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FACTORS THAT GUIDE TOWARD THE EMANCIPATION
OF FOSTER CARE YOUTH

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
Singhi Rajan

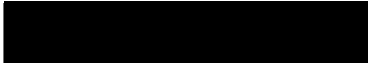
June 2007

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Singhi Rajan
June 2007

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine the guiding factors that help foster youth emancipate successfully. The goal was to examine five areas: housing, education, identifying role models, social skills and effectiveness of Independent Living Program (ILP) services. This study contains a literature review covering these five areas. The data was retrieved from Orangewood Children's Foundations' former foster youth participants of age 18 or older who graduated from ILP. This study also presents the detailed results of the statistical analysis of the quantitative data obtained from the participants. The majority of the participants indicated that the support services received through Orangewood Children's Foundation helped them to overcome barriers that prevented subjects from accessing education, housing and assisted them in identifying positive role models and enhanced their social skills. Youth were satisfied overall with the support services provided by Orangewood Children's Foundation.

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I would like to acknowledge my God who has helped me through everything in my life. I would also like to acknowledge Fred and Lulu Ramos and my best friend Keith, who helped and encouraged me through my struggles. I would like to thank my little brother Alex who is an inspiration in my life. I would not be here without Katharine Peake who went above and beyond and believed in me. Also, would like to thank all the family members in Oregon. I would also like to acknowledge my Professors Dr. Davis, Dr. Shon, Dr. Taylor, Dr. Smith, Dr. Liles, Dr. Mary, Dr. Little and Tim who gave me great courage.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

According to Massinga and Pecora, in 2001, approximately 47% of foster care children were over age 11. Of youth who were leaving foster care, about 20% were over the age of 16 (Massinga & Pecora). Permanency, stability and sense of belonging to a family are needs not only for children but those who are either ready to emancipate or already emancipated out of foster care. A critical resource for foster youth is maintaining connections with people who have been a support in their lives to assist in transition to their independence (Massinga & Pecora). Based on past studies by (Barth, 1990; Cook, 1991; McMillen & Tucker, 1999), youth who participated in Independent Living Program (ILP) were struggling more than mainstream youth as far as lack of social support, money management skills, housing, education and parenting skills. In addition these youth face other challenges including: mental health, being sexually active without contraceptives and not able to reach economic self-sufficiency Georgiades (2005).

However Georgiades also mentioned that recent studies shows improvement for foster youth who were participants of ILP such as education and employment.

Policy

The Foster Care Independence Act was enacted by Congress on December 14, 1999. The Act was introduced to address the concerns foster youth face post emancipation and to prepare youth for independent living (Massinga & Pecora, 2004). The Chafee Foster Care Independence Act was signed into a law by President Clinton to assist foster youth in areas of education, employment, housing and life skills (Georgiades, 2005). The five purposes of the Chafee Program were to: 1) help youth who are preparing to emancipate and make the transition to reach self-sufficiency; 2) help youth obtain necessary services such as training or education to obtain employment; 3) assist youth to achieve higher education; 4) provide support for youth's post emancipation personal and emotional needs; and 5) to teach youth by providing a variety of services and support to learn to take responsibility for their adulthood (Collins, 2004). Another purpose was added on in 2001, in The Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendment, Section 477 of the

Social Security Act, which is to make vouchers of \$5000 available for foster youth up to the age of 23 if the youth are continuing a training program or enrolled in a post-secondary education. According to Collins (2005) a transitioning service plan requires the youth's involvement in coming up with goals for his/her future. This procedure is also intended to empower the youth and to emphasize a youth driven approach. However it is not a standardized procedure for youth to be involved in the transitioning service plan (Collins, 2005).

Results of previous studies on ILP suggests that ILP services are targeted more on youth who had multiple placements and usually of within an ethnic background of African American or Mexican American/other Latino. Youth who are placed in relative care are less likely to be aware of ILP services/referrals than youth placed in group homes or foster care (Lemon, Hines, & Merdinger, 2005).

ILP participants and non-ILP participants tend to learn about life skills while they are placed in foster care. However, the ILP group was more likely to learn about money management, obtaining employment, opening up a checking account, housing and basic life skills such as

setting and achieving goals or finding out resources (Lemon et al., 2005).

"Former foster children are at a higher risk for a number of negative outcomes, such as substance abuse, homelessness, and low educational attainment, but the research on older youth is limited and often does not consider the strengths these youth exhibit" (Massinga & Pecora, 2004, p. 151).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out the guiding factors that help foster youth emancipate successfully. The goal was to examine five areas: housing, education, identifying role models, social skills and effectiveness of ILP services. The data was collected from foster youth, age 18 and older, from Orangewood Children's Foundation, a facility that provides aftercare services in the form of life skills training, employment and education assistance, supervised living, case management, and follow-up for emancipated youth until the age of 21.

For the purposes of this research, the outcomes assessed were the clients' levels of employment,

education, housing stability, and overall establishment of basic living skills they are either receiving or received upon completion of services by Orangewood Children's Foundation.

The type of research design that best addresses these issues among emancipated youth who received aftercare services through Orangewood Children's Foundation was a quantitative approach. A purely quantitative approach most likely allows for reaching the greatest number of respondents via a survey or questionnaire. However, the inclusion of one to two open-ended questions at the end of the quantitative survey allowed gathering additional feedback and anecdotal information about the quality of services provided in the exact words of the clients.

Population

The data was retrieved from Orangewood Children's Foundations' former foster youth participants of age 18 or older who recently graduated from ILP. California Youth Connection (CYC) conducts meetings with former foster youth to get input on how to better serve youth. The survey or questionnaire was administered during CYC meetings.

Benefits

The benefits of this study may guide ILP social workers, foster care agency workers and County social workers to understand what programs are more beneficial for foster youth. This study may also help social service professionals better prepare youth for emancipation. It may better prepare supporting social service professionals and facilitators for ILP to help youth focus on their future and guide them to assume positions of responsibility in society as well as help these youth avoid many social stressors. As statistics show most of former foster care youth end up homeless or in prison (Collins, 2004). Although, there is not enough support in guiding youth for successful emancipation, in the long run taxpayers end up bearing the costs associated with imprisonment, high crime rates, homelessness and welfare. In addition, this study may generate interest among social service professionals to conduct further research into problems facing foster care youth upon emancipation. Therefore, these costs could be reduced if more foster youth are able to lead more productive lives, contributing to society.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Collins (2004) reported that states have been receiving financial support resulting from federal legislation enacted to provide services to foster youth to better prepare for emancipation. Services such as education, housing, life skills and support services are met through the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Collins, 2004). Implementation of these policies has been closely observed by scholars to further advocate for foster youth and also to evaluate if these policies have been effective (Collins, 2004). According to Collins, (2004) the legislation addresses the need for oppressed youth within the foster care system. The legislation funds ILP skills training. However this training is conducted in a classroom setting that may fail to address the learning environmental needs of many of these youth. This research study focused on the five factors that guide toward emancipation among foster youth. The following is the literature review based on the

five factors: education, social support, employment, housing and effectiveness of ILP services.

Education

Postsecondary education is in demand in the workforce. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the numbers of jobs for people with less than college education during the years of 1998-2008 will decrease as the demand for college level jobs increases rapidly (Merdinger, Hines, Lemon, & Wyatt as cited in U.S. Department of Education, 2000). College graduates earn more money than non-college graduates. "In 1999, 25-34 year old college graduates earned \$15,000 more yearly than high school graduates (\$40,000 v. \$25,122), and \$22,000 more than high school dropouts (\$40,000 v. \$18,000)" (Merdinger et al., 2005, p. 869).

The multimethod and multiphase study of descriptive findings by Merdinger, Hines, Lemon, Wyatt, and Tweed (2002), citing the Pathways to College study, a sample of 216 emancipated foster youth attending a four-year university, reveals that building resilience through adversity helped them cope with the various demands of academia. Although the results indicated that these youth

are academically performing according to university standards, they might be vulnerable in other areas (Merdinger et al., 2002). This study examined the participants' responses and compared them to other studies to understand the factors that affect the academic performance of the former foster youth. "About 40.5% of the sample of college attending, former foster youth felt only somewhat prepared for independent living, while 35% indicated they were not well prepared" (Merdinger et al., 2002, p. 891). These youth also faced a tremendous amount of financial stress. According to the study, the majority of respondents were supporting themselves through financial aid (79.6%) or through employment (76.4%) and the consensus of about half of the participants was that others of their own age faced less financial stressors than the participants (Merdinger et al., 2002).

Social Support

Strength of social support could be one of the contributing factors in regards to the educational success among foster youth (Merdinger et al., 2002). According to Merdinger et al. (2002), almost 87% of the

sample population responded that they could get social support from friends and family members. Mentor support was one of the key elements that motivated former foster youth to achieve some kind of goal (Merdinger et al., 2002). About 60% have friends who they knew in foster care, group home or kinship care with whom they were able to maintain contact (Merdinger et al., 2002). Emancipated foster youths' relationships that were built in out-of-home placements continue to be an important source of support. For most of the participants, going to a four-year university gave them some kind of goal. Social support also helped them with housing and a sense of hope to prove to others that they can make it in society regardless of circumstances (Merdinger et al., 2002).

The literature review indicates that foster alumni experience extraneous obstacles that affect their education. Environmental factors contribute to the poor educational outcomes among foster youth (Lemon, Hines, & Merdinger, 2004). As the literature points out the various factors and stressors include physical, verbal and sexual abuse, restrictive environment, unstable placements, poor quality of foster home or group homes and the incapacity of youth to seek out advice or access

to resources (Collins as cited in Massinga & Pecora 2004).

Employment

According to Dworsky (2005), foster youth are dependents of the court and at emancipation, most of them do not have enough social support, making the transition to adulthood difficult. Wisconsin's out-of-home system of 8511 foster youth were participants of the study conducted by Dworsky (2005) who examined self-sufficiency based on three categories: employment, earnings and public assistance receipt. According to the study, foster youth were employed prior to emancipation for about four quarters and some found employment just before emancipation. When the total earnings for a two year period were compared, the majority of these youth were living below the poverty level (Dworsky, 2005). According to the sample of participants, female foster youth earned more than male. The study also revealed that unique demographic and out-of-home care history characteristics had some correlation with the stability of employment (Dworsky, 2005). "[R]ecipt of AFDC/TANF cash assistance was nearly three times higher among females (26.9%) than

among males (9.5%)” (Dowrsky, 2005, p. 1095). The study concludes that although there was some increase in the earnings among former foster youth, eight years post emancipation they were still living under the poverty level. According to Dworksy (2005), one-third of these youth studied received some sort of public entitlement such as cash or food stamps for two years post emancipation. This study correlates with the Bass, Shields, and Berman, (2004), Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study, which examined outcomes for 659 alumni between September 2000 and January 2002. The unemployment rate was 80.1% among the sample population. According to Bass et al., (2004) the study results showed nearly 33.2% of these alumni lived below poverty level.

Housing

According to a study done by Zugazaga (2004) using a multiple shelter sample of 162 homeless adults (54 men and 108 single women and women with children), stressful life events that these participants faced were: financial crises, unsteady relationships, loss of loved ones, foster care experiences and other medical related crises (Zugazaga, 2004). The study revealed that 30% single

homeless women and 33% homeless women with children had lived in foster care (Zugazaga, 2004). According to Bass et al., (2004 as cited in Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith 2001), 22.2% of the foster care alumni studied were homeless for at least one day post emancipation. The study further explained that stressful events and lack of support can increase the likelihood of homelessness. Zugazaga (2004) also suggested that further in depth research is necessary to find the correlation between female foster alumni and homelessness.

Effectiveness of Independent Living Program Services

Lemon et al., (2004), examined data, retrieved from ILP coordinators from nine California Counties, of non-ILP participants versus participants. The sample included 81 participants who were enrolled in ILP and 113 non-participants. The study used an ethnographic analysis to describe the unique services provided by the nine counties. The study revealed that most ILP participants were more likely to be African American or Mexican American/other Latino (Lemon et al., 2004). While in foster care, they tend to be placed in nonrelative placements. According to the study, the results indicated

that the ILP services emphasized the instructional component rather than non-authoritative environments where youth might be more receptive to learning Independent Living skills. Legislation has recently allowed some flexibility in ILP services (Lemon et al., 2004).

According to Georgiades (2005), in a sample where 49 foster youth were examined, the results indicated that ILP participants were: able to pursue a higher education, able to obtain and stabilize employment, able to stay away from governmental assistance, able to have stable housing and able to obtain driver's licenses. This study suggests that ILP classes need to take proactive steps to help youth to have healthy interpersonal relationships for social support Georgiades (2005).

Theory

According to Bolen, Lamb, and Gradante (2002, as cited in Maslow, 1987) discussing child abuse and neglect, there are four hierarchical domains: physiological needs, safety, love and belonging and esteem.

Physiological needs are the need for food, shelter and clothing. Many children have been removed out of their family of origin based on the lack of basic food, shelter and clothing. In most cases, the parent(s) have an addiction problem and therefore, are not able to provide basic needs (Bolen et al., 2002).

Lack of safety could be a reason for child removal due to lack of education, substance abuse and inability to connect with resources on the part of these parents. Considering the environmental factors, parents cannot always protect their children, which may cause these children to feel fearful and unable to grow according to their developmental stage (Bolen et al., 2002).

Most of the time when children are placed in the foster care system, they feel angry, lonely, isolated from the family and friends and often lose their sense of identity. This brings up the third stage of needing to belong/love. When children acquire self-identities this gives them some kind of a base of morals and values. If those children are taken away from that environment due to imminent danger or lack of protection, the children have to relearn their basic values (Bolen et al., 2002).

The other component of stage three is the need for love. Usually, when children are placed in foster care they assume that it is their fault, but in reality they are too young to understand that what was done was for their own protection. They often feel as if no one loves them. This is very detrimental because to fill that void they try to fit in with their peers. This is crucial because the type of peer pressure they are surrounded by can either help them overcome obstacles or create even worse situations (Bolen et al., 2002).

The fourth need is the need for self-esteem, to feel a sense of competence and/or worth as a person. Children and youth gain their sense of self-esteem through reinforcement. Many youth and children in foster care experience lack of reinforcement for their efforts to make a difference in their new placement. There is a frequent push and pull between the family of origin and the court system and in the midst of it all, these children do not feel a sense of permanence, and this hinders their self-esteem. Multiple placements, lack of positive reinforcement and lack of sense of self can be barriers to any creative component children might have

acquired. So, they might not even have the chance to improve their creative abilities (Bolen et al., 2002).

Conclusion

The Legislation was passed to ensure the well being of foster alumni. According to Collins (2004), the focal point of ILP is on the training component of Independent Living Skills. Studies have shown if the ILP classes can be more flexible, so that youth get one-on-one attention, it is more than likely they will acquire something out of ILP classes (Lemon et al., 2004). Although most foster alumni face many stress factors such as homelessness, unemployment, addiction issues and falling back to welfare, there are quite a few who are able to rise above the obstacles and have built enough resilience to able to move forward in life (Merdinger et al., 2002). Youth in foster care already understand authority because they are under the jurisdiction of the court for their safety. Youth in general who turn 18 face various challenges because they are learning the language of society, and youth in foster care, in general, face unique adversities, and making it more challenging to cope with situations post emancipation, because many did not

receive adequate education or the opportunity to learn essential life skills (Dworsky, 2005; Massinga & Pecora, 2004).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

This Chapter will cover the purpose of the study, sampling, data collection, instrument, procedures and data analysis.

Design of the Study

The purpose of the study was to find out the guiding factors that help foster youth emancipate successfully. The goal was to examine five areas: housing, education, identifying role models, social skills and effectiveness of ILP services. The study intended to collect data from foster youth age 18 and older from Orangewood Children's Foundation, a facility that provides aftercare services in the form of life skills training, employment and education assistance, supervised living, case management, and follow-up for emancipated youth until the age of 21. The data solicited responses designed to address the specific outcomes: levels of employment, education, housing stability, and overall establishment of basic living skills they are either currently receiving or received upon completion of services by Orangewood Children's Foundation.

The type of research design that best addresses these issues among emancipated youth who received aftercare services through Orangewood Children's Foundation was a quantitative approach. A purely quantitative approach allowed for reaching the greatest number of respondents via a survey. Moreover, the inclusion of one to two open-ended questions at the end of the quantitative survey allowed gathering additional feedback and anecdotal information about the quality of services provided in the exact words of the clients themselves.

Sampling and Data Collection

The data was retrieved from Orangewood Children's Foundations' former foster youth participants of age 18 or older who graduated from ILP. The Orangewood Children's Foundation conducted a workshop on the last Wednesday of each month. The goal was to administer the survey after the workshop or during the break depending on the preference of the youth and the facilitator of the workshop. Interview surveys took approximately fifteen minutes for the participants to complete.

The instrument was retrieved from a previous ILP evaluation study for San Bernardino ILP (Baeza & Nava, 2003). Changes were made on the instrument to accommodate services provided by Orangewood Children's Foundation. Each county operates ILP services in a unique manner. Therefore, the questions on this instrument were general in order to avoid any biases or misunderstanding.

Procedures

Orangewood Children's Foundation conducted a workshop at the last Wednesday of each month. The workshop consisted of about 15-20 foster youth. They also had a scattered site program where a youth could stay as a temporary placement until he/she was able to find permanent housing. Scattered site is part of Orangewood Children's Foundation and this group held meetings. Part of the procedure was to schedule the next meeting with the scattered site manager and youth so this researcher could administer the survey at their convenience.

Protection of Human Subjects

To protect the confidentiality of the respondents, this researcher personally collected all the data. The

data was stored in a locked box to ensure clients' right to privacy. The data was only used for this research study and was protected by all means. Upon completion of this study, the data was destroyed.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data retrieved was analyzed using SPSS. Included in the statistical analysis were the mean, mode and frequencies. The variable that was determined services included: education, social support, employment, housing and effectiveness of ILP services.

This chapter explained the quantitative design of the study. It identified the population sample. Data collection procedures, protection of human services and data analysis were discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Chapter four presents the results of the statistical analysis of the quantitative data obtained from Orangewood Children's Foundation. These results are categorized to support the five focus areas of this study: housing, education, identifying role models, social skills and effectiveness of ILP services. The results of the two open-ended questions are also shown.

Table 1 contains the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample. The sample contained more males than females (nearly 60% to 40%, respectively), and the highest represented ethnic group was Hispanic (36.4%), followed by Caucasian (27.3%), Asian (13.6%), and Afro-American (9.1%). Three subjects identified themselves as either "Afro-American and Native American," "Caucasian and African American," or "N/A." The mean age of the subjects was 19 years old, and the age ranged between 18 and 21 years of age, with the sample represented most highly by 18 year olds (40.9%).

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
male	13	59.1
female	9	40.9
Ethnicity		
Afro-American	2	9.1
Asian	3	13.6
Caucasian	6	27.3
Hispanic	8	36.4
Afro-American & Native American	1	4.5
Caucasian & African American	1	4.5
N/A	1	4.5
Age in years (mean age = 19 years)		
18	9	40.9
19	5	22.7
20	7	31.8
21	1	4.5

Table 2 contains data on whether the subjects had received a scholarship from Orangewood Children's Foundation. The majority of the participants had not yet received a scholarship from the Foundation (63.6% versus 36.4%).

Table 2. Have You Received a Scholarship from Orangewood Children's Foundation?

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	8	36.4
no	14	63.6
Total	22	100.0

In response to the follow-up question, "How helpful was the scholarship provided by Orangewood Children's Foundation to you?" Of the responses, 77.8% reported "very helpful"; 11.1% of the subjects reported "moderately helpful," with an equal number reporting "not at all helpful" (11.1%) (Table 3).

Table 3. How Helpful was the Scholarship Provided by Orangewood Children's Foundation to You?

Responses	Frequency	Percent
not at all helpful	1	11.1
moderately helpful	1	11.1
very helpful	7	77.8
Total	9	100.0

In response to the question, "Have you ever lived in the Transitional Housing Program?" 2/3 of the subjects (63.6%) reported "no," and 1/3 reported "yes." (Table 4)

Table 4. Have You Ever Lived in Transitional Housing Program?

Responses	Frequency	Percent
yes	7	33.3
no	14	66.7
Total	21	100.0

Of those subjects who participated in the Orangewood Transitional Housing Program, 50% reported completing the program; 37.5% reported that they had not completed the program, and 12.5% reported that they are still in the program (Table 5).

Table 5. Did You Complete the Program?

Responses (n = 8)	Frequency	Percent
Yes	4	50.0
no	3	37.5
still in the program	1	12.5
Total	8	100.0

In responding to the follow-up question, "How helpful was the Transitional Housing Program to you?" 77.8% of the subjects reported "very helpful," while 22.2% reported "moderately helpful" (Table 6).

Table 6. How Helpful was the Transitional Housing Program to You?

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Moderately helpful	2	22.2
very helpful	7	77.8
Total	9	100.0

When asked, "Have you ever received any financial assistance from Orangewood Children's Foundation for your housing needs?" 61.9% of the subjects reported "yes," while 38.1% reported "no" (Table 7).

Table 7. Have You Ever Received any Financial Assistance from Orangewood Children's Foundation for Your Housing Needs?

Responses	Frequency	Percent
yes	13	61.9
no	8	38.1
Total	21	100.0

In response to the follow-up question, "How helpful was the financial assistance provided by Orangewood Children's Foundation to you?" 71.4% of the subjects who received financial assistance reported "very helpful"; 14.3% reported "moderately helpful,"; 7.1% reported "a little helpful," and another 7.1% reported "not at all helpful" (Table 8).

Table 8. Extent to which Financial Assistance was Helpful to Subjects

Responses	Frequency	Percent
not at all helpful	1	7.1
a little helpful	1	7.1
moderately helpful	2	14.3
very helpful	10	71.4
Total	14	100.0

The responses reveal that the five most helpful types of employment assistance services for the respondents were 1) Job search, 2) Filling out job applications 3) Obtaining bus pass 4) Transportation and 5) Referrals. Subjects checked more than one type of employment service (Table 9).

Table 9. What Kind of Assistance have You Received through Orangewood Children's Foundation in Terms of Obtaining Employment?

Types of Employment Assistance (n=22)	Percent of Subjects
Job search	27.2%
Fill out job applications	22.7%
Obtain bus pass	22.7%
Transportation	18.1%
Referrals	18.1%
Interview Skills	13.6%
Mock Interview	13.6%
Interview Clothing	9.0%
Food Bank	4.5%
Job @ Orangewood Foundation	4.5%

When combined the categories of services provided by Orangewood Children's Foundation reveal three outstanding themes of pre-employment support services (Table 10).

Pre-employment services

a) Physical access to job

application/interview-Transportation was found most helpful. According to the subjects it also gave them the opportunity to save money to buy a car.

- b) Job leads (via internet and referrals such as word of mouth). The second leading support service was the job leads. One of the subjects' responses was "Independent Living Program was much help, as well as provided accessible resources such as job hunting and computers with internet for research."
- c) Interview skills - Subjects also found interviewing skills helpful through mock interviewing and supplying the means for interview clothing (Table 10).

Table 10. Pre-employment Support Services

(n=22)	
Physical Access to potential job sites	63.5%
Job Leads	49.8%
Interview skills	36.2%

Responses show that the five most helpful types of educational assistance services for the subjects were

- 1) Locating School Program, 2) Transportation
- 3) Financial Aid 4) Applying to other programs and

5) Filling out admission applications. Subjects checked more than one type of employment service.

When combined the categories of services provided by Orangewood Children's Foundation show three outstanding themes of pre-enrollment support services (Table 11).

Table 11. Services Provided for Education

Types of Educational Assistance (n=22)	Percent of Subjects
Filling out Financial Aid application	13.6%
Applying to other programs (EOPS, etc)	13.6%
Filling out Admission Applications	13.6%
Locating School Program	18.1%
Transportation	18.1%
None (not applicable)	7.0%
Guidance	4.5%
Tutoring	4.5%

The majority of the participants' responses of (63.4%) indicates that the support services received through Orangewood Children's Foundation helped to overcome barriers that prevented subjects from accessing education.

Orangewood Children's Foundation provided youth with bus passes to access school. Subjects also reported that

the program's ILP coordinator assisted respondents in applying for college and also in receiving financial aid such as financial aid and chafee grants.

The subjects who received tutoring services (4.5%) (n = 22) responded that tutoring prior to admission acceptance has helped raise their knowledge base (Table 12).

Table 12. Outstanding Educational Services

Pre-Enrollment Support Services (n = 22)	
Support based on procedural/resource access	63.4%
Physical access	18.1%
Financial access	4.5%

In response to the question, "The program provided me with guidance when I needed it to handle personal life situations," 12 out of 22 (54.5%) participants responded "strongly agree," followed by "agree" (40.9%), and (4.5%) reported "strongly disagree" (Table 13).

Table 13. The Program Provided Me with Guidance when I Needed it to Handle Personal Life Situations

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	4.5
Agree	9	40.9
Strongly agree	12	54.5
Total	22	100.0

When asked, "The program was a support system while I was preparing for adulthood," (50.0%) of the subjects reported "agree," followed by (40.9%) "strongly agree," while (4.5%) reported "disagree" and another (4.5%) "strongly disagree" (Table 14).

Table 14. The Program was a Support System while I was Preparing for Adulthood

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	4.5
Disagree	1	4.5
Agree	11	50.0
Strongly agree	9	40.9
Total	22	100.0

In response to the question, "The program offered me the necessary tools that gave me the ability to function on my own," 13 out of 22 (59.1%) participants responded "agree," followed by "strongly agree" (36.4%), and (4.5%) reported "strongly disagree" (Table 15).

Table 15. The Program Helped Me to Develop Skills to Survive on My Own

Responses	Frequency
Strongly disagree	1
Agree	10
Strongly agree	11
Total	22

When asked, "The program was sensitive to my individual or particular needs" (63.6%) of the subjects reported "agree," followed by (31.8%) "strongly agree," while (4.5%) reported "strongly disagree" (Table 16).

Table 16. The Program was Sensitive to My Individual or Particular Needs

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	1	4.5
Agree	14	63.6
Strongly agree	7	31.8
Total	22	100.0

In response to the question, "The program was helpful overall," 15 out of 22 (68.2%) participants responded "strongly agree," and (4.5%) reported "agree" (Table 17).

Table 17. The Program was Helpful Overall

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Agree	7	31.8
Strongly agree	15	68.2
Total	22	100.0

When asked, "The program included one-on-one training from staff members that was helpful to reach my personal goals," (50.0%) of the subjects reported "agree," followed by (40.9%) "strongly agree," while (4.5%) reported "strongly disagree" (Table 18).

Table 18. The Program Included One-on-one Training from Staff Members that was Helpful to Reach My Personal Goals

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	2	9.0
Agree	11	50.0
Strongly agree	9	40.9
Total	22	100.0

In response to the question, "The program needed to be longer," 11 out of 22 (50.0%) participants responded "disagree," followed by (36.4%) "strongly agree"; (9.1%) reported "agree" and (4.5%) "strongly disagree" (Table 19).

Table 19. Subjects' Responses to "Does the Orangewood Children's Foundation Program Need to be Longer?"

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	4.5
Disagree	11	50.0
Agree	2	9.1
Strongly agree	8	36.4
Total	22	100.0

When asked, "The program was available to me when I was in crisis," (54.5%) of the subjects reported "strongly agree," followed by (40.9%) "agree," while (4.5%) reported "disagree" (Table 20).

Table 20. Subjects' Responses to the Question, "Was the Program Available to You When You Were in Crisis?"

Responses	Frequency
Disagree	1
Agree	9
Strongly agree	12
Total	22

In response to the question, "When I graduated from the program I felt that I was prepared to live independently," (57.1%) participants responded "strongly agree," followed by (33.3%) "agree" and (9.6%) "Disagree" (Table 21).

Table 21. When I Graduated from the Program I Felt that I was Prepared to Live Independently

Responses (n=22)	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	2	9.6
Agree	7	33.3
Strongly agree	12	57.1
Total	21	100.0
Total	22	

When asked, "The program helped me to develop skills to survive on my own," one half (50.0%) of the subjects reported "strongly agree," followed by "agree" (45.5%), while 4.5% reported "strongly disagree" (Table 22).

Table 22. The Program Helped Me to Develop Skills to Survive on My Own

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	4.5
Agree	10	45.5
Strongly agree	11	50.0
Total	22	100.0

In response to the question, "The mentor program helped me to identify positive role models," 14 out of 22

(63.6%) participants responded "strongly agree," followed by (31.8%) "agree" and (4.5%) "strongly disagree" (Table 23).

Table 23. The Mentor Program Helped Me to Identify Positive Role Models

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	4.5
Agree	7	31.8
Strongly agree	14	63.6
Total	22	100.0

To the questions, "What was the most helpful service that you received from Orangewood Children's Foundation aftercare services, and how were they helpful?" and "What suggestions do you have to improve services for helping foster youth transition into adulthood?" only 14 of the total survey participants answered. Five themes were found in these respondents' answers: 1) helpfulness of scholarship; 2) helpfulness of Transitional Housing Program 3) financial assistance; 4) living skills, and 5) social support.

The following are some of the subjects' responses to the survey's two open-ended questions. A content analysis of the first question, "What was the most helpful service that you received from Orangewood Children's Foundation aftercare services, and how were they helpful?" Revealed four themes:

1. Scholarship: Subjects' comments on scholarship included:

"Getting school funding helped a lot because if I had to do it on my own, I couldn't have gotten to college."

"I did not know the process of getting into college and how to fill out financial aid forms, etc. This program helped me get into college."

"No one in my family had the opportunity to go to college and I feel lucky to go to college."

2. Transitional Housing: Some of the verbatim responses to "Transitional Housing Program" being most helpful included:

"The Transitional Housing Program was most helpful." "When I was on the streets, the

Transitional Housing Program helped me and kept me off the streets."

3. Financial assistance: In response to how "financial assistance" was most helpful, respondents included:

"They helped me get furniture for my apartment."

"The program should also teach youth how to manage money."

"The ILP funds through Trust Fund were helpful."

"The Trust Fund gave some financial security."

"Getting funds to attend school really helped me out a lot."

4. Living Skills: Subjects' comments for scholarship included:

"The resources that were provided by the program were helpful to me while I was out in the streets. Need more information about different resources".

A content analysis of the second question, "What suggestions do you have to improve services for helping youth transition into adulthood?" Revealed three themes:

1. Transitional Housing: Subject's suggestions in response to Transitional Housing included:

"Everyone who been [sic] through the system should be given the opportunity for Transitional Housing Program."

"It was sad to see one of the other foster kids getting kicked out because of his problems. He had a lot of issues but now he is on the streets. I hope he doesn't get into more trouble."

"Transitional Housing Program should not be like foster care! They should treat us like adults and guide us how to be independent because I feel like they just give us stuff and what we going to do when we leave here?"

"There should be more Transitional Program like Rising Tide."

2. Living skills: Some of the suggestions for Living skills included:

"Need more assistance in getting efficient documents such as: Birth Certificate, Identification card and Social Security card

and go over with a mentor or coordinator and explain".

"Need access to more information to different resources".

3. Social support: Subject's suggestions in response to social support included:

"There should be an offer to hold off an individual if they are not ready to emancipate on a case by case bases".

"They should offer mentoring to younger kids!"

"They need to teach us how to get help or have someone there for us to be there for us".

"Teach us how to have steady and stable lives".

"We need someone who would listen to us and not see us and think dollar signs".

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Discussion

This chapter will discuss the findings, limitations, and recommendations for further research for independent living programs. This study hypothesized that the Orangewood Children's Foundation has effective services in terms of providing assistance in: enrolling youth in educational/vocational programs, social support, identifying role models and obtaining employment and housing.

Demographics

The majority of the participants were Hispanic male and this correlates with the previous study done by Lemon, Hines and Merdinger, (2005), that suggested ILP services are utilized more often by youth with an ethnic background of African American or Mexican American/other Latino. The mean age of the sample was 19 years of age ranging from 18 to 21.

Education

In terms of receiving scholarships from Orangewood Children's Foundation, (63.6%) have not received any

scholarship versus (36.4%) who have. Of the responses to a follow-up question of scholarship provided by Orangewood Children's Foundation, (77.8%) mentioned that the scholarship was very helpful. The types of educational assistance that were most helpful were filling out financial applications, applying to other programs (EOPS, etc), filling out admission applications, locating school programs, transportation, guidance and tutoring. The outstanding pre-enrollment support services were identified as: support based on procedural/resource access, physical access and financial access. Support based on procedural/resource access indicates that through support Orangewood Children's Foundation was able to assist youth in enrolling in schools or vocational programs. This correlates with the previous findings of Merdinger et al., (2002), that strength of social support is one of the contributing factors in regards to the educational success among foster youth. According to Merdinger et al., (2002), mentor support was another key element that motivated foster youth to achieve some kind of goal. When asked "What was the most helpful service that you received from Orangewood Children's Foundation aftercare services, and how was it helpful?" some of the

participants mentioned that the mentors at Orangewood Children's Foundation were most helpful.

Housing

The Transitional Housing Program provides foster youth with housing opportunities that require them to take more responsibility such as part-time employment, paying a portion of the rent, and the probability of sharing a room with another former foster youth. Out of sample data of 22, 14 participants (66.7%) did not participate or have yet to participate. The majority (50.0%) of those who participated in the Transitional Housing Program completed it. In responding to the follow-up question, "How helpful was the Transitional Housing Program to you?" 77.8% of the subjects reported "very helpful," while 22.2% reported "moderately helpful." This corroborates with the study done by Zugazaga (2004) that the importance of support, post emancipation, for foster youth is a critical component to help them reach self sufficiency.

In terms of assisting youth with financial assistance for housing needs, (61.9%) of the data sample mentioned yes and (71.4%) found the financial assistance very helpful.

Effectiveness of Independent Living Program Services

In response to the question, "The program provided me with guidance when I needed it to handle personal life situations," 12 out of 22 (54.5%) participants responded "strongly agree." When asked, "The program was a support system while I preparing for adulthood" (50.0%) of the subjects reported "agree," and (40.9%) "strongly agree."

This correlates with the study by Merdinger et al., (2002) that suggested the importance of social support that gave foster youth a sense of hope to prove to others that they can make it in society regardless of circumstances.

Participants were overwhelmingly satisfied (63.6%) in term of Orangewood Children's Foundation being sensitive to their individual or particular needs, which is a critical component to the social work practice/service delivery.

An astounding response of (68.2%) found Orangewood Children's Foundation being helpful overall. This percentage contrasts with Georgiades (2005) overall findings. Georgiades (2005) stated that most ILP services focus on meeting the guidelines to keep the program

alive, but in this study, it was found to be not true because the emphasis of Orangewood Children's Foundation is on the supportive service aspect.

When asked, "The program was available to me when I was in crisis," (54.5%) of the subjects reported "strongly agree." This corroborates Lemon, Hines & Merdinger's, (2004) study because as it deals with the extraneous obstacles foster youth face not only in foster care but post emancipation. Since foster youth experience a tremendous amount of stressors in their lives, it is very empowering for these youth that Orangewood Children's Foundation provides effective crisis management services.

In response to the question, "When I graduated from the program I felt that I was prepared to live independently," (57.1%) participants responded "strongly agree," followed by (33.3%) "agree". This correlates with the study by Georgiades (2005), that youth who participated in ILP services have higher chance of attaining stability in their lives.

The most helpful assistance for employment was job search followed by filling out applications, obtaining bus passes, transportation and referrals to job leads.

The three most outstanding services were physical access to potential job sites, job leads and interview skills. Orangewood Children's Foundation helped youth obtain employment by providing practical assistance as well as support to the youth to help them build stability.

Social Skills

When asked about the program offering the youth with the necessary tools that gave them the ability to function on their own, 13 out of 22 (59.1%) participants responded "agree," followed by "strongly agree" (36.4%). This shows that Orangewood Children's Foundation was guiding the youth to achieve self sufficiency with supportive services such as helping them to: pursue a higher education, obtain and stabilize employment, and locate stable housing.

In response to the question, "The mentor program helped me to identify positive role models," 14 out of 22 (63.6%) participants responded "strongly agree," followed by (31.8%) "agree." Most of the time foster youth don't have positive role models in their lives. Often they look up to their family of origin for guidance and support, post emancipation, because now they are supposed to be independent. However, studies have shown that foster

youth need guidance post emancipation to survive and have a stable life style (Dworsky, 2005). According to this researcher's study, almost (95.4%) of the participants agree that the program helped them identify positive role models, which explains one of the successful guiding factors to their achieving successful independence.

Open-ended Questions

According to the content analysis one of the two open-ended questions, youth suggested that every former foster youth should be given an opportunity to participate in the Transitional Housing Program. Some other suggestions included that Transitional Housing Program should teach youth how to reach self sufficiency rather than helping youth while they're in crisis. However, one of the participants mentioned the Transitional Housing Program being very helpful. Some participants were very empowered by the Trust Fund provided by Orangewood Children's Foundation because it helped them to learn about money management. Respondents were also thankful for the assistance with the process in pursuing a higher education.

Limitations

The process of data collection did not go as I anticipated. I did not get any response from ILP, Riverside, where I initially planned on collecting my data. Once I got approved by Orangewood Children's Foundation, the process was much easier. However, eight participants took the incentives, handed back blank surveys, and rushed out of the room. Another area of limitation was that the study did not further explore, with the youth, their current status of employment, housing, and education. It might also have been useful to provide a satisfaction scale with the various ILP services. Further studies may be beneficial if they compare youth who participated in ILP services versus those did not participate.

APPENDIX A
INSTRUMENT

INSTRUMENT

I. Identification Information

Please check:

1. Gender: 1. Male ____ 2. Female ____
 3. Other ____
2. Ethnicity 1. Afro-American ____ 2. Asian ____
 3. Caucasian ____ 4. Hispanic ____
 5. Native American ____ 6. Non-Hispanic Caucasian ____
 6. Other, please specify _____

Please fill in:

3. Your Current Age: _____

II General Questions

4. Have you received a scholarship from Orangewood Children's Foundation?

1. Yes ____ (PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 4a.)
2. No ____ (SKIP TO QUESTION 5.)

- 4a. How helpful was the scholarship provided by Orangewood Children's Foundation to you?

1	2	3	4
Not at all helpful	A little helpful	Moderately helpful	Very helpful

5. Have you ever lived in the Transitional Housing Program?

1. Yes ____ (PLEASE ANSWER QUESTIONS 5a. and 5b.)
2. No ____ (SKIP TO QUESTION 6.)

- 5a. Did you complete the program? Yes ____ No ____

- 5b. How helpful was the Transitional Housing Program to you?

1	2	3	4
Not at all helpful	A little helpful	Moderately helpful	Very helpful

6. Have you ever received any financial assistance from Orangewood Children's Foundation for your housing needs?

1. Yes ___ (PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 6a.)

2. No ___ (SKIP TO QUESTION 7.)

6a. How helpful was the financial assistance provided by Orangewood Children's Foundation to you?

1	2	3	4
Not at all helpful	A little helpful	Moderately helpful	Very helpful

7. What kind of assistance have you received through Orangewood Children's Foundation in terms of obtaining employment?

Please check all that apply.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Referrals ___ | 2. Transportation ___ |
| 3. Mock interview ___ | 4. Interview skills ___ |
| 5. Job search leads ___ | 6. Interview clothing ___ |
| 7. Filling out applications ___ | 8. Provided bus pass ___ |
| 9. Other (please specify): _____ | |

8. What kind of assistance have you received through Orangewood Children's Foundation in terms of your educational needs? Please check all that apply.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. locating school program ___ | 2. filling out admissions application |
| 3. provided transportation ___ | 4. completing financial aid applications |
| 5. applying to other programs (EOPS, etc) ___ | |
| 6. Other (please specify): _____ | |

The following questions pertain to your opinion of the services you received from Orangewood Children's Foundation. Please check the answer that most closely reflects your opinion.

9. The program provided me with guidance when I needed it to handle personal life situations.

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

10. The program was a support system while I was preparing for adulthood.
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
11. The program offered me the necessary tools that gave me the ability to function on my own.
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
12. The program was sensitive to my individual or particular needs.
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
13. The program was helpful overall.
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
14. The program included one-on-one training from staff members that was helpful to reach my personal goals.
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
15. The program needed to be longer.
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
16. The program was available to me when I was in crisis
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
17. When I graduated from the program I felt that I was prepared to live independently.
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |

18. The program helped me to develop skills to survive on my own.

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

19. The mentor program helped me to identify positive role models.

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. If you need additional writing space, please feel free to write on the back of this page.

What was the most helpful service that you received from Orangewood Children's Foundation aftercare services, and how were they helpful?

What suggestions do you have to improve services for helping foster youth transition into adulthood?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

My name is Singhi Rajan. I am a graduate student in the Master of Social Work (MSW) program at California State University, San Bernardino. I am conducting a research project on the factors that guide toward the emancipation of foster care youth. The purpose of this study is to identify the guiding factors that guide foster youth towards emancipation.

The data from the attached questionnaire will be used for research purpose only and your participation will remain anonymous. Please feel free to give your opinions and explanations in the spaces provided. If you feel the need to withdraw from the study at any point in time, please feel free to do so. This study is completely voluntary and you do not have to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable answering. Your participation or lack of participation won't affect your status with Orangewood Children's Foundation.

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Dr. Herb Shon at California State University, San Bernardino at 5500 University Pkwy, Social Work Department San Bernardino Ca, 92407. You may also contact him at (909) 537-5532.

Please initial on the space below acknowledging that you have been informed, understanding the purpose of the study, and freely consent to participate.

Initials

Date

APPENDIX C
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

The study you have just completed was designed to find out the factors that guide toward the emancipation of foster care youth. Your feedback will assist to find out the outcomes of the Independent Living Services provided by Orangewood Children's Foundation.

If you would like to find out the results of this study please refer to The Pfau Library at California State University, San Bernardino after July, 2007. Thank you for participating in this study and please keep the contents of this survey confidential.

If you felt uncomfortable or disturbed as a result of participating in the survey, please feel free to contact Erica Medina at Orangewood Children's Foundation at 1575 E. 17th Street, Santa Ana, CA 92705. You may also contact her at (714) 619-0215.

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