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A SATISFACTION SURVEY OF FOSTER CARE ADOLESCENTS
PARTICIPATING IN 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
Trina Jane Van Steenwyk

June 1995

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Trina Jane Van Steenwyk
June 1995

Approved by:



Dr. Teresa Morris, Project Advisor, Social Work

6/8/95
Date



Gary Null, Deputy Director
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Dr. Teresa Morris, Chair of Research Sequence

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Abstract

Adolescence and the transition to adulthood presents additional challenges for children who have been removed from their homes and declared dependents of the court. Emancipation at age 18 is especially difficult for these children who often lack family support systems and the skills and resources necessary for self-sufficiency. Independent living programs are designed to address these needs and prepare adolescents for independence. This study examined one aspect of an independent living program by gathering information and perspectives from a sample of adolescents currently in the child welfare system. The purpose of this study was to measure the relationship between participation in ILP and the adolescent's perception of preparedness for independent living in the areas of housing arrangements, education, employment and career, and money management. This study had a posttest-only, descriptive design with nonequivalent groups, from within the positivist paradigm. Self-administered questionnaires were mailed to two groups of adolescents: ILP Participants and Non-Participants. ILP Participants scored better than or equal to Non-Participants for most individual variables on the questionnaire. The majority of ILP Participants agreed or strongly agreed that participation in ILP was most influential to their current level of preparedness in each of the four areas. Due to small sample size, chi-square statistics which measure the significance of the results could not be analyzed; precluding a rejection of the null hypothesis. Qualitative data was also gathered which provided praise of the program, suggestions for improvement, and criticism. Further, more extensive research which includes outcome-based evaluation was highly recommended.

Dedication

With much love,

to my husband, John,
whose love, patience, and encouragement
sustained me during this endeavor,

and

to my parents,
Carl and Sue Somers,
whose unconditional confidence, devotion,
guidance, and assistance
enabled me to realize my dreams.

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Introduction

Problem Statement

Adolescent dependents of the court.

Adolescence, a challenging time of transition from childhood to adulthood, presents additional challenges for adolescents who have been removed from their homes and declared dependents of the court. An especially difficult event for these minors is emancipation, the point at which the minor leaves the child welfare system and lives independently, without the care and supervision of foster parents, relatives, guardians, or social workers, and without the financial aid provided to juvenile dependents of the court.

The proportion of adolescents in foster care doubled from 1977 to 1981, and continues to increase (Timberlake, Pasztor, et al, 1987). In addition, the children entering the system have grown older on average (Moynihan, 1988). Twenty-three to thirty percent of adolescents in the child welfare system will neither return to their biological families nor become members of adoptive families or permanent placements (Timberlake & Verdieck, 1987), but will rather "age-out" of the system (Timberlake, Pasztor, et al, 1987; Festinger, 1983).

Adolescents in all types of foster care are faced with the dual challenge of dealing with their often traumatic past experiences of being separated from their families, coping with the dysfunction of their families, and relocating; as well as facing their future as independent adults (Timberlake & Verdieck, 1987; McDermott, 1987). These experiences may also impair their psychosocial development (Timberlake & Verdieck, 1987; Timberlake, Pasztor, Sheagren,

Clarren, & Lammert, 1987). For most adolescents, the transition to maturity and the forming of a sense of personal identity and autonomy comes through a *gradual* increase in responsibility, decision-making, and independence. As well, parents and family members often somewhat monitor the speed of that transition. However, adolescents in out-of-home placements are suddenly faced with the full force of these external pressures upon reaching their eighteenth birthday (Timberlake & Verdick, 1987; Hardin, 1988).

Adolescents in foster care are usually without those support systems which regulate the transition into independence, and are instead living in rather rigid environments which place many restrictions on their daily lives. For example, unlike most of the teenagers who are not in foster care, adolescents in foster care have a greater number of people and institutions placing constraints on their personal decision-making, including the department of public social services, the courts, foster parents, biological parents, and social workers (Euster, Ward, & Euster, 1984; Festinger, 1983). Then suddenly, at age eighteen, the adolescent's life changes from one of many restrictions and lack of personal decision-making to one of complete independence with a sudden lack of support systems and resources. At this age, the state is no longer required to provide shelter, food, money, or even social support to those adolescents. The transition is often sudden and forced, no matter what the maturation level of the individual adolescent. The unique characteristics of each out-of-home placement will determine the full extent of the situations discussed. Some foster homes or relatives may allow the adolescent to maintain residence beyond the age of eighteen. However, all legal obligations are severed, and many placements either cannot or will not allow the adolescents to remain.

The children in out-of-home placements have unique needs. Many of them have been separated physically and emotionally from their previous support systems. Many of them are separated from their families and from the places and people who had made up their daily lives, such as school and community ties (Euster, et al, 1984). They have most likely lost the support systems which would have prepared them for independent living.

Adolescents in out-of-home placements are often lacking the familial, community, and social support systems which many adolescents take for granted. On the adolescent's eighteenth birthday, the state is released of its obligations, and the adolescents are expected to live independently. However, most people live *interdependently*, with the safety nets of family structure or community resources when they are in need of assistance or face difficult challenges. Without these safety nets and support systems adolescents from out-of-home placements are disproportionately unprepared to meet the challenges of independent living.

The literature shows that former foster children are disproportionately represented in homeless shelters, the penal system, and on public assistance (Moynihan, 1988; Festinger, 1983). A New York City study showed that 33% of former foster care children ended up on public assistance within 15 months (Moynihan, 1988). According to Barth (1986), educational and employment deficits are the most troublesome problems for foster children to deal with as adults. A study by the children's Defense Fund (cited in Sims, 1988) suggests that foster care children are more prone to such problems as early pregnancy, substance abuse, and delinquency due to the lack of appropriate social and psychological development. As supported by this literature, many foster care children are "aging-out" of the system (i.e. emancipating at age 18),

unprepared to handle the responsibilities and pressures of independent living. Therefore, it is vital to research independent living programs and to determine how to better serve this specific population. The child welfare system needs to provide effective services for the growing population of adolescents who will eventually emancipate as independent adults.

State required independent living skills programs.

In response to the special needs and challenges facing children in foster care, many states have mandated the implementation of independent living skills programs . However, recognition of this need to help prepare these adolescents for independent living has been recognized only in the last decade. In 1986, Congress first authorized the Independent-Living Initiative under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. The initiative offers financial incentives for states to provide services to prepare youths in foster care ages 16 and older for independent living (Moynihan, 1988; Irvine, 1988; Tatara, Casey, Nazar, Richmond, Diethorn, & Chapmond, 1988). The State of California requires that all children 16 years of age or older be offered assistance in achieving independence by planning for living arrangements, further education, vocational training, or employment to ease the transition from dependency status to self sufficiency (State Department, 1991).

As the temporary guardians of so many adolescents who will reach the age of majority under its care, the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) must understand how to best prepare adolescents to live in the community without the Department's support. As their temporary guardians, it is imperative for DPSS to provide the best training and preparation possible so

that these children can become productive, self-sufficient, and successful adults.

Evaluation of independent living programs.

The evaluation of independent living programs is difficult because of the problems with long term outcome assessment. The county will not encounter participants after program completion unless they return to the county system through the welfare or penal departments (Moynihan, 1988; Festinger, 1983). Once emancipated from the foster care system, the former participants are difficult to track. Many of the adolescent want to forget about their experiences as foster care children, and, therefore, want to disassociate completely from the Department of Public Social Services. Even when an Independent Living Program offers incentives, such as trips or picnics, for former participants to return and provide feedback, the response is almost nil. According to Erikson's (1963) developmental stages, adolescence is the stage of identify versus role confusion. It is a time of seeking autonomy from parents and achieving independence of thought and action (Newman & Newman, 1991). In many respects, DPSS and those involved with it, were the adolescents' "parents" or caretakers. Therefore, it may be considered "normal" for the adolescents to not want to maintain contact.

It would be ideal to study the outcome results of youth of approximately age twenty to twenty-two, in order to measure the actual level of self-sufficiency for both participants and non-participants of independent living programs. However, in addition to reasons already discussed, youth of this age often change residences often. It is difficult, costly, and overwhelming for the present staff of the county system to track the locations

of the youth involved. Additional funds and staff would be essential to such an endeavor. Therefore, being that population samples are difficult to locate and that the field of independent living programs is relatively new, literature on outcome-based program evaluations of independent living programs is insufficient, and, as well, literature on independent living programs in general is small in quantity; further research is important. However, available outcome studies have been hopeful. In one study, 70 percent of the participants in an independent living program moved successfully into living on their own, with 20 percent returning home to their natural parents. The remaining 10 percent either returned to the care of another agency or could not be traced by the researchers (Sims, 1988).

Problem Focus

Positivist paradigm.

This research was proposed from within the positive paradigm. According to Guba (1990), the positivist paradigm is identified by three characteristics: ontology, epistemology and methodology. Positivism is rooted in a *realist* ontology; a reality exists and the goal of science is to discover this "truth." Positivism is also committed to an *objectivist* epistemology, which means that the researcher must not allow his/her own values and judgments to interfere with the process of inquiry and experimentation. Finally, positivism requires the researcher to follow an *empirical experimentalism* methodology, which allows the inquirer to control the setting in order to allow a true view of nature that eliminates the bias of the inquirer. This research followed this framework and was a two-group, descriptive study.

Arenas of social work practice.

This study addressed practice issues in the three arenas of social work practice: direct practice, community intervention, and administration and policy planning. The results of this study describe the adolescents' perceptions of the Independent Living Program and of their preparedness for independent living. These results may influence the administration as it designs and plans future programs, which will then directly influence each of the adolescents who participate in those programs. Direct intervention will eventually, and hopefully, impact the community as the number of former foster children who end up on public assistance or within the penal system decreases. It is important for child welfare professionals to understand how the independent living program does and does not meet the needs of foster care adolescents.

Problem focus.

This research project examined one aspect of an independent living program by gathering information and perspectives from a sample of adolescents who were still within the child welfare system, and whose locations were readily available. Measuring the perceptions of adolescents participating in these programs helps provide the necessary data to ensure that this population is receiving the services it requires. Through research, independent living programs will be implemented and modified which will provide the fundamental preparation and training needed by this population to succeed as independent adults and, therefore, may decrease the number of

former foster care children in the welfare and penal systems. This study serves as one small piece of that research.

The purpose of this study was to measure the relationship between participation in the Independent Living Program and the adolescent's perception of preparedness for independent living in the areas of housing arrangements, education, employment and career, and money management. This study examined a local Independent Living Program implemented by an Inland Empire county, in accordance with the state guidelines, by measuring the perceived usefulness of the program for adolescents who had been offered these services.

Design and Methods

Purpose and Design of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between participation in the Independent Living Program and participants' perception of their preparedness for independent living. The study assumed that reception of services would produce a more positive effect than if no services were received. The study attempted to reject the null hypothesis, which stated that no relationship exists between participation in the Independent Living Program and perception of preparedness for independent living, and it attempted to support the following hypothesis:

Adolescents in foster care who have participated in the Independent Living Program will perceive themselves to be better prepared for independent living than adolescents who have not participated in the Independent Living Program, in relation to four categories: housing arrangements, education, employment and career, and money management.

This study had a positivist, correlational research design. The ultimate goal of explanation is inherent in the positivist approach. However, in a positivist, *correlational* study, such as this, the outcome would not be explanation, but rather a description of the relationship between variables. The outcome may also be increased insight, which may allow researchers to better understand how ILP participation may influence adolescents aging out of the system. Researchers may then be better able to design explanatory studies in the future which may provide more definitive answers (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). In time, DPSS will know how to best prepare the adolescents for independent living and how various elements and characteristics, such as their placement setting, may influence their individual needs.

Program evaluation takes many forms, focusing on two broad categories of either content or process, which is also known as formative. Outcome data, for example, is labeled as a content focus, while client satisfaction data, such as gathered in this study, is labeled a process focus. Following Jacobs's (1988) Five-tiered Approach to Evaluation, this study is categorized as Level 3, the program clarification tier. Jacobs states the purpose of evaluation at this level is to provide information to program staff to improve the program. The tasks at this level include questioning what kinds of services are provided for whom and by whom or clarifying and restating the program's missions, goals, objectives, and strategies. Several types of data may be collected and analyzed in order to fulfill some aspect of these tasks. Examples of types of data are (1) content of staff meetings, supervision sessions, or interviews with staff, (2) observation by staff of program activities and staff process, (3) previously collected staff and service data, (4) interview data on desired benefits of program, and (5) client satisfaction information.

This study focused on the fourth and fifth examples of data, by gathering information on client satisfaction in the form of perceived preparedness for independence and through open-ended questions. The open-ended questions also initiated client responses pertaining to desired benefits of the program.

This study had a posttest-only design with nonequivalent groups. It was a pre-experimental, descriptive design. A survey was administered to two groups of participants: adolescents who have participated in ILP and adolescents who have had little or no participation in ILP. The design was correlational and, therefore, had low internal validity. It addressed the threats of testing and instrumentation, but it did not address the threats of history, maturation, or selection biases. For example, the groups were not randomly selected in regards to who received or did not receive services (i.e. the experimental group and the comparison group), because it would have been unethical to deny requested services. Therefore, the selection of the two groups did not control for such factors as placement program, placement status, and type of residence, nor ethnicity, gender, or months in the DPSS system. These factors may be extremely influential in each adolescent's perception of preparedness, and may alter this study's findings.

Sampling

The population of interest was seventeen-year-old adolescents currently in out-of-home placements under the jurisdiction of the San Bernardino County Department of Public Social Services. To select the sample, the method of systematic random sampling with replacement was utilized to establish two subpopulations of fifty participants each. The first subpopulation consisted of adolescents who had participated in ILP, and the

second subpopulation consisted of adolescents who had had very little or no participation in ILP. Seventeen-year-olds were selected for this study because they had already had the opportunity of either participating in or foregoing ILP activities, which is available to all adolescents in out-of-home-placements who are age 16 or older.

Data Collection and Instruments

Data was collected through self-administered, written questionnaires. The survey instruments were created specifically for this study. The purpose of this descriptive study was not to define causal relationships, but to describe possible relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

✓ The independent variable was the level of participation in the Independent Living Program, and it was measured into two levels: An adolescent is considered an ILP participant if he/she has completed at least one multi-week ILP course or has attended at least three one-day ILP classes or seminars; otherwise, an adolescent is considered to have very little or no ILP experience.

✓ The dependent variables were the adolescent's perception of his/her preparedness for independent living within the categories of housing arrangements, education, employment and career, and money management.

The dependent variable was measured by rating the respondents' answers to various Likert scale questions (see Appendices A and B). The questionnaire consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. A rating sheet was constructed, and the closed-ended responses were coded numerically. Closed-ended questions were asked in order to provide a greater uniformity of responses and to decrease the possibility of misunderstanding a

respondent's answers. Caution was taken to ensure that the answer categories were exhaustive and mutually exclusive.

The adolescents were asked to respond to several open-ended questions, allowing them to respond more freely and to possibly generate ideas which may not have been addressed in the closed-ended format. The questionnaire's format allowed space to further elaborate after each question. The experimental group was also asked to respond to two additional open-ended questions, which stated, "In what ways can the Independent Living Program be more helpful to you?" and "How can the Department of Public Social Services better assist you in preparing for independent living?" The comparison group was also asked to respond to two questions, which stated, "What would have influenced you to participate in or participate more in ILP?" and "How can the Department of Public Social Services better assist you in preparing for independent living?" Both groups were asked to provide any additional comments.

Survey A (see Appendix A) was administered to the experimental group of adolescents who have participated in ILP. Survey B (see Appendix B) was administered to the comparison group of adolescents who have had very little or no participation in ILP. The questionnaires were identical except for the content of three questions. These questions were worded differently in order to correspond with the respondent's level of participation in ILP. For example, in each section the ILP Participants were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement that ILP had most influenced their current level of preparedness regarding that section's topic. The Non-Participants were asked an open-ended question which asked who or what had most influenced their current level of preparedness.

The advantages of a written, mail-out questionnaire are that it is inexpensive, interviewer bias is avoided, the respondents experience less pressure to give an immediate response, and the respondents experience a greater feeling of anonymity. The disadvantages are that the response rate is usually low, the level of accuracy and completeness of responses is lower than other methods, respondents' misunderstandings cannot be corrected, and the researcher does not have control over the environment in which the survey is completed. These issues were played out with this study's population in the following manner. An individual interview may have provided a greater response rate and more complete, knowledgeable answers, yet the adolescents may have been highly influenced by the desire to either please or rebel toward the adult interviewer. The privacy of adolescents in out-of-home placements is constantly invaded by social workers, foster parents, group home staff, and the entirety of the legal and child welfare system, and the greater anonymity provided via a self-administered questionnaire may have manifested higher degrees of truthfulness and genuineness in their responses.

To test the face validity of the survey instrument, several DPSS practitioners and supervisors with experience in the Independent Living Program were asked to evaluate whether the questionnaire appeared to measure what the adolescents perceived their level of preparedness to be. They were asked to provide insight concerning possible problems with phrasing and content. Positive comments were received. One supervisor commented that the scope of independent living was much broader than just the four categories referenced. The issue was discussed, yet the survey was not expanded due to the limitations of time and staff. A social service

practitioner working with the Independent Living Program commented that the adolescents would not be able to correctly report the number of classes they had attended on specific topics. Therefore, the results of these questions were not used in the analysis. Instead, individual class attendance was accessed through the computer files by the researcher.

Procedure

The survey instrument was a self-administered questionnaire, and it was mailed to the home of each participant. A cover letter was enclosed which provided a consistent explanation to each of the respondents (see Appendix C). A stamped, return envelope was also enclosed for convenience. Although DPSS provided a signed letter of consent as the legal guardian of each of the minors (see Appendix D), an individual letter of consent, which explained the confidentiality of their responses, was also included (see Appendix E). A copy of this letter served as a debriefing letter to be kept by the respondent. The letter provided phone numbers to the adolescents if they had any questions regarding the study itself, the Independent Living Program, or issues related to preparing for independent living.

To seek a more favorable response rate, the involvement of each participant's social worker was solicited. Each social worker was asked to telephone their client to encourage him or her to complete the survey (see Appendix F). The social workers were instructed not to influence any answers or prompt the adolescents on the questionnaire's content, but merely to encourage a response. The purpose of this method was to connect the survey with a familiar contact in the participant's life.

The second method of seeking a favorable response rate was to provide a monetary incentive. After the original questionnaires had been distributed, the Department of Public Social Services agreed to contribute \$10 to each adolescent who completed and returned the questionnaire. The practice of providing monetary incentives was an already established practice in the ILP program in order to encourage participation in its activities. A follow-up letter (see Appendix G) was mailed to each participant that reminded him or her to complete the questionnaire and offered the \$10 incentive for those that responded.

Each questionnaire required approximately twenty minutes for the participant to complete. The data gathering period of this study occurred between February 1, 1995 and March 31, 1995.

Protection of Human Subjects

The rights and welfare of all the participants were protected in this study. Participation was voluntary, and all participants who decided to participate were required to sign a letter of informed consent. Because the participants were minors and dependents of the court, an additional informed consent was required from the Department of Public Social Services, acting as their legal guardian. No significant risks were apparent in this study. This study was a nonmanipulative, nonstressful study of individual perceptions. The Department of Public Social Services was provided with a copy of this study's results. However, all information given was confidential, and each participant's identity was not nor will not be revealed to DPSS nor any other person or agency. The findings of this study, in aggregate or anonymous data only, was shared with DPSS in order to

benefit adolescents in out-of-home placements through improved programs and future research.

Results

Data Analysis

The survey questionnaire was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The results of this study were organized and summarized by using the EPI Info software program and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program for the quantitative data, and by using the procedure of open coding and other summarizing techniques for the qualitative data.

Frequency tables were created for each variable within the four categorical sections. Measures of central tendency, minimums and maximums, variances and standard deviations were also calculated. The data was also organized into various univariate analysis tables, using the crosstabulation procedure, to show the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The independent variable was the level of participation in the Independent Living Program. The dependent variables were the variables which described the perception of level of preparedness for the tasks within each of the four categories. Preparedness was measured by the level of either certainty, awareness, or preparedness for a certain task. The crosstabulation procedure was conducted for the following dependent variables: certainty of housing arrangement (2 measures), preparedness to locate and maintain housing, awareness of G.E.D. or high school diploma requirements, awareness of entry requirements for college or trade school,

preparedness to complete a college application, certainty of employment arrangement (2 measures), awareness of steps to achieve career goal, preparedness for a job interview, preparedness to complete a job application, preparedness to obtain employment which will meet basic financial needs, preparedness to effectively use a checkbook, preparedness to organize a household budget, preparedness to effectively open, close, and use a checking or savings account, and preparedness to effectively establish and use a credit card. In summary, the crosstabulation procedure was conducted for three measures of preparedness regarding housing arrangements, three measures of preparedness regarding educational issues, six measures of preparedness regarding employment and career issues, and four measures of preparedness regarding money management. Demographic information was also studied as related to ILP Participation.

Because nominal and ordinal variables were used, chi-square tests, which determine the significance of the relationship, were performed on each of the crosstabulations listed above. A significance level of .05 was used to determine the probability that the observed relationship could have been produced by chance. In order to reject the null hypothesis, the probability must have been equal to or less than the significance level of .05. However, the crosstabulations lacked sufficient quantities of data within each variable degree, and the chi-square statistics were invalid.

This survey instrument also gathered qualitative data. The responses to the open-ended questions were organized through open coding. The responses were divided into the four categories (housing arrangements, education, employment, and money management), as well as general praise of the program, general criticism, general suggestions for improvement in

ILP, financial assistance, comments on social workers, and praise of the survey itself. These latter categories were determined by the actual responses received from the survey.

A variety of procedures, unique to either qualitative or quantitative data, were utilized in order to test the hypothesis and to communicate the strength and/or significance of the relationships between variables in an organized and summarized presentation. The coding methods for qualitative data were much more subjective than the procedures for quantitative statistics, and, therefore, are more susceptible to criticism. The design of this study incorporated a combination of the two data gathering methods in order to provide a well-rounded understanding of the research question.

Demographics

Fifty adolescents were selected for each subpopulation, depending on level of ILP participation. Twenty-four of the fifty adolescents who were ILP participants completed the questionnaire, while fifteen of the fifty adolescents who had very little or no ILP participation completed the questionnaire. The total response rate was 39%. Demographic information included gender, age, ethnicity, placement program, placement status, type of residence, months within DPSS system, and region.

All the respondents except one were age seventeen. One respondent had turned eighteen during the data gathering period. The respondents' birthdays fell between February 8, 1977, and January 26, 1978. Overall, thirty percent of the respondents were female, and nine percent were male. In the ILP Participants subgroup 16 respondents (66.7%) were female, and eight

(33.3%) were male. In the Non-Participant subgroup 14 respondents (93.3%) were female, and only one (6.7%) was male.

Table 1: Respondents' Ethnicity

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>ILP Participants</u>	<u>Non-ILP Participants</u>
African American	12.8%	12.5%	13.3%
Caucasian	33.3	16.7	60.0
Latino	17.9	25.0	6.7
Asian American	5.1	8.3	0.0
Native American	5.1	4.2	6.7
Multi-Ethnicity	25.6	33.3	13.3

The ethnicity of the respondents was diverse, with a slight majority of respondents being Caucasian (see Table 1). In the ILP Participants group, the Latino and Multi-Ethnicity categories were larger than overall. In the Non-ILP Participants group, 60 % of the respondents were Caucasian, almost four times the percentage of the Participants group.

Table 2: Respondents' Placement Program

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>ILP Participants</u>	<u>Non-ILP Participants</u>
Family Maintenance	10.7%	5.9%	18.2%
Family Reunification	3.6	5.9	0.0
Permanent Placement	85.7	88.2	81.8

Number of Mission Observations: 11

The overwhelming majority of respondents were in Permanent Placement, meaning they were not living with their natural parents and plans for reunification had been permanently dismissed (see Table 2). Non-Participants were more likely than ILP Participants to be in the Family

Maintenance program, in which they remain living with their natural parents.

Table 3: Respondents' Type of Residence

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>ILP Participants</u>	<u>Non-ILP Participants</u>
Foster Home	37.8%	40.9%	33.3%
Relative Home	35.1	27.3	46.7
Group Home	16.2	18.2	13.3
Youth Home	5.4	9.1	0.0
Other	5.4	4.5	6.7

Number of Missing Observations: 2

Overall, ILP Participants were almost evenly from either Foster Homes (37.8%) or Relative Homes (35.1%) (see Table 3). However, individually and between only these two options, ILP Participants were more likely to come from Foster Homes, and Non-Participants were more likely to come from Relative Homes.

Table 4: Respondents' Placement Status if in Permanent Placement

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>ILP Participants</u>	<u>Non-ILP Participants</u>
Long Term Foster Care	51.7%	61.1%	36.4%
Guardianship	37.9	27.8	54.5
Adoption	3.4	5.6	0.0

For adolescents in a Permanent Placement only, the majority of ILP Participants were in placements considered Long Term Foster Care (LTFC) (see Table 4). This is the least stable type of placement status, because the foster parents have not legally committed themselves to care for this child

until age 18. Guardianship is more stable than LTFC, yet less stable than Adoption, which is equal to a natural parent-child relationship in the eyes of the law, and which carries full legal responsibility. The majority of Non-Participants were in Guardianships.

The highest percentages of respondents had been involved with the Department of Public Social Services (Child Protective Services) from one to five years (see Table 5). Over half had been in the system less than five years. A higher percentage of ILP Participants had been in the system for over 11 years than had Non-Participants.

Table 5: Months In DPSS System

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>ILP Participants</u>	<u>Non-ILP Participants</u>
0 - 12 Months	22.2%	23.5%	20.0
1 - 5 Years	37.0	35.3	40.0
5 - 10 Years	14.8	11.8	20.0
11+ Years	25.9	29.4	20.0

Number of Missing Observations: 12

Table 6: Respondents' County Region

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>ILP Participants</u>	<u>Non-ILP Participants</u>
San Bernardino	57.9%	54.2%	64.3%
West End	15.8	12.5	21.4
Desert	23.7	29.2	14.3

San Bernardino County Department of Public Social Services divides its services into three regions: San Bernardino (centralized in the City of San Bernardino), West End (centralized in Rancho Cucamonga), and Desert (centralized in Victorville). The two subgroups were not equally distributed

among the three regions, with the majority (57.9 %) of respondents living in the San Bernardino region (see Table 6).

Preparedness for Independent Living

The individual questions on the surveys related to four specific categories which are important elements of independent living. The categories were Housing Arrangements, Education, Employment/Career, and Money Management. Table 7 reports the percentage scores for the selected questions within each category that followed a comparable Likert scale format. The scores are separated for ILP Participants and Non-Participants. Tables 8, 9, and 10 report the percentage scores for the remaining questions (see Appendix H). These scores are also separated for ILP Participants and Non-Participants. Chi-square statistics, which determine the significance of a reported relationship, were not valid due to the lack of sufficient data within each variable cell.

Percentages for individual variables are compared in Tables 7, 8, 9, and 10 (see Table 7 and Appendix). In the education section, the percentages for ILP Participants were drastically higher than Non-Participants in the "Well" and "Very Well" categories in response to Question Three and Question Four (see Table 7). These questions related to the requirements for college or trade school entrance and to college applications. In response to Question One, concerning the highest level of education the adolescents planned to obtain, the majority of ILP Participants (over 60%) answered within the categories "B.A. or B.A. Degree" or "Post-graduate Degree." Only 26.7% of the Non-Participants answered within those same categories. The highest percentage of Non-Participants responded in the "Some College"

Table 7: Selected Responses by Participation Level

	Don't Know N/A	Not At All	Very Little	Somewhat	Well	Very Well
Housing						
	4. How prepared are you to locate and maintain housing after emancipation?					
ILP Participant	12.50%	12.50%	12.50%	25.00%	16.70%	20.80%
Non-Participant	6.70%	0.00%	0.00%	53.30%	33.30%	6.70%
Education						
	2. How informed are you of the requirements for a GED or a high school diploma?					
ILP Participant	12.50%	4.20%	4.20%	8.30%	16.70%	41.70%
Non-Participant	0.00%	0.00%	6.70%	20.00%	13.30%	60.00%
	3. How informed are you of the requirements for college or trade school entrance?					
ILP Participant	12.50%	4.20%	8.30%	20.80%	12.50%	41.70%
Non-Participant	26.70%	0.00%	20.00%	40.00%	6.70%	6.70%
	4. How prepared are you to complete a college application?					
ILP Participant	8.30%	8.30%	12.50%	29.20%	16.70%	25.00%
Non-Participant	40.00%	20.00%	13.30%	13.30%	6.70%	6.70%
Employment / Career						
	7. How well do you know the steps needed to achieve your stated career goal?					
ILP Participant	0.00%	0.00%	8.30%	20.80%	20.80%	50.00%
Non-Participant	0.00%	6.70%	26.70%	20.00%	26.70%	20.00%
	8. How prepared are you to participate in a job interview?					
ILP Participant	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.80%	45.80%	33.30%
Non-Participant	0.00%	6.70%	13.30%	26.70%	33.30%	20.00%
	9. How prepared are you to complete a job application?					
ILP Participant	4.20%	0.00%	4.20%	20.80%	37.50%	33.30%
Non-Participant	0.00%	6.70%	6.70%	13.30%	26.70%	46.70%
	10. How prepared are you to obtain employment which meets your basic financial needs?					
ILP Participant	13.00%	0.00%	8.70%	43.50%	21.70%	13.00%
Non-Participant	13.30%	6.70%	26.70%	20.00%	13.30%	20.00%
Money Management						
	1. How prepared are you to effectively use a checkbook?					
ILP Participant	4.20%	16.70%	4.20%	29.20%	25.00%	20.80%
Non-Participant	13.30%	13.30%	6.70%	20.00%	33.30%	13.30%
	2. How prepared are you to organize a household budget?					
ILP Participant	8.30%	16.70%	8.30%	33.30%	16.70%	16.70%
Non-Participant	13.30%	6.70%	26.70%	20.00%	20.00%	13.30%
	3. How prepared are you to open, close, and use a checking or savings account?					
ILP Participant	12.50%	12.50%	20.80%	16.70%	4.20%	33.30%
Non-Participant	6.70%	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	6.70%	26.70%
	4. How prepared are you to effectively establish and use a credit card?					
ILP Participant	8.40%	37.50%	20.80%	16.70%	12.50%	4.20%
Non-Participant	26.70%	33.30%	6.70%	20.00%	6.70%	6.70%

category. The responses to Question Two, regarding the requirements for a G.E.D. or high school diploma, were inconsistent with the responses to Questions One, Three, and Four, and, therefore, may represent a misunderstanding of the questionnaire's phrasing.

In the Employment/Career section of the questionnaire, the combined percentages for the "Well" and "Very Well" categories of ILP Participants for Questions Seven and Eight were significantly higher than those of Non-Participants. For Questions Nine and Ten, the combined "Well" and "Very Well" percentages for both groups were approximately even (see Table 7).

The combined percentages for the "Well" and "Very Well" categories for the two subgroups in the Money Management section were more equal than in the other sections. For Questions One, Two, and Three, combined percentages were approximately equal, while a slightly higher combined percentage was reported for the ILP Participant group for Question Four, regarding credit cards.

The Housing Arrangements section asked the respondents to report where they would live after emancipation and to rate how probably and certain those arrangements were. Only one question (Question 4) did not pertain to this predicted arrangement. The two subgroups equally responded within the "Will Definitely Happen" category regarding the probability of their arrangement, yet a slightly higher percentage of Non-Participants scored in the "Will Happen Almost Definitely" category. Regarding the extent to which the arrangement had been discussed and/or agreed upon by the others involved, the Non-Participants' percentages were higher in the two highest levels of certainty. The combined percentages of the "Well" and "Very Well" categories for the Non-Participant group were only slightly higher than for

the ILP Participant group for Question Four, regarding locating and maintaining housing after emancipation (see Table 7). However, in the separate "Very Well" category the ILP Participants' percentage was significantly higher.

Combined variables were created within each of the four categories by combining the responses of the questions which followed comparable Likert scale formats. Table 11 reports the mean scores of the ILP Participants and the Non-Participants, and includes the standard deviation, the standard error, and the minimums and maximum scores for each question. The scores are tabulated by adding each of the respondents answers from the individual variables which compose the combined variable. For example, combined variables which include three individual variables have a score range of zero to 15. The higher score represents a higher level of preparedness, overall. Table 12 reports the results of T-Tests conducted on the combined variables.

The ILP Participant subgroup scored higher than the Non-Participant subgroup for three of the six combined variables (see Table 11). For the combined EDUCATION variable, which includes individual questions #2, 3, and 4 in the Education section, the ILP Participant subgroup scored approximately 1.73 points higher than the Non-Participant subgroup. For the combined EMPLOYMENT A variable, which includes individual questions #7, 8, 9, and 10 in the Employment/Career section, the ILP Participant subgroup scored approximately 1.80 points higher than the Non-Participant subgroup. For the combined MONEY MANAGEMENT variable, which includes individual questions #1, 2, 3, and 4 in the Money Management section, the ILP Participant subgroup scored .875 points higher than the Non-Participant subgroup.

Table 11: Means of Combined Variables

	Number of Cases	Mean	Stand. Dev.	Stand. Error	Min/Max Score
Combined HOUSING A variable:					
ILP Participant	23	9.8696	3.468	0.723	0.00/15.00
Non-Participant	15	10.8667	3.226	0.833	
Combined HOUSING B variable:					
ILP Participant	23	7.0435	2.82	0.588	0.00/10.00
Non-Participant	15	7.60	2.444	0.631	
Combined EDUCATION variable:					
ILP Participant	24	9.6667	3.807	0.777	0.00/15.00
Non-Participant	15	7.9333	2.865	0.74	
Combined EMPLOYMENT A variable:					
ILP Participant	23	15.2609	3.165	0.66	0.00/20.00
Non-Participant	15	13.4667	4.086	1.055	
Combined EMPLOYMENT B variable:					
ILP Participant	22	4.0909	2.827	0.603	0.00/15.00
Non-Participant	12	5.1667	1.403	0.405	
Combined MONEY MGMT variable:					
ILP Participant	24	10.875	4.739	0.967	0.00/20.00
Non-Participant	15	10.00	4.796	1.238	

The Non-Participant subgroup scored higher than the ILP Participant subgroup for three combined variables, as well. For the combined HOUSING A variable, which includes individual questions #2, 3, and 4 from the Housing Arrangements section, the Non-Participant subgroup scored one point higher than the ILP Participant subgroup. For the combined HOUSING B variable, which includes individual questions #2 and 3 from the Housing Arrangements section, the Non-Participant subgroup scored approximately 0.56 points higher than the ILP Participant subgroup. For the combined EMPLOYMENT B variable, which includes questions #4 and 5 in the Employment/Career section, the Non-Participant subgroup scored approximately 1.07 points higher than the ILP Participant subgroup.

Table 12: T-Tests of Combined Variables

		Pooled Variance Estimate			
F-Value	2-Tailed Probability	t-Value	Degrees of Freedom	2-Tailed Probability	Result

Combined HOUSING A variable:

1.16	0.797	-0.89	36	0.379	Insignificant
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Combined HOUSING B variable:

1.33	0.588	-0.63	36	0.535	Insignificant
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Combined EDUCATION variable:

1.77	0.272	1.51	37	0.139	Insignificant
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Combined EMPLOYMENT A variable:

1.67	0.275	1.52	36	0.137	Insignificant
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Combined MONEY MANAGEMENT variable:

1.02	0.93	0.56	37	0.58	Insignificant
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		Separate Variance Estimate			
F-Value	2-Tailed Probability	t-Value	Degrees of Freedom	2-Tailed Probability	Result

Combined EMPLOYMENT B variable:

4.06	0.02	-1.48	31.85	0.148	Insignificant
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For the three combined variables for which the ILP Participant subgroup scored higher than the Non-Participant subgroup, the differences in mean scores were 1.73, 1.80, and .875 points, making the average of the three scores to be 1.4683. For the three combined variables for which the Non-Participant subgroup scored higher than the ILP Participant subgroup, the differences in mean scores were 1.00, 0.56, and 1.07, making the average of the three scores to be .8767.

In each section of the survey for ILP Participants, the adolescents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a statement claiming that the Independent Living Program had most influenced their current level of preparedness regarding either housing arrangements, education,

employment and career, and money management. Table 13 indicates the percentage of responses within each category. In each of the four questions the highest percentage of respondents answered "Agree," with percentages between 33.3% and 41.7%. Three of the combined percentages for "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" were over 50%, and the fourth was 45.8%. The combined percentages for "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" were much lower, with combined percentages of 16.6%, 29.1%, 29.1%, and 33.3%.

Table 13: Perceived Influence of ILP by Participants Subgroup Only

The Independent Living Program has most influenced my current level of preparedness regarding...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know N/A
Locating and Maintaining Housing	16.7 %	41.7 %	8.3 %	8.3 %	25.0 %
Education	12.5 %	33.3 %	20.8 %	12.5 %	20.8 %
Employment and Career Goals Overall	16.7 %	37.5 %	20.8 %	8.3 %	16.6 %
Money Management	8.3 %	41.7 %	20.8 %	8.3 %	20.8 %

Qualitative Responses

The survey participants were asked to respond to three open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire (see Appendices A and B). These questions initiated more candid expressions of the adolescents' criticism and suggestions for the Independent Living Program. It was more difficult to code these responses, yet these flexible answers gleaned meaningful insights from the adolescents. Many of the adolescents responded with constructive

criticism, advice, and/or praise. The majority of their responses focused on the issues addressed in the survey: housing, education, employment, and money management. The responses also included issues and subjects beyond the four categories cited in this survey, such as financial assistance, praise and criticism of instructors, the format of the ILP classes, social worker involvement, and the survey itself.

✓✓ Housing.

Some of the responses of the ILP Participants included the topic of housing. One respondent stated that ILP could be more beneficial if more information was provided on renting, including what questions should be asked. Another stated, "The Department of Public Social Services could better assist us by provid[ing] or helping us in finding or renting [a] house." One suggested that DPSS assist with paying most of the first or last months rest, or buying some furniture.

✓✓ Financial assistance.

This topic of financial assistance also surfaced in other responses. One respondent stated, "They [DPSS] could better assist *me* with preparing for independent living by reassuring me they *can* and *will* financially help me out at school and with my car." Requests for assistance with college or trade school tuition fees or assistance in finding and receiving scholarships were other responses requesting a form of financial assistance. Statements from the Participants subgroup included: "I hope they will help me get through all the schooling I intend to take...", "...help us out with scholarships...because those [are] also important," and "...helping us on college tuition and how to

get financial help, etc." Statements from the Non-Participants subgroup included: "Help me with trade school finances," and "I think [DPSS] should make appointments with me or send letters how to get into college, and what they can help you with in grants."

✓✓Education.

Education was a topic of some of the responses, as is apparent in the previous suggestions regarding assistance with tuition and financial aid. One respondent asked for help in choosing a college and how to prepare for leaving, while one suggested that DPSS "try to help you and ask questions about schooling if you want a higher education." Another respondent stated, "[DPSS] should make it their top priority to get you into college, they should make sure you're getting what you need at your high school."

Employment/Career.

The topic of employment was another primary topic in the responses. The responses included the topics of present and future employment. Responses in the former category included one respondent's suggestion that DPSS "get us employment all year round not just in the summer," and another suggestion that "[DPSS] should have a program that should help you really find a job and somehow to help you with transportation to the job." The latter responses included suggestions that DPSS should explain "what's involved in your resume" and "what to do in a job interview." One respondent also suggested that DPSS assist them in having "good clothes" and a "suitable outfit" for a job interview, because many of them are "too

poor." Several respondents also suggested job training as a necessary element of ILP.

Money management.

The fourth category which corresponded to the focus of this survey was money management. Several respondents suggested that DPSS and ILP teach them how to "work a household budget," "handle banking accounts," or "open checking or savings accounts" to be more helpful. One respondent stated, "They can give more situations on how you should spend your money and how to make the right decisions."

Praise and criticism of the program.

The qualitative responses included both praise and criticism of the Independent Living Program and DPSS. Overall, the responses conveyed a positive perception of ILP. Some of the positive comments included: "ILP is a great program...I'm learning a lot of good things in there," "It provides helpful information and is encouraging in the ways where if you express yourself they respect you and accept your ideas," "It's been very helpful," "...because if you don't have nothing [sic] in life they teach and help you get there," "I think they are doing fine with the program they have now," "...ILP is good because it teaches you how to get a job, and it prepares you before you get a job," "I think [ILP] is a success [because] it helps teach young kids to go in the right direction...it helps me think highly of myself," "I really enjoyed the ILP programs, and I plan to share the experiences with others...what I learned was helpful and I really miss my instructors," "I think the ILP Program is a good and involved program," "it helped me to freshen up my skills," and "It

helps me become a better adult, and it helps me to [obtain] my independence and maturity to the outer world."

Some responses, however, also criticized particular elements of the program. A respondent from one of the regions commented, "They need better instructors, that are more organized and better trained. They are rude and have poor communication skills. They don't have the information I need, and rarely answer my questions." Another commented, "I asked a lot of questions and sometimes never got answered..." The former respondent was particularly critical of ILP and DPSS, also stating, "I am very disappointed with ILP and DPSS. I am so glad I am almost 18 and on my own. 'The system' has brought me guilt, pain and confusion." A few responses from the Non-Participant subgroup, who may have had some contact with the program, were also critical of particular elements within the program. A respondent criticized the instructors for being unprepared and the class for being poorly "set up," also stating that he/she may have been more willing to attend ILP "if the attendants weren't so rude." This respondent also criticized the "dumb" or "lame" films he/she had seen, which he/she felt "didn't really tell us anything about living on our own." Later comments identified this film as "from the 80s about drugs and drink and driving, which didn't really help us to figure out how to live independently...it was no help to me at all." This same respondent also stated that he/she didn't complete the course he/she attended, and that the sessions he/she went to "were really lame." Another respondent commented that the classes were too "strict," and another stated, "I didn't learn anything I didn't already know."

Social worker involvement.

The involvement and/or influence of social workers was also a topic within some of the responses. Two respondents praised the influence of their social worker, while several criticized the lack of involvement of their workers. One respondent stated, "Just because some of us are 'easy cases,' social workers need to do their job. ILP coordinators do a lot, and practically the social worker's job...they would be able to improve if social workers would keep up and do their job." One respondent commented that one way DPSS could better assist him/her in preparing for independent living is through a "better friendship with my social worker, encouragement from my social worker," and "counciling [sic] after independent living starts." Another respondent stated that DPSS could better assist him/her "if they [social workers] would spend more time working with individuals and their individuals needs." The respondent added, "I think I've talked to my social worker twice. She doesn't call to see how I'm doing or anything. It makes me mad." One of the previous respondents also suggested that, "[the] ILP teacher and organizer have so much to do...they would do more if social workers did their job," and that DPSS could better assist him/her "simply by one on one by your social worker."

Respondents' suggestions.

In addition to the categories already discussed, many other suggestions were made by the adolescents on how ILP could better prepare them for independent living. Some of these comments also reiterated the adolescents' perceptions of the purpose of ILP. Several respondents suggested more experiential, "hands-on," activities, including a suggestion which appeared to

suggest a transitional living program. One respondent stated, "It would help if they would have a program where you have to actually do everything for living on your own, not just talk about it!" Smaller groups were also suggested, with classes "closer to home." Several respondents commented on the need for more ILP classes, better advertising and communication of classes available, and assistance in signing up for the classes. In contrast, one respondent commented on the abundance of programs.

The general theme of the suggestions was to focus on actually preparing the adolescents for independent living and self-sufficiency. Again, the categories included education, job training, employment, housing, and money management, in addition to various miscellaneous categories. The respondents wanted "more classes that would show us how to live on our own...things that are important for us teens," and stated ILP could be helpful "by preparing us for life...how it's going to be and what we have to do to get where we want to go." One respondent stated ILP could improve "if they were a little more helpful with the things that need to be done by the time we're out of the system." It was also suggested to "continue to review things." Another suggestion was to pay the participants five dollars an hour.

One respondent suggested an accountability system, in which the adolescent sets a goal, and three months later the social worker checks on your goal and sets another. The respondent gave a goal example of going to the DMV for a permit. Three months later the social worker would check in on you, and the next goal would be to receive a license. One respondent stated, "If they make you a ward of the state they should make sure you'll not be one later by having to be on welfare." Another respondent commented

that DPSS could better assist them in preparing for independent living "by just being supportive."

One response was gathered on each of the following issues: self-esteem growth, sex education, medical insurance, and domestic skills. Regarding self-esteem, one respondent stated, "When I first started learning about ILP I established good friends who made me realize I was special and I am not alone. Since then I have explored and experienced a great and growing relationship with myself and others around me." One respondent suggested that ILP should provide more information on "protecting yourself from sex." One respondent suggested ILP should provide assistance with medical cards, and another suggested teaching domestic skills, such as "cooking, dishwashing, use of cleaning items, cleaning house, making beds, and washing windows."

Non-Participants' lack of involvement.

Looking only at the responses from Non-Participants to the question, "What would have influenced you to participate in or participate more in ILP?" the responses were unclear. Only six adolescents responded to this question. One respondent wished ILP was "closer to home." One respondent wanted ILP to show them more about "how we can do for ourselves if we were all independent." Two responses included only praise of the program. One respondent's statement could not be understood. The final respondent to this question was extremely critical of the program. Responding to "What would have influenced you to participate in or participate more in ILP?" this respondent's comments focused on the "dumb" and "lame" films shown, the

rude attendants, and the unorganized instructors/program. This respondent stated, "I didn't learn anything I didn't already know."

Praise of the survey.

Several respondents praised this survey itself, thanking the researcher for her interest in their lives and willingness to hear their input. Comments included: "I want to thank you for taking the time and effort in this," "...I feel you are reaching out and learning about individuals, maybe only for a study - but still you have reached the people," and "I want to thank you for this survey...No one has ever asked me to respond to the ILP and DPSS systems and programs."

Discussion

Interpretations

The purpose of this study was to measure the relationship between participation in the Independent Living Program and the adolescent's perception of preparedness for independent living in the areas of housing arrangements, education, employment and career, and money management.

// The findings do not support a rejection of the null hypothesis. Due to a small sample size and the lack of sufficient data within each variable cell, chi-square statistics which measure the significance of the results could not be measured. However, the lack of statistical support which would justify the rejection of the null hypothesis does not prove that a relationship does not exist. The statistical data shows that ILP Participants scored better than or equal to Non-Participants for most individual variables on the questionnaire (see Tables 7

and 8). Although the significance of this relationship could not be measured, the findings suggest that participation in ILP often increases perception of preparedness in the areas addressed.

Education.

Regarding education, ILP Participants seek a four-year college or university degree or post graduate degree in significantly higher percentages than do Non-Participants. Also, the percentages for ILP Participants were drastically higher than Non-Participants in the "Well" and "Very Well" categories in response to questions related to the understanding of the requirements for college or trade school entrance and to college applications. One interpretation of these results may be that participation in ILP encourages and motivates the adolescents to look into and plan to obtain a Bachelor's Degree or higher.

The qualitative responses reflected a strong concern for higher education and the funds and scholarships needed by the adolescents. A focus on education is an appropriate and important component to incorporate into an independent living program. It appears that this focus has already been recognized by the Independent Living Program examined in this study.

Employment/Career.

In regards to employment and career, ILP Participants perceive themselves as better prepared than or as equally prepared as Non-Participants. The Participants' responses reflected a higher understanding of the requirements needed to achieve their career goals and a higher preparedness for job interviews. The responses of both subgroups were relatively similar

regarding job applications and obtaining employment which will meet basic financial needs. After emancipation, adolescents in out-of-home placements are more likely than other adolescents to be suddenly without the financial support of parents or caretakers. Employment is a crucial concern for these youth. It is important for an independent living program to assist the adolescents in understanding what is required for particular careers and how to obtain employment which will meet their basic financial needs. Although some of the percentages were equal for the two groups, other individual variables reported a higher level of perceived preparedness for those that had participated in ILP.

In comparison to ILP Participants, Non-Participants responded with more certainty in the employment arrangement they stated they would have after emancipation, and yet zero percent responded that the employer had somewhat agreed to the arrangement, that the employer had promised to hire him/her, or that he/she already worked for the employer. The high responses to certainty in the arrangement may be based more on subjective perceptions rather than objective perceptions.

Housing.

Housing is an another critical issue for emancipated adolescents. Most of them will no longer be able to remain in their current residence after emancipation. The findings in this study regarding housing were ambiguous. It does not appear that Participants are being prepared well enough on this issue which carries such great significance. Several responses from the qualitative data indicate a significant need for more training regarding locating housing and the renting procedures. Also, the responses reflected a

high concern for the necessary funds for housing, such as first and last months' rent. Respondents suggested that DPSS help provide those initial funds for newly emancipated youth.

Money management.

Overall, many more respondents responded "I Don't Know" in the Money Management section than in the other sections. Many of them explained that they had never dealt with such issues as checking accounts, credit cards, or budgets. Adolescents often do not require familiarity with these issues while they are minors under the care of adults. However, foster care children are in a unique situation that suddenly releases them into independence at age eighteen. It is important that these youth understand how to manage the income they will hopefully be earning. For many of them budgeting and managing money appropriately will be very crucial to their success. Many of the responses regarding housing, college funds, and money management seemed to demonstrate the adolescents realization that independent living will be financially difficult, especially as former foster children with limited or no family support.

Perceived influence of ILP.

In each section of the survey for ILP Participants, the adolescents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a statement claiming that the Independent Living Program had most influenced their current level of preparedness regarding either housing arrangements, education, employment and career, and money management (see Table 13). The majority of respondents answered that they agreed with this statement. The

respondents seem to perceive the Independent Living Program as beneficial and influential. From those perceptions, I would have speculated that more significant differences would have been found between the two groups. Although the respondents perceived the Independent Living Program as beneficial overall and many of the percentages reported suggest that ILP Participants perceive themselves as somewhat more prepared for independent living than Non-Participants, the results of this study do not support a rejection of the null hypothesis. The relationships cited in this study may be due to chance, since statistics which could determine significance could not be used on this data.

Limitations

Several issues and facts need to be considered that may influence the results reported in this study and any inferences one may make from this study. These issues include Type II errors, sample size, limited scope of questionnaire content, and subjectivity of responses.

Every time a researcher makes a decision to not reject the null hypothesis, as in this study, he or she risks making a Type II error. Rubin and Babbie (1993) define a Type II error as the failure to reject a false null hypothesis. The results of this study do not indicate a rejection of the null hypothesis. That does not prove that the research hypothesis is false, but rather that it lacks the level of probability required before chance can be ruled out as a plausible explanation of the findings. Rubin and Babbie (1993) cite too small a sample or too unlucky a draw as possible causes of insignificant results.

The sample size of this research study was 100 adolescents: 50 who had participated in the Independent Living Program and 50 who had very little or no participation in the Independent Living Program. Only 39% responded to the mail-out survey, bringing the actual sample size to 39. Rubin and Babbie (1993) state that the larger the sample, the less sampling error we have. They also state, "It is safer to generalize findings from large samples than from small ones, and even a very weak relationship might warrant generalization if it was found in a very large sample." Therefore, the small sample size of this study alerts researchers to the higher probability of error due to sample size. Future studies on this topic which include larger sample sizes are indicated. It is important not to generalize the findings of this study to other independent living skills programs or to other areas of the studied Independent Living Program because of the high possibility of error due to small sample size.

The small sample size also precluded a valid evaluation of chi square statistics. Many of the variable cells were either empty or not filled with a valid number of responses. Therefore, significance levels for the relationships reported in the results could not be determined.

Twenty-four ILP Participants responded and 15 Non-Participants responded. The unproportional number of responses in the two subgroups was expected. It was speculated that a greater percentage of ILP Participants would respond due to their previous investment in and/or commitment to the Independent Living Program.

The Independent Living Program encompasses a broad arena of topics and objectives. This study only focused on particular aspects within four categories: housing, education, employment and career, and money

management. Therefore, one cannot generalize the findings of this study to the entire program. For example, other categories that the Independent Living Program emphasizes, which may strongly influence the adolescent's success, are self-esteem building, networking support systems, and social skills building. Even though an adolescent may not have the actual skills necessary in housing, education, employment, or money management issues, through the ILP program, the adolescent may have built up the confidence and self-esteem which will enable him or her to gain those skills after emancipation and succeed in maintaining self-sufficiency and independence.

The adolescents were asked to report how prepared they perceived themselves to be. Self-reporting always presents some level of risk to the validity of the response due to the potential for the respondent to be biased to give more socially desirable responses (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). The results in this study may be tainted by either pretentious or deflated self-concepts. Also, the respondents may not have a clear understanding of their level of preparedness. Until the situation is experienced, no person can ever truly know their ability to handle the situation.

Implications for Social Work Practice

Recommendations.

Children in out-of-home placements are at the mercy of the system which removed them from their homes. It is the system's responsibility, therefore, to do all that is necessary to help prepare these children for adulthood and independence. The findings of this study did not overwhelmingly indicate a positive relationship between participation in the Independent Living Program and perception of preparedness for independent

living. Therefore, a closer look needs to be taken of the existing program to evaluate its effectiveness. However, this study had several limitations which warrant a hesitant acceptance of its findings. Even though, further examination of the program is indicative.

Via the results and the qualitative data, it appears that several topics should be addressed. First, several respondents criticized the instructors' lack of preparedness in class. Even more respondents criticized the lack of involvement of their social workers, suggesting that a higher level of contact with their social worker would be beneficial to their success. These criticisms need to be evaluated from the realization that each person experiences situations uniquely. The negative perspective of one respondent may be absent in the majority of other respondents. However, these responses deserve attention. Interpersonal relationships are paramount in the field of social work and significantly impact the lives of clients.

Subject matter was addressed often in the qualitative responses. Many respondents requested more information on higher education and the scholarships and funds needed to obtain higher education. Many of responses indicated a concern for their future economic status, requesting assistance with first and last months' rent and tuition. Perhaps DPSS could initiate programs which link the adolescents with community resources or individuals who are interested in investing in their future. Some resources are already in existence; ILP could include this subject in their classes by discussing the programs and providing the necessary details. Outside the realm of this study, these activities may already be included in ILP. Several others requested more information on renting, job training, and money management. Other respondents wanted more classes and assistance in

knowing about and signing up for the classes and activities. Several indicated that more hands-on experiences would increase the benefits of the training and information they are receiving. These suggestions are appropriate and valid, and they should be carefully addressed.

Further research suggestions.

Insufficient literature is available on independent living programs. Even more limited is outcome-based research which studies the level of self-sufficiency of former foster care children. Although it is difficult and costly for the present system to undertake such research, it is vital. We need to make the decision that the future of these children is important and worthy of our efforts and our funds. Self-reported responses of minors still within the system may provide a certain level of significant information to help improve the independent living skills programs offered. However, without research on the true, future outcomes of adolescents who have experienced the program, we are unable to confidently report the success or failure of existing programs.

Independent living skills programs encompass a wide range of subjects that focus on both soft and hard skills. Soft skills may include building self-esteem and social skills. Hard skills may include concrete tasks such as those featured in this study. The positive influence of self-esteem building and social skills training was suggested in this study. Research on their true impact would add an important component to this field.

Based on the computer records, the number of ILP Participants was much smaller than the number of Non-Participants, who had no or very little experience with ILP. Therefore, it was more difficult to compile the

group of fifty Non-Participants. Sims (1988) and this researcher agree that it is important to pinpoint the barriers to adolescents' use of emancipation services. Although adolescents cite the need for better preparation for independent living, it appears that many are not utilizing the services already offered. Are the services not providing what the adolescents need or believe they need, or are there other barriers? The responses in this study which pertained to this question did not provide adequate information. A study which more effectively examines this question is recommended.

Conclusions

Dependents of the court have been removed from their natural homes for a variety of reasons. Most of these reasons include neglect and/or physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Believing that under these circumstances the government could provide these children with a better and safer environment in which to grow, Child Protective Services was given legal responsibility for these children. As their temporary "guardians," it is imperative that Child Protective Services works to prepare these children for adulthood and self-sufficiency. This role should be the responsibility of parents. However, if the government allows an agency to remove children from their homes, then the government must be prepared to assume all the parental responsibilities for that child. Preparing adolescents for independence is a vital component of this responsibility. The government needs to provide Child Protective Services with the necessary funds to carry out this responsibility, as well to evaluate the effectiveness of its efforts. At this time, independent living programs are threatened with decreased or eliminated funds. As social workers and as members of society, we need to

ensure that this threat does not come to fruition. Today's children and adolescents are the future. Are they prepared?

Appendices

Appendix A: Survey for ILP Participants

**INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM
SURVEY**

ID Number: _____
Survey A

A. **Sex:** (1) Male ___ (2) Female ___

B. **Age:** _____

C. **Date of Birth:** _____

D. **Ethnicity:** ___ (1) African American ___ (2) Caucasian
 ___ (3) Latino/Hispanic ___ (4) Asian American
 ___ (5) Native American
 ___ (6) Multi-ethnicity (Please specify: _____)

E. **Months in DPSS System:** _____ Months

F. - H. **Type of Current Placement:**

F. (Mark One:)

- ___ (1) FM:
Family
Maintenance
- ___ (2) FR:
Family
Reunification
- ___ (3) PP:
Permanent
Placement

G. (Mark One:)

- ___ (1) Foster Home
- ___ (2) Relative Home
- ___ (3) Group Home
- ___ (4) Youth Home
- ___ (5) Other:

H. (Mark One:)

- ___ (1) Long Term
Foster Care
- ___ (2) Guardianship
- ___ (3) Adoption
- ___ (4) Not Applicable

I. **Primary Language:** (1) ___ English, (2) ___ Spanish, (3) ___ Other: _____

J. **Region:** ___ (1) San Bernardino Region ___ (2) Desert Region
 ___ (3) West End Region (Rancho Cucamonga Office)

I. HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

1. Where will you live after emancipation? (Mark one only.)

- (1) Remain in current foster home, group home, or youth home?
- (2) Remain in current relative's home?
- (3) Live with other relative (that I am not currently living with)?
- (4) Live with mother or father? (Specify which: _____)
- (5) Live with natural or step- siblings? (without parents)
- (6) Live with other emancipated foster care adolescents?
- (7) Live with friend(s) who are less than 5 years older than me?
- (8) Live with older friend(s) or adult(s)?
- (9) Live with boyfriend/girlfriend?
- (10) Live in shelter?
- (11) Live in school dorm or residence?
- (12) Other? (Specify: _____)

2. Complete the following statement by circling the most appropriate number:

"The above housing arrangement..."

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5
I don't will not may or may probably will will happen will definitely
know happen not happen happen almost definitely happen

Explain: _____

3. Circle the number below indicating the level at which the above housing arrangement has been discussed and/or arranged:

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----
I don't know	I probably will never bring it up to the others involved	I have not brought it up with the others involved yet	I have talked about it a little bit with the others involved	The others involved have somewhat agreed to this arrangement	This arrangement has been agreed upon by myself and all others involved

Explain: _____

4. Overall, how prepared are you to locate and maintain housing after emancipation?

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all prepared	Very little prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared	Not applicable

Explain: _____

5. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement:

"The Independent Living Program (ILP) has most influenced my current level of preparedness regarding locating and maintaining housing."

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	N/A
I don't know	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable

Explain: _____

6. How many ILP courses, classes, or workshops have you taken that focused on locating and maintaining housing arrangements?

II. EDUCATION

1. What is the highest level of education you plan to obtain?

- ___ (1) G.E.D.
- ___ (2) High School Diploma
- ___ (3) Some College
- ___ (4) A.A. Degree (2-year college degree)
- ___ (5) Completion of a Trade School Program
- ___ (6) B.A. or B.S. Degree (4-year college/university degree)
- ___ (7) Post-graduate Degree (Master's, Doctorate, etc.)

2. To what extent are you informed of the requirements needed to obtain a G.E.D. or a high school diploma, whichever is more appropriate for you?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well N/A
know informed informed informed informed informed applicable

Explain: _____

3. To what extent are you informed of the requirements that you need to enter college or a trade school, whichever is more appropriate for you?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well N/A
know informed informed informed informed informed applicable

Explain: _____

4. How prepared are you to complete a college application?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well Not
know prepared prepared prepared prepared prepared applicable

Explain: _____

5. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement:

"The Independent Living Program (ILP) has most influenced my current level of preparedness regarding education."

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----N/A
I don't Strongly Agree Disagree Strongly Not
know Agree Disagree applicable

Explain: _____

6. How many ILP courses, classes, or workshops have you taken that focused on educational goals or requirements?

III. EMPLOYMENT / CAREER

1. Currently, I am: ___ (1) unemployed

 ___ (2) employed part-time

 ___ (3) employed full-time

2. After I emancipate, I plan to be: ___ (1) unemployed

 ___ (2) employed part-time

 ___ (3) employed full-time

3. After emancipation, I will most likely be employed at:

 ___ Not applicable

 ___ Specify type or place of employment: _____

4. Complete the following statement by circling the most appropriate number:

 "The above employment arrangement..."

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5
I don't will not may or may probably will will happen will definitely
know happen not happen happen almost definitely happen

Explain: _____

5. Circle the number below indicating the level at which the above employment arrangement has been discussed and/or arranged:

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----
I don't know	I probably will not seek employment there	I have not yet applied there but plan to	I have applied or discussed this with employer, but have not received any offer yet	The employer has somewhat agreed to this arrangement	The employer has already hired me or has promised to, and I already work there or have promised to

Explain: _____

6. My career goal is: _____

7. How well do you know what steps are needed to achieve the above career goal? (such as experience, education, etc.)

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Well	Very well	Not applicable

Explain: _____

8. How prepared are you to participate in a job interview?

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all prepared	Very little prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared	Not applicable

Explain: _____

9. How prepared are you to complete a job application?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well Not
know prepared prepared prepared prepared prepared applicable

Explain: _____

10. How prepared are you to obtain employment which will meet your basic financial needs?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well Not
know prepared prepared prepared prepared prepared applicable

Explain: _____

11. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement:

"The Independent Living Program (ILP) has most influenced my current level of preparedness regarding employment and career goals *overall*."

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----N/A
I don't Strongly Agree Disagree Strongly Not
know Agree Disagree applicable

Explain: _____

12. How many ILP courses, classes, or workshops have you taken that focused on employment or career goals?

IV. MONEY MANAGEMENT

1. How prepared are you to effectively use a checkbook?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well Not
know prepared prepared prepared prepared prepared applicable

Explain: _____

2. How prepared are you to organize a household budget?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well Not
know prepared prepared prepared prepared prepared applicable

Explain: _____

3. How prepared are you to effectively open, close, and use a checking or savings account?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well Not
know prepared prepared prepared prepared prepared applicable

Explain: _____

4. How prepared are you to effectively establish and use a credit card?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well N/A
know prepared prepared prepared prepared prepared applicable

Explain: _____

5. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement:

"The Independent Living Program (ILP) has most influenced my current level of preparedness regarding money management ."

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----N/A
I don't Strongly Agree Disagree Strongly Not
know Agree Disagree applicable

Explain: _____

6. How many ILP courses, classes, or workshops have you taken that focused on money management?

V. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

A. In what ways can the Independent Living Program be more helpful to you?

B. How can the Department of Public Social Services better assist you in preparing for independent living?

C. Any additional comments?

Please use the back of this paper if more space is needed.

Thank You!

Appendix B: Survey for Non ILP Participants

**INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM
SURVEY**

ID Number: _____
Survey B

A. **Sex:** (1) Male ___ (2) Female ___

B. **Age:** _____

C. **Date of Birth:** _____

D. **Ethnicity:** ___ (1) African American ___ (2) Caucasian
 ___ (3) Latino/Hispanic ___ (4) Asian American
 ___ (5) Native American
 ___ (6) Multi-ethnicity (Please specify: _____)

E. **Months in DPSS System:** _____ Months

F. - H. **Type of Current Placement:**

F. (Mark One:)

G. (Mark One:)

H. (Mark One:)

___ (1) FM:
Family
Maintenance
___ (2) FR:
Family
Reunification
___ (3) PP:
Permanent
Placement

___ (1) Foster Home
___ (2) Relative Home
___ (3) Group Home
___ (4) Youth Home
___ (5) Other:

___ (1) Long Term
Foster Care
___ (2) Guardianship
___ (3) Adoption
___ (4) Not Applicable

I. **Primary Language:** (1) ___ English, (2) ___ Spanish, (3) ___ Other: _____

J. **Region:** ___ (1) San Bernardino Region ___ (2) Desert Region
 ___ (3) West End Region (Rancho Cucamonga Office)

I. HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

1. Where will you live after emancipation? (Mark one only.)

- (1) Remain in current foster home, group home, or youth home?
- (2) Remain in current relative's home?
- (3) Live with other relative (that I am not currently living with)?
- (4) Live with mother or father? (Specify which: _____)
- (5) Live with natural or step- siblings? (without parents)
- (6) Live with other emancipated foster care adolescents?
- (7) Live with friend(s) who are less than 5 years older than me?
- (8) Live with older friend(s) or adult(s)?
- (9) Live with boyfriends/girlfriend?
- (10) Live in shelter?
- (11) Live in school dorm or residence?
- (12) Other? (Specify: _____)

2. Complete the following statement by circling the most appropriate number:

"The above housing arrangement..."

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5
I don't will not may or may probably will will happen will definitely
know happen not happen happen almost definitely happen

Explain: _____

3. Circle the number below indicating the level at which the above housing arrangement has been discussed and/or arranged:

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5
I don't know I probably will never bring it up to the others involved I have not brought it up with the others involved yet I have talked about it a little bit with the others involved The others involved have somewhat agreed to this arrangement This arrangement has been agreed upon by myself and all others involved

Explain: _____

4. Overall, how prepared are you to locate and maintain housing after emancipation?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't know Not at all prepared Very little prepared Somewhat prepared Well prepared Very well prepared Not applicable

Explain: _____

5. Regarding locating and maintaining housing arrangements, what has most influenced your current level of preparedness?

6. How many ILP courses, classes, or workshops have you taken that focused on locating and maintaining housing arrangements?

II. EDUCATION

1. What is the highest level of education you plan to obtain?

- ___ (1) G.E.D.
- ___ (2) High School Diploma
- ___ (3) Some College
- ___ (4) A.A. Degree (2-year college degree)
- ___ (5) Completion of a Trade School Program
- ___ (6) B.A. or B.S. Degree (4-year college/university degree)
- ___ (7) Post-graduate Degree (Master's, Doctorate, etc.)

2. To what extent are you informed of the requirements needed to obtain a G.E.D. or a high school diploma, whichever is more appropriate for you?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well Not
know informed informed informed informed informed applicable

Explain: _____

3. To what extent are you informed of the requirements that you need to enter college or a trade school, whichever is more appropriate for you?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well Not
know informed informed informed informed informed applicable

Explain: _____

4. How prepared are you to complete a college application?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well Not
know prepared prepared prepared prepared prepared applicable

Explain: _____

5. Regarding education overall, what has most influenced your current level of preparedness?

6. How many ILP courses, classes, or workshops have you taken that focused on educational goals or requirements?

5. Circle the number below indicating the level at which the above employment arrangement has been discussed and/or arranged:

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----
I don't know	I probably will not seek employment there	I have not yet applied there but plan to	I have applied or discussed this with employer, but have not received any offer yet	The employer has somewhat agreed to this arrangement	The employer has already hired me or has promised to, and I already work there or have promised to

Explain: _____

6. My career goal is: _____

7. How well do you know what steps are needed to achieve the above career goal? (such as experience, education, etc.)

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Well	Very well	Not applicable

Explain: _____

8. How prepared are you to participate in a job interview?

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all prepared	Very little prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared	Not applicable

Explain: _____

9. How prepared are you to complete a job application?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well Not
know prepared prepared prepared prepared prepared applicable

Explain: _____

10. How prepared are you to obtain employment which will meet your basic financial needs?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well Not
know prepared prepared prepared prepared prepared applicable

Explain: _____

11. Regarding employment or career goals overall, what has most influenced your current level of preparedness?

12. How many ILP courses, classes, or workshops have you taken that focused on employment or career goals?

IV. MONEY MANAGEMENT

1. How prepared are you to effectively use a checkbook?

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all prepared	Very little prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared	Not applicable

Explain: _____

2. How prepared are you to organize a household budget?

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all prepared	Very little prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared	Not applicable

Explain: _____

3. How prepared are you to effectively open, close, and use a checking or savings account?

0-----	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5-----	N/A
I don't know	Not at all prepared	Very little prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared	Not applicable

Explain: _____

4. How prepared are you to effectively establish and use a credit card?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----N/A
I don't Not at all Very little Somewhat Well Very well Not
know prepared prepared prepared prepared prepared applicable

Explain: _____

5. Regarding money management, what has most influenced your current level of preparedness?

6. How many ILP courses, classes, or workshops have you taken that focused on money management?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

A. What would have influenced you to participate in or participate more in ILP?

B. How can the Department of Public Social Services better assist you in preparing for independent living?

C. Any additional comments?

Please use the back of this paper if more space is needed.

Thank You!

Appendix C: Survey Cover Letter



Hello!

My name is Trina Van Steenwyk, and, as an MSW student, I am conducting a research study measuring how prepared minors are to live independently after growing up within the DPSS system and how the Independent Living Program (ILP) influences that. I need your feedback!

Please read and sign the following consent letter, which gives you more details about the survey. The survey will only require a short amount of your time, so please take a few moments to fill it out completely. A stamped, self-addressed envelope is provided for your convenience. Because of the time-constraints placed on this project due to the university schedule, **please return the survey by March 22.**

Thank you for participating!

DEPARTMENT
OF
SOCIAL WORK
9/880-5501

Appendix D: Agency Letter of Consent

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO
SOCIAL SERVICES GROUP



WELFARE SERVICES

JOHN F. MICHAELSON
Director

Dr. Teresa Morris
Department of Social Work
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, CA 92407-2397

REPLY TO:

- 1300 East Mt. View Street
Barstow, CA 92311
- 61607 29 Palms Hwy., Ste. E
Joshua Tree, CA 92252
- 1300 Bailey Avenue
Needles, CA 92363
- 9638 7th Street
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730
- 396 North "E" Street
San Bernardino, CA 92415
- 494 North "E" Street
San Bernardino, CA 92415
- Box 14
13207 Market Street
Trona, CA 93562
- 16515 Mojave
Victorville, CA 92392

TDD - TELEPHONE SERVICES FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED
(909) 387-5036 (9/93)

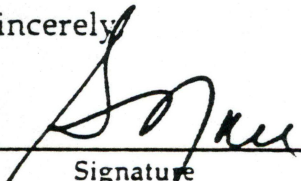
To Dr. Teresa Morris,

This letter serves as notification to the Department of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino, that Trina Van Steenwyk has obtained consent from the Department of Public Social Services, San Bernardino County, to conduct the research project entitled "A Satisfaction Survey of Foster Care Adolescents Participating in the Independent Living Program." This letter also serves as notification to the Department of Social Work that the Department of Public Social Services, San Bernardino County, is giving consent to allow minors under the jurisdiction of DPSS to participate in this research project.

If you have questions regarding this letter of consent, you may contact

_____ at _____
Name/Title Phone Number

Sincerely,



Signature

Gary Null

Name (printed)

2-1-95

Date

Dep. Dir.

Title/Position at DPSS

Appendix E: Individual Consent Form/Debriefing Letter

Letter of Explanation and Consent Form **Please read and sign this form.**

The study in which you are about to participate is designed to examine the relationship between participation in the Independent Living Program (ILP) and how prepared you believe you are for independent living. In this study, you will be asked to answer questions about your level of participation in ILP and questions relating to education, employment, housing, and money management. You will also be given the opportunity to share your opinions regarding the Independent Living Program and other ways in which the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) can better assist you in preparing for independent living after emancipation at age 18.

This study is being conducted independently by Trina Van Steenwyk, an MSW student at California State University, San Bernardino and an intern at DPSS, under the supervision of Professor Teresa Morris. Your feedback is important. The Department of Public Social Services will be provided with a copy of this study's results. However, all information you give is confidential, and your identity will not be revealed to DPSS nor any other person or agency. The ID Number on your survey will only be known and used by Trina Van Steenwyk to track which surveys have been returned.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the researcher, Trina Van Steenwyk, or Dr. Morris at the Department of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino at (909) 880-5501. If you have any questions regarding the Independent Living Program or issues related to preparing for independent living, please contact your social worker

or the ILP Coordinator with the Department of Public Social Services, Lory Klopfer at (909) 945-3807.

Please understand that your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and that your participation or lack of participation will neither help nor hinder your involvement with the Department of Public Social Services nor the Independent Living Program.

Please answer all the questions. Be as honest as possible and feel free to give your opinions and explanations in the spaces provided.

**** Please return the signed, bottom portion of this consent form with your completed survey by March 22. A stamped, self-addressed envelope has been provided.**

I acknowledge that I have been informed, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

Appendix F: Request Letter for Social Worker Assistance

My name is Trina Van Steenwyk, and I am an MSW intern at CPS, Rancho Cucamonga. In order to graduate this June, I must complete a Research Project or Thesis. I am studying the Independent Living Program and sending a survey to a selection of 17 year olds. Clients that return their completed survey will be given an ILP incentive of \$10.

I am requesting your help in encouraging their participation. In order for my project to work, I need a high response rate. **I am asking that you make a quick phone call to the clients in your caseload who have been selected to receive a survey.** I know this sounds like a lot, but I would greatly appreciate this assistance.

The surveys will be mailed either Tuesday or Wednesday, March 14th and 15th, and I am asking that the clients return them by March 22. Therefore, **I am asking that you call them this week.**

Please, just call and tell them to be expecting a survey in the mail and encourage them to complete it and return it in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope. Their identities will remain confidential, and DPSS will only receive a copy of my results, unable to match identities with specific answers. The survey is measuring their perceived level of preparedness for independent living and the impact of the Independent Living Program. A group of 50 ILP participants and 50 ILP non-participants were selected.

Again, I know this is asking a lot from you, considering the extremely high caseloads all of you have. But if you could make the time, this almost-graduate would be extremely thankful!!

The following page lists the clients selected on your caseload.

For my research purposes only, I will contact you later to identify if clients received a call of encouragement to participate.

THANK YOU!

Trina Van Steenwyk
MSW Intern
CPS, Ranch Cucamonga

Appendix G: Financial Incentive Follow-up Letter



Hello again!

I just received great news that may interest you. You may or may not have already received a letter and questionnaire from me regarding the Independent Living Program (ILP). If not, it should arrive any day. The good news is that I was given approval from DPSS to **provide each participant with an ILP Incentive of \$10**. Even if you have never participated in ILP before, you will receive the money if you complete and return the survey.

Only a hundred people were selected to participate in this survey. Therefore, the information and feedback *you* provide is very important. So I am glad that I can give a little something back to you for taking a few moments out of your day to answer my questions. Don't worry about your answers; remember that your answers won't be connected with your identify. Just be candid and honest!

Please return the completed survey by March 22. On April 5, ILP Coordinator Lory Klopfer will be given the names of those who have completed the survey, and she will distribute the \$10 ILP incentive money to you within 4 -6 weeks of that time.

If you have any questions about this survey or have not received a survey by March 20, you may leave a message for me with Dr. Teresa Morris at (909) 880-5501 or with DPSS at (909) 945-3719.

Sincerely,

Trina Van Steenwyk

DEPARTMENT
OF
SOCIAL WORK
—
(909) 880-5501

Appendix H: Additional Tables of Individual Variables

Table 8: Questions Two and Three, Housing Section

2. The above [stated] housing arrangement...		
	ILP Participants	Non-Participants
I don't know	8.7 %	6.7 %
...will not happen	4.3 %	0.0 %
...may or may not happen	17.4 %	20.0 %
...probably will happen	17.4 %	13.3 %
...will happen almost definitely	17.4 %	26.7 %
...will definitely happen	34.8 %	33.3 %
3. Indicate the level at which the above [stated] housing arrangement has been discussed and/or arranged:		
	ILP Participants	Non-Participants
I don't know	8.3 %	6.7 %
I probably will never bring it up to the others involved.	4.2 %	0.0 %
I have not brought it up with others involved YET.	4.2 %	0.0 %
I have talked about it a little bit with the others involved.	29.2 %	13.3 %
The others involved have somewhat agreed to this arrangement.	16.7 %	33.3 %
This arrangement has been agreed upon by myself and all others involved.	37.5 %	46.7 %

Table 9: Question One, Education Section

1. What is the highest level of education you plan to obtain?		
	ILP Participants	Non-Participants
G.E.D.	0.0 %	0.0 %
High School Diploma	12.5 %	13.3 %
Some College	16.7 %	33.3 %
A.A. Degree (2-year college degree)	8.3 %	20.0 %
Completion of a Trade School Program	0.0 %	6.7 %
B.A. or B.S. Degree (4-year college / univ. degree)	33.3 %	20.0 %
Post-graduate Degree (Master's, Doctorate, etc.)	29.2 %	6.7 %

Table 10: Questions Four and Five, Employment/Career Section

4. The above [stated] employment arrangement..."		
	ILP Participants	Non-Participants
I don't know	18.2 %	7.7 %
...will not happen	4.5 %	0.0 %
...may or may not happen	27.3 %	7.7 %
...probably will happen	18.2 %	38.5 %
...will happen almost definitely	22.7 %	23.1 %
...will definitely happen	9.1 %	23.1 %
5. Indicate the level at which the above [stated] employment arrangement has been discussed and/or arranged:		
	ILP Participants	Non-Participants
I don't know	37.5 %	28.6 %
I probably will not seek employment there.	4.2 %	0.0 %
I have not yet applied there but plan to.	41.7 %	57.1 %
I have applied or discussed this with employer, but have not received any offer yet.	4.2 %	14.3 %
The employer has somewhat agreed to this arrangement.	8.3 %	0.0 %
The employer has already hired me or has promised to, and I already work there or have promised to.	4.2 %	0.0 %

Appendix I: Request for Research Approval

December 5, 1994

Department of Public Social Services,
County of San Bernardino
494 North "E" Street
San Bernardino, CA 92415-0080

To The Department of Public Social Services:

I am writing today to ask for consent to conduct a research project entitled "A Satisfaction Survey of Foster Care Adolescents Participating in the Independent Living Program." This research project is a requirement for graduation for the Master of Social Work program at California State University, at San Bernardino. I am a second-year MSW student. I am presently serving as an intern at Child Protective Services at the Rancho Cucamonga office. My supervisor is Patty Liles, LCSW.

The purpose of this study is to measure the relationship between participation in the Independent Living Program (ILP) and the adolescent's perception of preparedness for independent living in the areas of housing arrangements, education, employment and career, and money management. A survey will be administered to two groups of seventeen-year-old participants who are currently in out-of-home placements under the jurisdiction of San Bernardino County DPSS: adolescents who have participated in ILP and adolescents who have had little or no participation in ILP. Through self-administered, written questionnaires, information will be gathered which identifies the participants' perception of their level of preparedness for independent living, their perception of the level of influence of the Independent Living Program or other sources, and their opinions of how ILP can be more helpful to them and how DPSS can better assist them in preparing for independent living. The two groups will be randomly selected from the computerized records of the Independent Living Program.

Each questionnaire will take approximately twenty minutes for the participant to complete. The data gathering period of this study will occur between January 1, 1995 and March 31, 1995. The results of the study will be available after June 17, 1995.

The rights and welfare of all the participants will be protected in this study. Participation will be voluntary, and all participants who decide to participate will need to sign a letter of informed consent. Because the participants will be minors and dependents of the court, an additional informed consent will need to be signed by DPSS, acting as their legal guardian. No significant risks are apparent in this study. This study is a nonmanipulative, nonstressful study of individual perceptions. DPSS will be provided with a copy of this study's results. However, individual information given by the participants will be confidential, and each participant's identity will not be revealed to DPSS nor any other person or agency. The findings of this study, in aggregate or anonymous data only, will be shared with DPSS in order to benefit adolescents in out-of-home placements through improved programs and future research. Any information that would link data with an identity will be destroyed at the conclusion of this project, no later than July 1, 1995.

A copy of my research proposal is attached for further information. If the Department has any other questions or concerns, I may be contacted at 945-3807. The Department may also contact my supervisor, Patty Liles, at 387-4965 or my research advisor, Dr. Teresa Morris, at 980-5501.

I am requesting that I obtain written consent from the Department by December 23, 1994. I have provided a consent form which you may return to the address provided, or you may create a separate letter of consent.

Respectfully,

Trina Van Steenwyk
9638 7th Street
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730

Dr. Teresa Morris
Department of Social Work
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, CA 92407-2397

To Dr. Teresa Morris,

This letter serves as notification to the Department of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino, that Trina Van Steenwyk has obtained consent from the Department of Public Social Services, San Bernardino County, to conduct the research project entitled "A Satisfaction Survey of Foster Care Adolescents Participating in the Independent Living Program." This letter also serves as notification to the Department of Social Work that the Department of Public Social Services, San Bernardino County, is giving consent to allow minors under the jurisdiction of DPSS to participate in this research project.

If you have questions regarding this letter of consent, you may contact

_____ at _____
Name/Title Phone Number

Sincerely,

Signature

Date

Name (printed)

Title/Position at DPSS

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