher determined in order for youth to cope with disruptions they had to make sense of their environment. Youth that were loyal to their parents

and continued to love them regardless of the abuse were more likely to develop adaptive coping skills. Youth that were able to normalize their abusive home environment were able to adapt more easily to change and these adaptive coping skills served as a protective factor that contributed to the youth's resilience.

Further, Henry (1999) asserts youth that perceived themselves as "invisible" and able to mentally remove themselves from disruptions in the environment coped better with change. Youth that perceived themselves as valuable and overcoming negative thoughts about themselves were able to succeed later in life. Finally, the youths' ability to visualize their life in the future was an indicator of resilience (Henry, 1999).

Although this study assisted in understanding the multi dimensions of resiliency it did not indicate how resilience is constructed among youth living in foster care. Henry's (1999) study reveals the importance a person has in perceiving their life as worthwhile. Youth that were able to remove themselves from their negative experiences were able to become productive agents of society regardless of their past. Foster youth experience continued disruptions while in foster care specifically

in placement changes. However, foster youth's ability to accept and cope with change is vital in developing resiliency and coping strategies to overcome disruptions in the future (Henry, 1999).

Osterling and Hines (2006) also made a connection between mentorship and resilience. Their quantitative and qualitative study explored close personal relationships between foster youth and mentors and the positive effect this had on emancipating foster youth outcomes. The researchers used a self-administered questionnaire to gather information about foster youth age 15 and older on their relationships with mentors while in foster care. A total of 128 questionnaires were distributed and collected by the researchers. In addition, focus groups and interviews were conducted to gain further insight on foster youth's perception of how useful mentors had been in their life.

In this study, (Osterling & Hines, 2006) youth reported the significance mentorships make in their life and how their interest in youth allowed youth to overcome barriers. Mentorships help foster youth overcome poor outcomes once they exit the child welfare system. Mentors that worked with school aged foster youth helped them

develop skills to increase their character. Mentors helped youth discover qualities and traits that made that youth unique. Youth reported the significance mentors had in helping them discovering who they were and how to use qualities and traits to succeed in school regardless of their circumstances. Mentors assisted foster youth in developing their own personal identity. Mentors listened to youth and encouraged them to construct meaningful identities. Whenever youth questioned, "who they were" mentors that had worked with them accurately defined the youth's goals, dreams and aspirations for the future. Youth remained in contact with mentors and reported progress even after years had passed. Osterling and Hines (2006) also noted mentors were useful in modeling desirable behaviors in the school environment.

Youth that engaged with mentors were more likely to change inappropriate behaviors and were recognized and praised by mentors. Youth that had continued interaction with mentors were likely to develop and reach goals. Mentors provided youth with the tools necessary to achieve goals. Additionally, Osterling and Hines (2006) report mentors helped youth believe in themselves by praising small success. Several foster youth reported the

significance mentorships had in increasing their outcomes in school. Finally, Osterling and Hines (2006) found mentorships were useful in helping at-risk populations have a better opportunity of facing challenges while in school.

Unger (2001) provides a different perspective on the development of resiliency based on past or current experience in placement. He attempted to discover what defined resilience based on young people's point of view. He examined 43 case studies of youth with past experiences in child welfare, mental health, and corrections. Unger determined resilience was socially constructed by the relationship between the youth and their caregiver. Unger discovered that youth who engaged in deviant behaviors were doing so in an effort to cope with negative experiences in their environment. Many of these youth were placed in institutions and abandoned by family members.

However, youth that were empowered through staff, caregivers, and service providers were able to control their deviant behaviors and released back into the community. The findings indicate youth's behavior problems are part of identity development and the ability

to overcome those behaviors were based on their perception to control their own life. Furthermore, youth identified as vulnerable had the capacity to overcome that identity and become productive agents of society. This study portrays how one's perception can change the outcome of life and increase their ability to become more resilient.

Masten (2000) conducted a longitudinal 20-year study investigating competence and resilience in Minnesota. This qualitative study, named Project Competence, involved 114 females and 91 male minority students that were randomly selected from urban city schools. Children were interviewed and asked about what contributed to their competence, what adversity they had faced throughout their life and the individual qualities within themselves and their family that made the difference. The researcher followed up with each student seven, ten and finally twenty years after the study.

Masten's (2000) study found that children who were successful in overcoming the hardships of their lives were doing so because they had structure, stability and close relationships as well as good thinking and attention skills. Children who had succeeded in the face

of adversity had developed internal and external resources within their environment. Specifically, having a positive view of oneself was vital in facing challenges. Masten's (2000) research also found that "Children who succeed in the developmental tasks of childhood were likely to succeed in the new arenas of competence as they matured" (Masten, 2000, p. 2). Resilient children had characteristics that included ability to problem solve when faced with a challenge and ability to learn and capture new information.

Children also had close, affectionate adults in their lives that had high expectations of them. These children learned early on to follow rules and avoid consequences in school. With time the laws of society were similarly followed and resilient children were rarely defiant. One major similarity with these children was connections to their environment. Children were consistently involved in activities at home, school and within their community. As children aged they were able to develop friendships, romantic relationships and view themselves in a positive way. High self-esteem was an indicator that children were likely to become resilient later in life.

However, this study discovered that individuals that had engaged in troubling paths in their childhood, now as adolescents sought second chances in life. Youth found opportunities to turn their life around and make dramatic changes to become happy and competent adults. This study reveals that regardless of time, children and adolescents are able to become competent and resilient adults. Youth made significant changes in decreasing deviant behaviors, breaking ties with negative friendships and seeking opportunities to make better choices.

Masten (2000) identified protective factors that contributed to youth's ability to cope with adversity. These protective factors include having ordinary parents, connections to competent and caring adults, high intellectual skills, believing in oneself, possessing talents and qualities that are valued by society, believing that life is meaningful, and access to community resources.

Finally, Masten (2000) concluded that the development of resilience arises from the extraordinary power children possess to cope with ordinary problems. Children that "make it" do so because they adapt to challenges within their environment. Resilience does not

come from rare or special qualities but from every day "magic" of ordinary human resources in the mind, brain and bodies of children, their families and their relationship in their community (Masten, 2000).

### Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Erikson's psychosocial theory and Saleebey's strengths perspective was used as the guiding concepts for this study. The relationship between development and resilience was discussed. Specifically, the psychosocial stages of development were used to examine the connection between human development and the resiliency of emancipating foster youth. Erikson's psychosocial stages of development's premise is that unless an individual successfully masters a developmental task they are at risk of not moving on to the next developmental stage (as cited in Lesser & Pope, 2006). Erickson's theory was relevant to the current research study because it relates to the concept of development of resiliency as noted in earlier references.

Lesser and Pope (2006) list Erikson's psychosocial stages of development as trust vs. mistrust; autonomy vs. shame and doubt; initiative vs. guilt; industry vs.

inferiority; identity vs. role confusion; intimacy vs. isolation; and generativity vs. stagnation. For the purpose of this study the researchers focused on the stages of identity vs. role confusion and intimacy vs. isolation. By focusing on these stages of development the researchers were able to examine the perceptions of former foster youth relating to growing up in foster care and developing a strong identity.

Additionally, a discussion of meaningful adult relationships was pursued. This discussion referenced reports revealing mentorship or close adult relationships as necessary to developing resilience in transitional aged youth, especially, transitional aged foster youth (Masten, 2000; Osterling & Hines, 2006; Rutter, 2000)

Strengths perspective was used to guide the conceptualization of the study. Popple and Leighninger (2008) discuss strengths perspective as a component of the generalist practice of social workers. Saleebey, Weick, Rapp and others are credited with developing the concept of strengths perspective (as cited in Popple & Leighninger, 2006). The premise of the strengths perspective is in empowering the individual to focus on their abilities rather than their deficits. In other

words, instead of focusing on a client's unemployment status, a social worker would focus on the client's abilities, resources and support in securing employment. This was relevant because this research was looking at foster youths' strengths, particularly their resilience.

Knowledge gained from an examination of the strengths perspective may also prove beneficial in determining the strengths as well as the most appropriate resources for improving the outcomes of emancipating foster youth. However, Staudt, Howard, and Drake (2001) suggest that it may be difficult to determine if positive outcomes can be credited to strengths-based practice or if positive outcomes are a result of social work clients receiving more services and resources.

Saleebey (1996) asserted, "The strengths approach required an accounting of what people know and what they can do" (Saleebey, 1996, p. 297). He also suggested that the elements of strength-based practice included the language that was used in casework. Social workers should reframe negative statements with positive ones in an effort to encourage clients towards helping in the solution of their problems. The words and concepts of empowerment and resilience were introduced in

strength-based practice because they encourage an individual to use resources and to use their past experiences (good and bad) to overcome adversity. The strengths perspective was valuable to the study of resilience in transitional aged foster youth because it focuses on changing the perception of adversity from a negative to a positive circumstance.

However, Saleebey (1996) also reported that there was a valid concern regarding the strength-based practice. Some of these concerns included; the strengths perspective was no more than encouraging a client to think positive and be hopeful. Saleebey (1996) also noted that changing language to express adversity in a more positive way does not make the situation any less dire for the individual. Instead, it may give an individual a false sense of hope.

### Summary

This chapter discussed literature relevant to the study of resilience and its effect on transitional aged foster youth. This literature review focused on articles, journals, reports, and text featuring the characteristics of foster youth. This literature review also focused on

transitional age foster youth outcomes, mental health needs, current policies and concepts of resiliency. In addition, literature pertaining to the conceptualization of theories related to human development and strengths perspectives were reviewed.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### Introduction

The contents of this chapter present the methods that were utilized in this study. Specifically, the study's design, sampling methods, data collection, procedures, protection of human subjects, and the analysis of the data are discussed.

#### Study Design

The purpose of this study was to assess emancipated foster youth's views on resiliencies, factors associated with the development of resiliency, the extended needs of emancipated foster youth, the challenges in accessing services, and emancipated youth's satisfaction with the child welfare system. This study employed a qualitative research design using open-ended questions. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 15 former emancipated foster youth living in the Inland Empire. This type of design allowed the researchers to obtain subjective data pertaining to ex-foster youth's experiences of the development of resiliency.

This design was the most effective in allowing former emancipated foster youth to express their views on the development of resiliency, needs and challenges in accessing services and usefulness of child welfare agencies in preparing youth for independence. This research design has the following advantages: in-depth comprehensive information of former foster youth, opportunity of witness behaviors, and emotions and interacting within the natural setting. However, this design has the following limitations; predetermined data will be analyzed, sample size is small and not representative of all former foster youth. Due to the size of this study generalization cannot be established. The research question of this study is: What are emancipated foster youth's perceptions on challenges, resiliencies, and coping strategies?

#### Sampling

This study used non-probability convenience snowball sampling, in which the researchers recruited former emancipated foster youth that are now legal adults. According to Grinnell and Unrau (2008), a snowball sample is obtained by asking each person interviewed to suggest

additional people for interviewing. This sampling method was used for this study because this population is hard to recruit.

The researchers have also requested assistance from a support services program at a 4-year university that serves former foster students. The program has agreed to distribute the researchers' project information to former foster youth program participants that meet the researchers' target population eligibility requirements. The program will also inform the identified former foster youth students that their participation is voluntary, confidential, and that the research is in no way affiliated with the support service program.

The researchers developed the following sampling criteria in recruiting emancipated foster youth participants. Successful foster youth participants were selected for this study. Successful foster youth were defined as participants that had exited the child welfare system within the past thirteen years' prior, current students that are enrolled in college, and those that are currently employed. The expected age will range from 18 years to 38 years of age. The researchers attempted to

interview 10 men and 10 women and included participants of diverse ethnicities.

Participants were recruited on a first come first serve basis with excess youth put on a waiting list to make up for participants that do not show up or miss their interview. Each participant was provided with an informed consent and asked questions about how they emancipated from the foster care system. This population was selected due to the researchers' belief that emancipated foster youth are the only ones that provide the most accurate responses to their development of resiliency while in foster care.

#### Data Collection and Instruments

Data was collected through face-to-face interviews using an interview guide comprised of approximately 10 questions. Demographic information including age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, education, and income was asked of participants and collected separately, prior to presenting the questions from the interview schedule. The questions were open-ended and participants were encouraged to elaborate on their experiences transitioning from foster care. This process allowed the

researchers to obtain the most comprehensive information from the participants.

Furthermore, the sequence of the questions were arranged in such a way as to encourage the participants to elaborate on their personal experiences, e.g., participants were asked about their relationships with biological family members, foster care background and history, including their history of child abuse, environmental factor including social supports, educational background, employment and services received upon emancipation. These questions gathered information pertaining to circumstances that brought youth into the child welfare system, challenges after emancipation, and ways foster youth developed resiliency. Additionally, the researchers sought information related to participation in life skills programs and mental health assessments.

#### Procedures

The researchers developed a flyer that was distributed to eligible former foster youth by the support service program. The flyer was informative, brief, and listed the criteria the researchers were looking for. Additionally, the researchers' contact

information was posted including their e-mail, telephone number, and supervisor in charge of their study. Also, the flyer indicated that monetary compensation was available upon the successful completion of the interview. All participants that were interested in the study contacted the researchers and the researchers made arrangements for the interview.

Emancipated foster youth participants were recruited from February 8 through April 6, 2012. Participants that met the criteria of emancipated foster youth were invited to participate in the study. Participants were given a consent form. The interview took approximately 30 minutes to complete and was administered by the researchers. Upon successful completion of the interview, participants were given \$20.00 compensation for their time, a list of resource in the area and a debriefing statement.

#### Protection of Human Rights

The researchers used appropriate measures to ensure participants in this study were protected. All the participants were interviewed on a voluntary basis. The participants were presented with an informed consent, and an audio consent, in which they placed an X in the

appropriate box indicating their consent to participate as well as to be audio taped. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, confidentiality and that their participation was completely voluntary, and they have the right to stop at any time or refuse to answer any questions they feel uncomfortable with.

Additionally, participants were informed about who was conducting the study, the researchers' supervisor overseeing the study, IRB approval guidelines, and what they would receive for their participation. All participants as indicated in the informed consent may choose to discontinue the interview at any time without penalty. All participants were given a list of resources in the area. During this study, the participants were not identified by name, instead a number between 1 and 15 was assigned to each interview corresponding with demographic information collected. This precaution protected the confidentiality of all participants. All data obtained was stored in such a way that the researchers were the only persons to have access to the information. Upon the successful completion of the study all data was destroyed. Researchers shredded and deleted all interviewees' information. The audiotape from the

recorder was either pulled out of the cartridge and fed into a paper shredder or deleted from digital recordings.

### Data Analysis

This study utilized a qualitative data analysis technique. The researchers used a journal for the collection and analysis of data. The researchers were familiar with the entire data set by previewing all the interviews. The journal assisted during the analysis of data in reviewing memos, identifying meanings, and documenting emergent issues during the interview. All data gathered from the interviews as well as the audiotapes were transcribed verbatim using a word processing program. The researchers developed a coding method to organize and categorize the data. The researchers focused on four critical factors to understand the development of resiliency, these factors were: relationships with family members, history of child abuse, connections with the environment and individual characteristics.

The presence or absence of these indicators assisted researchers in understanding why emancipated foster youth were resilient. Furthermore, Grinnell and Unrau (2008),

suggest researchers needed to examine data sets carefully to further identify similarities and differences. Each unit of information was formulated into different themes and categories within the interviews of the participants. In addition, the researchers verified with the support program that all participants met the criteria of the target population. This verification ensured the trustworthiness of the results. Finally, this study used descriptive statistics, frequency distribution, and measures of central tendency to describe the characteristics of the sample.

#### Summary

In summary, this chapter outlined the methodology that was used in this study. This study used a qualitative design, as well as non-probability convenient snowball sampling. The researchers conducted face-to-face interviews using an interview schedule. The procedures used as well as protection of human subjects were addressed. Finally, data analysis techniques pertaining to qualitative research were discussed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

This chapter presents the results from the research study. Data analysis for demographics was conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Results findings relating to Categories I-VI are reported descriptively through qualitative analysis. Finally, results pertaining to the research question are presented.

#### Demographic Information

This research study collected data from 15 participants that identified as former emancipated foster youth who exited the child welfare system within the past thirteen years. The majority of participants identified as Black/African American and Hispanic. In this study, females outnumbered males by a margin of thirteen to two. The ages of participants ranged from eighteen to thirty-one years. Nearly 93.3% of all respondents have attained a college degree or are current students. In addition, half of the participants are able to hold a

part-time job. Tables 1 and 2 describe the demographics makeup of participants.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency (%)	Percentage (n)
Age (N=15)		
18-22	8	53.3
23-27	6	40.0
28-32	1	6.7
Gender (N=15)		
Female	13	86.7
Male	2	13.3
Ethnicity (N=15)		
African-American/Black	7	46.7
Hispanic/Latino	3	20.0
White/Caucasian	2	13.3
Asian/Pakistani	1	6.7
Mixed	2	3.3
Marital Status (N=15)		
Single	13	86.7
Married	1	.7
Cohabiting	1	.7
Educational Attainment (N=15)		
Vocational/Trade School	1	6.7
Associate Degree	1	6.7
Bachelor Degree	1	6.7
Graduate Degree	2	13.3
Current Student	10	66.7
Employment Status (N=15)		
Unemployed	8	53.3
Employed	7	46.7

Variable	Frequency (%)	Percentage (n)
Income Level (N=15)		
No Income	7	46.7
\$1,000-\$5,000	2	13.3
\$6,000-\$10,000	1	6.7
\$11,000-\$15,000	1	6.7
\$16,000-\$20,000	2	13.3
\$31,000-\$35,000	2	13.3
Occupation (N=15)		
Fulltime Student	9	60.0
Fulltime/Part time employee	3	20.0
Part time Student/Multiple Jobs	1	6.7
Professional Career	2	13.3

### Presentation of Findings

Six categories were used to gather data from former emancipated foster youth. The data revealed emancipated foster youth's perceptions of their experiences, including obstacles, coping skills and outcomes associated with aging out of foster care and transitioning to adulthood. From the collection and analysis of their responses, the following findings emerged regarding the experiences and coping skills of emancipated foster youth. Additionally, a sample of the participants' answers to questions in all categories is included in these findings.

### Category I: Family

In category I participants answered questions regarding their biological and foster family contact. Specifically, participants were asked to describe their relationships with biological family members and their foster family at the time of emancipation. The majority of respondents reported having lost contact with biological parents because abuse continued when they tried to maintain a current relationship. One participant responded, "I don't speak to my mother because now that she can't be physically abusive she is mentally abusive. She always calls me names, always brings it down on you. There's a lot of emotional abuse" (Participant 2, personal communication, February 9, 2012). Participants who reported that they stay in contact with family members indicated, more often than not, that their primary family contact is their siblings.

In one response referring to sibling contact, a participant stated, "we keep in contact through face book, but their new foster mom doesn't really allow me to talk with them, which really gets to me because I'm the best for them" (Participant 10, personal communication, March 17, 2012). This participant became tearful and

upset when remembering the separation from siblings even though it had been several years since their separation. Overall, a majority of participants remained in contact with siblings while nearly all of the participants had lost contact with their biological mother and/or father.

Regarding foster family contact, eight participants reported having contact with their foster family at time of emancipation, including foster siblings. These participants noted having meaningful relationships with their foster families and reported that their foster families treated them with love and respect and that they continue to consider them family. In answering the question about foster family contact a participant responded, "My foster mom, I keep in contact with her still. I go to see her at Christmas and Thanksgiving, so I'm up there on holidays and stuff or I just talk to her on face book" (Participant 10, personal communication, March 17, 2012). Participants who lost contact with foster family members reported having lost connection for reasons ranging from, not liking their foster families to not being able to contact the foster family or receiving no response to attempted calls. One participant's answer revealed:

.

Well, my foster mom, while I was in foster care, she was like a mother to me. We talked all the time. She gave me advice but then, when I got out of foster care we weren't really close anymore. Like, I haven't talked to her in a couple of months or so. I just feel we lost that close connection we had when I was in foster care. (Participant 9, personal communication, March 17, 2012)

#### Category II: Abuse History

Category II posed questions to participants regarding their foster placement history. Participants responded to questions regarding the reason for entering placement, the length of time in placement, the number of placements, and their history of child abuse while with their biological family and in foster care.

All respondents reported the reason for entering placement was because of parental neglect and/or abuse. The majority of participants recalled, in great detail, the circumstances surrounding their abuse. A number of participants became emotional, angry and visibly upset when asked about their abuse history. Specifically, one participant remembered with explicit details:

There were creative punishments like when you get in trouble you have to kneel on your knees with some beans on a tray, like my dad would do it. He would put an egg in between your legs so you can't move your legs and he would put peanut butter on your nose and he videotapes you and you are naked. That's what he would do and just weird stuff like that.

(Participant 1, personal communication, February 8, 2012)

Another participant revealed the reason they entered foster care was "because of my dad for child endangerment and sexual abuse. He actually touched me once and I told my mom about it but she didn't do anything about it"

(Participant 14, personal communication, March 29, 2012).

This participant remembered that her sibling had reported a similar sexual abuse to a counselor at a school resulting in the removal of all children from the home. Another participant answered "I entered when I was a baby so I don't really know. I just recently found out that my mom was on drugs and she couldn't take care of me"

(Participant 13, personal communication, March 23, 2012).

The majority of participants thought being removed was

warranted and often necessary to stop abuse to them or their siblings.

The average age participants entered care was eight years old. This finding coincides with current data from government agencies receiving child welfare reports from California's fifty-eight Counties, including Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.

One participant reported entering care at three months and one participant entered care at 17 years old. All participants reported aging out of foster care at either 18 or 19 years old.

Regarding the number of placements, findings reveal participants had an average of 4 placements. Five participants reported having only one placement while one participant reported having lived in sixteen different placements. Participants who lived in one to four foster care placements reported they felt more stable and able to concentrate on school. One participant stated:

I am very lucky my educational background was very stable. I was in the same school system since I was in the third grade. I was within the same district. I was at the same middle school and high school. It

was very stable. (Participant 5, personal communication, March 9, 2012)

Another participant stated:

I had just one placement while in foster care but I really hated the whole school environment so I dropped out in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. When, my foster mother, she told me something very important. She told me if you don't educate yourself you will end up being homeless. She pushed me to get educated.

(Participant 2, personal communication, February 9, 2012)

Although, the number of placements is attributable to many variables, in most responses, participants perceived having fewer placements with better success in secondary education. Two participants reported that multiple placements contributed to difficulties in secondary education. One participant with multiple placements replied, "My education in foster care was poor. I moved to quite a few schools. I probably went to 13 different schools. Because I moved around so much I didn't have an opportunity to do well in school"

(Participant 3, personal communication, February 24, 2012).

The history of child abuse findings revealed that all participants entered foster care because of child abuse, including physical abuse, sexual abuse and abandonment. When asked about their child abuse history, one participant became agitated and stated:

I got a loaded gun pointed to the back of my neck. I was put outside naked. I had to spend the night outside because of something I had done wrong. I guess I have tried to forget the bad things from my past. (Participant 3, personal communication, February 24, 2012)

This participant reported being five years old at the time of this abuse.

### Category III: Environment

Category III was comprised of three sections. The first section relates to social supports, the second section relates to educational background and the third section relates to services offered upon emancipation.

#### Social Supports

Almost all of the study's participants said they had a supportive adult while in placement. Participants described supportive adults as people in their lives who

were willing to spend time with them, give them advice and words of encouragement and acknowledged their successes as well as giving constructive criticism to them. One participant expressed with sincere gratitude: "One support was my CASA we used to meet weekly and she would do anything for me. This lady is amazing till now we are in touch. She goes beyond the duties of a CASA" (Participant 2, personal communication, February 9, 2012).

This participant remembered in detail how her CASA worker left her kids to aid her when she was in a car accident, stating, "She didn't even have to do that but she's done a lot for me and I appreciate it" (Participant 2, personal communication, February 9, 2012).

Emancipated foster youth reported the significance their CASA workers made in ensuring that they received justice in a manner that expressed their wishes rather than that of the child welfare system.

These youth express CASA workers were role models in ensuring that their voices were heard and taught them how to advocate for themselves. Answers to questions about their life-long connections revealed participants remain in contact with these social supports. Social

supports included teachers, social workers, including ILP social workers, foster parents and friends. A participant's response to life-long connections included the statement:

My social worker was very supportive. We were very close even after she no longer had my case. I could contact her to let her know what was going on. She stayed in my life until I was 19 when I met my Aftercare worker and she is still currently my mentor. (Participant 15, personal communication, April 6, 2012)

Additionally, these youth perceive their life-long connections are supportive because they continue to participate in their daily lives. An example of this continued involvement was revealed by a participant who proudly reported that their ILP social worker would be attending their upcoming graduation from community college.

#### Educational Background

Regarding educational background, participants reported attending an average of 5.1 schools during their academic career. Data indicates that most participants attended between one and twelve schools. The majority of

participants reported having changed schools multiple times from kindergarten to sixth grade. One participant stated:

So I can't remember how many elementary schools I went to. I do know I missed kindergarten completely. I never went. From 2<sup>nd</sup> grade I went to multiple schools, I want to say 8-9 schools. In 3<sup>rd</sup> grade I was stable. That's when I started finally being stable. It created a problem for me when I was in college because I missed the basics it took me a long time to get my AA. (Participant 15, personal communication, April 6, 2012)

This statement exemplifies the impact of disruptions in primary education among foster youth. However, several participants noted that it wasn't until middle and high school that they became more stable in placement and school. A participant remembered:

It wasn't until my junior year that somebody was like, oh you're not going to graduate until you are 21. That was my school counselor in the continuation school. He told me it was impossible to get as many credits as I needed to even go back to the regular school. Turned out I ended up making up 3 years

worth of credits in a year. I think the fact that my counselor told me it was impossible made me want to prove him wrong. (Participant 3, personal communication, February 24, 2012)

In terms of high school graduation, data revealed that all participants graduated from high school. One participant recalled with determination:

I wanted that diploma because it was very important to me because I wanted to prove to myself and to my family, to my siblings that I still can look forward to graduating, that they could get a diploma. I wanted to be the first. (Participant 14, personal communication, March 29, 2012)

Despite a variety of obstacles encountered by participants while completing their secondary education, all of the participants are currently attending college or have completed a post-secondary degree. Some participants reported difficulties paying for school while others reported problems with transportation to school or not taking school seriously. One participant recounted a conversation with the foster parent about not doing well in school:

In the end, my foster mom would remind me it was me that I was hurting with doing so poor in school. Once I had this conversation with her I was able to bring up my grades. It was then that I decided I wanted to go to college. (Participant 12, personal communication, March 22, 2012)

### Employment History

Regarding employment, participants were asked if they had ever been employed and if they could describe their experiences. Nearly all respondents indicated that they had worked as a teenager in foster care and most continue to work today. The overall reasons participants indicated they worked as teenagers was 1) to "get the things I needed", 2) "to feel more independent" and 3) "because my foster mom didn't give me any money of my own" (Participant 8, personal communication, March 9, 2012). One participant said:

Yes, I worked most of my teenage life in fast food. I was 19 when I got an internship at the Aftercare program I'm currently working at a local mental hospital. Work helped with transitioning definitely. I have always been a go-getter and when my mom abandoned me I realized early that I needed to take

care of myself. I am very self-sufficient so I have always done something, even when I was in elementary school. Having those values instilled in me, I just continued that throughout my life and it has helped me a lot through everything because I know you have to work to get the things you need. (Participant 15, personal communication, April 6, 2012)

Another participant stated adamantly:

I mean, the only reason she kept me in that house was cause she [foster mother] got a paycheck every month. I'm not stupid. So, when I got 16 I got a job and it was then I got to do stuff. I became a cheerleader that year. I bought clothes that I liked, stuff like that. (Participant 8, personal communication, March 9, 2012)

#### Services Offered at Emancipation

Every participant in this study was offered some type of service or resource at emancipation. These services included life skills training; budgeting, housekeeping, college prep, and driver training. Medical benefits were also extended to the majority of emancipated foster youth. One of the most valued services reported by all participants, whether they received this

service or not, is transitional housing. More than half of emancipated foster youth participants were provided transitional housing either through a public or not-for-profit agency. A participant explained, with excitement, that transitional housing services through a not-for-profit agency meant the participant was living in an apartment with a roommate, "I was hoping for a transitional program that would help me to get into the independent type of adulthood. They provided housing, which you paid \$100 in rent. So I still contribute to the independence and I saved money" (Participant 14, personal communication, March 29, 2012).

Overall, most participants reported that not-for-profit agencies were more helpful in providing transitional services as compared with public agency services. A participant reported with conviction:

So, I'm in the Independent Futures program and I actually get a \$250 stipend every month for going to college and being a full time student and stuff through their program that they have. So, I feel like if there were more agencies like that it would be better. I talk to all the other kids in the house [transitional housing] and they're like, oh, yea, we

just don't have all of that [meaning services]. We got kicked out of our agency and the County is worse. I feel like County is worse. (Participant 10, personal communication, March 17, 2012)

Conversely, two participants expressed with sadness that they were not eligible for any transitional services because they had guardianship and were ineligible for services at age 13. In a poignant statement by one of these participants it was noted:

They [meaning County social worker] just said because my case was closed before I was 13 I wasn't eligible, your case had to be open past 13 for you to be in ILP. But I got lucky because the ILP lady, she liked me, she gave me all the ILP information when they have job openings. She still e-mails me scholarships. (Participant 13, personal communication, March 23, 2012)

This statement is powerful in that it illustrates that the need for services is as great for foster youth who are technically considered to be in guardianship or foster care status because according to participants there is no difference, their needs are still the same.

More than half of all participants either received or are currently receiving life skills services. However, a nearly equal number of participants reported they had acquired life skills from a source other than an Independent Living Program. A participant commented, "ILP and Aftercare were there but I didn't necessarily utilize Aftercare too much. I had good foster parents. So they prepared me a lot for independence" (Participant 5, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Some participants felt that life skills services were either not available, not offered to them, or did not offer valuable and interesting life skills. One participant noted, "I went through the ILP program but it wasn't very helpful. The program was showing me stuff that I already knew" (Participant 2, personal communication, February 9, 2012). Another participant commented, that "The classes were really boring and they didn't really teach me anything. I didn't get anything from these services, I felt they were useless" (Participant 11, personal communication, March 17, 2012).

One participant reported receiving driver's training and felt strongly that this was a valuable resource. This participant stated, "The ILP has a six-week series so I

went to learn how to get my driver's license and get my ID and social security card" (Participant 15, personal communication, April 6, 2012).

#### Category IV: Individual Characteristics

Category IV is divided into two sections. Section I asks participants to describe characteristics related to their personality. Specifically, participants were asked to describe their perceived strengths, weaknesses, unique qualities, and levels of self-esteem.

In Section I, most participants described determination as a personality characteristic that helped them to develop the drive to succeed. A participant adamantly stated:

I am determined to get what I want. My determination is one of the most important things I have. I am determined to get out of poverty. I think that if you are determined to get out [of foster care] you need to do it yourself. (Participant 2, personal communication, February 9, 2012)

Another participant noted "One of my strengths is that I am very determined when I set my mind on something

I reach it no matter what" (Participant 11, personal communication, March 17, 2012).

Regarding weaknesses, the majority of participants revealed their perceived weakness was making poor choices that ultimately affected their outcomes in negative ways. One participant noted, "I was on the drug path for a minute or two. They sent me to rehab but I still have to worry about falling back into that lifestyle when I'm stressed" (Participant 6, personal communication, March 9, 2012).

Additionally, many youth reported difficulties with regulating their emotions. One participant said:

My weakness is that I am very emotional when things happen sometimes. I think I am too hard on myself. I have high expectations of myself. I feel these weaknesses are in part, due to my feeling of being alone. (Participant 12, personal communication, March 22, 2012)

Regarding uniqueness of character, participants cited being strong willed, helpful, kind, outgoing and adaptable as characteristics they attribute to their resiliency. One respondent noted, "I'm very passionate in helping others. I'm very friendly, I think I'm very

helpful and kind" (Participant 5, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Another participant stated strongly:

My uniqueness, I am a perfectionist I am creative. I am really optimistic about life. I don't really see the bad things about life. I am very bright and intelligent. I'm educated. I try to see stuff better. I try to see beyond the negativity. I see it from a different view and it may be related to the fact that I am an artist. I'm a creator so I see the picture before it's there, but that's the way my mind works. (Participant 6, personal communication, March 9, 2012)

Regarding self-esteem, fourteen out of fifteen participants reported that they were very comfortable with themselves and had high self-esteem. One participant relayed having struggled with self-esteem, stating:

I feel really great about myself. I don't really have any problems with myself like, I put myself down only with school but I tell myself, you need to get going, you've been through this before, you can make it happen. (Participant 10, personal communication, March 17, 2012)

Section II asked participants to describe the type of stressors they encountered while in foster care and what they think helped overcome them. Five out of fifteen participants reported that foster parents were a direct source of stress. One participant stated with disgust:

My foster parents were 20 and I was 16 and I didn't want them telling me what to do. I thought they were no different than me because of the age. Plus, the other foster kids would steal and break my stuff that stressed me out a lot. I coped with this by knowing no one recovers from foster care and moving on. (Participant 4, personal communication, March 2, 2012)

Another participant recounted the struggles in bonding with their foster parent. This participant angrily stated:

My foster dad was really mean. He was always yelling for no reason, he was really cruel. And my foster sibs, we always fought and stuff. Coping with it? I just ignored her and didn't come home and would just be gone. (Participant 1, personal communication, February 8, 2012)

In terms of sibling separation five participants reported that separation from siblings was stressful and made adjusting to foster care difficult. A participant who was clearly distraught exclaimed:

Many times I felt alone! I didn't think anyone could understand me. It was traumatic to be separated from my 4 siblings. I did visit with my siblings for one year but once my siblings reunified with my mom [biological] I was not able to see them again. The social worker determined it wasn't appropriate for me to reunify with my mom but my siblings did reunify with her. (Participant 12, personal communication, March 22, 2012)

This participant noted coping with this stressor well and further elaborated "At first I was upset, now I realize that it was the best choice, because now I can focus on myself instead of focusing on my biological family" (Participant 12, personal communication, March 22, 2012).

Finally, five participants reported difficulty in adjusting to the foster care environment. The majority of these participants reported that stressors in foster care included; 1) adjusting to a new home and strange people, 2) not having sufficient finances and, 3) the inability

to deal with being a foster youth. Regarding foster home adjustments, one participant stated, "My will to succeed was my survival strategy" (Participant 3, personal communication, February 24, 2012). Another participant commented, "I learned to forgive and now I'm striving to be my best" (Participant 4, personal communication, March 2, 2012). In relation to not having sufficient finances a participant announced:

When I turned 16 I got a job and it was then I became self-sufficient, even while in foster care." Still, another participant talked about the stress of being a foster child by saying I coped by ignoring the problem because I felt I couldn't do anything about it. I just stayed to myself until emancipation. (Participant 8, personal communication, March 9, 2012)

#### Category V: Overall Health

Category V is divided into two sections. Section I asks participants to describe their physical and emotional health while in foster care, including mental health. Section II asked participants to describe their current health.

Section I; Regarding participants' health while in foster care ten out of fifteen respondents indicated they had good physical health. Overwhelmingly, participants reported that they could not remember clearly the implications of being healthy or unhealthy while in foster care. One respondent stated candidly, "I think I was in better health when I was in foster care because the foster parents are forced to take you to the doctors to get a physical every year and you must go to the dentist too" (Participant 13, personal communication, March 23, 2012). In comparison to their responses about their physical health, participants had many more significant memories of depression and other mental health issues than physical ailments.

Regarding mental health twelve out of fifteen participants reported depression, anger and suicide ideation and other various mental health issues while in foster care. One participant stated concretely, "While I was in foster care I went through depression. At one point I had suicidal thoughts. I had therapy but I don't think it helped me" (Participant 2, personal communication, February 9, 2012). These sentiments were shared by the majority of participants who answered this

question by stating that they were either offered counseling services or attended counseling session but felt they did not benefit from mental health services. This information is consistent with literature indicating foster youth are receiving inadequate mental health services. One participant recounted:

When I went to see the counselor she never asked me about what happened. She would ask me about my day that's because she wanted me to say what happened but she wouldn't even talk about the abuse. It would be like that. (Participant 9, personal communication, March 17, 2012)

Section II; Regarding current physical health, participant discussion centered on self-care. Fourteen out of fifteen participants responded to this question by stating that they perceived themselves as better at providing for their health needs. One participant expressed:

I'm eating better. I go to the Doctor every 3 months and they weigh me, and every time I've been losing. I think the last time I went the doctor said I'd lost 7 pounds. So this time I'm actually doing something to lose weight. So hopefully it's going to

be more. (Participant 1, personal communication, February 8, 2012)

Regarding current mental health, eleven out of fifteen participants report they are not currently experiencing mental health issues. Respondents attributed this overwhelmingly positive change to self-care and seeking informal resources through friends and family. Specifically, one participant commented, "If I need help when I'm stressing out I just go to people I trust. My sister and I talk, I go to my friends, my close, close friends" (Participant 14, personal communication, March 29, 2012).

#### Category VI: Vision for the Future of Foster Care

The final category in this research study focuses on a proposed change for the future of foster care. Overall, participants were very excited about answering the question: If you could propose a change for foster care what would it be and why? Many participants asked for a moment to contemplate their responses and gave poignant suggestions.

The overriding theme derived from this question was better training of foster parents. Seven out of fifteen

respondents said they felt foster parents needed better training. One participant noted after careful thought, "Um, better foster homes" (Participant 5, personal communication, March 9, 2012). When asked to elaborate, this participant continued:

Foster parents that are there to really help kids and not just there to take the pay check and put a roof over their heads; to be really involved with the foster kids, play games with them, talk to them, show them how to be independent. A lot of them [foster parents] don't do that. (Participant 5, personal communication, March 9, 2012)

Another emerging theme in this category was participants' response to the lack of services offered upon emancipation. Five out of fifteen respondents said they wanted to see improved resources, equity in resources between counties and extending care beyond age eighteen. A participant responded:

One of the biggest things is not kicking people out at 18. I feel like now that they kind of fixed that (reference to AB 12). I think about my brother who wasn't fortunate enough to qualify for Aftercare like me. He didn't graduate high school cause he had

a lot of problems. And, I look on that and I wished he would have gotten more help when he got kicked out [of foster care]. And I understand that you have to want the help, but at the same time it was because my brother didn't know how much he needed the help. (Participant 10, personal communication, March 17, 2012)

Regarding improved social work practice and involvement, two participants felt the vision for the future of foster care must include better training of social workers, especially in the area of independent living. A participant answering this question stated with conviction:

I think that social workers need to be consistent in foster youth lives. If there was one way to make one social worker from beginning to end with that youth it would benefit the youth in the long run. When you lack consistency so much can happen through that. (Participant 7, personal communication, March 9, 2012)

## Summary

In this chapter the demographic of the participants were described. The study revealed that a majority of the youth identified as African American females. Further this study derived six categories relating to emancipated youth's family of origin, abuse history, environmental factors including support systems, educational background, employment history, and services offered at emancipation. In addition, individual characteristics of youth were examined, overall health and their vision for the future of foster care. Study findings revealed that in order for youth to perceive themselves as resilient they must have strong connections with supportive adults, bonding with siblings, and characteristics relating to determination, strong self-esteem and the belief that their life is worthwhile in order to succeed in life.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

This research study examined emancipated foster youths' perceptions of coping strategies that helped them to transition successfully from the child welfare system. This chapter discusses significant results, limitations and implications for social work practice. This chapter also and offers recommendations for future research studies.

#### Discussion

The study found that the majority of emancipated foster youth perceived that strong attachments to biological siblings proved to be critical in assisting them transition to adulthood. Additionally, many foster youth had siblings that were either placed with them or were separated at the time of removal. Youth that continued to remain bonded with their siblings were more likely to feel that they were not alone and that one day when they grew up they would be together again. Studies reveal that sibling relationships not only stimulate

development but aid children with adapting to difficult situations (Depp 1983, Hegar 1988).

Many youth continued contact with their biological siblings after emancipation. This finding is consistent with literature suggesting that many emancipated foster youth return to their family of origin after leaving care (Garmezy 1993). An example of this finding in the study was expressed by one youth who was so determined to connect with her birth family that she adopted her younger sibling and underwent and passed all criteria necessary to adopt him. Strong sibling relationships allow youth to surpass many of the challenges of foster care and enables youth to strive to be better people. Sibling relationships transcend foster care as they provide support, companionship, and caretaking that are established early in life and carries over into adulthood.

This study also found that abuse history ranged from physical, emotional, sexual to neglect. The majority of children were removed due to neglect. This number is consistent with literature regarding removal of children. Studies reveal that over 70% of children are removed due to child neglect (McSherry, 2007). Further, youth

reported continued emotional abuse within their foster placement. The ability to rationalize abuse and adapt to the changing environments associated with foster care were key factors in the successful outcomes of participants. This finding is consistent with Henry's (1999) literature relating to children that normalized their abusive background. According to Henry (1999), because these children believed that their lives were worthwhile they were more capable of achieving success. Adaptation is one of the most important characteristics in ensuring that foster youth make it and overcome adversity.

Another finding was that emancipated foster youth perceived their successful outcomes to be associated with having life-long connections, bonding with foster parents and supportive adults. Participants that had strong connections with at least one foster parent or with a supportive adult in their lives expressed greater ease in transitioning to adulthood. These youth expressed gratitude in having foster parents that resembled birth families and that genuinely cared for them.

These foster parents were described as wonderful people that cared for them, believed in them and did not

become foster parents for monetary gains. According to a majority of foster youth, these foster parents were what every child needed in order to make it in life. These youth were grateful to the foster parents and did not view them as alternative caregivers but rather as their mom and dad.

In addition, youth that sought additional connections with other supportive adults such as social workers, CASA workers, teachers, or mentors had more access to resources compared to youth that became lost in the system. These observations are consistent with literature reporting that in order for children to overcome adversity, they must seek relationship with people that will enable them to become competent adults through the use of mentorships and consultation with others (Garmezy, 1991).

Further, a majority of foster youth in this sample had connections with supportive adults willing to help them beyond the age of 18. The realization that someone was physically as well as emotionally available to meet their basic needs was essential in ensuring youth became successful. Youth did not have to worry about being

homeless, burdened by finances or lacking attachment bonds with significant adults.

Educational findings revealed that an important characteristic of successful transitional foster youth is the pursuit of higher education. These youth were determined and successful in seeking a college degree. All youth managed to maintain at least a 3.0 GPA and were successful in ensuring their continued participation in college programs. The majority of the sample, nearly 94% of former foster youth, were currently enrolled in college, graduate school or in a vocational program. These youth not only were persistent in enrolling in college but were actively advocating for themselves.

One participant ensured that they received every grant available to foster youth even if it meant going the extra mile to obtain the information and services needed. This is consistent with literature in that resilient people are those that do not give up easily and continue to seek answers. All the youth had encountered problems entering college yet each one had successfully sought solutions and found answers to all their problems.

An important finding related to employment suggests that participants felt having a job while in foster care

helped them to feel independent and less reliant on foster parents. This finding is significant because it coincides with current literature that suggests foster homes can facilitate youths' employment status (Hook and Courtney, 2011).

A significant finding is related to the services participants received upon emancipation. Specifically, participants who received services, no matter how small, perceived those services as beneficial. This finding coincides with literature suggesting that resilient adults are those who are persistent in seeking out solutions to their problems (Masten, 2000).

One major finding related to personality appears to contradict Erikson's (2011) theory of child development. Specifically, these youth had mastered the stage of identity vs. role confusion despite the challenges they encountered in foster care. These participants were able to develop a healthy identity which helped them to successfully transition to adulthood.

This information is consistent with data related to positive coping skills in which self-esteem nurtured by strong and supportive relationships is an indicator of youth's ability to cope and endured challenges.

Furthermore, self-imagine is associated with characteristics attributed to resilient people that make it in life and manage to become successful despite life's challenges.

Advocacy is another characteristic often seen in resilient children. Youth that advocated for themselves reported developing coping skills that included going along with the status quo while in placement to prevent themselves from getting in trouble or being moved from placement to placement. In hindsight, these young adults realize if they had advocated for themselves while in care things could have been better. Each participant interviewed was passionate about sharing their experiences and advocating for at-risk youth still in the foster care system.

This study found that a key component of resiliency is children's ability to cope with difficult situations. This sample was unique in that all the foster youth had adapted to challenges while in foster care and managed to beat the odds. The outcome of these interviews support Masten's (2000) research in which resilient youth were found to be good problem solvers and were close to adults

in their lives who cared and provided structure as well as high expectations for transitional aged youth.

In terms of overall health the study found that participants were less aware of their physical health status while in foster care than after emancipation. One reason for this interpretation could be that foster parents are mandated to tend to the health needs of foster youth as a condition of foster home certification.

Another significant finding related to the mental health of participants suggests that foster youth were cognizant of their mental health needs while in foster care. However, because of their reluctance or misunderstanding of the importance of good mental health they either refused or were too ashamed to accept mental health services. This finding is directly related to literature that reports deficiencies in the provision of mental health services to transitional aged foster youth (CAI, 2010).

Finally, the most profound discovery was related to the vision for the future of foster care. The study's participants unanimously agreed that in addition to more transitional services, better training of foster parents and social workers is needed. This statement is

consistent with policy efforts that are currently in place to assist emancipated foster youth transition to adulthood. California's Assembly Bill 12 (2012) is in the beginning stages of extending foster care placement and services to emancipating foster youth. Social workers, foster parents, and youth are being informed and trained about the continuation of services that may benefit youth in transitioning to self-sufficiency. Further, initiatives are in place in the recruitment of foster parents who are willing to take care of sibling groups and teens. For example, the Quality Parenting Initiative (UC Davis, 2010), aims to recruit only the most qualified foster parents that will be a good match for the foster child and their siblings. This initiative began in Florida after child welfare agencies continuously received negative comments regarding placement of children and is currently practiced in Northern California.

#### Limitations

The first limitation of this study is related to sampling size. The researchers sought to have a larger sample of participants but were unsuccessful in reaching

this population. Further, the sample was primarily composed of African American females. Greater diversity would have increased knowledge of other ethnicities relating to coping strategies. In addition, the researchers did not intend to primarily focus on single women but a combination of married male and females alike. Also, many of the participants primarily originated from San Bernardino and Riverside Counties of Southern California, thereby limiting this study's generalizability. The participants were selected based on convenience and availability rather than using random sampling.

Secondly, this study only examined emancipated foster youth that perceived themselves to be successful. A comparison group of unsuccessful youth may be beneficial in learning more about challenges while in foster care. Thirdly, the structured interview questionnaire that was used did not allow the researchers to fully capture all characteristics in understanding resiliency in former foster youth. Although coping strategies were asked of participants, a broader understanding of defense mechanisms would have been vital in understanding how youth cope with emotional trauma.

Further, these concepts could have provided researchers with a more detailed understanding of how foster youth's defense mechanism impact various stages of development. Finally, the study may be further limited in that some of the youth perceived the researchers as intrusive authority figures. This perception placed foster youth on guard limiting their trust and ultimately affected the quality of the information acquired from these participants. While some of the youth that were older were more confident, outspoken, and eager to tell their stories, the younger youth that had recently emancipated were careful in revealing their stories. This age gap prevented the researchers from fully understanding younger generations compared to older generations.

#### Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

The implications for social work practice that emerged from this study give insight into the specific needs that foster youth identified as necessary to successfully transition to adulthood. A significant need for research in the area of child welfare, specifically foster care, is in the training and screening of foster

parents. There is limited information on the success rates of foster parents that are genuinely involved in the child's life compared to parents that are simply in it for monetary gains. Current research studies such as the Quality Parenting Initiative focus on recruiting and retaining high-quality caregivers to provide excellent care to children in California's Child Welfare System. The goal of the initiative, formerly known as the Caregiver Recruitment and Retention Pilot, is to develop a statewide approach for screening foster parents and caregiver involvement in the cases of foster youths. Over the past year, nine California counties have begun to implement this approach. This program reiterates the vision of the majority of participants who stated that there is a need for better trained foster parents in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.

This study suggests that emancipated foster youth need coordinated services despite qualifications and agency criteria. Social workers must be involved in teaching life skills and need to focus on developing resources that will allow foster youth the ability to gain independence through the attainment of life skills. Moreover, participants felt that even the smallest

contribution, e.g. receiving ILP brochures, made a significant difference in their successful transition to adulthood. More effective tools relating to assessment of foster youth are needed. This study revealed that not all foster youth share the same experiences and that each youth should be treated and assessed differently. These findings suggest that new approaches in assessment of emancipating foster youth are needed within the child welfare system.

Additionally, one major finding is that youth demonstrated an understanding of the basic needs related to food, shelter, safety, love, belonging, self-esteem confidence, respect, problem solving and reaching self-actualization.

Although policy impacting emancipated foster youth is currently in place, further refinements to this legislation are necessary. Changes regarding AB 12 need to be examined closer and tailored towards providing resources that will assist foster youth towards self-sufficiency. AB 12 does not ensure that all foster youth receive services following emancipation. A large number of children continue to emancipate each year without attaining the skills or the eligibility

requirements necessary to participate in aftercare programs. Further, AB 12 is conditional and not all foster youth will meet the criteria for this program of extended foster care. More services and resources are needed to serve foster youth that do not have anyone to turn to when they emancipate.

Since a majority of emancipating foster youth are African American, more research with this population is needed. Additional research is needed in the area of social work practice related to the provision of information and services to foster youth at a younger age. Youth often report feeling disappointed with the child welfare system's delivery of services because they feel that they were not given enough time to properly learn and utilize the services for emancipating foster youth.

Also research relating to disparities in service availability could be beneficial to emancipating foster youth as was revealed in this study. Specifically, foster youth felt that the opportunity for vital services was not equal across different Counties in California. Further research on self-advocacy for foster youth is also needed to discover how youth who are involved in

making decisions about their lives compares to those who do not.

The study suggests that more research is needed with a larger sample of emancipated foster youth. More research is also needed relating to emancipated youth that are taking part in extended services to foster children under the new AB 12 legislation.

### Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore foster youth's perceptions of factors that contributed to coping strategies that allowed them to successfully transition to adulthood. In this study fifteen foster youth were interviewed. The data from these interviews were analyzed and compared to understand the concept of resiliency. The findings revealed that resiliency is a complex phenomenon composed of various characteristics. The limitations of this study are described and clarified to assist future research endeavors. In conclusion, more research is needed on defense mechanisms, service availability and delivery and better screening and training of foster parents.

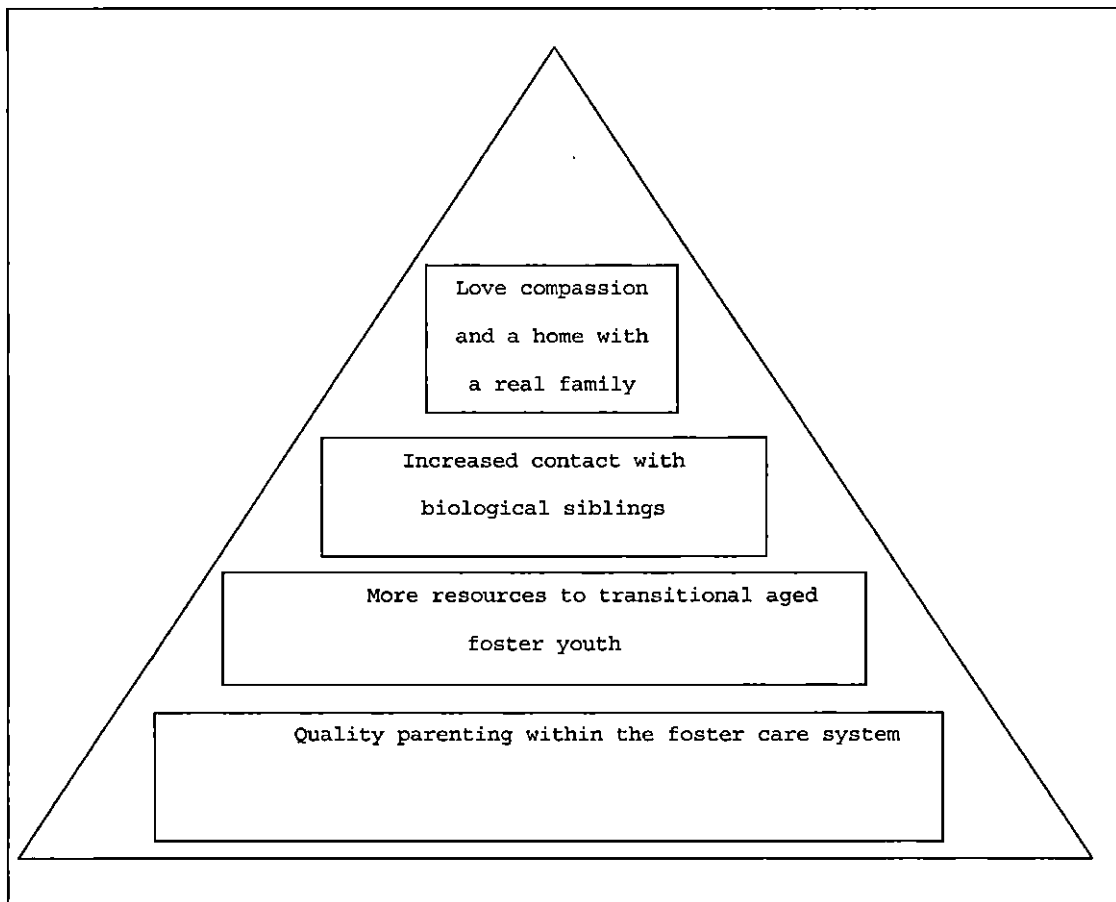


Figure 1. Emancipated Foster Youth's Hierarchy of Needs

APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### Introduction:

We are conducting a research study with former foster youth that have aged out of the system within the past ten years to see how they are currently doing. We are defining resilience as factors that allowed a youth to become successful. Since you meet our criteria we will be asking you a series of questions. We are interested in learning what contributed to your resilience upon emancipation. The responses provided will assist us in learning information about resilient emancipated foster youth.

#### Category I     Family:

##### Bio Family Background

1. Can you describe your relationships with biological family members (family of origin) and your foster parent(s). (Do you speak w/ family of origin, siblings? Why or why not?)

#### Category II     Abuse History:

##### Foster Care Background

2. Describe the reason for entering foster care. (Reason for entering, length of stay, # of placements, hx of child abuse)
3. What type of services were you offered to help prepare you for emancipation while in foster care?

#### Category III     Environment:

##### Social Supports

4. While in foster care did you have any supportive adults or lifelong connections? Do you still contact them? If so for what reasons? (Mentors, counselors, teachers, friends, social workers)

##### Educational Background

5. Can you describe you educational background while in foster care. And can you describe your education today? (# Of Schools attended, goals, obstacles, college)

### Employment History

6. Have you ever been employed? If so can you describe your experience?

### Services upon Emancipation

7. What type of services did you receive after emancipation?(Life skills, budgeting, cooking, housekeeping,etc;)

### Category IV Individual:

#### Personality Traits

8. Describe characteristics related to your personality. (What are your strengths/ weaknesses, what makes you unique, how comfortable do you feel about yourself? self-esteem levels)

#### Coping Skills

9. What type of stressors did you encounter while in foster care and what do you think helped you overcome them?

### Category V Overall Health:

10. Can you describe your physical and emotional health while in foster care? (Including mental health) what is your current health today?

### Category VI Vision for Future:

11. If you could propose a change for foster care what would it be and why?

Developed by Olga Phillips and Guadalupe Martinez

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT

## INFORMED CONSENT

You are invited to contribute your opinions to a study of former foster youths' views on overcoming adversities in aging out of foster care. This study is being conducted by Olga Phillips and Guadalupe Martinez under the supervision of Dr. Janet Chang, School of Social Work. This study has been approved by the School of Social Work Sub-committee of the CSUSB Institutional Review Board.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to assess emancipated foster youth's views on resilience.

**Description:** If you take part in this study, you will be interviewed and audiotaped about your experiences in aging out of foster care.

**Participation:** Participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to skip any questions you do not want to answer.

**Confidentiality:** The information you give will remain confidential and anonymous and no record will be made or kept of your name or any identifying information. The anonymous data from the interviews will only be seen by the researchers; the results will be reported in group form only.

**Duration:** This interview should take approximately 60 minutes to complete.

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

**Benefits:** You will receive \$10 cash, your opinions will help the Child Welfare system plan and develop programs for emancipating foster youth to successfully transition into adulthood.

**Contact:** If you have any questions about this study you can contact Dr. Janet Chang at (909) 537-5184

**Results:** The results of this study will be available in December 2012, from the Pfau Library at California State University, San Bernardino.

By marking below, you agree that you have been fully informed about this study and acknowledge that you are at least 18 years of age. .

Place a check mark here [ ☐ ]

Date\_\_\_\_\_

I understand and consent to this interview being audio taped. Place a check mark here [ ☐ ]

APPENDIX C  
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

## **DEBRIEFING STATEMENT**

### **A RESEARCH STUDYING THE RESILIENCIES OF FORMER FOSTER YOUTH**

The interview you have just completed was conducted to learn more about former foster youth views on coping strategies (resiliencies) and strengths. The focus of this study is to learn how former foster youth, such as you overcame barriers while other did not. Your responses to the questions asked today provide new information about characteristics of resiliency. This information will be compiled with future and past interviews of other study participants and will be used to educate others on the characteristics of resiliency in former foster youth.

Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions about this study please contact Olga Phillips, Guadalupe Martinez or Dr. Janet Chang at (909) 537-5184. If you feel you need to speak with a counselor you may contact the Psychological Counseling Center at (909) 537-5241 or Catholic Charities at (909) 388-1239. If you would like to obtain a copy of the group results of this study, please contact the Pfau library at California State University, San Bernardino after December 2012.

APPENDIX D  
DEMOGRAPHICS

### **Demographic Info**

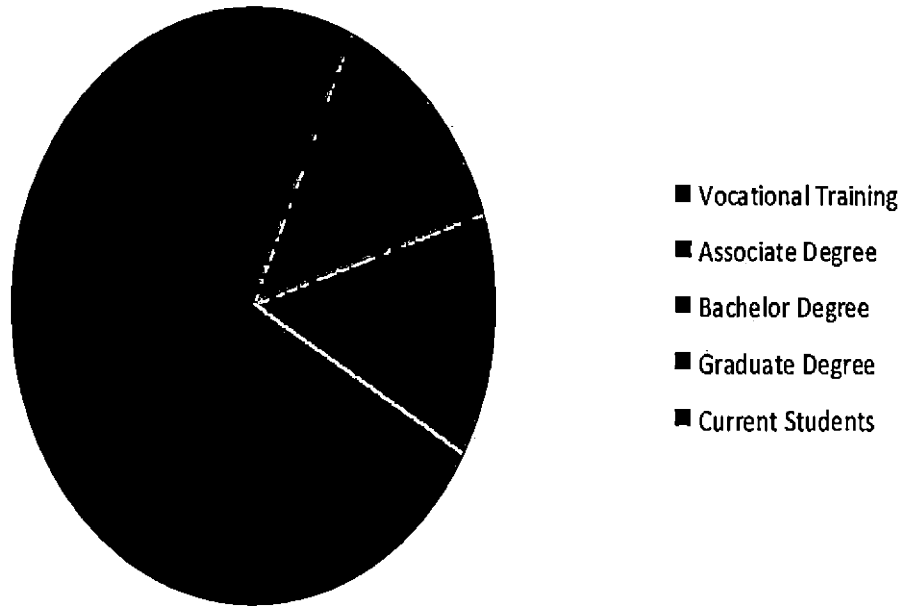
1. What is your current age? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your ethnicity? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your gender? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your marital status? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your income? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is the highest level of education reached? \_\_\_\_\_

Developed by Olga Phillips and Guadalupe Martinez

APPENDIX E

EMANCIPATED FOSTER YOUTH EDUCATIONAL STATUS

## Education



## REFERENCES

- Bank, S. P., & Kahn, M. D. (1982). *The sibling bond*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bernard, B. (1991). *Fostering resiliency in kids: Protective factors in the family, school, and community*. Portland, OR: Western Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities.
- Brandford, C., & English, D. J. (2004). *Foster youth transitioning to independent study: Final report*. Seattle, WA. Retrieved on 10/02/11 from [www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/ca/FYTfinal2004.pdf](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/ca/FYTfinal2004.pdf)
- California Fostering Connections. (2011). *Extending foster care to age 21: Implications and estimates from youth aging out of foster care in California*. Retrieved from <http://www.cafosteringconnections.org/research.html>
- California Fostering Connections to Success Act. (2011). *Public child welfare training academy*, San Bernardino, Ca.
- Casey Foundations. (2004). *2020 strategy: A vision for America's children*. Retrieved from <http://casey.org/aboutUs2020>

Children's Advocacy Institute. (2011). *Proposition 63: Is the mental health services act reaching transitional foster youth. A special report of the institute, University of San Diego, School of Law, January 2010*. Retrieved from [http://cachildlaw.org/Misc/Proposition\\_63\\_Report\\_Final\\_Master.pdf](http://cachildlaw.org/Misc/Proposition_63_Report_Final_Master.pdf).

Child Trends Data Snapshot. (2011). *Foster care data snapshots*. Retrieved from <http://www.childtrends.org/files/FosterCareRB.pdf>

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2011). *Foster care statistics 2010*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.

Courtney, M. E., & Barth, R. P. (1996) Pathways to of older adolescents out of foster care: Implications for independent living services. *Social Work*, 41(1), 75-83.

Courtney M. E., & Piliavin, I. (1998). *Foster youth transitions to adulthood: Outcomes 12 to 18 months after leaving care* (pp. 32). Madison: Wisconsin School of Social Work and Institute for Research on Poverty.

Dacy, J. S., & Travers, J. F. (2006). *Human development across the lifespan*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

- D'Andrade, A., & Berrick, J. D. (2006). When policy meets practice: The untested effects of permanency reforms in child welfare. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 33(1), 31-52.
- Downey, D., & Condron, D. (2004). Playing well with others in kindergarten: the benefits of siblings at home. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, 333-350.
- English, D., Thompson, R., Graham, J., & Briggs, E. (2005). Toward a definition of neglect in young children. *Child Maltreatment*, 10(2), 190-206
- Garmezy, N. (1993). Children in poverty: Resiliency despite risk. *Psychiatry*, 56, 127-136.
- Geenan, S., & Powers, L. E. (2007). "Tomorrow is another problem." The experiences of youth in foster care transitioning into adulthood. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 29, 1085-1101.
- Grinell, R. M., & Unrau, Y. A. (2011). *Social work research and evaluation* (9<sup>th</sup> edition). New York, Oxford University Press.
- Henry, D. L. (1999). Resilience in maltreated children: Implications for special needs adoption. *Child Welfare*, 78, 519-540.

- Honoring Emancipating Youth. (n.d.). *Barriers facing foster youth: National and local statistics about emancipating youth*. Retrieved from <http://heysf.org/pdfs/HeyFosterYouthStatistics.pdf>
- Hook, J. L., & Courtney, M. E. (2011). Employment outcomes of former foster youth as young adults: The importance of human, personal, and social capital. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(2011) 1855-1865.
- Jackson, S., & Martin, P. Y. (1998). Surviving the care system: Education and resilience. *Journal of Adolescence*, 21, 569-583.
- Lesser, J. G., & Pope, D. S. (2011). *Human behavior and the social environment: Theory and practice*. Boston, Allyn & Bacon.
- Lorentzen, B., Lomley, A. Kimberlin, S., & Byrnes, M. (2008). *Policy brief. Outcomes for former foster youth in Californi's THP-Plus program: Are youth in THP-Plus faring better?* John Burton Foundation for Children With Homes. Retrieved from: <http://www.cafosteringconnections.org/pdfs/JBF%20THP-Plus%20Outcomes%20Brief.pdf>

- Losel, F., & Bliesener, T. (1994). Some high-risk adolescents do not develop conduct problems: A study of protective factors. *Internal Journal of Behavioral Development*, 17, 753-777.
- Masten, A. S. (2000). Children who overcome adversity to succeed in life. *Institute of Child Development*, Retrieved from [http://extention.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/components/7565\\_06.html](http://extention.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/components/7565_06.html)
- McCoy-Roth, M., DeVoght, K., & Fletcher, M. (2011). *Number of youth aging out of foster care drops below 28,000 in 2010*. Retrieved from <http://www.fosteringconnections.org>
- McSherry, D. (2007). Understanding and addressing the "neglect of neglect": Why are we making a mole-hill out a mountain? *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 31, 607-614
- Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Williams, D., Simon, V., Hamilton, D., Lou, C., Peng, C., Moore, M., Jacobs, L., & King, B. (2011). *Child welfare services report for California*. Retrieved from University of California Berkeley Center for Social Services Research. [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/uch\\_childwelfare](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/uch_childwelfare)

- Osterling, K. L., & Hines, A. M. (2006). Mentoring adolescent foster youth: promoting resilience during developmental transitions. *Child & Family Social Work, 26*(11), 242-253.
- Popple, P. R., & Leighinger, L. (2008). *Social work, social welfare and American society* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Resnick, M. D., Bearman, P. S., Blum, R. W., Bauman, K. E., et al. (1997). Protecting adolescents from harm: Findings from the national longitudinal study of adolescent health. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 278*(10), 823-832.
- Rosalind, K., & Day, A. (2011). Increasing college access for youth aging out of foster care: Evaluation of a summer camp program for foster youth transitioning from high school to college. *Children & Youth Service Review, 33*(7), 1173-1180.
- Rutter, M. (2007). Resilience, competence, and coping. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 31*, 205-209.
- Rutter, M., & Quinton, D. (1984). Long-term follow-up of women institutionalized in childhood. Factors promoting good functioning in adult life. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 2*, 191-204.

- Saleebey, D. D. (1996). The strengths perspective in social work practice: Extensions and cautions. *Social Work, 41*(3), 296-305
- Staudt, M. M., Howard, M. O., & Drake, B. B. (2001). The operationalization, implementation, and effectiveness of the strengths perspective: A review of empirical studies. *Journal Of Social Service Research, 27*(3), 1-21.
- Straus, M., & Kantor, G. (2005). Definition and measurement of neglectful behavior: Some principles and guidelines. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 29*, 19-29.
- THP- PLUS. (2010-11). *Statewide implementation project annual report*. John Burton Foundation for children without homes. Retrieved from [www.http://thpplus.org](http://thpplus.org)
- UCR Newsroom. (2009). Transition from foster care to adulthood studied. *UCR Newsroom*. From foster care to adulthood. Retrieved from <http://newsroom.ucr.edu/2030>
- Ungar, M. (2001). The social construction of resilience among "problem" youth in out-of-home placement: A study of health enhancing deviance. *Child & Youth Care Forum, 30*, 137-154.Plus

United States Department of Health and Human Services,  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families.

(1999). *Title IV-E independent living programs: A decade in review*. Washington, DC: US. Government Printing Office.

United States Department of Health and Human Services,  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families.

(2004). *Title IV-E independent living programs: A decade in review*. Washington, DC: US. Government Printing Office.

United States Department of Health and Human Services.

(2005). *A report to Congress on adoption and other permanency outcomes for children in foster care: Focus on older children*. Washington, DC: Children's Bureau.

United States Department of Health and Human Services,  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families.

(2009). *Title IV-E independent living programs: A decade in review*. Washington, DC: US. Government Printing Office.

United States Department of Health and Human Services.

(2010). *Child maltreatment 2008*. Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau  
[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats\\_research/index.htm#can](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/index.htm#can)

University of California, Davis. (2010). *Quality parenting initiative*. Retrieved from:  
<http://humanservices.ucdavis.edu/Resource/QPI/index.aspx>

Van Breda, A. P. (2001). Resiliency theory: A literature review. *Military Psychological Institute*, pp. 1-56.

Wulczyn, F., & Zimmerman, E. (2005). Sibling placements in longitudinal perspective. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 27, 741-763.

## ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE

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

### 1. Data Collection:

Assigned Leader: Olga Phillips

Assisted By: Guadalupe Martinez

### 2. Data Entry and Analysis:

Team Effort: Olga Phillips & Guadalupe Martinez

### 3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:

#### a. Introduction and Literature

Team Effort: Olga Phillips & Guadalupe Martinez

#### b. Methods

Assigned Leader: Guadalupe Martinez

Assisted By: Olga Phillips

#### c. Results

Team Effort: Olga Phillips & Guadalupe Martinez

#### d. Discussion

Team Effort: Olga Phillips & Guadalupe Martinez