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EMANCIPATING YOUTH AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
THE INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

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
Roxana Veronica Alas

June 2012

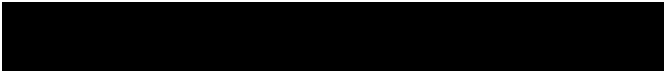
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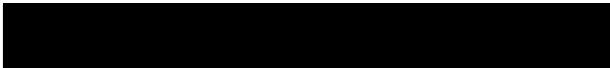
by
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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between the participation of foster youth in the Independent Living Program (ILP) and their outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identification of a life-long connection. 119 random welfare cases involving emancipated youth were sampled.

The study used secondary data from Riverside County Child Welfare System/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) and Efforts to outcomes (ETO) database. Chi-Square and correlations were used for bivariate analyses. This study found a significant relationship between the participation in the ILP program and educational outcomes after emancipation, (45.4%) of the youth were enrolled in college. However, there was no significance found between the level of participation in the ILP program and outcomes in education prior to emancipating, employment, and identification of a life-long connection. A higher graduation rate was accomplished by former foster youth In Riverside County (69%) than the national average for foster youth (46%). Riverside County youth also had a higher percentage of enrollment in college (45%) than the national average (10%). Almost (90%) of the youth had

housing arrangements. It is recommended that social workers continue to provide the youth with services and resources in education, employment, and housing to help foster youth transition into adulthood successfully. Further research should address modifications to the Independent living program to better serve foster youth.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Jennifer Claar, Faculty Supervisor, Department of Social Work, for her continues support and guidance throughout this journey.

DEDICATION

To my parents, Juana and Jose Emilio Alas, my sisters, Kelly and Yamilet Alas, my brother, Emilio Alas for their continued love and support throughout this rewarding experience. My soul mate and best friend, Frank Tochez, for supporting me through this process and giving me the encouragement I needed. My love goes beyond what words can express.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
. Problem Statement	1
Purpose of the Study	6
Significance of the Project for Social Work	9
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Introduction	12
Challenges Faced by Emancipating Foster Youth	12
Educational Outcomes	15
Benefits of the Independent Living Program	18
Determining Level of Knowledge on Skills	21
Training Curriculum	22
Theories Guiding Conceptualization	24
Summary	27
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	
Introduction	28
Study Design	28
Sampling	30
Data Collection and Instruments	31
Procedures	32

Protection of Human Subjects	33
Data Analysis	34
Summary	35
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS	
Introduction	37
Presentation of the Findings	37
Participation and Educational Outcomes Prior to Emancipating	46
Participation and Educational Outcomes After Emancipation	47
Participation and Housing	48
Participation and Identification of a Life Long-connection	49
Participation and Employment	51
Summary	52
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION	
Introduction	54
Discussion	54
Limitations	61
Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research	63
Conclusions	67
APPENDIX: DATA EXTRACTION TOOL	68
REFERENCES	71

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Frequency for Gender, Race, and Reason for Removal	39
Table 2.	Mean and Median	40
Table 3.	Participation and Non-participation in Life	41
Table 4.	Outcomes in Education Prior and After Emancipation	43
Table 5.	Outcomes of Contact made between the Youth and the Emancipation Coach	44
Table 6.	Participation and Education Cross-tabulation	46
Table 7.	Participated and Educational Outcomes After Emancipation Cross-tabulation	48
Table 8.	Participated and Housing Cross-tabulation	49
Table 9.	Participated and Identification of a Life-long Connection Cross-tabulation	51
Table 10.	Participated and Employment Cross-tabulation	52

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the problems and challenges that many foster youth face upon emancipating from the foster care system. Programs like the Independent Living Program (ILP) have been developed in order to help foster youth overcome some of these challenges. ILP provides youth with services to help them gain the appropriate skills which can lead to better outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identification of a life-long connection. The (California Department of Social Services [CDSS] 2010) reports that in the first quarter of 2010, there were 444 youth that emancipated from foster care. Out of those 444 youth, 47 youth were from Riverside County. During the 2009 fiscal year, October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009, there were 35,685 statewide youth that were eligible for ILP services.

Problem Statement

The number of youth that remain in foster care until they reach their 18th birthday and emancipate from the foster care system has increased throughout the years. This has led to the development of programs that give

foster youth the opportunity to participate in workshops which promote skills that will help them transition into adulthood more successfully. It is fundamental that the youth be provided with resources that will help them obtain better outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identifying a life-long connection. Foster youth are eligible to participate in the ILP program after their 16th birthday until they reach the age of 19.

ILP was developed from the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) of 1999:

There were five purposes and goals that were outlined with the FCIA: (1) increased identification and outreach to youth who are likely to be in foster care until age 18; (2) the provision of education and training necessary for employment; (3) preparing ILP participants for postsecondary education; (4) the provision of emotional and personal support to youth aging out of care, and (5) the provision of a range of services to former foster youth ages 18 to 21. (National Foster Care Awareness Projects, 2000)

Some of the challenges that emancipated youth face are, not being employed, not pursuing higher education or

job training, lack of housing, and the uncertainty of not knowing where their life is headed. The ILP workshops provide the youth with resources that help develop competencies in education, career development, health and safety, daily living, and financial resources. Unfortunately, not all youth take advantage of the resources that are offered through ILP which has an impact on their readiness to transition into adulthood successfully. This is an alarming problem because the youth are the future of our country and as social workers it should be a priority to ensure we provide them with the appropriate resources that will need to be successful.

According to the (U.S Department of Health & Human Services [HHS], 2008) 10% of foster youth nationwide emancipated from foster care during the fiscal year of 2008. Despite the decrease of entries into the foster care system, there was an increase of foster youth that emancipated, which means that foster youth are remaining in care much longer. During the 2009 fiscal year, October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009, there were 35,685 statewide youth that were eligible for ILP services. Only 20,365 youth participated in ILP Services (CDSS, 2010).

This number is disturbing because there are 15,320 youth that are not being provided with services.

It is crucial to understand the long-term effects of not possessing the necessary skills to successfully transition into adulthood. Some of the long-term effects include but are not limited to unemployment, incarceration, homelessness, and possible drug or alcohol abuse. According to the CDSS (2010) 1,719 former foster youth reported at least one episode of homelessness after emancipating from the foster care system. A contributing factor may be unemployment, as the youth would not have any financial means and would not be able to live independently. Another long-term effect would be becoming dependent on government financial assistance and falling into a cycle of government dependence. Other youth might resort to criminal activity which will lead to incarceration. Drug and alcohol abuse can become prevalent among emancipated youth that do not have resources available. This is why it is crucial for society to understand the importance of providing services to the youth prior to their emancipation. It is also important for the youth to be aware of the services that are available to them and how these resources can

provide them with the skills that they will need to transition into adulthood successfully.

The lack of skills and preparedness to successfully transition into adulthood among foster youth concerns various people. The participation of multiple government agencies and community partners is needed to establish an effective program. The Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) is the leading governmental agency which provides the youth with ILP services in Riverside County. ILP social workers meet with the youth every six months to develop a Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) in which goals are developed to help the youth prepare for emancipation.

Foster family agency social workers also play an important role in ensuring that the youth participate in ILP services, since they have more frequent contact with the youth and the foster parents. In addition, foster parents play an essential role in ensuring the youth participate in life skills classes, as they provide transportation to the youth. If the youth continue to be encouraged by social workers, service providers, and foster parents, the willingness to participate in ILP services will increase.

In the state of California foster youth are eligible to remain dependents until the age of 19. In October of 2008, the state government enacted Assembly Bill (AB) 12 also known as the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (California-adoptions, 2011). This new law is intended to allow foster youth to remain in foster care until the age of 20 as long as they meet educational and employment requirements. This will allow the youth to continue to receive services and strengthen the skills they will need to transition into adulthood successfully.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the participation in the ILP program and outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identification of a life-long connection. By participating in ILP services the youth should be better prepared to transition into adulthood more successfully. The lack of participation in these services would reduce the likelihood of accomplishing good outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identification of a life-long connection.

Foster youth become eligible to participate in the ILP program after their 16th birthday. Foster youth attend life skills workshops once a month. The youth is assigned an emancipation coach, which will remain with their case until age 21. Once the court terminates the youth's dependency, emancipation coaches take on a primary role in case managing the case and providing resources to the youth. The emancipation coaches maintain contact with the youth and provide them with aftercare services. These services include providing them with bus passes, gas cards, assisting them with financial aid and enrollment forms, and employment opportunities.

The Department of Public and Social Services (DPSS) and a contracted service provider collaborate in providing services to the youth. Information is shared between ILP social workers and emancipation coaches through the Exit to Outcomes (ETO) system. Although the emancipation coaches have regular contact with the youth, there continues to be a lack of participation in life skills workshops by foster youth.

There are some foster youth that choose not to participate due to lack of motivation. Monetary incentives are offered to the youth which have increased

interest slightly. There have been some recent changes made to the program to help increase the youth's participation such as receiving a \$25.00 Wal-Mart gift card per class attended. An additional \$25.00 is deposited into a credit union account which the youth will have access to after they emancipate. Prior to these changes the youth did not receive an instantaneous reward for their participation. These changes are intended to impact an increase in participation of foster youth.

The present study utilized secondary data analysis in regards to participation in ILP services and outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identification of a life-long connection. The data was gathered from Riverside County DPSS and the ILP Unit. Secondary data could only be gathered as former foster youth cannot be interviewed due to confidentiality. If a positive correlation is found then the data should show higher numbers in continuing higher education, be enrolled in a vocational program, have appropriate housing, employment, and identification of a life-long connection.

Secondary data analysis allowed a more in-depth analysis of educational, employment, and housing outcomes. Once the youth emancipates the case is closed

and the department no longer documents any data regarding the youth. Through the ETO system data continues to be gathered after the youth emancipates allowing for more accurate data. Success was measured by enrollment in college, being employed, having appropriate housing, and identifying a life-long connection.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

The significance of this study to social work provides a better understanding of the benefits of ILP services and how it helps youth achieve better outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identifying a life-long connection. Social service departments, policy makers, and community partners can use the findings to make appropriate accommodations and changes that will benefit the youth. The results are specifically beneficial to Riverside County as the data gathered is representative of youth that emancipated from foster care and were dependents of Riverside County. With recent budget cuts and lack of services, this study can strengthen the argument that these types of services are beneficial to foster youth and need to continue to ensure

success in education, employment, housing, and identifying a life-long connection.

At the same time this study can identify deficiencies within the program and modifications can be made to make the ILP program more efficient. At the same time this study can help identify deficits within the program and modifications can be made to make the ILP program more efficient. The main goals of the ILP program were evaluated which include: housing, education, identification of a life-long connection, and employment.

Social workers can use the results to target specific areas and develop goals for the youth. This will be beneficial to the youth as they can be exposed to these skills at earlier age, which can lead to a higher success rate. Goal setting is a vital component of the ILP program and targeting specific areas and providing services within these areas will be extremely beneficial to the youth.

With changes to state laws regarding foster youth, specifically the implementation of AB 12 in January of 2012, this study will be valuable to the department, as modification to the program can be based on what has been effective in helping foster youth transition to

adulthood. Policy makers and any collateral that work with this population would benefit. Social workers and service providers will have a better understanding of the importance of the ILP program and how it can correlate with positive and successful outcomes.

This study is relevant to child welfare as it evaluates the effectiveness of the ILP program and targets specific variables that are core elements of the program. It is beneficial to social workers, service providers, community partners, and policy makers. All foster youth are eligible for ILP services after their 16th birthday but unfortunately, many youth do not take advantage of these services. The results can answer the important question: Do foster youth that participate in ILP services have better outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identifying a life-long connection?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of numerous studies that have been conducted regarding the Independent Living Program (ILP) and emancipating foster youth. The following literature review covers common areas that affect foster youth in transitioning into adulthood, including challenges faced with emancipation, education, benefits of the ILP program, and support systems.

Challenges Faced by Emancipating Foster Youth

Foster youth are faced with many challenges as they prepare to emancipate and transition into adulthood. Some of these challenges include but are not limited to lack of education, unemployment, and lack of appropriate housing (Scannapieco, Connel-Carrick, & Painter, 2007). In order to help foster youth transition into adulthood more successfully there are core fundamentals that the youth should be exposed to, such as education, employment, permanency, and daily living skills. Foster youth become exposed to these elements by attending life

skills workshops as part of the ILP program. The ILP program has been designed to provide foster youth with fundamental skills that they will utilize as they transition into adulthood. It is unfortunate that there is a large number of youth that do not take advantage of these services. It is anticipated that foster youth that do participate will have better outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identifying a life-long connection. The following literature reviews support the correlation between transitioning successfully into adulthood and the participation in the ILP program.

Reilly (2003) conducted a study with 100 emancipated youth in the state of Nevada between September 2000 and January 2001. Data was gathered from the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS). The results were obtained by conducting a 30 to 90 minute face to face interview. It was a qualitative study which included open-ended questions. The data showed some of the major challenges that the youth faced were "unemployment, furthering higher education, living arrangements, health care, legal issues, preparedness for independent living, and maintaining contact with siblings and family members" (Reilly, 2003, p. 735). The research supports the

correlation between receiving training services and the likelihood of successful outcomes with emancipated foster youth (Reilly, 2003).

Reilly (2003) also found that former foster youth experience extreme financial hardship. A large number of "youth reported being unemployed and not having enough money to cover basic living expense" (p. 736) The ILP program offers the youth workshops in which they can become knowledgeable about interviewing skills, filling out job applications, and writing a resume. These are skills that will provide the youth with better opportunities in the future. A downfall with the structure of the workshops is that the youth do not get hands on training. Another negative aspect is the lack of employment opportunities available to the youth. It would be ideal if the youth would be provided with employment opportunities to obtain work experience and to help develop a good work ethic.

One of the limitations to the research was the difficult task of locating the former foster youth, since most emancipated youth do not provide current contact information to the department. Other limitations of the study included, "self-reports of behavior by the foster

youth, which can lead to biased responses" (Reilly, 2003, p. 741). The study was only conducted in the state of Nevada and cannot be generalized to other states. It is unknown if foster youth in other states had similar experiences. This study "did not capture the duration and severity of unmet needs" (Reilly, 2003, p. 742). The study only consisted of 100 participants and it might not be representative of non-respondents. Although there were numerous limitations, the findings reinforced other research as to the types of services that may be needed to avoid negative outcomes (Reilly, 2003).

Educational Outcomes

Education is a key element in the success of foster youth transitioning into adulthood. The higher the educational level the better employment opportunities they will be able to obtain. Unfortunately, there is a high percentage of foster youth that do not obtain a high school diploma or a GED. A serious problem among foster youth is the occurrence of behavioral problems at school which lead to suspensions. This affects the youth's ability to learn because they find themselves out of school for prolonged periods of time. This also affects

the placement because there is a high probability that they are also displaying problematic behaviors at home.

Leather and Testa (2006) conducted a study by mailing out a survey questionnaire to primary caseworkers in Illinois to obtain information on youth that were 17.5 years old but not yet 18. Social workers were asked to answer questions in regards to ILP services, education, and mental health. A 3 point Likert scale was used and the options were "not at all," "somewhat," or "very much" (p. 465). Closed ended questions were used to minimize error. Various variables were included to evaluate educational deficits. These variables included "problems with reading and writing, truancy, and not having a high school diploma" (Leather & Testa, 2006, p. 466) The study describes the effectiveness of providing services to foster youth especially those that have educational and job skills deficiencies, and behavioral problems (Leather & Testa, 2006).

The results showed that less than half (42%) of all youth had high school diplomas or equivalence degrees. Of those youth that were 18 years and older, 52% had high school diplomas or equivalent degrees. Overall 23% were enrolled in either a four year or community college; 10%

were enrolled in a special education classroom, or school, and 11% were attending a GED class. The results also showed that noncompliance with the expectations of their placements were frequent among high school dropouts (Leather & Testa, 2006). Frequent placement changes can be associated with behavioral problems. Placement changes have a dramatic effect on education for foster youth. As the youth is moved from placement to placement they also have to move to a new school. Foster youth are not able to complete credits because they do not complete the semester, or they simply fall behind academically (Leather & Testa, 2006)

Some of the limitations of this study included its reliance on a mail survey of caseworkers, which can lead to biases in the reported results. There was a disproportionate representation of youth in the downstate regions, which could have affected the results. Also the survey did not collect information on how the youth fared over time, and it was limited in the range of questions addressed (Leather & Testa, 2006). The findings suggest the need for research using randomized, experimental designs with outcomes administered over time.

Benefits of the Independent Living Program

Merdinger, Hines, Lemon and Wyatt (2004), conducted a study representing two analyses exploring the beneficial role of the Independent Living Program for foster youth. A comparative analysis using survey data described characteristics of former foster youth who were enrolled in an ILP while in foster care. The study was composed of 81 ILP participants and 113 non ILP participants. The second analysis was an ethnographic analysis using interview data with ILP coordinators in nine California counties.

All of the students were enrolled in a four year college. Students that participated in ILP services were more likely to have received information about financial aid in high school than non-ILP participants. ILP participants were also more likely to receive tutoring services. Former foster youth that participated in ILP services "were significantly more likely to have been taught skills regarding opening a bank account, finding a job, budgeting money, balancing a checkbook, and finding a place to live" (Merdinger et al., 2004, p. 259). They also had a higher probability of being taught psycho-emotional/social skills which included goal

setting, asking for help, and how to find opportunities for training and education.

Although both ILP and non-ILP participants were accepted into four year colleges, ILP participants received more resources and obtained skills that would help them live independently. There were also external factors that the youth reported as having an important influence on their success. These included "role models, having significant people in their lives, being enrolled in advanced placement courses, participation in school clubs or organizations, and participation in ILP services" (Merdinger et al., 2004, p.259). This study illustrates why it is important for foster parents, social workers, service providers, and teachers, to understand the impact they can have in the success of these youth. ILP services are an important factor but it takes multiple service providers to develop a nurturing and positive environment for the youth.

Merdinger et al. (2004) ethnographic analysis suggested that the preliminary analysis can be divided into two classifications: typical services and unique services. Typical services included instructional services that are geared towards "acquisition of specific

independent living skills; incentives earned by participants for ILP participation, and an exit meeting for youth that are about to emancipate" (p. 263). Unique ILP services included "computer-training courses that allow participants to earn a free computer after finishing a course; experimental role playing activities; and pre-ILP (ages 13-16) programs" (Merdinger et al., 2004, p. 263). The results indicate an association of these services with self-sufficiency.

Riverside County offers typical services to its foster youth. In collaboration with the office of education and other community partners, unique ILP services were offered previously, such as summer employment opportunities, computer camps, and tutoring. Due to recent budget cuts some of these services have been terminated or reduced, which is unfortunate because it decreases the opportunity for the youth to excel in certain areas.

Although, Merdinger et al. (2004) showed a positive correlation between participation in the ILP program and positive outcomes, they must be interpreted with caution. The nonprobability sampling method utilized limits the generalizability to a larger population. The ethnographic

results depended on the knowledge and the opinions of the ILP coordinators which can lead to biases and error. Furthermore only nine counties were surveyed which does not allow the results to be generalized across the state.

Determining Level of Knowledge on Skills

Determining what level of skills the youth has is essential to providing the best level of service. This could be determined by using an assessment tool that measures living skills. The Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA) which is a standardized assessment tool that is used throughout the United States can help youth and caregivers acknowledge the youth's strengths, and develop a realistic picture of the youth's readiness for emancipation, and it also identifies areas that need to be strengthened (Nolan, Wolfe, Ansell, & Burns, 2000). This is the only assessment tool used to identify areas of needs and strengths when working with foster youth. The ACLSA is used throughout the nation. It measures the same areas which include communication, daily living, housing and money management, self-care, social relationships, work and study skills. Social workers and

service providers can use this assessment tool to develop goals for the youth.

The ACLSA is time-efficient and a large amount of information can be gathered in a short period of time (Nolan et al., 2000).

Training Curriculum

In a study that was conducted by Mares (2010) with emancipated youth in Lucas County, Ohio, 108 former foster youth were surveyed in the years 2005 through 2007. Focus groups and a self-administered survey showed the youth wanted "home-based independent living skills training provided by their foster parents." They wanted more "hands-on" training in the areas of budgeting and financial management (Mares, 2010, p. 86). In Riverside County, the life skills workshops use an instructional curriculum and do not provide hands on training. Providing hands on training would be beneficial for the youth because it would allow them to experience real life situations. Another area that should be considered for further development is providing the youth with employment opportunities. Few programs provide

apprenticeships or affordable vocational programs, and connections to potential employers (Collins, 2001).

Unfortunately there are limited longitudinal studies conducted on the effectiveness of the ILP program and outcomes in education, employment, housing, and life-long connections with former foster youth. The sample sizes are often small and cannot be generalized. It makes it difficult to get an accurate idea of how effective ILP services are with emancipating youth. In order to get a better understanding of how effective the ILP program is, there needs to be more research done that targets specific areas of the program, including but not limited to transitional housing, employment, and continuing higher education. Studies including youth that are currently receiving ILP services would be beneficial to social workers because it would allow comparisons between current foster youth and emancipated youth. This might be difficult as court authorization would be needed to obtain certain demographic information. Qualitative and longitudinal studies would offer more concrete data that would allow departments, policy makers, and community partners to better serve foster youth.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

A theory that is related to this study is ecological theory. Ecological theory examines the relationship between the environment and the individual. "Patterns of communication, individual coping behaviors, interpersonal networks, and characteristics of the physical and social environment, which either support or impede human development, are examined in the context of the complex reciprocal interactions between the person and the environment" (Lesser & Pope, 2007, p.9). The interaction with the youth and service providers can lead better outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identifying a life- long connection. Reilly (2003) found that youth that received more training and services, such as, ILP and life skills classes, were "less likely to have trouble with the law and were more satisfied with their overall foster care experience." They also felt better "prepared to be on their own and showed satisfaction with their current living arrangements" (Reilly, 2003, p. 739).

The identification of a life-long connection at an early age is a crucial component to the success of the youth once they emancipate. Mares (2010) found that

post-emancipated youth identified establishing "permanent connections with supportive adults as one of the important factors in transitioning into adulthood successfully" (p. 739). Foster youth often lack a supportive environment due to the circumstances that led them to becoming dependents of the court. This is why it is so important for foster parents to play an active role in the youth's life and continue to have a relationship with them after they emancipate from the foster care system.

Participation in the ILP program can lead to the youth establishing supportive relationships. The youth are able to relate to others and establish a support group as all the participating youth are in foster care. Life skills classes are facilitated by emancipation coaches, which continue to play an active role until the youth reaches the age of 21. Not only do they provide a supportive relationship but they also continue to provide the youth with services. These services include educational support, employment opportunities, and possible housing placement.

A second theory that is significant to this study is resiliency theory. Mares (2010) identified resilience as

a survival mechanism for foster youth. Foster children have endured some type of trauma which led to them becoming dependents of the court. As they go through different developmental stages they must learn coping skills and deal with the trauma and stress that they have experienced. The lack of coping skills can lead to behaviors, such as withdrawal, which would isolated the youth from others. This would prevent the youth from addressing their feeling and thoughts about the trauma they have endured, which can result in other behavioral problems. Having a support system can help the development of coping skills.

Merdinger et al. (2004) conducted a study with college students enrolled in the Pathway to College program. The youth "identified resilience and protective factors, with their ability to attend college and transition into adulthood successfully" (p. 87). These factors included "role models, especially from a school setting, having significant people in their lives "who did extra" to help them, and participation in the ILP program (Merdinger, et al., 2004 p. 8).

The underlying theme is that foster youth, especially emancipating youth, need a support system.

This system will provide them with a life-long connections, role models, help them cope with some of the traumas and stresses they face, and most importantly will be a crucial component to their transitioning into adulthood successfully. The ILP program offers the youth an opportunity to gain coping skills and to develop meaningful relationships.

Summary

Understanding the relationship between the participation in the ILP program and outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identification of a life-long connection, is important to be able to provide adequate services to foster youth. The participation in the program can be a contributing factor in preparing foster youth to transition into adulthood successfully.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter illustrates the methodology used to develop this study. Specifically, it addresses the design of the study, sampling methods, data collection and instrument, procedures, and protection of human subjects of extraction of secondary data.

Study Design

The purpose of this research study was to have a better perspective of the relationship between those participating in the Independent Living Program (ILP) and outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identification of a life-long connection. Foster youth in Riverside County have the opportunity to participate in life skills workshops after their 16th birthday. The workshops cover four important components which are: education, permanency, employment, and healthy choices. Unfortunately there are many foster youth that do not take advantage of these services. The number of foster youth that are emancipating after their 18th birthday has increased through out the years. It is crucial to study

the effectiveness of these services, so that appropriate adjustments are made to ensure that the youth receive the tools they will need to live successfully independently after their emancipation.

The research method that was most effective in evaluating the effectiveness of the ILP programs was a secondary data research design. Data was provided by the Department of Public and Social Services (DPSS) in Riverside County. The data was extracted from the Child Welfare System/ Case Management System (CWS/CMS) and Efforts To Outcomes (ETO) and an extraction tool was used to extract the necessary information. The data gathered provided demographic information, which included age, gender, race, reason for removal, length of time they were in foster care, and number of placements. Other information included the level of participation in the ILP workshops, participation in annual conferences and events, and contact with ILP social workers and emancipations coaches.

A secondary data design was most appropriate as it allowed the extraction of a large amount of data in a short period of time and it was cost-effective. 273 cases were reviewed but only 119 were used due to the cases not

meeting the selection criteria. This study had both limitations and strengths. A limitation is that the information that was extracted may not be accurate as it is reported by different sources. A strength is that after-care information was accessed allowing for the extraction of data to include post-emancipation information. The information gathered from this study will allow service providers to analyze the effectiveness of the program and to make appropriate modifications if needed.

Sampling

Participant selection was based on the following criteria, the youth had to have emancipated from the foster care system from Riverside County and they must be between the ages of 18 to 21. Placement eligibility included residing in a foster home, residing with a relative, a NREFM (Non-Related Extended Family Member), or a legal guardian. Group home placements and AWOL youth were not used for the purpose of this study. There were no gender or race restrictions. The data was gathered through the ILP regional database in Riverside County and ETO.

The participants did not have to be actively participating in after-care services or have actively participated in the ILP program when they were dependents of Riverside County. Data was also gathered through ETO, which provided further information, such as level of participation in the ILP program, contact with emancipation coaches and ILP social workers, participating in annual conferences and events, and educational, employment, and housing information post-emancipation.

Data Collection and Instruments

The researcher created the Independent Living Program Extraction Tool (See Appendix) to gather the necessary information to be representative of some of the core elements the ILP program.

The study examined the level of participation in the ILP program and the outcomes in education, employment, housing and identification of a life-long connection. The independent variable was the level of participation in the ILP program. The dependent variables included level education, employment, current housing conditions, and the identification of a life long connection. The

following variables were measured as nominal variables: gender, race, age entering the foster care system, reason for removal, years in foster care, number of placements, education, housing, life-long connection, and employment. Other nominal variables included: participation in the following workshops, employment, education, permanency, health and safety, contact with an ILP social worker and an emancipation coach, and participation in annual conference and events.

Procedures

To ensure that the appropriate steps were taken in order to obtain the necessary data, a meeting was held with the main research project committee members in Riverside County. The committee was given a copy of the proposal. The board was informed of the purpose of the study and all questions were answered regarding the study design. After receiving approval of the study design, the appropriate people were contacted to gather the necessary information and data extraction begun.

Data included information on former dependents between the ages 18 and 21 who had emancipated from foster care system within Riverside County. Data from

foster youth that were AWOL or in group home placement was not used.

Since the data gathered consisted of secondary data extraction, an informed consent and debriefing statement was not needed. The extraction tool allowed the researcher to gather the necessary data to conduct this study design. The data collection took place at a child Welfare Systems approved location. Data was extracted from October 1, 2011 to February 1, 2012.

Protection of Human Subjects

In order to ensure that the participants were protected and there was no risk of violation of their rights or their welfare, all data was maintained in a confidential file. The data was kept in locked file cabinet and the extraction tool and the data provided by DPSS was destroyed upon the conclusion of the study. Each case was given an identification number and was referred as the (case ID#) on the data extraction tool (SEE Appendix). Since there was no contact with any of the participant a consent form and a debriefing statement was not needed. The department was informed of the procedure

and was given a copy of the proposal and the extraction tool.

Data Analysis

A bivariate analysis was used which included correlations and chi-squares. This study consisted of secondary data extraction to test the relationship between the participation in the ILP program in Riverside County and the outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identification of a life-long connection. Variables were measured by frequency distributions. These variables included demographic information, such as age, gender, race, number of years in placement, and reason for removal. Other variables that were measured were outcomes in level of education prior to and after emancipation, employment, current housing conditions, and the identification of positive life-long connection were also measured.

A Chi-square statistical test was used to determine the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. Since the level of measurement is nominal, this was the most appropriate. The intent is to see if there is a correlation between the level of

participating in the ILP program and the outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identification of a life-long connection. The study did not intend to look at causation. The independent variable is the participation in the ILP program and was measured by the attendance in life skills workshops, contact with an emancipation coach and ILP social worker, and attendance in annual conferences and events. This data was gathered through the CWS/CMS system and ETO.

The question that is being looked at is: If the foster youth participate in the ILP program, will they have better outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identification of a life-long connection?

Summary

In conclusion, the research method used to administer this study was a secondary data extraction design. A quantitative approach was used to study the 119 cases of former foster youth. The selection criteria included former foster youth, ages 18 to 21, who emancipated from foster care from Riverside County. Data was provided by the Department of Public Social Service in Riverside County. There were no gender or race

restrictions. The demographic information included age, gender, race, reason for removal, number of years in foster care and number of placements. The dependent variables were the outcomes in education, employment, housing and identification of a life-long connection. The independent variable included age of entry into foster care, gender, race, case characteristics, number of placements, number of years in foster care, level of participation in the life skills workshops, contact with an emancipation coach and ILP social worker, and participation in annual conferences or events. Chi-squares and correlations were used for bivariate analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter Four presents the outcomes of this study. The findings provide information regarding the frequencies of the nominal and continuous variables that were tested against one another. The results of the tests, including descriptive statistical tables, are also included. The independent variables included age of entry into foster care, gender, race, and case characteristics, number of placements, number of years in foster care, and participating in the life skills workshops, contact with emancipation coach and ILP social worker, and participation in annual conferences or events. The dependent variables included outcomes in education (before and after emancipation from foster care), employment, housing, and identification of a life-long connection.

Presentation of the Findings

The sample utilized was a total of 119 out of 273 cases that met the selection criteria. Information was gathered from CWS/CMS and ETO. A total of 154 cases were

not utilized, as the cases did not have any information in ETO, the youth were AWOL, or the youth were in a group home placement.

Table 1 provides demographic characteristics of the sample for emancipated youth (N = 119). The sample was evenly distributed, consisting of 60 males and 59 females. The majority of those represented within the sample were Hispanic/Latino with (47.1%) and White (33.6%). The most common reason for removal was general neglect (87%) followed by caretaker absence/Incapacity (16.8%).

Table 1. Frequency for Gender, Race, and Reason for Removal

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender (N = 119)		
male	60	50.4
female	59	49.6
Ethnicity		
American Indian	1	.8
Hispanic/Latino	56	47.1
Asian	1	.8
Black	21	17.6
White	40	33.6
Case Characteristics		
General Neglect	87	73.1
Physical Abuse	7	5.9
Sexual Abuse	3	2.5
Caretaker Absence/ Incapacity	20	16.8
Severe Physical Abuse	2	1.7

Table 2 represents the mean and median for years spent in foster care and number of foster care placements. The average time that youth spent in foster care was 6 years (SD = 3.6), ranging from two to 16 years. The average number of placement changes was 7

foster homes (SD = 4.99), ranging from one to 26 placement changes throughout their dependency.

Table 2. Mean and Median

Years in Foster Care
M. = 5.54
Md. = 5
Number of Foster Care Placement
M. = 6.55
Md. = 5

Table 3 represents the four life skills workshops offered to ILP participants, including employment, education, permanency, and health and safety and the participating in annual conferences and events. The participation level in each workshop is presented. The employment workshop (47.1%) was the most frequently attended by the youth followed by education (45.4%). Permanency and health and safety were the least attended with (55.5%). On average, only 21.8% of the youth attended annual conferences or events, compared to 78.2% that did not participate in any conference or event.

Table 3. Participation and Non-participation in Life

Skills Workshops	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Type of Workshop (N = 119)		
Employment		
Participated	56	47.1
Did not Participate	63	52.9
Education		
Participated	54	45.4
Did not Participate	65	54.6
Permanency		
	53	44.5
Did not Participate	66	55.5
Health and Safety		
Participated	52	43.7
Did not Participate	66	55.5

Table 4 presents the outcomes in education prior and after emancipation, as well as outcomes for housing, employment, and identification of a life-long connection upon exit from foster care. Educational outcomes prior to emancipation showed that most youth earned a high school diploma (68.9%); however, one in four foster youth (24.4%) dropped out of high school. Higher education (45.4%) was pursued by almost half of the youth in the overall sample. This included enrollment in a two-year or

four year college. One in four foster youth (25.2%) decided to enroll in a job training program, such as Job Corps while others (24.4%) had no plans to continue higher education or enroll in a job training program.

Housing results showed that the youth were more likely to reside at home (67.25%) after they emancipated; some (14.3%) were residing in a Transition Housing Program (THP), such as Inspire, Safehouse, and Aspiranet. A small percentage of the overall sample was renting (8.4%) or had no housing arrangements (10.1%).

Slightly more than half (52.9%) of the youth were unemployed when they exited foster care. Full-time employment was obtained by a small percentage (7.6%) of the youth. A higher percentage of the youth was employed part-time (37.8%). When considering both part-time and full time employment, close to half (45.5%) of the overall sample was employed. Considering the youth that are enrolled in college (45.4%) and those that are unemployed (52.9%), only a small portion (7.5%) of the overall sample had no educational or employment plans. Identification of a life-long connection (96.6%) was prevalent among the youth.

Table 4. Outcomes in Education Prior and After
Emancipation

Outcomes (N = 119)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Education prior to emancipating		
HS Diploma	82	68.9
GED	8	6.7
Drop out	29	24.4
Education after emancipating		
College	54	45.4
Job training	30	25.2
No plans	29	24.4
Missing Information	6	5.0
Housing		
Rent	10	8.4
Live at home	80	67.2
THP	17	14.3
No plans	12	10.1
Employment		
Full-time	9	7.6
Part-time	45	37.8
No job	63	52.9
Missing Information	2	1.7
Identification of a life-long connection		
Yes	115	96.6
No	2	1.7
Missing information	2	1.7

Table 5 represents the contact made between the youth and the emancipation coach and the ILP social worker. Face to face contact with an ILP social worker (97.5%) was most frequent. Face to face contact with an ILP social worker occurs every six months. Face to face contact with an emancipation coach (89.1%) is the second highest form of contact for the youth. Contact with an emancipation coach can be made at the monthly life skills workshops.

Table 5. Outcomes of Contact made between the Youth and the Emancipation Coach

Contact	Frequency	Percent
Emancipation Coach		
Telephone	12	10.1
In person	106	89.1
Mail	1	.8
Contact with ILP Social Worker		
Telephone	1	.8
In person	116	97.5
TDM	2	1.7
Conference and Event Attendance		
Attended	26	21.8
Did not attend	93	78.2

In order to define the nature of correlation between variables, data from numerous variables were cross-tabulated and evaluated using chi-square analysis. In each case, significance was established using two-tailed probability level of .05. The cross-tabulation of participation and non-participation in the ILP life skills program and outcomes in education prior to emancipation, education after emancipation, employment, housing, and identification of a lifelong connection were analyzed. Among all of the relationships tested, only the participation in the ILP program and outcomes in education after emancipation were found to be significant, $\chi^2(2) = 7.955$, $p = 0.02$.

Participation in ILP workshops (such as employment, education, permanency, and healthy choices) did not have a significant relationship with the following: high school graduation, employment levels, and housing status. As for contact with emancipation coaches, ILP social workers, and participation in annual conferences and events, the test could not be ran as the sample size was too small to analyze. The participation in ILP workshops and identification of a lifelong connection were not found significant due to the sample being too small.

Participation and Educational Outcomes
Prior to Emancipating

The relationship between the participation in the ILP program and the educational outcomes prior to emancipating was examined. The cross-tabulation is illustrated in Table 6. There was no significant relationship found ($\chi^2 (2) = 1.049$, $p = > 0.5$.) The results showed that regardless of participation, the youth graduated from high school.

Table 6. Participation and Education Cross-tabulation

			Education			Total
			HS Diploma	GED	Drop out	
Participated	didn't participate	Count	39	4	17	60
		Expected Count	41.3	4.0	14.6	60.0
	participated	Count	43	4	12	59
		Expected Count	40.7	4.0	14.4	59.0
Total		Count	82	8	29	119
		Expected Count	82.0	8.0	29.0	119.0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.049 ^a	2	.592
Likelihood Ratio	1.053	2	.591
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.012	1	.314
N of Valid Cases	119		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.97.

Participation and Educational Outcomes After Emancipation

The relationship between the participation in the ILP program and educational outcomes after emancipation was examined. The cross-tabulation is illustrated in Table 7. The relationship was significant and valid, ($\chi^2 (2) = 7.955, p = 0.02$). The youth that participated in ILP life skills workshops had a higher number of college enrollment than those that did not participate.

Table 7. Participated and Educational Outcomes After
Emancipation Cross-tabulation

		AfterEmanc			Total
		College	training	No plans	
Participated didn't participate	Count	23	22	13	58
	Expected Count	27.7	15.4	14.9	58.0
	Count	31	8	16	55
	Expected Count	26.3	14.6	14.1	55.0
Total	Count	54	30	29	113
	Expected Count	54.0	30.0	29.0	113.0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.955 ^a	2	.019
Likelihood Ratio	8.215	2	.016
Linear-by-Linear Association	.411	1	.522
N of Valid Cases	113		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.12.

Participation and Housing

The relationship between participation in the ILP life skills workshops and housing outcome was examined. The cross-tabulation is illustrated in Table 8. The chi square results indicated that ILP life skills workshop participation is not significantly associated with a

youth having housing upon emancipation, ($\chi^2 (3) = 4.408$,
 $p = > .05$).

Table 8. Participated and Housing Cross-tabulation

		Housing				Total
		Rent	Live at home	THP	No plans	
Participated didn't participate	Count	5	42	5	8	60
	Expected Count	5.0	40.3	8.6	6.1	60.0
participated	Count	5	38	12	4	59
	Expected Count	5.0	39.7	8.4	5.9	59.0
Total	Count	10	80	17	12	119
	Expected Count	10.0	80.0	17.0	12.0	119.0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.408 ^a	3	.221
Likelihood Ratio	4.521	3	.210
Linear-by-Linear Association	.008	1	.928
N of Valid Cases	119		

a. 1 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.96.

Participation and Identification of a Life Long-connection

The relationship between the participation in the
 ILP life skills workshops (such as employment, education,

permanency, and healthy choices) and the identification of a life-long connection was examined. The cross-tabulation is illustrated in Table 9. The association was found not to be significant or valid at ($\chi^2 (1) = 2.00, p = .16$). Results showed that participation did not have an effect on identification of a life-long connection. The sample size was too small to make an accurate comparison.

Table 9. Participated and Identification of a Life-long Connection Cross-tabulation

		Connection		Total
		yes	no	
Participated didn't participate	Count	58	0	58
	Expected Count	57.0	1.0	58.0
participated	Count	57	2	59
	Expected Count	58.0	1.0	59.0
Total	Count	115	2	117
	Expected Count	115.0	2.0	117.0

Chi-Square

Pearson Chi-Square	2.000 ^a	1	.157		
Continuity Correction ^b	.491	1	.483		
Likelihood Ratio	2.773	1	.096		
Fisher's Exact Test				.496	.252
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.983	1	.159		
N of Valid Cases	117				

a. 2 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .99.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Participation and Employment

The relationship between the participation in the ILP life skills workshops and outcomes in employment were examined. The cross-tabulation is illustrated in Table 10. The association was found not to be significant or valid ($\chi^2 (2) = 3.823, p = .15$). Results showed that

participation did not have an effect on identification of a life-long connection. The sample was too small to make an accurate comparison.

Table 10. Participated and Employment Cross-tabulation

		Employment			Total	
		Full-time	Part-time	No job		
Participated	didn't	Count	4	18	37	59
	participate	Expected	4.5	22.7	31.8	59.0
	participated	Count	5	27	26	58
		Expected	4.5	22.3	31.2	58.0
Total	Count	9	45	63	117	
	Expected	9.0	45.0	63.0	117.0	
	Count					

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.823 ^a	2	.148
Likelihood Ratio	3.846	2	.146
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.333	1	.068
N of Valid Cases	117		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.46.

Summary

Chapter Four reviewed the results extracted from this research project. A total of 119 cases were analyzed to determine the relationship between participation in

the ILP life skills workshops and outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identification of a life-long connection. A significant finding was found with respect to the participation in the ILP life skills workshops and outcomes in education after emancipation.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Chapter Five discusses the key findings of this research project. This study examined secondary data through the Child Welfare System/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) and Exit to Outcomes (ETO) to determine the relationship between the participation in the Independent Living Program (ILP) life skills workshops and the outcomes in education (prior and after emancipation), employment, housing, and identification of a life-long connection. Recommendations for policy, procedures, and future research are presented to improve best practice in preparing foster youth to successfully transition into adulthood.

Discussion

This research project analyzed important factors that are significant to the relationship between the participation in the ILP program and outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identification of a life-long connection. A life-long connection is

identified by the youth which can include parents, family members, family friends, or friends.

The sample utilized was 119 out of 273 cases of foster youth that emancipated from the foster care system in Riverside County from January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010. The data was gathered from the CWS/CMS system and ETO data systems. The extracted data included demographics information, age of entry into foster care, gender, race, number of years in foster care, number of placements, and reason for removal.

The life skills workshops were compared to see which had more participation by the youth. The employment (47%) and education (45%) workshop had slightly more participation by the youth. Health and safety (43%) had the least participation. Unfortunately there is a low percentage of youth that attend annual conferences and events (21.8%). This in part has to do with the lack of motivation by the youth to attend; placement changes and not being able to receive the information in a timely matter; and schedule conflicts with school and extra-curricular activities.

The outcomes of the youth were compared among those who participated and did not participate in ILP life

skills workshops. The outcomes being analyzed were education, prior and after emancipation, employment, housing, and the identification of a life-long connection. Educational outcomes prior to emancipating showed a substantial number of youth had received their high school diplomas (68.9%). Only a small amount of youth received their GED (6.7%) and about a quarter had dropped out of high school (24.4%). According to the (Anne E. Casey Foundation [AECF], 2006) nationwide only (46%) of former foster youth obtained their high school diploma compared to (84%) of the general population. A higher graduation rate was accomplished by former foster youth In Riverside County (69%) than the national average for foster youth (46%).

Educational outcomes after emancipation showed that a high percentage of youth attended college (45.4%) after emancipating. According to CDSS (2006), on average only (10%) of former foster youth enrolled in college and less than (1%) graduated from college. The percentage of foster youth that emancipated from Riverside County and enrolled in college (45%) were significantly higher than the national average (10%). Participation in the ILP program showed positive results which can be associated

with receiving information on college, financial aid, and other information related to education. One in every four of the overall sample (25.2%) chose to attend a job training program such as Job Corps, in which they had the opportunity to learn a trade. Almost one in every four of the overall sample (24.4%) did not have any plans to continue higher education or attend a job training program. In May of 2009, the California Legislative Analyst's Office (LOA) released a report entitled the "Education of Foster Youth in California". The report showed that within four years of emancipating from the foster care system only (3%) of former foster youth had earned a college degree, (20%) were homeless, (25%) were incarcerated, and (50%) were unemployed (LOA, 2009).

Housing outcomes showed that most youth either lived with a family member or their parents (67.2%) after emancipating from the foster care system. Very few rented (8.4%) or lived in a Transitional Housing Program (THP) (14.3%). (10.1%) of the youth had no housing plans at the time of their emancipation. According to the CDSS (2006), 18 months after emancipating (40% to 50%) of former foster youth become homeless. Nationally, (27%) of the homeless population consists of former foster youth.

(65%) of youth leaving foster care need immediate housing after release. Within Riverside County an average of (10%) had no housing plans, which is much lower than the national average (40-50%). Almost (90%) of the youth had housing arrangements.

Employment outcomes showed more than half of the youth were unemployed (52.9%) which makes it more difficult to live independently and be able to provide for themselves. Very few were employed full time (7.6%) and part-time (37.8). Since there was a high enrollment in college (45.4%), this could have an effect on employment. According to the CDSS (2006) (50%) of emancipated youth experience unemployment within five years of emancipating. One third of former foster youth have an income at \$6,000 per year, which is substantially below the federal poverty level of \$7,890 for a single individual. A high percentage of the youth were enrolled as full time students which can limit their availability to work.

Other influential factors that can be considered while analyzing the success of the ILP program, is the current status of the economy and the job market. These

factors have an impact on the youth being able to find employment.

According to Collins (2001) there are few programs that provide apprenticeships or affordable vocational programs and connections to potential employers to former foster youth. This is an area that should be better developed to better provide employment opportunities to foster youth. The high dropout rate (24%) among the sample can also be a contributing factor, as not having a high school diploma or GED can prevent employment. Another factor is Riverside County is tied in third place for the highest unemployment (12.5%) rate nationwide. Unemployment not only effects former foster youth but all residents of Riverside County.

Almost all of the youth identified a life-long connection (96.6%). This in part can be due to the ILP social worker asking the youth for potential life-long connections at an early stage. One of the ILP workshops addresses permanency, which also encourages the youth to identify a life-long connection. From the initial meeting at the age of 16 until the youth emancipates, the youth is asked to identify a life-long connection every six months when completing a TILP (Transitional Independent

Living Plan). The primary County child welfare social worker evaluates potential life-long connections on a regular basis and considers them for possible placement.

Contact with an emancipation coach (89.1%) can be on a monthly basis or every couple of months. After the youth emancipates from the foster care system their contact with the emancipation coaches increases as they take on a primary role as case managers and provide after-care services. Contact with an ILP social worker (97.5%) is significantly high. This in part has to do with mandatory contact with an ILP social worker as required by the department. Contact with an emancipation coach increases when the youth emancipates as the emancipation coach becomes the primary contact for the youth.

Finally, there were significant findings in educational outcomes after emancipation. There was a high percentage (45.4%) of foster youth that decided to continue to pursue higher level of education after high school graduation. According to the (U.S. Department of Education [ED] 2011), an average of (20%) of former foster youth enroll in college nationally. More than double the national average of former foster youth that emancipated

from Riverside County are enrolled in college. Compared to the average college enrollment rate (57%) within Riverside County, foster youth have a slightly lower average than the rest of the County (Riverside County of Education [RCOE], 2011). Factors that could have contributed to this may include the ongoing support and contact by the emancipation coaches. The emancipation coaches provide educational guidance to the youth and are available at the local community colleges within Riverside County. Other services that are provided by the emancipation coaches are bus passes, gas cards, help with filling out financial aid forms, and on a case to case basis some type of monetary help.

Limitations

There were significant limitations in this research project. The first was the small sample size. The original sample set consisted of 273. However, 154 cases were excluded due to the youth being placed in a group home, being AWOL, or missing information. The small sample size could have contributed to the non-significance and low validity and therefore resulting in the inability to generalize. The sample size did not

allow the detection of associations amongst some variables.

Another significant limitation was the exclusive use of secondary data from CWS/CMS, and ETO. The information was only as accurate as the ILP social worker and the emancipation coaches had imputed into ETO. There could have been a large margin of error as information could have been entered incorrectly or was incomplete.

An accurate start date of participation in the life skills workshops was unknown. This is significant because the time of participation could have influenced the outcomes. Some workshops could have also been re-taken or skipped. The length of time that the youth participated could have been a variable and correlated with the outcomes.

Another key limitation was that the ILP services examined were only provided by one contract service provider. Other community partners or resources were not examined. The information was limited and was only as accurate as it had been reported by the emancipation coaches.

Although, a high percentage of the youth identified a life-long connection, the quality of the relationship

was unknown. When the youth meets with the ILP social worker every six months, they ask the youth to identify someone they consider a life-long connection. The information is only gathered from the youth and it is unknown if the person being identified is interested in establishing this relationship. This is a great limitation of this study, as the life-long connection is not confirmed and the quality of the relationship is unknown.

Finally, the use of only quantitative data is a noteworthy limitation. Significant relationships between dependent and independent variables could not be correlated. Conclusions and predictions could not be made about certain frequencies. Clarification on some data could not be obtained and limited the information that could be reported.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

This study shows that the participation or non-participation in life skills workshops does not have a significant relationship on outcomes in education, employment, housing, and identification of a life-long connection. However, the attendance in the education life

skills workshop was higher, and the outcomes in education after emancipation were significant. There was also a substantial number of youth that graduated from high school.

Although, the limitations of this study avert any definitive policy or practice recommendations, the findings highlight important key factors. Providing ongoing services to emancipated youth is beneficial and can have a positive impact in educational outcomes. The continuous contact with the emancipation coach after emancipating allowed the youth to have continued educational support. The ongoing contact with the ILP social worker is also crucial in identifying a life-long connection and allows the youth to receive resources and services prior to emancipating. A life-long connection can be a parent, relative, family friend, or a friend. It is up to the social worker to examine the quality of the relationship between the life-long connection and the youth, to make necessary accommodations to help strengthen the relationship, and to ensure they will have a positive influence on the youth.

It is recommended that ILP social workers continue to provide the youth with services and resources in

education, employment, and housing. In order to increase participation incentives, location and time of the life skills workshops should be analyzed to better serve the youth. Achieving successful outcomes in education, employment, and housing, requires ongoing support and services. The services need to be tailored to the youth's needs. Evaluation of the life skills workshops is necessary in order to make modification to help improve participation by the youth. The involvement of foster parents is important. If multiple service providers were to offer the ILP life skills workshops, participation might increase as there would be more access.

At a policy level, it is important to provide ongoing training for social workers on micro-practice services. These include how to effectively communicate with foster youth, integrating engagement techniques, and modifying the existing case plan to accommodate the youth. On January 1, 2012 Assembly Bill 12 (AB 12) went into effect in the state of California. With the implementation of this bill, the youth will be able to remain in foster care until the age of 20. Modifications need to be made to better serve this population including modifications to the case plan. The case plan goals are

going to be more specific and will include goals such as, paying rent, attending college, and employment. By making these modification the youth will have better opportunities to transition into adulthood successfully.

At a research level, it is important to understand how life skills workshops have helped foster youth transition successfully into adulthood. Mares (2010) found that post-emancipated youth identified establishing permanent connections with supportive adults as one of the important factors in transitioning into adulthood successfully. Ongoing support from foster parents is essential in helping the youth learn the necessary skills to transition into adulthood. The youth should be able to practice the skills they learn in the life skills workshops in their home environment. Future research should include what youth perceive as useful and what changes they would make to the program to better meet their needs. ILP programs across the nation should be cross-examined to see what makes them successful and what modifications should be made. A longitudinal study is needed to have a better understanding of factors contributed to successfully transitioning into adulthood.

Conclusions

The findings in this study indicate there is relationship between the participation in the ILP life skills workshops and educational outcomes after emancipation. Identification of a life-long connection was preeminent amongst almost all of the youth. This can be associated with the continuous contact with the ILP social worker and identifying important people in their lives at an early age.

Participation in life skill workshops is low but some workshops tend to be more popular than others, which include employment and education. Also, participation in annual conferences and events had low attendance.

In addition, this study revealed that foster youth in Riverside County are obtaining a high school diploma (68.9%) and attending college (45.4%) at a higher rate than expected. Nationally only (10%) of former foster youth enroll in college and only (46%) graduate from high school. Ongoing services after emancipating can be beneficial to the youth and lead to better outcomes.

APPENDIX
DATA EXTRACTION TOOL

Data Extraction Tool

Case ID# _____

Age _____

Gender 0 = Male 1 = Female _____

Ethnicity

☐ 1= American Indian or
Alaskan Native

2 = ☐ Hispanic or Latino

☐ 3=Asian

4 = ☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific
Islander

☐ 5 = Black or African American 6 = ☐ White or Caucasian

Case Characteristics

0-General neglect

1-Physical abuse

2-emotional abuse

4-caretaker absence/Incapacity

5-severe physical abuse

Number of placements _____

Number of years in foster care _____

Education

0-Obtained high school diploma

1-GED

2-youth dropped out of high school

After emancipation

0-youth enrolled in college

1-youth who plan to enroll in a vocational or job training

2-youth has no plans to continues education

Housing

0-Youth is going to rent or share rent with another person

1-Youth is going to reside with parent

2-youth will have transitional housing (THP+)

3-youth has no housing arrangements

Life Long connection

0 = Youth identified a life- long connection

1 = youth do not report having a life -long connection

Employment

0 = full time employment

1 = part time employment

2 = enlisted in the military, job corps, conservation corps, or americorps

3 = youth has means of financial support

Life Skills classes

0 = Participated 1 = Did not participate

Employment	<input type="checkbox"/> Participated	<input type="checkbox"/> Did not participate
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Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Participated	<input type="checkbox"/> Did not participate
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Permanency	<input type="checkbox"/> Participated	<input type="checkbox"/> Did not participate
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Healthy Choices	<input type="checkbox"/> Participated	<input type="checkbox"/> Did not participate
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Contact with emancipation coaches

0-telephone

1-face to face

2-TDM participation

3-Mail

Contact with ILP social worker

0-telephone

1-face to face

2-TDM participation

3-Mail

Participation in annual conferences or events.

0-Attended

1-Did not attend.

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