

California State University, Northridge

Support for High School Success: Perceptions of Male Students Living in Out-of-Home
Care Attending a Comprehensive High School

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends. To my sons William, Christopher, Michael, and Joshua your unconditional love, understanding, and support made it possible to keep focused during these three and one-half years. Please understand that this accomplishment serves as a blueprint for you and the successes you will experience in your lives. I would have never finished this document without your love support and understanding. To my brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles, aunts, and grandchildren, thank you for understanding and forgiving me for the many family functions that I missed. I love you all.

To my CSUN friends and faculty members, thank you for your continual words of encouragement and support. I know that I could not have survived this journey without you.

To all the students, faculty, and staff at Chatsworth High School thank you for allowing me to share my journey with you

Most importantly, thank God for all of the blessings that he has bestowed on me, my family, and friends.

Acknowledgement

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Abstract

SUPPORT FOR HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS:
PERCEPTIONS OF MALE STUDENTS LIVING IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE
ATTENDING A COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL

By

Timothy D. Guy

Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

This dissertation examined the experience of male out-of-home care students attending comprehensive high schools within the Los Angeles Unified School District. The study sought to highlight the needs of these students, as well as identify patterns for using institutional supports in order to create student success, as well as shed light on practices and supports that serve to further disadvantage this population. This initial study is qualitative in nature and was intended to uncover possible threads for future study and additional in-depth research regarding the best practices for supporting out-of-home care students within the context of public high schools. The study uncovered commonalities in the areas of personal resources, institutional resources, and barriers for success for the population of interest.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Purpose of Study

Darnell's Story

Darnell's Story is included for two purposes. First, it provides the reader with the motivational history of the author. During my twenty-five year career in this field as a childcare worker for a large facility in Southern California and an administrator for two six-bed group homes, this was the first story that touched me emotionally and motivated me to work diligently to end this young man's plight as well as work to improve the plight of all young men in similar situations. Second, Darnell's Story is not about his life but about how he entered into the Child Welfare System and is typical of how a large segment of this population enters into the child welfare system, unfortunately.

Darnell was a ten-year old African-American male placed in our large level fourteen treatment facility in the San Gabriel foothills by Los Angeles County's Department of Children and Family Services. According to the DCFS, a level fourteen rating at that time was for children who had severe emotional or behavior problems. After several months, Darnell became acclimated to our routine and began to divulge his personal history. It was at one of these times that Darnell informed me about his entry into the "system."

My mom said that she needed cigarettes and took me and my little sister to the corner liquor store. I think she took us only because there wasn't nobody around to watch us until she got back. I was holding my little sisters hand walking north on Hooper Avenue to Martin Luther King Boulevard. The liquor store was on the corner. When we got to the store, my mom told me and sister to wait by the light pole in front of the store

while she went to get the cigarettes. She told us at the house, that if we were good, she would get us some candy.

So we stayed by the pole like she said. I think maybe like an hour went by, I don't know we were watching cars and playing by ourselves. It got dark and the streetlights came on. I looked in the window of the store to find my mom and didn't see her. I took my sister and we walked back to the house, but she wasn't there either. So, we walked back to the liquor store and stayed under the light pole for long time, because it was real dark and my hood was bad. We were cold and my sister started to shake. I was cold too, so I just put my arm around her shoulder and we sat on the curb under the light.

I don't know how long it was, but a police drove by and then went around the corner. I don't know if it was the same police, but another police car pulled up and asked us what we were doing because it was like 9:00 at night. I said waiting for my mother. He said where is she? I said in the liquor store. He went in and then came out and said nobody knows your mom or you. He then said for us to get in the car to stay warm. He took us back to our house but nobody was there. So he said, I can't leave you on the streets, do you have a family member or friend you can stay with and I told him no. He said ok. We went to the police station. I was scared and my sister was too. I thought we were getting arrested, but then we got back in his car and he took us to some place far away from our house. When we got there some people took us to get something to eat and then we went to sleep. The next morning, I was told that they couldn't find my mother so they were going to keep me and my sister until the court could find us a place to live. I have never seen my mother since that day.

I have never forgotten Darnell's story, because his rendition was so emotional that it hurt me. I could never imagine parents and especially a mother leaving her children for any reason. I became Darnell's advocate and friend. Two years later, he left our facility. Darnell would call two or three times a month. Then, he stopped calling very abruptly. I have never heard from Darnell since, but I will always remember his story and hope that things worked out for his sister and him (D. Tripp, personal communication, 1986).

Introduction

Maslow (1943) in his paper on Hierarchy of Needs states,

If both the physiological and the safety needs are fairly well gratified, then there will emerge the love and affection and belongingness needs.

Now the person will feel keenly, as never before, the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or children. He will hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely for a place in his group, and he will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal. He will want to attain such a place more than anything else in the world and may even forget that once, when he was hungry, he sneered at love (p. 171).

Similar concerns confront today's youth living in out-of-home care. The need to belong to or identify with a specific group regardless of the criteria for membership is considered crucial by most teens. This is especially evident in large urban school districts that serve large comprehensive high schools. This is certainly the case for Los Angeles Unified School District, where this study takes place. Students, who live outside of their biological home, have lost the security of their families, friends, and relatives (Nunez, Dupper & Chicon as cited in Herrington, Kidd-Herrington & Kritsonis, 2006, p.

3). In their new environment “everything seems unfamiliar and strange... foster children feel like unwanted guests in someone else’s house where everything they do including simply existing in that setting, feels wrong” (Herrington et al., 2006, p. 3). According to the Los Angeles County’s Department of Children and Family Services Fact Sheet for September 2009, there are 32,371 children receiving assistance through this department. There are 19,911 children throughout county living in out-of-home care. Of these 19,911 children living in out-of-home care, over eight thousand are of high school age 14 – 18 years old. There are approximately 49.5% males and 50.5% females within this age range. These students attend our schools daily.

Most students living in out-of- home care come to the public school system with more than learning disabilities or gaps due to multiple home and school placements. Many have emotional and psychological problems that must be accommodated on the school site. For example, many take psychotropic medication (a chemical substance that acts primarily upon the central nervous system where it alters brain function, resulting in changes in perception, mood, consciousness and behavior) to deal with depression, schizophrenia, and behavior disorders. Others must see school psychologists or outside therapists to deal with anger management problems, low self-esteem, and effects of abuse. Others must report to probation officers daily because of prior contact with the juvenile justice system. Too often, these students feel unwanted by their family and society (DeCesare, 2004, p.219). Many exhibit anti-social behaviors as a reaction to being in out-of-home care, while others join groups (positive and negative) to obtain a sense of belonging that was lost in their transition to the child welfare system (DeCesare, 2005, p. 220). Herrington et al (2006) sums the difficulty in educating many students

living in out-of-home care, “A closer look at their learning needs is imperative because their learning needs are so different from the typical student” (p. 2).

For African-American and Latino children in out-of-home care, this experience can be a two-edged sword due to their disproportionate representation among children in the Child Welfare System. According to the United States Census Bureau, 2006 – 2008 (O’Hare 2008), all African-Americans represent approximately 12.3% of the total United States population. However, African-American children comprise 31% of the total children in foster care in 2008. Similarly, Hispanic or Latino children comprise 20% of US children in foster care, but all Hispanics or Latinos represent approximately 15% of the entire US population in 2008 (O’Hare, 2008).

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to develop an improved understanding of the educational experiences of high school aged male students living in out-of-home care in order to identify strategies that comprehensive high schools can implement to increase their chances of a positive high school experience and achieve a high school diploma. The California Youth Connection (2006) says that while 70% of the teens who emancipate from foster care express an interest in attending post-secondary education, less than 50% earn a high school diploma. In addition, the researcher will examine and document support programs that exist presently in high schools to facilitate academic and social success. Further the researcher will document the perceptions of these young men as it pertains to present support services in their high school. Finally, the researcher will recommend additional supports services that high schools can implement to increase

academic and social success for male students living in out-of-home care. The research is guided by the following primary and secondary questions:

- I. What institutional resources are important in facilitating the success of out of home care students?
- II. What are the high school experiences of students living in out of home care?
- III. How does their out-of-care environment influence their academic success?

Significance

Too often American society, as does many other societies around the world, stigmatize groups or individuals based on physical features such as perceived ethnicity, skin color, weight, hair, etc. or psychological features such as religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and etc. Those that do not share the majority traits, attitudes, and beliefs are marginalized from the mainstream. Essentially, these groups become ridiculed and made to feel inferior to the majority (Herrington et al., 2006). Ultimately, these groups become so disenfranchised with the entire system, they strike out against society.

Within our schools, many educators share the characteristics of the larger majority society (DeCesare, 2004). When students enter our schools, if they do not fit the stereotype of what a successful student should be, we begin to marginalize them. We deny them access to certain upper level courses (Blome, Jacobson, & Cockerum as cited in Shin, 2003, p. 617). We often have less tolerance for their differences, and refer them for discipline over minor offenses (Herrington et al., 2006). We allow them to fail, because we only want to teach those that fit our ideal student model. Students living in

out-of-home care come to us with an array of negative psychological and physical experiences. They have few educational support providers to advocate for them on our high school campuses. As a result, they fall between the cracks and crevices never heard from again because many are either withdrawn, overly compliant, or they become more aggressive or demanding (Altshuler, McNeil, Herschell, Gurwitch, Clemens-Mowrer as cited in Herrington et al., 2006, p. 3). Then we attempt to get rid of them under the pretense that their behavior is so outlandish that the offender must belong in a self-contained classroom (special education) or in a special school with similar students (Herrington et al., 2006).

Males living in out-of-home care are significant to this study due to the societal pressure on them to perform as “real men.” According to Urberg (1979), adolescents are the most stereotyped age group in her study. As Young (1977) states, “Society places different demands on boys and girls prior to adolescents and that boys carry the more difficult load, for example, in terms of sex role development” (p. 953). These young people are not “throwaways.” We cannot simply discard them or relegated them to special education classes or other alternative educational programs. If we as a nation truly believe that we can “leave no child behind” (107th Congress, 2001), then we must include one of our most vulnerable student populations: children living in out-of-home care. The findings of the current study, student surveys, and focus groups may have implications for educators at both the site and district levels. Through understanding the needs of these students, which resources are available to these students, the resources the students are actually connecting to, and how they are accessing these resources, direction

may be given to education professionals as to how to best serve these students in helping them to transition into successful young adults.

Methodology

A qualitative research design was chosen to carry out this study. Guided by a quantitative survey design, a student questionnaire was administered to 18 year old high school male students living in out-of-home care attending large comprehensive high schools. In this study, the sample included eight large comprehensive high schools within the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). LAUSD is known to have large populations of male students living in out-of-home-care.

Additionally, a sub-sample of 18 year old males living in out-of-home care surveyed at each of the eight high school sites was invited to participate in focus groups interviews. The goal of the focus group interviews was to document the personal and educational experiences of high school males living in out-of-home care, by understanding the level of support they have available to them in both their home and school setting. The study also looked at the role the Los Angeles Unified School District's Foster Care Office plays in supporting the educational experiences of high school males living in out-of-home care.

Limitations

This study focused on high school-aged males of 18 years of age living in out-of-home care and attending large urban comprehensive public high schools and has a particular set of limitations that should be taken into consideration. First, since the sample was limited to 18 year old males living in out-of-home care, the findings are not generalizable to the experiences of females in similar K – 12 schools or males under 18

years-of-age, enrolled in grades K – 12 who also reside in out-of-home care. Moreover, this study focused on those educational institutions that have a large population of 18 year-old male students living in out-of-home care. Therefore, the results may not be applicable to smaller urban, rural, private, or charter schools and school districts.

A third limitation of this study is the potential influence of the researcher's biases due to previous work in this field. While measures were taken to minimize the researcher's reactions to the interpretation of the participants' responses, it was not completely possible to eliminate all personal biases due to the nature of this study. According to Ratner (2002), "qualitative methodology recognizes that the subjectivity of the researcher is intimately involved in scientific research. Subjectivity guides everything from the choice of topic that one studies, to formulating hypotheses, to selecting methodologies, and interpreting data. In qualitative methodology, the researcher is encouraged to reflect on the values and objectives he brings to his research and how these affect the research project" (p.1).

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following terms will be used:

- Out-of-home care is defined narrowly as students who live in group homes, foster care (relative), foster care (nonrelative), and residential facilities.
- Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) assume the responsibility for child protective services in the county. This agency investigates allegations of in-home child abuse, neglect, abandonment, exploitation and parents cannot care for their children. DCFS also provides a

number of other services (adoption, permanency placement, family reunification, and emergency response) to families in crisis.

- Probation Department recommends and enforces court-ordered sanctions for probationers; prevents and reduces criminal activity by developing and implementing strategies from early intervention through supervision.

Organization of Study

This study is organized into five chapters. After the introduction, Chapter 1, a review of the literature comprises Chapter 2. Chapter 3 describes the methodological approach of the study. Chapter 4 organizes the quantitative data and qualitative results and reports those findings. Chapter 5 interprets and discusses the results of the study in reference to the research questions, the literature review, and conceptual framework. The final section concludes with recommendations for policy implications for improving services and possible next steps for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to critically analyze and synthesize the literature as it pertains to high school adolescent male students living in out-of-home care and the types of support available to them on urban high school campuses. Zetlin, Weinberg, and Shea (2006) noted that children in foster care are among the most educationally vulnerable populations in our schools. Martin (2003) states, “A solid education is considered the foundation for a productive future, but for teens in foster care, education beyond high school is rarely a reality” (p. 452). Taking these accounts into perspective, the problem associated with making sure these children have equal access to successful futures, which takes higher levels of care and support from education systems in order to increase the chances for success among children in out-of-home care.

Why High School-Aged Males?

High school-aged male students are of particular importance to the researcher due to societal obligations on males in general, Latino and African-American males specifically, who have become marginalized and disenfranchised due to their removal from their family and community structure. As Young (1977) states, “Society places different demands on boys and girls prior to adolescents and that boys carry the more difficult load, for example, in terms of sex role development” (p. 953).

Marginalization, as used in this study, refers to the societal process of becoming or being relegated or confined to a lower social standing or outer limit/edge of society. Many adolescent males living in out-of-home care, as a group, become marginalized in our high schools by some educators who find this group’s academic and social

contributions to the classroom and school insignificant due to the negative characteristics that many believe these young men possess (Blome as cited in Shin, 2003, p. 617). Once an educator labels a student, it affects our assumptions about that student, advantaging some, while disadvantaging others (Good, Hunsberger, Canvanagh, Brehm & Kassin as cited in Smith & Mack, 2006, p. 37). We know that words have power. Words can build up and words can tear down leaving the person with the impression that they will never be anything (Smith, 2006). Unfortunately, some teacher/educators let harmful words fall from their lips without giving thought to whom those words may harm. The use of “off-the-cuff” remarks is what Purkey (as cited in Smith, 2006) refers to as unintentionally disinviting. This is characterized by carelessness and thoughtlessness actions toward other despite the speaker’s best intention (p. 38).

The 14th Amendment guaranteed all American citizens the right to an education (U.S. Const. amend. XIV Sect. 2, 1868). It is noted in the literature that one of the important barriers to a quality education is the transitory nature of children in foster care (Fein et al.; Hicks & Nixon as cited in Lyman & Bird, 1996). A longitudinal study found that twice as many foster youth (compared to other youth) changed schools three times or more after fifth grade (Blome as cited in Zetlin et al, 2006, p. 31). Lips (2007) discuss the effects of mobility on education for foster care youths. Lipps (2007) states that “frequent school transfers negatively affect foster children as a result. School transfers create gaps in the learning cycle, force children to adjust to new classroom settings, teachers, and classmates, and cause children to lose social networks (social capital), peer groups and relationships with adults” (p. 2). Today, most males, especially adolescent black and Latino males continue to perpetuate their masculine stereotype in society, not

as buffoons but as “bad boys.” Compounding this problem is that many of these students end up disenfranchised, lacking equal access to a quality education due to their mobility and insufficient time and resources to establish relationships with peers or adults within their schools.

While these young men must adhere to the overall society norms, they must also comply with the spoken or unspoken norms of their contemporaries despite their psychological and emotional experiences of being apart from their birth families and in out-of-home care. This may include:

- Pressure by peers to engage in sexual intercourse before they are ready (Young, 1977)
- Pressure by peers to engage in delinquent acts (Barnes, Welte, Hoffman, & Dintcheff, 2006)
- Experimentation with drugs and alcohol (Tyler & Melander 2010; Shin, 2003)
- Belonging to or identifying with a particular gang or social clique (Timlin-Scalera, Ponterotto, Blumberg, & Jackson as cited in McKelley & Rochlen, 2010, p. 2)
- Wearing the latest fashion/jewelry/cell phone
- Regularly communicating on one of the social networks via Facebook, My Space, Twitter, among others.
- Being “hard” or maintaining a “macho” image (Vogel, Wade, & Haake as cited in McKelley & Rochlen, 2010, p.1)
- Avoidance of higher than average intelligence due to pressures not to be labeled as “school-boy” or “school-girl”.

- Avoidance of being labeled homosexual, especially for African-American and Latino males (Good, Dell, & Mintz as cited in McKelley & Rochlen, 2010, p. 1).
- Being labeled as a foster kid, group home kid, or probation kid by most stakeholders on a high school campus

Conforming to stereotypical male norms becomes paramount for high school male students. It is even more important for those high school adolescent males living in out-of-home care. From a young age, boys will adhere to a masculine psyche to adhere to societal norms. According to Biller (1969) “when the boy views his father as more dominant than his mother, the boy’s masculine development is facilitated” (p. 92). As they mature into young men, males continue along this path of adherence to cultural and societal norms. Even when the father figure is absent, young men seek to emulate the dominate male in their group regardless of the consequences. Cohn, Jukupcak, Seibert, & Zeichner (2010) in their study recognize this phenomenon as well. Cohn, et.al (2010) state, “Studies have demonstrated that men who adhere rigidly to traditional male role norms are at higher risk for perpetrating aggression in response to masculine relevant threatening event than men with low gender role adherence” (p. 53). Hence, if a young man or adult encounters a situation that threatens his perceived notion of masculinity he is more likely to strike out at the person or situation with some form of aggression, than a male who is less concerned about his conformity to society’s requirements for masculinity.

This subgroup’s desire, like most teenagers, is not to draw attention to themselves. They are aware of how society views them. They are acutely aware of their

low social standing among the students and adults on a typical public high school campus (Zetlin, Weinberg, & Luderer, 2006) and as a result avoid confrontation to avoid being confronted with their masculinity (Christian as cited in Lipps, 2007).

Child protective agencies attempt to provide a stable living environment for those children, who for various reasons, cannot live with either biological parent(s). The type of care depends upon the presenting challenges that each child possesses. While the ideal care would be reunification with one or both of the biological parents, one of the least restrictive levels of care would involve living with a relative caregiver. The most restrictive level of care would constitute incarceration. The custodial caregiver's responsibility, in partnership with a case manager or social worker, is to prepare these children socially, morally, psychologically, and emotionally for the challenges of life.

Local educational agencies (LEA), school districts and schools, participate in the development of these children by providing academic, social, and emotional services. However, a question that remains under-researched is whether or not schools and school districts respond effectively to this marginalized and disenfranchised student population? Danielson and Lee (2010), state that while remarkable advances have been made in California, there still remain several important areas that schools and school districts can do to improve the lives of these students. One important area is to communicate to school-site and district personnel who these students are, challenges, strategies for working with them, and their successes (Zetlin, Weinberg, & Luderer, 2006). It has been my experience in twenty-eight years as an educator that I have not attended one professional development of substance where the discussion centered on the children in foster care. Annually, educators have discussed the characteristics, federal and state

requirements of students with special needs and to some extent with English Learners.

When it comes to high school male students in foster care, we know and do very little for them.

Another important area is school support for foster children. Mickey (2000) states that “support from others is very crucial to the life of a foster child” (p. 28). While building a trusting relationship can be challenging between adolescent males and supportive/caring adults due to the negative news reports about child abuse in our schools, it is not impossible. On the high school campus, adults can provide a caring and supportive atmosphere for these young men to develop socially, emotionally, and academically. However, adults and students must remain vigilant of the barriers between a healthy supportive relationship and an unhealthy one.

In our current atmosphere of accountability there continues to be mounting pressure both politically and socially for our schools to do more with less financial and governmental support. With the re-authorizations of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in 2001 and Individual with Disabilities Act (IDEA) of 2004, local education agencies (LEA) and schools (particularly public schools) have the added burden of stigmatization as “low” or “underperforming” school when they do not meet external entities’ targets, and goals. With such scarcity of resources and external mandates to ensure that every student meet proficiency levels in core courses, are schools adequately meeting the educational needs of adolescent males students living in out-of-home care? Herrington, Kidd-Herrington, & Kritsonis (2006) reflect on this challenge, “Schools have been seeking ways to close the learning gaps among different groups of children without

examining the special needs of the most invisible children--homeless and foster children” (p. 2).

High School Aged Males in Foster Care Statistics

While most adolescent males encounter many stressors to adhere to society’s concept of masculinity, young men living in out-of-home care have the additional burden of proving their masculinity without the support of their biological family. Historically speaking, taking care of orphaned or abandon children did not begin in the United States. During the 17th century, English Poor Law created the foundation for our modern day social welfare system. According to the Children’s Aid Society, English Poor Law stated, “orphan and widow’s children were indentured until their mid-twenties or until they married” (The Orphan Train Movement, 2006).

In 1853, Charles Loaring Brace and a group of reformers founded the Children’s Aid Society in New York. Motivated by the condition of the immigrant children living on the streets he created and ran “orphan train movement” that placed 20,000 poor and orphan children in homes throughout forty-nine states and two countries (The Orphan Train Movement, 2006). The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System’s (AFCARS) (2009) definition of foster care (out-of-home care) is found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and states that foster care is “24-hour substitute care for children outside their own home.” Columbia Encyclopedia (2008) defines foster care as “intended to offer a supportive family environment to children whose natural parents cannot raise them because of the parents’ physical or mental illness, extreme poverty, the child’s behavioral difficulties, or problems within the family environment, e.g. child abuse, alcoholism, extreme poverty, or crime.”

Out-of-home care according to Barth, Green, Webb, Wall, Gibbons, & Craig (2008) is “the centerpiece of child welfare services (CWS) in the United States” (p. 6). Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) indicates that as of September 30, 2008 a total of 463,000 children were in foster care in the United States. Fifty-three percent of these youths are males and forty-seven percent are females. The mean age of all youths in foster care is 9.7 and the median age is 9.8. The population of high school aged students (14 to 18 years old) in foster care is 149,601 approximately 32% of the current population.

Figure 2.1 Ethnicity of Children in Foster Care

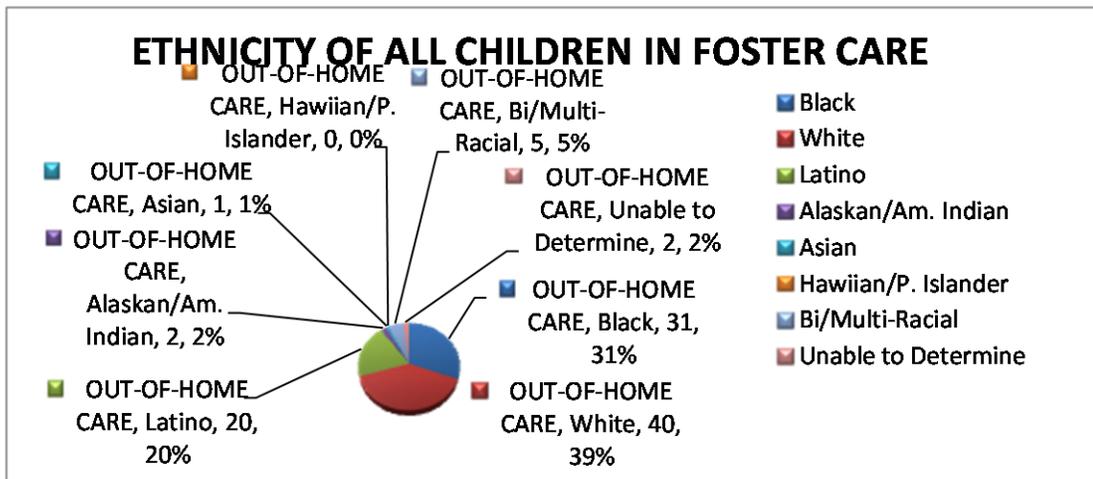


Figure 2.1 from the AFCARS (2009) reports the racial/ethnic background of youth (infant to 18 years old) living in the foster care system. While European-Americans (White) children account for 39% of the total population, children of color particularly Blacks and Latinos comprise the majority of children in foster care. Moreover, African-American children are disproportionately represented in foster care in

juxtaposition to their representation in the United States. Disproportionality according to Green (2002) refers to a particular racial or ethnic group of children being represented at a higher percentage than other ethnic or racial groups. According to the United States Census Bureau, 2006 – 2008 American Community Survey, all African-Americans represent approximately 12.3% of the total United States population. However, as Figure 2.1 indicates African-American children comprise 31% of the total children in foster care in 2008. Similarly, Hispanic or Latino children comprise 20% of US children in foster care, but all Hispanics or Latinos represent approximately 15% of the entire US population in 2008 (O’Hare, 2008).

Using the 2000 Decennial Census data, in the United States, there were a total of 519, 356 children under 18 years old living in foster care. The total number of children in group homes or institutions under 18 years old is 88,420. The number children living in foster family homes with a relative (kinship care) under 18 years old is 129, 977. Conversely, the number of children living in foster care non-relative homes is 242, 411. Additional foster care statistics include: Trial home visits under 18 years old is 17, 532, Runaway or Independent Living children under 18 years old total 9,633, Pre-Adoptive children under 18 years old is 21,26, and those children whose current placement information is missing is 19,118. According to O’Hare (2008), these figures may not be accurate due to a number of reasons. First, children are in individual foster homes for a short period of time, and in the context of the “usual place of residence” the Census respondent may not feel the foster child is part of the household in terms of completing the Census form. O’Hare (2008) further states that according to AFCARS (2005) 96,000 children exited foster care in less than five months, and almost 50,000 exited in less than

one month. For these reasons, the number of children living in out-of-home care can conceivably be higher.

While the national statistics provides a broad picture of children living in out-of-home care and high school-aged males, a review of California statistics will present the reader a more specific representation of these young men. Jacobson (2008) found California is home to more than 10% of the nation's children in foster care. In California, males comprise 52% of the 68,390 children in the child welfare system (CWS, January 2010). According to CWS and Case Management System (CMS) in July 2002, thirty-eight percent of all children in the system (90,972 placements) were placed in relatives homes. Twenty-five percent of these children were placed in foster family agencies and sixteen percent in foster family homes. Eight percent were placed in guardian homes and nine percent were placed in group homes. Four percent of the children were placed in some other type of home setting. In this same report fifty-three percent of the care providers were not related to child or guardian. Some thirty-five percent were related but non-guardians, nine percent were guardians, and three percent were related to the guardian.

Figure 2.1 displays the ethnic make-up of children living in out-of-home care in California. While it appears that the three predominant cultures (African-American, Hispanic, and European-American) in California are equally represented in foster care, when viewed from the total population of just adolescents (14 – 17 years) there is a very large disparity. Blacks comprise 5.4% of the 2.1 million teenagers in California, but represent 33% of the total population in out-of-home care. White adolescents account for

30% of the total teenage population and Hispanic adolescents consist of 49.9% of the total adolescent population in California (Kids Data, 2010).

At the national and state levels, black adolescents are disproportionately represented in out-of-home care. The causes for this trend are suspect. Is there a double standard for blacks who enter into the foster care system than for other ethnicities? McRoy (2008) cites a U.S. Government Accounting Office (GAO) report July 2007 which states that not only are black children more likely to be placed in foster care than their white counterparts, but also that these children experience longer stays in foster care (p. 205). The GAO report notes several contributing factors including: limited access to family support services, limited, or inadequate legal representation, and difficulty recruiting and retaining permanent homes, difficulty with adoptions and reunification with birth parent(s) (p. 205 – 206). In California during the 2002 year, the gender structure of children living in out-of-home care was evenly split 50% females and 50% males. This data is similar with the adolescent population at the same period in California (California Department of Social Services, 2002).

Some comparative facts about placement patterns include: Hispanic children (30%) are more likely to be placed by a foster family agency and European children (10%) are more likely to be placed in group homes. Black children (45%) are most likely to be placed in a relative' home. Finally, approximately 27% of all placements are of high school age (14 -18 years old) (California Department of Social Services, 2002).

During this reporting period (July 2002) California's probation department had a total of 6,947 children living in out-of-home placements. Of this population 88% were placed in group homes, 3% in foster family agencies, 4% in relative homes, 3% in other

types of homes, and 2% in foster care. Of those placed in group homes 81% were between 15-18 years old. Seventy-seven percent of the total placements for the probation department were males and 23% were females. The ethnic make-up of children placed in out-of-home care by the probation department are 36% Hispanic children, 33% European-American children, 27% African-American children , and 4% other children.

In Los Angeles County, where this study will take place, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Los Angeles County Probation Department (LACPD), and Los Angeles County Departmental Mental Health (LACDMH) are responsible for placing children in to out-of-home care facilities. Of the approximately 32,317 children from infancy to 19 years old receiving CWS services 15,816 live in out-of home care. Males receiving CWS services account for 49.5% (15,995) (DCFS, 2009). While males in general constitute approximately half of the children in both state and county receiving CWS services, high school aged males (14 – 18 years old) account for approximately 27% of the total male population receiving CWS services. The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services caseload by ethnicity is as follows: 11.6% (3,758) European-American, 29.5% (9,533) African-American, 55.5% (17,947) Hispanic, 1.9% (619) Asian/Pacific Islander, .6% (202) Filipino, .4% (145) Am. Indian/Alaskan Native and .3% (113) other (DCFS, 2009). At this time demographic information on placements from Los Angeles County Probation Department and Los Angeles County Mental Health could not be found.

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in compliance with Assembly Bill 490 maintains a Foster Care Office. This office stated mission “enhancing educational results and academic achievement for students living in out-of-home care

[e.g., with relative caregivers, foster care, and group homes]” (LAUSD, 2011). The latest data (2006 – 2007 school year) from this office reveals that of the approximately 650,000 children attending LAUSD schools, 7,247 or approximately 11.5% out-of-home care children attend LAUSD schools grades Pre-K to 12th including a relatively small number of ungraded special needs students who were enrolled by DCFS (LAUSD, 2011).

Additionally another 2,975 or approximately 4.5% children attending LAUSD schools grades 7 – 12 were enrolled in LAUSD by the Los Angeles County Probation Department. It is important to note that 28.1% (2,039) of the student placed by DCFS are of high school age 14 – 18. While a larger percentage of students 92.4% (2,746) were enrolled in the LAUSD by the Probation Department, the largest grade level cohort group attending LAUSD schools and living in out-of-home care were 9th grade (ages 13-14) 1,106 students from probation and 798 students for DCFS.

Table 2.1 reflects the ethnic make-up of students living in out-of-home care (DCFS/Probation Department) and attending a Los Angeles Unified School in 2008.

Table 2.1

Ethnicity of Students in Out-of-Home Care by Program

Ethnicity	DCFS	LACPD
African American	35%	25%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1%	0%
Asian	1%	1%
Filipino	1%	1%
Hispanic/Latino	57%	69%
European-American	6%	4%
Total Population in Program	7247	2975

Table 2.1 reflects the large enrollment of Hispanic/Latino and Black students from both Children Services and the Probation Department. However, the total student population of LAUSD during the 2009 – 2010 school year was 688, 138. (LAUSD Fact Sheet, 2009-2010).

The majority of students 33% (3,484) who were placed by both DCFS and LACPD and attend LAUSD schools reside in Local Districts 5, 6, 7, and 8 (LAUSD is divided into eight smaller districts or local district to provide better service to all stakeholders with in the residential area) which is the southern and central-eastern boundary of the school district. This area is populated by people of color specifically blacks and Latinos. Senior high school students 3,962, 22.1% from DCFS and 71.2% from LACPD, compose the majority of the students in out-of-home care attending LAUSD schools. Other types of educational institutions (Span Schools, Independent Charters Schools, Non-Public Schools, AEWK Schools, and Option Schools) were excluded from this report due to the focus on traditional comprehensive high schools.

Educational Experiences for High School Aged Males Living in Foster Care

Statistics from the national, state, and local levels provide information on the general state of children living in out-of-home care. However, academically, are these young men doing as well as their non-foster care counterparts? Although the educational data from the Foster Care Office of the LAUSD is minimal, it does, however, provide some insight into how adolescent males living in out-of-home care are faring on important state summative assessments. In the 2006 – 2007 school year, the California High School Exit Exam (CAHEE) was administered to 10th grade students for the first time and to 11th and 12th grade students who did not pass one or both sections

(English/Language Arts and mathematics). Students living in out-of-home care meeting the criteria also took the exam. Although the data was not delineated by grade level there was a combine 1,333 10th grade students who potentially should have taken both exams. Those students living in out-of-home care placed by the DCFS 42.1% (525) passed the English/Language Arts section and 33.9% (570) passed the mathematics section. Those students living in out-of-home care and placed by the Probation Department passed the English/Language Arts section 35.2% (659) and 33.2% (669) passed the mathematics section (LAUSD, Planning and Assessment, 2008, p. 6).

Also during the 2006 – 2007 school year, another high stakes test for high school-aged students in grades 9 – 11 on the California Standards was administered. DCFS students 22.7% (1,720) and Probation Department students 86.2% (2,444) potentially should have taken this examination (California Standards Test, CST). According to the data for this period, 16.6% of the DCFS students passed the English/Language Arts section of the exam, while 9.0% of the Probation Department students passed this section. In mathematics, 4.0% of the DCFS students passed this section of the CST test, while 2.4% of the Probation Department students passed this section (LAUSD, Planning and Assessment, 2008, p. 6). According to Lips (2007) compared to their peers, foster children have lower scores on standardized tests.

According to the Honoring Emancipated Youth (2006) 70% of teens who emancipate from foster care expressed an interest in attending college, however less than 50% complete their high school graduation. The literature is very clear that multiple placements are the most severe barrier to academic success (Fein et al.; Hicks & Nixon as cited in Lyman & Bird, 1996), but as Zetlin (2006) states even if placement instability

was reduced, there remains substantial problems adversely affecting the education of all foster youths. There are four additional areas of focus, as follows, to best answer this question: maltreatment, lack of social capital, separation from family, and lack of appropriate support service from the high school/district.

Maltreatment can take many forms such as physical abuse, neglect (failure of caregiver to provide/supervise), sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and substance abuse (exposure generally at birth). According to the Administration for Children and Families (2005) report, of children in the study, “the most serious forms of maltreatment experienced by the children were neglect and the primary cause 60% for placement.” The report states that failure to provide and failure to supervise had equal percentages. Moreover, ten percent of the children experienced physical abuse and 8% experienced sexual abuse (Administration for Children and Families, 2005).

Maltreatment also varied by age and race/ethnicity among the children in the study. For example, younger children (infancy to two years) were more likely to experience failure to provide and least likely to experience sexual abuse. In terms of race/ethnicity, for example, Hispanic children were most likely to experience physical abuse, while less likely to experience failure to provide. African-American children were most likely to experience failure to supervise and white children (including other races) were most likely to experience sexual abuse (Administration for Children and Families, 2005).

The most striking, but not surprising, aspect of the Administration for Children and Families (2005) report was that most children experienced more than one type of maltreatment. Among the four most common types of maltreatment (physical abuse,

sexual abuse, failure to provide, and failure to supervise), 41% of the children in the study experienced more than one type of maltreatment (Administration for Children and Families, 2005).

For males of school age living in out-of-home care the most serious form of maltreatment was physical assault. Finkelhor, Turner, Ormond, Hamby & Kracke. (2009) illustrates this point in their survey results. They report that adolescents between the ages of 14 to 17 years experienced more serious types of violence, including assaults with injury, gang assaults, sexual victimizations, physical and emotional abuse, and witnesses to violence in their communities (Finkelhor et al., 2009). Males living in out-of-home care have experienced these forms of violence prior to and while living in placements.

Another important barrier for academic and school success among high school males living in out-of-home care is the lack of social capital by caregivers (foster parents, group home staff, probation officers, social workers, etc.) and foster youths in the high school setting. Social capital according to Woolcock & Narayan (2000) is the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively. Social capital can be summed up in the common aphorism, "It's not what you know, but it's who you know that matters." Due to the amount of movement over the placement period, foster children and foster caregivers have little or no social capital built up with the new school or community and therefore have difficulty navigating the high school environment.

There are several benefits associated with social capital according to Putnam as cited in, Smith (2009):

- Child development is powerfully shaped by social capital. Trust,

networks, and norms of reciprocity within a child's family, school, peer group, and larger community have far reaching effects on their opportunities and choices, educational achievement, and behavior and development (p. 10).

- In high social capital areas, public areas are cleaner, people are friendlier, and the streets are safer. Risk-factors (high poverty, residential mobility, and high crime rates) in traditional neighborhoods are not as significant (p. 11).
- Trust and social networks flourish according to a growing body of research. Also social capital can help to mitigate the effects of socioeconomic disadvantage, "the underground economy of the urban poor" (p. 11).
- There also appears to be a strong relationship between the possessions of social capital and better health. For example regular club attendance, volunteering, entertaining or church attendance is the happiness equivalent of getting a college degree (p. 11).

Moreover, the World Bank argues that another benefit of social capital is schools are more effective when parents and local citizens are actively involved (Smith, 2009). Smith (2009) continues, "Teachers are more committed, students have higher test scores, and better use is made of school facilities in those communities where parents and citizens take an active interest in children's educational well-being" (p. 11).

Adolescent males living in out-of-home care typically come to the high schools from juvenile incarceration. Most of their foster care placements are typically outside of

their biological parents' neighborhoods. Therefore, whatever social capital they had built up is diminished and they must start over. While their peers in the group home, foster care, or probation may provide a small network on which these young men can rely, it is not likely that in the high school setting they can be of much assistance due to their inability to navigate the system. Therefore these young men cannot share in the benefits of social capital and are left to fend for themselves which often leads to frustration, anger, and some form of retaliation.

Still another barrier to academic and school success for adolescent high school aged-males living in out-of-home care is separation from their biological families. (Chubb & Fertman as cited in Lyman & Bird, 1996) says of this issue that the sense of belonging and support from one's family has a powerful influence on self-concept. Foster care placement may serve to reduce the sense of belonging and support that the adolescent can get from his or her family (Lyman & Bird, 1996).

Finally, inadequate school support services in the form of instruction, intervention, other programs, and personnel are viewed as barriers to academic and school success for adolescent males living in out-of-home care. Educational success, including age-appropriate academic achievement and graduation from high school, is critical for older youth in foster care (Altshuler, Barth, McDonald et al., as cited in Shin, 2003). Moreover, (Jackson & Westat as cited in Greenen & Powers, 2006) state that educational achievement (for example high school completion) is one of the best predictors of positive adult outcomes, such as employment and postsecondary education (p. 234).

Environment of High School Aged-Males Living in Out-of-Home Care

Poverty, maltreatment, lack of social capital, and inadequate school support services are viewed as educational barriers for the academic success of adolescent males living in out-of-home care, but their personal history may also hinder their academic future. The literature on children living in out-of-home care indicates that most children regardless of age primarily enter into the child welfare system through removal from the biological family home due to some form of maltreatment: physical abuse, neglect (failure of caregiver to provide/supervise), sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and substance abuse (exposure generally at birth) by any child protective agency. While initial placement is dependent on a variety of demographic factors (age, gender, race/ethnicity, poverty, etc.), the most striking, but not surprising, aspect of the Administration for Children and Families (2005) report was that “most children experienced more than one type of maltreatment.” For example, among the four most common types of maltreatment (physical abuse, sexual abuse, failure to provide, and failure to supervise) 41% of the children in the study experienced more than one type of maltreatment.” For older youths entering or re-entering the foster care system, particularly high school-aged males, the two most common forms maltreatment reported according to Ryan, Testa, and Zhai (2008) were physical abuse 40% and neglect 58% of the study participants.

While states may develop specific definitions for physical abuse and neglect, the federal government defines both through The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), (42 U.S.C.A. §5106g), as amended by the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003, as physical abuse is non-accidental physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) as a result of punching, beating,

kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other object), burning, or otherwise harming a child, that is inflicted by a parent, caregiver, or other person who has responsibility for the child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caregiver intended to hurt the child. The federal definition of neglect is the failure of a parent, guardian, or other caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs. Neglect may be:

- Physical (e.g., failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision)
- Medical (e.g., failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment)
- Educational (e.g., failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs)
- Emotional (e.g., inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs)

Another characteristic of high school-aged males living in out-of-home care is their race or ethnicity. O'Hare (2008) states, "The disadvantaged position of foster care children may be related to the fact that disproportionate shares of foster children are Hispanic and African-American segments of the population that are disadvantaged" (p. 25). According to the O'Hare (2006) "black children were 26% of the foster care children identified in the survey, but make up only 15% (10,698,274) of all children under the age of 18years (73,785,118) in the United States. Also, Hispanic children were 28% (81,952) of the children in foster care, but were only 20% (14,965,045) of all children under the age of 18years in the United States.

Poverty is another common condition of high school-aged males living in foster care as well as other population living in out-home-care. According to Green (2002), “Poverty establishes risk factors for increased involvement in delinquencies...whether it exists in urban, rural, or suburban settings...Children, living in poverty, are more likely to come from single-parent working families, where there is decreased likelihood of supervision at critical times during a child’s day” (p. 2).

According to Zweig (2004), “poverty is a state of lack/absence of basic necessities or lack of the usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions.” Payne (2005), states that poverty is relative to the circumstance. If everyone around you lived in a similar fashion (wealthy or poor) then the notion of either is unclear (p.2). There are two areas of poverty generational and situational. Generational poverty is defined as being in poverty for two or more generations (p. 3). Conversely, situational poverty is a shorter period and is determined by specific circumstances (death, divorce, illness, etc.) (p. 3).

In the United States there are two measures of poverty (threshold and guidelines). The U.S. Census Bureau issues the poverty thresholds, which are generally used for statistical purposes. The Department of Health and Human Services issues the poverty guidelines for administrative purposes—for instance, to determine whether a person or family is eligible for assistance through various federal programs (Fisher, 2003). In the California, poverty thresholds and guidelines are calculated on the federal government’s data. However, in the Los Angeles Unified School District, poverty is determined by a family who qualifies for the federal free/reduced lunch program. Family income and

participation in certain California assistance programs (CalWORKs, Kin-Gap, Food Stamps, etc.) are also qualifiers for the free or reduced lunch program. Additionally, all children placed in out-of-home care are eligible for free meals.

The effects of poverty on student achievement are potentially devastating. As Burney & Beilke (2008) suggest, “Poverty may be the most important of all student differences... may have the greatest impact on [student] achievement.” While there are other variables of poverty (ethnicity, family structure, parent educational level, etc.) that may influence the dire aspect of poverty (Ashworth et. al. in Rank & Hirschl, 1999), there are several specific effects of poverty on children and adolescents. One effect of poverty on student achievement, according to Smith et. al. in Lacour & Tissington (2011), is that children who live in generational poverty scored 6 to 9 points lower on various assessments than children who were never poor. Moreover, children who reside in very poor households (income 50% below the poverty line) scored 7 to 12 points lower than children who resided in near—poor households (p. 523). Most students living in out-of-home care, based on the data cited above, reside in or resided in poverty and therefore are affected by these statistics.

Another effect of poverty on student achievement is the student failure rate. According to Zill et. al. in Lacour & Tissington (2011), welfare children are twice as likely to fail in school...and are more likely to be discipline problems in school than non-poor children. In referring to African-American youth, Murray & Ogbu, in Fram, et. al. 2007, concluded that the “culture of poverty” inhibits academic success and an promotes “oppositional behavior” of black youths who react against mainstream expectations and

disengage from school because the fear being accused of “acting white” and they do not perceive the benefits of education. Ogbu, in Fram et. al.2007, further says that these youths choose not to succeed in school due to their home culture that stigmatizes achievement and receive little material rewards [for academic achievement] and therefore these students choose to forgo the cost of the stigma (p.310).

Still another effect of poverty on student academic achievement is the dropout rate. According to the U. S. Census Bureau 2008, “Children of poor families are up to six times more likely to drop out [of school] than wealthy children.” Although Mayer, in Lacour & Tissington (2011), agrees that completion of school is an effect for children living in poverty, they rate it as a small or moderate effect. One possible explanation for the high dropout rate among children living in poverty is that they are not concerned about school because they are preoccupied [with basic necessities for everyday living] (McDermott et. al., 2009).

Finally, there are too many variables of poverty to do this topic significant justice. The three most pervasive effects (dropout rates, failure rates, and low assessments rates) of poverty on children in general and students living in out-of-home care specifically are the most consistent among the literature. However, despite the dire effects of poverty on children, there are students living in poverty who are succeeding in school. Those students need to be celebrated for their achievement while society continues to work on mitigating the effects of poverty for all students.

These stressors (race/ethnicity, maltreatment, poverty, and etc.) have a profound effect on all children living in out-of-home care including adolescent males who in most instances must try to conform to the masculine role models society has determined for them. However, research shows that this population is just as vulnerable, psychologically, socially, morally, and educationally. Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, Hamby, & Kracke, (2009) state:

“That most of our society’s children are exposed to violence in their daily lives. More than 60% of children (birth – 17 years old) in their survey were exposed to violence in the past year, either directly or indirectly (i.e. as a witness to a violent act; by learning of a violent act against a family member, neighbor, or close friend; or from a threat against their home or school. They further state that “In 2005, juveniles and young adults (12 – 19 years old) were more than twice as likely to be victims of violent crimes as the population as a whole” (p. 2).

The effects of exposure to violent crimes for these children are lasting physical, emotional, and mental harm. Finklehor et al. (2009) explains that these children “suffer from difficulties with attachment, regressive behaviors, anxiety, depression, aggression, and conduct problems.” They are also more prone to dating violence, delinquency, further victimization, and involvement with the child welfare system and juvenile justice system. They may also impair a child’s capacity for partnering and parenting later in life, continuing the cycle of violence into the next generation (Finklehor et al., 2009). As mentioned above children in foster care are more likely to suffer from the effect of violence due to their initial removal from their biological parent’s home.

Another effect, that being placed in out-of-home care on males of high school age, is the perception of a loss of control over their lives; locus of control. According to Neill (2006) "locus of control refers to an individual's perception about the underlying main causes of events in his/her life." Simply stated, do you believe that you control the events in your life (internal locus of control) or do you believe that outside forces (fate, God, or powerful people) are responsible for the events in your life (external locus of control).

Wiehe (2001) discusses the concept of locus of control in his study on locus of control in foster and non-foster children. It should be mentioned that internal or external locus of control should not be viewed as positive or negative. An individual is not a better person for having more internal locus of control as opposed to someone who perceives his circumstances as more external locus of control. In fact there are times in our lives that we truly do not have control over the circumstances that happen to us. In his study, Wiehe (2001) states that foster placements occur in childhood when a child is learning appropriate social and personal behavior. According to social learning theory, it may be hypothesized that the critical events necessitating removal from the family and placement into foster care, events over which the child has little or no control, may reinforce a belief that one can assume little responsibility for the control of life events (Wiehe, 2001). Therefore more children in foster care believe that other individuals/entities have more control over their lives. This may in part explain the higher number of behavior problems among this population especially from high school-aged males. It may be postulated then, that these students feel it necessary to regain some control over their lives resist some authority (people or rules). Wiehe (2006)

concludes that, “the data did reveal that the longer children were in foster care, the greater the external direction of their locus of control orientation. This may reflect the frustration and loss of control children feel...”

Still another related effect of children entering foster care especially for adolescent males of high school age is low self-esteem. According to Lyman and Bird (1996), in adolescence, self-esteem has been shown to be influenced by parental support, parental control, parental participation, (Demo, Small, & Savin-Williams; Gecas & Schwalbe; Hoelter & Harper; Hoffman, Ushpiz, & Levy-Shiff as cited in Lyman & Bird, 1996), perceptions of family cohesion, (Cooper, Holman, & Braithwaite as cited in Lyman & Bird, 1996), and a sense of belonging to one’s family (Chubb & Fertman as cited in Lyman & Bird, 1996). Consistent with these findings, low self-esteem has been found to be a characteristic of foster children, with weakened family ties being associated with low self-esteem and identity confusion (Chubb & Fertman as cited in Lyman & Bird, 1996). The findings from the Lyman & Bird (1996) study suggest that for foster care youths, “relationships other than family may provide the support necessary to establish emotional health.” Another finding of this study was that race/ethnicity was a significant explainer of self-image in the family relations domain (Lyman & Bird, 1996). Mason’s (2008) study accurately describes this point. From the child’s point-of-view in foster care, they felt that what was major in their lives were the connections (adult) at critical points in time.

Gecas (as cited in Lyman & Bird, 1996) argues for the importance of the family bond. He states that the socialization that takes place is usually the most persuasive and consequential for the individual (Gecas as cited in Lyman & Bird, 1996). The above

findings are consistent with low self-esteem as a characteristic of foster children (Gil & Bogart; Hicks & Nixon as cited in Lyman & Bird, 1996) with weakened family ties being associated with low self-esteem and identity confusion (Palmer as cited in Lyman & Bird, 1996) (p. 86). It is well documented that removing a child from his or her birth parent (s) has negative consequences on the child and society. However, by providing these children and more specifically, these adolescent males with a stable, permanent out-of-home care placement (Norton; Palmer; Festinger; Triseliotis as cited in Lyman & Bird, 1996) may promote a positive self-image.

Finally, academic achievement is an important factor that has consistently been found to be positively related to self-esteem confusion (Palmer as cited in Lyman & Bird, 1996). It is well documented that foster care children enter into the system with deficits in education, as compared to the general population that they are not able to overcome.

An Improving Future for Adolescent Males in Foster Care

While these young men come from backgrounds that appear ominous, recent federal, state regulations and LAUSD policies have begun to change the fate of these young men and for all students who are living in out-of-home care. For example, in California the number of children in foster care has dropped 45% since 2000 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as cited in Danielson & Lee, 2008). This trend is primarily attributed to the reduction of time children spend in foster care. Also, of the 58 counties in California thirty-one have experienced a decline of 10% or more in the number of children receiving child welfare services between 2000 and 2009, while the population of children in the state has increased from 9.3 million to 10 million during the same period (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as cited in Danielson & Lee, 2008). While the child welfare system is improving in a state like

California, there continues to be challenges (low graduation rates, high dropout rates, stigmatization/marginalization, overrepresentation of blacks in foster care, etc.) faced by foster children. Federal, state, and local governments as well as school districts are taking appropriate steps to provide educational support for these children.

Provisions in the No Child Left Behind Act 2001(NCLB) provide federal guidelines for educating delinquent and out-of-home care youth. In part, NCLB states that educational institutions must improve educational services so that these children living in institutions can meet the rigorous challenges of the state standards and assessments that other children must meet. Moreover, NCLB states that governments must provide services to these children so that they can make a better transition from institutional life to employment and/or additional schooling; prevent these at-risk children from dropping out of school and provide additional support services to assist these students to return to school.

Prior to NCLB the federal government sought to assist foster youth by enacting John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. This legislation helps ensure that young people involved in the foster care system get the support they need to make the most of their lives. They may have opportunities for additional education or training, housing assistance, counseling and other services. In 2002, Education and Training Voucher were added to the Chafee Act. This provided youth who have aged-out of out-of-home care \$5000.00 per year toward continuing their education or employment training.

California Assembly Bill (AB) 490 (Steinberg), Chapter 862, was enacted in January 1, 2004. This bill was created to establish new duties and rights related to the

education of dependents and wards in foster care. AB 490 ensures that children living in out-of-home care have:

- Access to the same educational opportunities and resources as other students
- Increased stability of school placements
- Immediate enrollment in schools, even if records are not available
- Timely transfer of student records
- Calculation of full or partial coursework by schools the student has attended
- Education placement decisions that are determined by the child's best interest.

AB 490 (Steinberg), Chapter 862 enacted on January 1 2004 and the McKinney-Vento Act 2002 (Subtitle B of title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.) further requires school districts to appoint a Homeless Liaison and an Educational Liaison to ensure that foster youths obtain all necessary services.

Another California Assembly Bill 167, Chapter 224 was enacted on January 1, 2010. This bill was enacted to amend Section 51225.3 of the California Education Code, relating to graduation requirements. This bill exempts 11th and 12th grade foster youth from being required to take additional classes required by the school/school district in order to graduate. Simply, due to the transitory nature of foster care children, juniors and seniors foster care students who enter in to or transfer to a new school during their 11th or 12th years are only responsible to meet the state standards for graduation.

AB 167 seeks to reduce the impact on children in foster care due to the multiple home and school placements. The literature is very clear that education related problems (loss of school credits, academic problems, and delay in earning a high school diploma) are by-products of the transitory nature of out-of-home care (Adams, Alquist, Liu, & Romero, Cal. Ed. Code 51225.3, 2009). The same literature also shows that high school students who change schools only once are less than 50% as likely to graduate from high school as compared to high school students who do not change schools. While the state has established minimum graduation requirements, school districts have some flexibility to require additional classes as graduation requirements.

In compliance to AB 490, the Los Angeles Unified School District has established guidelines for all schools to follow. Bulletin 787 enacted on July 1, 2004 delineates practices and procedures that all LAUSD schools must follow in regards to enrolling students living in out-of-home care. As AB 490 suggests, foster care students must be immediately enrolled in school and placed in the most appropriate classes possible based on the information from the caregiver or student in lieu of any documents. The issue that immediately arises is misplacing a student until school records arrive, if they ever come. This is a hardship for the student both in placing the child in courses that he/she has already completed or is not required to take. These students must “make-up” the required classes at a later date. This is a quirk in the system that must be remedied in order to achieve appropriate placement. It is extremely difficult to tell a child and especially one who is at-risk for a number reason that she/he cannot graduate because they were incorrectly programmed when they arrived at the school.

Also, in accordance with AB 490, LAUSD has established a Foster Care Office in their central offices who is charged with the oversight of foster care children in the district. While the availability of relevant information is sparse, LAUSD has taken a tremendous step in making this student population a priority. Another important step for this school district is the proposed hiring of Pupil Service and Attendance Counselors whose sole responsibility is the welfare of students who live in out-of-home care. This program is in its infancy stage and there is little data on their effectiveness on our secondary school campuses (LAUSD, 2011).

Summary

The literature is very consistent on the challenges (socially, psychologically, and academically) these young men face as they enter yet another new high school. According to California Youth Connections (2006) 75% of children (10 years and younger) and youth (11 – 18 years old) foster youth are behind grade level. Forty-six percent of former foster youth complete high school as compared to 84% of the general population. Seventy percent of teens who emancipate from foster report that they want to attend college, but less than 50% complete their high school graduation and fewer than 10% of high school graduates enroll in college, and of those less than 1% graduate from college. Foster youth have a higher rate of absenteeism than their counterparts (Joiner as cited in Greenen & Powers, 2006). Moreover, foster youths score 15 to 20 percent below their peers on statewide achievement tests (Burley & Harper as cited in Greenen & Powers, 2006). Finally, foster youths dropped out of school at twice the rate of students not in foster care (Blome as cited in Greenen & Powers, 2006). The purpose of this study was to develop an improved understanding of the educational experiences of high school

aged male students living in out-of-home care in order to identify strategies that comprehensive high schools can implement to increase their chances of a positive high school experience and achieve a high school diploma.

Chapter Three builds upon these concepts developed in Chapter Two by describing the qualitative research methods and design used to examine the research questions for this study. The data gathered from this research helps reveal factors that assist adolescent male foster youth on the high school campus succeed regardless of the numerous challenges that they face daily. This aim of the study was to assist education practitioners, caregivers, and the child welfare system to better understand the needs of these young men so that additional policies and practices can be enacted to support these young men as they complete their high school education, but also become productive citizens in their chosen careers.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

A review of the literature demonstrates that although we have made some progress to improve the lives of students living in out-of-home care, we must continue to take positive strides so as not to lose these students. There is evidence that suggests that when students are provided with additional academic and social support while in school they do well in all areas. Furlong & Christenson (2008) state that, “the academic and social aspects of school life are considered important factors for student success, but especially for those students who are at-risk for educational failure.” Students living in out-of-home care experience additional stressors (poverty, transiency, maltreatment, etc.) that most students may not and therefore need additional support services in order to be successful in school.

The purpose of this study was to identify strategies that comprehensive high schools can implement to assist some of these young men to increase their chances of a positive high school experience and achieve a high school diploma. The California Youth Connection (2006) says that while 70% of the teens who emancipate from foster care express an interest in attending post-secondary education, less than 50% earn a high school diploma. In addition, the researcher examined and documented support programs that exist presently in high schools to facilitate academic and social success. Further, the researcher documented the perceptions of these young men as it pertains to present support services in their high school. Finally, the researcher made recommendations for additional support services that high schools can implement to increase academic and social success for male students living in out-of-home care.

The research study sought to accomplish the following three research goals: 1) Develop an improved understanding of existing research on high school-aged male students living in out-of-home care. 2) Document perceptions of these students as it pertains to present support services in high schools. 3) Present demographic and achievement data for male students living in out-of-home care.

To describe a possible relationship between living in out-of-home care and high school support services, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the high school experiences of male students living in out-of-home care?
2. What institutional resources are important in facilitating their success?
3. How does their out-of-home care environment influence their academic success?

Moreover, the following generalizations were also examined:

1. High school male students living in out-of-home care who receive appropriate school support have higher achievement scores on teacher generated formative and summative test and state standardized assessments than high school male students living in out-of-home care who do not receive any school support.
2. High school male students living in out-of-home care who receive appropriate school support have higher achievement scores on teacher generated formative and summative test and state standardized assessments than high school male students living in out-of-home care who do not receive any home support.

Participants

The accessible population for this study was high school-aged male students, age 18 years-old who currently reside in out-of-home care and attend comprehensive high schools in a large urban school district in Southern California. High school aged-males students living in out of home care confront different and unique challenges that other high school-aged males living in a traditional (biological parents) home setting may not necessarily relate. The stressors confronted by these males living in out-of-home care deeply influence how they interact within the parameters of the high school setting. While these students utilize the services of the school that all students have access to on a daily basis, due to their unique circumstances, they need another level of support services that the so-called average student does not require. Moreover, male students living in out-of-home care that are returning to a traditional comprehensive high school campus due to incarceration or prolong absence from a traditional high school campus, may require additional support services from the high school than a student living in foster care with a relative. As Davis (2006) suggests, regarding black males living in out-of-home care, is appropriate for all males living in out-of-home care, “black males need more than just a second chance to succeed.”

While the primary focus of this study was 18-year-old males living in foster care, the researcher also explored the role the Los Angeles Unified School District's Foster Care Office plays in supporting the educational experiences of high school males living in out-of-home care through an interview with the Director of the Foster Care Office.

All participants were furnished with a letter ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, and a brief explanation of the purpose of the study. The researcher anticipated that

approximately 160 participants will respond to the survey; however, the actual survey response was much smaller, with implications discussed in subsequent chapters. The researcher abided by the guidelines as set forth by the Human Subject Protocol Submission/Approval Process for California State University, Northridge, the Los Angeles School District, the city's Department of Children and Family Services and the County's Department of Mental Health and Probation Department. Permission and support from the Local District Superintendents and principals was sought prior to conducting this study. The student sample consisted of males from the juvenile justice system, Department of Mental Health, and the Department of Children and Family Services.

Design and Procedures

A qualitative research design was chosen to carry out this study. According to Gay, Mills, & Airasian (2009) a triangulation methods design mitigates the weakness of both the quantitative (e.g., ecological/external validity) and qualitative (e.g., context dependence/recollection of participant) method designs while strengthening both design methods (p. 463). However, because of the small number of respondents (n=16) for whom data could be used to triangulate, the final study had to be analyzed using qualitative methods, rather than statistical inferences. The quantitative piece of the study was a survey questionnaire which was administered to 18 year old high school male students living in out-of-home care attending large comprehensive high schools. The student survey allowed the researcher to capture some of the perceptions of foster youth and helped to guide interviews and focus groups during the study. Using a cross-sectional survey design is beneficial because it is a stand-alone study. This survey design

provides immediate data and can be analyzed and conclusions drawn within a very narrow time frame (Gay et al., 2009), but in the current study, the survey results were used to guide the qualitative direction of the study rather than to supply in-depth descriptive or inferential data.

In this study, eight large comprehensive high schools within the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) were purposefully selected. LAUSD is known to have large populations of male students living in out-of-home-care. While random selection for schools and males students would be the most desirable selection approach, a purposeful selection is more appropriate for this study. According to Creswell (2002), purposeful sampling is when individuals are intentionally selected to learn about a central phenomenon because the participants are "information rich." Purposely sampling from schools with high percentages of males students living in out-of-home care held the possibility to yield a larger sample size, which is both consistent and ideal in quantitative studies. The timeline for the survey data collection was approximately a one month period in the spring of 2011.

In addition to gathering data through the questionnaire, the power of the student voices must also be taken into account as a valuable resource so that the proper programs and people are in place to assist them in their educational maturation. Although students living in out-of-home care have many challenges that cause a tremendous amount of stress, it is vital that we continue to explore their strength and promote resiliency in these youngsters. Therefore, for the qualitative portion of this study, a convenient, homogeneous sub-sample of 18-year-old males living in out-of-home care surveyed at each of the eight high school sites was selected to participate in structured, focus groups

interviews. Gay et al. (2009) state that convenient sampling is a nonrandom selection strategy based on whoever is available or volunteers to participate in this study (p. 136). Homogeneous sampling, according to Gay et al. (2009), is another selection strategy used in qualitative studies to select participants who are very similar in experiences, perspective, or outlook.

The decision to use focus groups was based upon their ability to generate a wealth of understanding about participants' experiences and beliefs through guided discussions, during which the group dynamic provides insights into the world of the participants (Morgan, 1998), and elicit new perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). According to Creswell (2002), focus groups are used when you are trying to “collect shared understanding from several individuals as well as to get views from specific people” (p. 205). Gay et al (2009), states that “focus groups are useful when the interaction between individuals will lead to a shared understanding of the questions posed by a teacher researcher” (p. 373). The goal of the focus group interviews were to document the personal and educational experiences of high school males living in out-of-home care, by understanding the level of support they have available to them in both their home and school setting. Additionally, the focus groups aimed to yield more detailed information about the experiences of the students when making use of (or not) the services available through their schools. The commonalities in experiences between the students were projected to allow the researcher to begin to uncover possible relationships between particular services and experiences to different types of outcomes for out-of-home care students.

Another important point of view is the voice of the Director of the Foster Care Office of the Los Angeles Unified School District. This office is most directly responsible for the homeless and foster care students in the district. It provides support services for all students living in out-of-home care and presents appropriate data to the board of education (superintendent) who determines what support services the district will offer to homeless and foster children. This interview with the director explored the types of supports and services available at the district level that are important in promoting the academic success of these students. The researcher also sought to understand the level of collaboration and communication between the Foster Care Office and the high schools in an effort to learn about the resources and support structure available to schools that enroll students living in out-of-home care.

Instrumentation

Students who choose to participate in the study will complete a survey of their backgrounds, attitudes, feelings, and beliefs regarding their high schools and living situation. The first section of the survey consisted of demographic question, such as ethnicity, grade level, and length of time in current out-of-home placement. For example, students were asked to identify their race/ethnic, what particular community agency placed them in out-of-home care, and their length of stay in out-of-home care. Section two focused on students' perceptions and use of school support services. Specifically, students were asked to identify human and organizational resources that they have used, their graduation status, and future goals. Finally, Section three of the survey included questions regarding the availability of home support services related to personal and academic success. Participants were asked to identify community and home support

services that they have used, adult and technological resources at home, and provide feedback on needed support services at home and in the school. The literature indicates that age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status are strong predictors for referral to out-of-home care, but also (if you account for type of placement and length of stay in out-of-home care) shapes their perceptions of the support they receive at school and in the home setting.

The qualitative inquiry for the focus groups was intended to delve deeper than those questions posed in the survey. Participants were asked to respond to 10 questions that detail their life in foster care as it relates to school and home support. Participants described how living in out-of-home care has influenced their education positively or negatively. Moreover, they had the opportunity to explain their overall educational experiences. Additionally, the focus group protocol asked participants to describe their future aspirations after high school.

In addition, the qualitative inquiry for the district's Director of Foster Care included 16 questions. The interview protocol explored the mission and/or goal of the Foster Care Office, ascertain how data is collected and disseminated, and sought to understand the challenges for the district in servicing this student population.

Context of the Study

This study was conducted in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), in Southern California. LAUSD covers approximately 710 square miles of the county and stretches from the Ventura county line to the north down to San Pedro to the south; the Pacific Ocean is the most western boundary and the cities of Pasadena, Glendale, and other cities to the east. Within these borders reside a diverse range of ethnicities,

socioeconomic levels, religions, and cultures. LAUSD borders are composed of some of the wealthiest city in the state and nation and some of the poorest as well. Los Angeles Unified School District serves approximately 688,138 students. The district contains 123 high schools grades 9 - 12, 119 middle schools grades 6 – 8, and 520 elementary schools grades K – 5. LAUSD also has several alternative schools, with forty-five continuation high schools, fifty-five magnet schools (all grade levels), five opportunity schools, ten community day schools, and 8 span schools. The total number of school in the Los Angeles Unified School District is 885. Of these schools 635 are Title I schools.

The ethnic make-up of the district is 11.2% Black/African American, 72.8% Hispanic/Latino, 8.9% White/European, and Asian; Alaskan, Pacific Islander, Filipino, and First Nation people comprise 7.1% of the total student population. There are 240,249 English Learners attending LAUSD schools. The transiency rate for the entire district is 25.8% of the student population. The number of suspensions for the 2008-2009 school year is 52,432 and the number of expulsions for the same period is 418. LAUSD operates primarily on a traditional school calendar. Most schools begin the first week of September and end the third week in June (180 instructional days). LAUSD, Finger Tip Facts 2009

The Mission Statement of the Los Angeles Unified School District is; “The teachers, administrators, and staff of LAUSD believe in the equal worth and dignity of all students and are committed to educate all students to their maximum potential.”

Data Analysis

Quantitative data will be examined using descriptive statistics in order to understand variation in patterns of responses between students as it relates to their

perceptions and use of school support services. For the purposes of this study, the dependent variable was intended to be academic success and the independent variables are grade level, age, ethnicity, previous success, school support, home support, and academic marks (grade point average, California High School Exit Exam, and California Standards Test). Descriptive statistics were proposed because of their ability to illuminate the basic features of the data from the survey. The researcher sought to conduct a frequency count to verify the categorical (nominal) data from the survey (Gay et al 2009, p. 306) and to examine how different categories of values are distributed in the sample (Statsoft: Electronic Statistics Textbook, 2010). Additionally, the researcher sought to conduct a 2-way and 3-way cross-tabulation test to examine frequencies of observations that belong to specific categories on more than one variable. However, because of the relatively small sample size of participant-respondents, it was not possible to complete this sort of statistical analysis of the data within the current study. However, future studies would be strengthened through the use of a larger sample size and analysis to further explore the relationship between and among cross-tabulated variables (Statsoft: Electronic Statistics Textbook, 2010). This type of analysis would help future researchers examine measures of relationship, which is part of the discussion in subsequent chapters.

Guided by the research questions, the qualitative focus group interview transcripts were examined, codified, and systematically analyzed for thematic patterns. Narrative research guided the focus groups and individual interview with the Director of the Foster Care Office. Narrative research is the study of how different humans experience the world around them and allows people to tell their stories (Gay et al., 2009, p. 384). A

paid, nonparticipant observer, observed the behaviors of the participants and take notes (field notes) of participants their reactions to the questions, to the responses and interactions to each other, and other special features not easily observed by the researcher (Gay et al., 2009, p. 366-367). The researcher posed questions and elicited responses from each member of the focus group during this portion of the study. The researcher also took field notes of the participants. An audio-taped interview with the Director of Foster Care Office was also conducted as part of this study in order to look at the nature of services for out-of-home care students from the perspective of LAUSD as an organization.

Qualitative data analysis followed the three iterative (repeating) steps as suggested in Gay et al. (2009). The first step is to become familiar with the data and identify potential themes (reading and memoing). During this first step, the researcher reads and writes memos about the field notes and transcripts, and observer comments to get an initial sense of the data (Gay et al., 2009). The next step is to examine the data in depth to provide a detailed description of the setting, participants and activity. The third step is to categorize and code pieces of data and group them into themes. By utilizing triangulation practices (multiple data collection sources and strategies to obtain a more complete picture Gay et al., 2009), the researcher will build trustworthiness, understanding, and conduct member-check to ensure accuracy of the data and study (Guba, 1981).

Limitations

According to Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman (2000) limitations are limiting conditions or weakness that occur in part when the study design cannot control for all

factors. To begin, because the focus of the proposed study is only on high school aged males 18 years old, living in out-of-home care, the findings may not be statistically generalized to other student populations living in similar conditions. Therefore the findings cannot be assured for the larger population of children living in out-of home care, although the findings have the potential to indicate areas of interest for future research.

Another limiting factor includes the roles of adults in relationship to these students. These students encounter a variety of adults throughout the course of their day, parents/guardians, home staff, teachers, counselors, deans, and others. These individuals work to better the lives of each student they encounter. Their voice is not included in this proposed study. Therefore the findings will be skewed toward the student participant.

Still another limitation is the sole use of the young adult male voice. Males living in out-of-home care are significant to this study due to the societal pressure on them to perform as “real men.” According to Urberg (1979), adolescents are the most stereotyped age group in her study. As Young (1977) states, “Society places different demands on boys and girls prior to adolescents and that boys carry the more difficult load, for example, in terms of sex role development” (p. 953). Therefore, the results are not applicable to other student populations living in out-of-home care.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this proposed study was varied. To begin, the researcher must acknowledge his own subjectivities. According to Peshkin (1998) “the researcher(s), notwithstanding their use of quantitative or qualitative methods, their

research problem, or their reputation for personal integrity, should systematically identify their subjectivity throughout the course of their research” (p. 1). In that vein, my first subjectivity is my affinity for children living in out-of-home care. I have worked in this field for twenty-five years and during that time, I have adopted two young men from this system. I continue to fight for their rights, especially in the area of education. Too often, I have been witness to the stereotype of, *those group home kids*, which educators perpetuate.

Another subjectivity that I have is my belief in public education. I truly believe that more than any other variable, education can be the equalizer. Too often, our children view the fast path to wealth and prosperity. Music artist, athletes, actors, etc. receive the most attention from the media. I do not begrudge these professions, but it is the doctor, teacher, businessperson, etc. that should earn the respect and admiration from our society.

The researcher designed the survey, analyzed the data, and reported the findings. The researcher will administer the survey to the various participants at each of the eight schools. The researcher felt that although these students may be anxious and uncomfortable with someone unfamiliar to them, the researcher’s presence is necessary for student and school questions or concerns. The researcher is currently employed by the Los Angeles Unified School District as a principal at Chatsworth High School and is familiar with school and district current support services for students living in out-of-home care. The researchers purposefully chose these eight schools in the survey, because they had large populations of 18-year-old male students living in out-of-home care required for the proposed study. The researcher is also familiar with the principals from the other schools and this helped to facilitate access to the school. Although, for the

purposes of this study, the researcher presented himself to all individuals involved as a graduate student from California State University, Northridge and not as an employee of the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Chapter IV: Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop an improved understanding of the educational experiences of high school aged male students living in out-of-home care in order to identify strategies that comprehensive high schools can implement to increase their chances of a positive high school experience and achieve a high school diploma. The California Youth Connection (2006) says that while 70% of the teens who emancipate from foster care express an interest in attending post-secondary education, less than 50% earn a high school diploma. The study examined and documented existing support programs in high schools that are geared towards facilitating academic and social success. Further, the study documented the perceptions of these young men as it pertained to support services in their high schools. Finally, the study makes recommendations about additional support services that high schools can implement that may increase academic and social success for these male students living in out-of-home care.

This chapter begins with results from the student cross-sectional descriptive survey. The self-reported student data from the survey is presented in order to give a clear picture of whether students' utilizations and perceptions of the support services matches with what the district is designed to provide. This descriptive survey design was used because it provides immediate data and can be analyzed and conclusions drawn within a very narrow time frame (Gay et al., 2009, p. 176). Although the number of the survey responses (n=13) was too small to analyze using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, the results of the survey are presented to generally describe usage

of school resources, home resources, and school experiences that are elaborated in greater detail through the students' qualitative responses. The next part of this chapter presents the findings from the qualitative component of this study. Three areas emerge from the qualitative questions involving student perceptions of support services at school and in the home. These areas include: General Institutional Resources (these are resources that all students have available on a comprehensive high school campus.) Specific Institutional Resources (these are resources specifically intended for students living in out-of-home care.) and Personal Resources (these are the resources that student depend on day-to-day which includes, Guardians, Biological Parents, Child Care Worker, Social Workers, and finances).

This study surveyed male students who lived in out-of-home care and attended a comprehensive high school within the Los Angeles Unified School District at the time of the study. The surveys were administered to all students who fit the parameters identified previously in the methodology of this study (18 year old males living in out-of-home care). All student participants volunteered and were enrolled in large public high schools at the time of the study. One hundred percent (13 of 13) of the surveys were returned. However, not all of the questions were answered by all of the students. The intent of the study was originally to interview one hundred students; however this was not possible due to the parameters of the study which limited participants to 18 year old males. Additionally, several schools could not accommodate my study due to scheduling conflicts. The forty-one question survey was divided into three sections. The first section consisted of nine questions related to student demographics. These variables

included ethnicity, current living situation, length of time in out-of-home care, number of placements, reasons for initial placement, and initial referring agency.

The middle section was comprised of twenty-one questions related to student school life. These items included self-reported grades in subject areas, length of time at present school, participation in after school tutoring, teacher characteristics, frequency of counselor interaction, conversation topics with counselor, number of discipline referrals, support services used, effect of support services, school challenges, adult contacts on campus, and attitudes towards high school graduation.

The final section consisted of eleven questions related to home life. These items included time and place to complete homework, adult support for homework, home technology resources, public library access, adult home contact with present school, confidential contact at home, and additional support services desired.

The remaining bulk of this chapter presents the findings from the qualitative data collected through this study. Three areas emerge from the qualitative questions involving student perceptions of support at school and in the home. These areas include: General Institutional Resources (these are resources that all students have available on a comprehensive high school campus.) Specific Institutional Resources (these are resources specifically intended for students living in out-of-home care.) and Personal Resources (these are the resources that students depend on day-to-day which includes guardians, biological parents, child care workers, social workers, and finances).

Survey Findings

Perceived Challenges and Services Used

The survey data was used to provide a general portrait of participants' school experiences in response to the first research question: What are the high school experiences of students living in out of home care? The survey looked at a variety of school experiences. One question asked if students made contact with the school counselor, when they first checked in to their present school. Of the 13 respondents, eleven stated that they had contact with their school counselor. Eight students reported visiting their counselor to seek college preparation advice. In addition, seven students stated they visited their counselor or a teacher to address personal problems or a problem they were having with their teacher. Two students said they visited their counselor to speak about career preparation. Only one student reported that he discussed conflicts with other students while visiting his counselor.

When asked about what additional school support resources they used, the survey indicated that the majority (n=11) of students used at least one of services at the school. These services or service providers included: school nurse, probation officer, academic counselor, college office/counselor, school police, special education office, administrative offices, and tutorial services. Of the students responding, seven used three or more of the services available to them at their school. All of the responding students who utilized school support services reported that the use of these school support services helped them in school. In addition, eleven students reported that these school support services helped them do better in their personal lives. The services most frequently used by the students included the academic counselor and the college office.

Students, when asked about challenges at school, indicated a variety of issues facing them at school such as: making friends, getting along with school staff, conflicts with other students, keeping up with studies, being unaware of school resources available to them, and finding peers to associate. One student reported that gangs were a challenge to him. In addition, three students stated that they had no problems at their current school. (Table 4.1)

Table 4.1

Challenges at School

<u>Challenge</u>	<u>#of Responses</u>
Making Friends	4
Getting along with staff	4
Conflicts with other students	3
Keeping up with homework and classwork	7
Not aware of school resources	3
Finding a group to hang with	1
No problems	3
Other (Gangs)	1

When asked if students were asked to leave class, of the twelve students who responded, five stated that they were asked by teachers to leave class. The reasons for students leaving included: not being prepared for class (n=5), talking (n=2), use of profanity toward teacher (n=2), and late to class (n=2).

Academics

Students were asked to self-report their current academic grades. Only one student (8%) reported earning mostly A's. Five students (38%) reported earning mostly B's and seven students (58%) reported earning C's. In addition, students were asked to identify the subject(s) they felt they did well in based, on their self-reported current letter mark and the subject(s) they felt they had challenges. Using a Likert Scale from 1 = "Subject Doing Well" to 6 = "Subject Doing Poorly" for all math levels (foundational and advanced) nine student responded. For this study, scores of one and two were considered as "doing well", scores of three and four were considered as "doing average" and a score of five or six was rated as "doing poorly".

Six reported mathematics as being a subject that they felt they were doing well. Three students reported that they had challenges in mathematics. Of the respondents for English Language Arts, three reported that they were "doing well", four students reported that they were doing "average" in English Language Arts and two students reported that they were having some "challenges" in English Language Arts.

For history/social science, of the nine respondents, one student stated that he was "doing well." Five students reported that their grades were "average" for history/social science. Finally, three students reported that they were "doing poorly" in history/social science.

Science was the final core course identified, the majority of the students self-reported that they were satisfactory. Two students reported that they were "doing well". While four students reported that they were "average" students in science. Three students felt that their science classes were a "challenge" for them.

Physical education for these students was the most popular course. Seven of the students reported that they were “doing well”. The remaining two students reported that they were “doing poorly” in physical education.

Finally, in assessing their grades in all elective classes, five students reported that they were “doing well”. Three reported that they were earning average grades for their elective courses. Surprisingly, one student reported that he was “doing poorly” in his elective classes.

Table 4.2

Self-Reported Student Grades (N=9)

	<u>Doing Well</u>	<u>Doing Average</u>	<u>Doing Poorly</u>
Mathematics	6	0	3
English	3	4	2
History/Social Science	1	5	3
Science	2	4	3
Physical Education	7	1	1
Elective	5	3	1

Classroom Environment

As a final measure of the classroom academic experience, students were asked to identify the best classroom environment for them to do well as measured by teacher classroom management style. Response ranged from teacher having “No classroom control” to “total teacher control”. Out of the twelve students responding, 80% stated that they wanted the teacher to be in control of the class with students having active

participation. One student (8%) stated they did better academically when the teacher had minimal control and allowed the students to work independently. One student (8%) indicated that he did better in a class where the students could do as they please and one student (8%) stated he did better academically when the teacher had total control of the class and not allowing student input.

Campus Resources

Students were asked to report if they sought assistance after school for any of the core courses (English, mathematics, or social studies/history) they reported “doing poorly.” Out of the ten students, seven of the students (70%) reported that they were getting tutoring help after school. Out of those seven students, six of them reported that the help they were receiving was helping them in class. Only one student reported that he was not seeking any tutoring help after school.

When asked if there was an adult on campus who they could talk to about their personal problems, ten out of thirteen students (77%) indicated that there was at least one adult at their school that they felt comfortable to talk to about their personal problems. Two students identified more than one person at their campus that they could talk with. When asked to identify that person at their campus, three of the students identified that person as a teacher and three stated that their counselor was the person at their school with whom they could share their personal problems. Two students indicated that they felt comfortable sharing their personal problems with their discipline dean and one student stated that he felt comfortable talking to his principal about his personal problems. Finally, two students stated that some other person on campus such as an

athletic coach or PSA counselor was the person the he could talk with regarding his personal problems.

Home/Personal Resources

The next set of questions dealt with students' perceptions of support in their home life. One question focused on whether they had a specific place and time to study. Out of the twelve students who responded, eleven students (92%) indicated that there was a place and time to study at home. These same eleven students stated that their study hours were after school in one of the rooms of their home. One student indicated that he did not have a time and place in the home to study or the reason why.

When asked if there was an adult in the home to supervise the completion of their homework, nine students stated that there was an adult in the home that ensured they completed their homework. One student indicated that there was not anyone to ensure that he completed his homework. Three students did not respond to the question.

Next students were asked if they had access to technology (computer, printer, and internet) in the home. Eight stated that they had access to technology in the home. Three students indicated that they did not have access to any technology in their home. Three additional students did not answer the question.

Students were asked if any adult from their home came to school to talk to any school personnel about their academic progress. Seven of the students indicated that an adult from their home came to the school to talk to school personnel about their academic progress. Four students indicated that no adult came to the school to discuss their academic progress with any school personnel.

Students were asked if they had access to a library in their community and how many times they visited the library in the month of the survey. Nine students indicated that they had access to a library in their community. Three students stated that they did not have access to a library in their community. Of the students who stated that they had access to a library in their community, five indicated that they have visited the library in their community at least once during the month of this survey.

Finally, students were asked if there was an adult in their home that they could talk to about their personal problems and to identify the position of that person in the home. Ten students indicated that there was an adult in the home that they could talk to about their personal problems. Three students indicated that there was not an adult in their home that they felt comfortable to talk to about their personal problems. One student indicated that a relative in the home was the adult that they could talk to about their personal problems. Four students indicated that their social worker was the adult that they felt comfortable to talk to about their personal problems. Two students indicated that felt comfortable talking to a staff member about their personal problems. One student felt comfortable talking with his probation officer, while another student indicated that his therapist/case manager was the adult he could talk to about his personal problems. Finally, five students felt that their foster parent (mom or dad) was the adult in the home that they could talk to about their personal problems.

School Attendance and Personal Goals

Students were asked to state the number of high school they have attended since 9th grade. Six students (46%) indicated that they have only attended their present high

school. Two students (15%) stated that they have attended two different high schools. Three students (23%) stated that they have attended three different high schools. Finally, two students (15%) responded that they had attended four or more high school since 9th.

Another question asked students to rate how important graduating from high school was to them. Eleven of the twelve students responding to the question stated that graduating from high school was “Very important to me.” Only one student stated that graduating from high school was “Of little importance” to him. Students were then asked to state what their plans were after graduating from high school. Nine students indicated that after graduating from high school, they were interested in attending college (four year university or two year community college). Two students indicated that they wanted to get a job after graduating from high school. Additionally, two students stated a preference for joining the military.

The final question of this section asked students to identify an alternative to school if they were not required to attend school. Of the twelve students who responded, five students stated that if they were not required to attend school, they would get a job. One student indicated that he would go to the military if he was not required to attend school. Two students stated that they would hang out with their friends. Finally, five students stated that the question did not reflect their thinking about going to school.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative section of the study included 10 students from five comprehensive high schools and the coordinator of two (Foster Care Unit and Neglected, Delinquent, At-Risk Youth) programs serving group homes, residential treatment facilities, shelters, and hospitals in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Student focus groups and

interviews were conducted to answer the following research questions: What are the high school experiences of students living in out of home care? Students from three of the five comprehensive high school participated in focus groups while students from the other remaining schools participated in a personal interview. The coordinator of the two programs also participated in a personal interview. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all student and adult participants. The results of the qualitative section are presented with a short description of the participants from the four focus groups and two personal interviews. It will be followed by a summary of the results.

Focus Group Descriptions

Focus Group A took place in an empty classroom on a comprehensive high school campus in the Los Angeles Unified School District. This unused classroom and refreshments (pizza and soda) offered the student participants an environment in which they could relax and respond openly to the questions. The researcher took notes and recorded the session using a digital recorder. The young men who participated in this focus group all lived in foster care.

John M. is an Anglo-American male in the twelfth grade at High School A, a large comprehensive high school in the east San Fernando Valley. He was well-spoken and contributed greatly to the group. John expressed a very optimistic view of himself and his life. He viewed his present and only foster placement positively. John was removed from his home for domestic violence and placed in foster care by the Department of Children and Family Services. He appears well adjusted to school. Last year he played football for the school so his views seemed to center on people working together as a team. As he states, “When I played football...you learned how to operate as one.” It is

not surprising that he is interested in joining the military upon completion of high school and after the military he expressed interest in protective services (police, sheriff, or marshal). Also, his preference for structure extends to the classroom. He feels he learns best when the teacher have control of the class, but allows for student participation. John is fortunate to have his best friend living in the same foster home and attending the same high school.

Brian M., John's best friend, is an Anglo-American male in the 10th grade at High School A. He appeared to be more reserved than his best friend John. In fact, during the focus group session he would often defer to John for confirmation of his answers and support when he could not answer effectively. Brian has lived in foster care for more than ten years. It was difficult to determine if he was satisfied with his placement, however, his bond to John was very strong. It appeared their bond was very close to a sibling connection. Brian states that he was originally taken from his home by the Department of Children Services due to physical abuse by a biological family member. Brian views his academic standing as average "Mostly C's" in all subject areas. Like John, Brian wants to join the military after high school.

The last member of the focus group is Ricardo I. Ricardo is a Latino-American in the 10th grade. He recently enrolled in High School A and although he volunteered for the study, he was very reluctant to participate in the focus group. He listened to the responses from his peers, but when called upon to contribute he would not. While he responded to the survey, he did not return it. The researcher observed him fold it up and put it in his backpack.

Focus Group B took place in the principal's office on another comprehensive high school campus in the Los Angeles Unified School District which was located in the east San Fernando Valley. This office provided these students with an atmosphere in which they felt comfortable. In addition, students were provided with pizza and soda to ease any potential anxiety. The researcher took notes and recorded the session using a digital recorder. Both participants were living in out-of-home care prior to the session. However, one student had returned to his biological parents' home on probation at the time of this session. Eric O. is a Latino-American male in the 12th grade at High School C. Eric appears to be a very reserved young man. While he answered the questions asked of him, he did not elaborate on any of his answers unless urged by the researcher. Eric expressed optimism for his future now that he was living at home with his parents. He had been in jail and did not enjoy his time in incarceration and indicated while he attended school, "It wasn't like real school." Like many of the other students, Eric's primary focus is graduating from high school. He had no long-term plans post-secondary. He did indicate that he liked working with his hands. Socially, Eric likes to "hang with my friends." He rarely participates in any of the extra-curricular activities except a few school dances. Academically, Eric prefers elective classes and physical education over the four core courses. However, he reports being an average (mostly Cs) student. He also prefers being in a classroom in which the teacher controls the class, but students can also share their ideas. Eric wants to attend California State University after high school. However, he has not determined what he would like to study at this time.

Alan N. is the opposite of Eric. Alan is an extrovert, despite his statement to the contrary. He was quite eager to answer questions, and expound on his and Eric's

responses. Alan is a male Latino-American in the 12th grade at High School C. Unlike his peer, Alan currently lives in a group home. He seems upbeat about his present placement, but believes they (group home) can do more for him. Alan was originally placed in out-of-home care by the Los Angeles County Probation Department and remains on probation. This is Alan's fourth out-of-home care placement. At school, Alan participated in athletics (football) at High School C and generally liked being at school although he has only been enrolled for less than a semester. He reports that he is an average student and prefers elective classes to the core classes. He, also, expressed a preference for classrooms in which the teacher has control, but allows students to share their ideas. Finally, after high school, Alan wants to pursue music. He reports that he wants to attend the Musicians' Institute in Hollywood and eventually become a drummer in a band.

Focus Group B took place in the principal's conference room on a large comprehensive high school campus in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The principal's conference room and refreshment (pizza and soda) offered the student participants an environment in which they could relax and respond openly to the questions. The researcher took notes and recorded the session using a digital recorder. The three young men who participated in the focus group all lived in a large residential facility located adjacent to High School E in the north east section of Los Angeles County. Terrell M. is an African-American male in the twelfth grade at High School E. He is very out-going and a well-spoken young man. He was eager to participate in the group and contributed greatly to the success of the session. Terrell did not state why he was originally removed from his home. He did report that he was placed in the

residential facility by the probation department. Terrell, presently, had an optimistic view of his life at this time that he attributes this view to High School E and his present placement. He admitted that his home life with his biological family was filled with a lot of challenges. Terrell reported his current grades as average, but reported he excels in mathematics. He prefers teachers who can control their classroom, but will allow students to share ideas. While Terrell is an out-going young man, when it comes to his future he was not optimistic. He reported that he has seen a lot of “bad things” through his life with his mother and sister. As far as his future is concerned, Terrell stated, “...so five years from now, I hope I’m still alive.”

The next student participant was Thomas S. Thomas is an Anglo-American senior at High School E. He also lives in a large residential treatment facility near the high school. Thomas is articulate and well-read, as evidenced by some of his responses to the questions. He was convicted of a felony and removed from his biological parent’s home by the Los Angeles County Probation Department. He stated that he is an “angry kid” and attributed this to his family life. He shares Terrell’s optimistic view of their current placement. He reports, “They taught me the skills that I need to grow and be a normal member of society.” Academically, Thomas said that he is an above-average (Mostly B’s) student. He listed his favorite subject as mathematics. In the class, he preferred to work more independent of the teacher, but wanted the teacher to have control over the class. While Thomas did not see college in his immediate future, he stated that in five years he hoped to still be in college.

The last student participant was Joseph Y. Joseph identified himself ethnically as bi-racial, Jamaican and African. Like Thomas and Terrell, he was a senior and resided in

a large residential treatment facility near High School E. He and Terrell appeared to be close friends, but he was friendly with Thomas as well. Joseph was not as vocal as Terrell and Thomas. He allowed both to dominate the session, but he did answer the questions completely. Joseph reports that he was first placed in out-of-home care because his biological parent(s) had abandoned him. He was unsure as to which agency originally placed him in out-of-home care. Academically, Joseph reported being an above-average (Mostly B's) student and enjoyed all of his classes. He reported positive feelings about High School E. He said of High School, "Every since I've been here, my senior and junior years, it's been more positive and keeps me motivated..." He wanted to play football for High School E, but found some challenges to becoming a member of the team. While Joseph conceded that there were "cool teachers" at High School E he did not feel that burdening them with his personal problems was good. Like his peers, Joseph was very positive about his current placement. He stated, "...before I got here, I been doing bad, and you know that I was in a gang, this and that...when I got to (Utopian), then basically it changed my whole life." Joseph's life dream was to become a firefighter, but he wanted to play football as well. However, because he is not on the high school [football] team, he does not know how to get to the next level. He remained optimistic though. He stated that, "I am still going to push for that..."

Interview Descriptions

This interview took place in the principal's office of High School B, a large comprehensive high school within the Los Angeles Unified School District. The principal's office offered a more relaxed setting for this student interview. The researcher conducted the interview and recorded the session using a digital recorder.

Tremaine “Tre” T. is an African-American male senior at High School B. He resided in a group home located near the high school campus. Tre was eager to participate in the interview despite not having one of his closest friends, who completed the survey, but went AWOL from the group home before the focus group met. Tremaine reported that he was placed in out-of-home care because he was physically abused by a family member and he “made some bad decisions.” He was placed in the group home by the Los Angeles County Probation Department. Tre reported that he had been to a number of different middle and senior high schools due to his long incarceration. Academically, Tremaine stated that he likes High School B, because it “is like my first time ever having a shot at, you know, a normal high school education.” He also stated that he started “slippin up” in school, but he is optimistic that he can get it together. He reported that he is an average (mostly B’s, C’s and D’s) to below average student. He enjoyed most of his classes except history and science. He preferred being in a classroom in which the teacher had total control with little or no student participation. He stated that there were at least three people at High School B that he felt he could tell his personal problems to. One of these individuals was his discipline dean. He felt they were “down to earth” and would listen. As far as his future, Tre expressed interest in the medical field (nurse or x-ray technician). He also stated that his “ultimate dream” was to become an actor. He reported that he wanted to go to a community college in the San Fernando Valley to begin his post-secondary career.

The last student interview took place in the Parent Center at High School D, a large comprehensive high school within the Los Angeles Unified School District. The Parent Center offered a more relaxed setting for this student interview. The researcher

conducted the interview and recorded the session using a digital recorder. Jesus B. is Latino-American male senior at High School D in the Arts and Technology Academy. He resided in a non-relative foster care home near High School D. He reported that he was placed in foster care because his biological parent(s) were deported. He and his brother were placed by the Department of Children and Family Services. Jesus was a very articulate young man. While he appeared apprehensive, he answered all of the questions with thought and clarity. Academically, Jesus reported that living in foster care “messed with my education for a while.” He has since reported being “back on track.” He self-reported being an above-average (Mostly B’s) student. His two favorite subjects were mathematics and physical education. He stated that he preferred classroom in which the teacher had classroom control, but allowed students to share their ideas. He felt that his academic needs were being met at High School D, but most of the burden [fell] on the student to get a high quality education. As he stated, “If you want to excel you can join this program...if you don’t, you can half-ass around high school.” He reported having one teacher at High School D that he can trust to talk with about his personal problems and he met her at High School A, prior to being placed in out-of-home care. He stated that he trusted her because she was already aware of his home situation and was ok with it. After graduation, Jesus wanted to pursue a criminal justice degree at California State University, Northridge with his brother in hopes of becoming police officers.

The following interview occurred on the 29th floor conference of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) at 333 South Beaudry Avenue. The 29th floor conference was chosen by the interviewee, who felt most comfortable in this room. The

researcher conducted the interview and recorded the session using a digital recorder. Ms. Nancy Samuels, an African-American female, is the coordinator of two programs, Foster Care Unit and the Neglected, Delinquent Youth, and At-Risk Youth funded by Title 1, in LAUSD. These programs serve youth in group homes, foster care, licensed children institutions, shelters, and hospitals. Ms. Samuels is highly qualified for her position. She reported having twenty-five years of experience in LAUSD. She worked as a psychologist prior to her present position. Before coming to LAUSD, Ms. Samuels was employed as a social worker for Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services. Ms. Samuels was enthusiastic to participate in this interview session. She was equally candid about the successes and challenges of the programs she oversees. For the researcher, there were a number of “aha” moments during this session that will be discussed later. Of all of the challenges that we discussed during the interview session, the one that stood out for the researcher was the current economic situation of the district and the State of California.

General Institutional Resources

On most high school campuses, students have a myriad of general institutional resources that they may avail themselves such as: various academic support services, counseling, athletics, student clubs and organizations to name a few.

During the student focus groups and interviews, twelve of the thirteen students’ participants reported at least one school staff member they felt comfortable discussing their personal problems and positive experiences with these contacts.

Terrell Y. shared information about one teacher:

Mr. West, oh, man, I would say what makes me want to talk to him is that, he's just straight up. He doesn't beat around the bush. He sees me, he says what's up? We laugh, we talk. He found out that I was from out-of-home care and it didn't change. We laughed. We talked...he told me to stay my ass out of trouble. He helped me as if he was one my staff. Like he didn't know like the prayers we have are our goals and our passes are the things that we do and he really doesn't know that. But he was like, if you ever go to a party drunk and I think this is what really made me feel comfortable with him, if you ever go to a party drunk, there he goes, do not get behind the wheel of a car. I would rather you call me at three in the morning to come pick you up than get behind the wheel of a car because I lost too many students and I don't want to lose anymore. And once he told me that he gained my trust. I respect this man a lot. Not only is he a hell of a teacher, he's a hell of a father and a hell of a positive figure in my life.

At another school Alan N. reported that he could trust his counselor with his personal problems.

He said of his counselor:

I can tell her anything and she doesn't judge me. She tries to help me figure it out. She is always straight with me too. We argued one time, I don't remember what it was about, but I was mad. She called me in her office and told me to be straight with her and I did. Since then I always go to her when I'm having problems.

Finally, at High School E, Tremaine T. stated that he trusted his discipline dean and two of his teachers. He said of them:

I don't know...It's just that feeling that I, you know... I feel like I can trust in them. They are down to earth. They have ears that just want to listen. You know... I want to be heard so I feel like I have a problem or situation I can always run to them.

Only one student during the focus group session stated that he did not have an adult on the campus that he felt comfortable discussing his personal problems with.

Joseph Y stated:

Yeah, I know some teachers that I think are really cool...I like the way they teach, I like the way they are... but I'm not going to go to them with my personal problems. That's... I'm not saying they may not want to hear them, they might not care, more saying that I wouldn't want to put that pressure on them... it's unnecessary to let them know, that's really not their job to hear my problems out. So I'm not going to go out and try to push my problems on them.

While there are additional examples of students taking advantage of the adult resources, the results from the student focus groups and interviews are consistent with the results from the student survey. Seventy-seven percent of the student respondents stated that they had an adult on campus that they felt comfortable to talk with about their personal problems.

Another institutional resource that is available to all students on most high school campuses are teachers. The findings from the student focus groups and interviews revealed that all of the young men in the study listed their teachers as a positive resource for them. Thomas S. stated:

My teachers, my teachers they worked with me a lot more. They don't judge me. They don't just give up on me because I am an angry kid or anything like that. They work with me knowing my situation, knowing that I don't have access sometimes to certain things for projects like Internet, and things like that. They work with me. They give me extra time. That's less stressful on my behalf. It helps a lot. I think that has been a big positive year at High School E. I think that is what has kinda changed from high school...in the classroom, I have a lot of good teachers...I always kind of felt that...especially with teachers, they were teaching what they had to teach. They were teaching lies that people told them. But coming here...I kinda worried what teachers were going to say. What they were going to teach...But there are teachers here that are going to teach us the truth...Really teach the way things are...the way things need to be.

Joseph Y., who participated in the same focus group with Thomas S., said of his teachers:

I wanna piggy back off what Thomas said, I can relate to him. Ever since I've been here, my senior and junior year, it's been more positive and it keeps me motivated because I meet new people, and it keeps everybody

indifferent so it motivates me to do everything right in school. So...and other teachers, they look at me and they know that I have a lot of potential and athletic, and they tell me that I should be in the football team and I tried my best to get in it. And, I will continue to do my best in the football team.

Terrell Y. said of teachers:

Yes...I would say yes, because it's [school] like a classroom. Depending on what you have most of my teachers are very helpful. They help me out a lot. I'm not a quiet person...so I like to talk and it's good because teachers help me with that. They take advantage of that...like having me pass out papers...having me do something with my hands. They're not just having me sit there and listen to a lecture.

At High School C, both students indicated that teachers were an important factor for them. Eric O. stated:

Yeah...I like it [High School C] a lot. I mean this is my last year and so far it's been good. I get to talk to my counselor and I like most of my teachers.

Alan N. said of his experience with his teachers at High School C, "My counselor, my football coach and one or two teachers are good."

In discussing his teachers at High School B, Tremaine T. stated, "I feel like they [teachers] do their jobs. I mean... I feel like...yeah...They [teachers] help me. They [teachers] do whatever they [teachers] can."

A final category of general intuitional resources that is widely used by students on most high school campuses is student clubs, organizations, and athletics (extra-curricular activities). All of the participants mentioned that they were aware of the different extra-curricular activities available to them on their various campuses. Fifty-six percent of the participants in the student focus group and interview sessions, talked about football and its impact on them. At High School C, Alan N. stated, "Sports [football] is my favorite thing to do...but they have different clubs and other groups you can join."

The two young men at High School A echoed the same sentiment regarding extra-curricular activities. John M. stated:

When I played football last year...you learned how to play as a team. And you learned how everyone works together. So, you learn how to operate as one function.

At High School E, the student participants were also discussed extra-curricular activities and its impact on them. Joseph Y. said:

So...and other teachers, they look at me and they know that I have a lot of potential and athletic [ability]...and they tell me that I should be in [on] the football team...and I tried my best to get in it [football]. And I will continue to do my best in [on] the football team.

Terrell Y. stated:

I think it [extra-curricular activities] helps me out a lot. I need to move sometimes. Outside [the classroom], I would definitely say, yes...because the coaches here [at HS E] for like sports or whatever it is, are people [coaches and teachers] from off-grounds [not working at Utopian] who try

to get us involved in something. Even if it's just the ASB [Associated Student Body], trying to get us to buy sweatshirts...they are very positive. They are telling you I have seen you play...you can work on this, you can work on that, but I want you on the team. I want you to do this...I want you to do that. And if I was to tell them that I can't do something...they would tell me, can't is not in the male vocabulary. I think that [extra-curricular activities] helps a lot too. It also helps with my self-esteem.

During his interview, Jesus B. said of his experiences at High School D, "There's definitely a lot of stuff...there's a lot of clubs and stuff that you can join."

Specific Institutional Resources: Student Perceptions and Access

Institutional resources, as defined in the current study, are those resources that are designed just for those students living in out-of-home care and not available to all students on a comprehensive high school campus. The following research data address research question two: What institutional resources are important in facilitating the success of students? During the student focus groups and interviews, participants were asked to identify specific services that are available to them on their high school campuses. This question was very difficult for the student participants to answer, because many of them were not aware of the specific programs available to them. Jesus B. at High School D stated:

Well...there is...well I don't know...like I had a tutor come to my house to help me out... Well...I don't know if that was specifically for foster kids or for everybody.

Alan N. at High School B said of the specific services that he was aware of for students living in out of home care:

No...not really. I've never been to the library here [High School B]. I talk to my counselor a lot and she tells me about college and we talk about my plans to go to music school if I don't make it in football.

In the same focus group, Eric O stated:

I know of some of those things you [Interviewer] named. I talked to my probation officer and my counselor. I also have a teacher that I talk to a lot. He's down. He tells me like it is. I also talk to my counselor about my plans.

The student participants in the focus group at High School A were not sure of the services that were specific to students living in out-of-home care. They stated in unison:

“No...no...no... I [We] don't know if there [specific programs] is anything for us [students living in out-of-home care].” However, one female non-participant of this focus group and study mentioned, “Hey don't they have scholarships for foster kids? You have to be a senior.”

“Tre” during his student interview at High School B. was more informed than his peers at High School A. He stated, “I'm not aware of all of them. I am aware of some. Tutoring...I get that here and at my home. That's pretty much it.” When the researcher asked Tre about probation services, he responded, “Yeah.”

During the focus group session at High School E, Terrell Y. said of the specific services available to young men living in out-of-home care he stated:

The only one that I am aware of...right now that I am happy about is AB167. To me...right now...that's the only one [AB167] I really know about. I don't have that... I believe I need 130 [credits] around here to graduate...I and I think that right there...gave me a boost. Because I felt that if I can't graduate on time...I'll drop out. I'm not going to be doing summer school after 12th grade...I'm not going to be sitting here doing classes on-line and then just getting a diploma. If I am not graduating on time...on stage...I feel like there is no point in coming to school. So to hear about the AB167, which is the one that I know about.

During the same focus group, Thomas S. was also aware of AB167. He stated:

Ok...so I know about the AB167. I also know about...there one that's also [an] AB bill...if that if I do move out of the District [LAUSD]...or out of the area of High School E...I still come back to the school that I feel is my home school...or the school that is most comfortable for me. I'm not sure the numbers for it [AB 490]...but that one I know about...that I heard from my counselor. It was just nice to know that if I do leave [High School E]...if I go somewhere else...you know because on my situation or because I need to...I can still come back to this school. I can still finish out my high school years...you know...career...with the kids I know...with the teachers I know...and the school that I know...and that's something that actually is really important to me.

As seen above, the majority of the student participants in both the student focus groups and/or student interviews had independent knowledge of a few of the specialized

programs that are available to all students living in out-of-home care. Later in this chapter, we will examine these specific specialized programs available to these young men and generally to all students living in out-of-home care.

Students were also asked to identify specific program(s) that they felt would be beneficial to young men like themselves [living in out-of-home care]. Brian M. from HS A stated that he would like to see a program(s), “That makes them [new students in out-of-home care] feel comfortable.”

John M. responded, “Like that...and so like...say they want to talk about something [private/personal issues]...we can get counselors to talk about...personal stuff. Or if they wanted to do something...we can have career planning. If they needed help in school...tutors...stuff like that.” John added, “There’s another program...CYC, remember [asking Brandon]. Connection Youth...what’s the other part?” [CYC or California Youth Connection is a group of foster youth and supportive adults to provide a vehicle for California foster youth to learn leadership and advocacy skills and to engage directly with policy makers to improve the foster care system] (CYC, 2012).

In another focus group, Alan N. of HS C responded when asked which program(s) he felt would benefit young men would benefit from on HS C campus, said,

I think the one program that you should have is wrap around... This is when you have a lot of people from different agencies, like a psychologist, my group home, my mom, and some other people come and talk about what is best for you and how they are going to help you. It was pretty

good [for me] because it was all about me. Everything they talked about was how to help me.

Eric O. in the same focus group responded that he would like to see a program that, “if they had more people in their lives to help them get through...it would be enough.”

Thomas S. from HS E stated that felt what was needed at his school was “create more tutoring lessons...because I think we have one after school for two hours and I mean that’s good and all...”

At HS D, Jesus B. stated in his interview when ask about the specific program(s) that he would institute that would help other students living in out-of-home care at his school:

I would guess just to help people out more economically...You just get the money like I would say...the only money that I am seeing is like the checks that come once a year...for clothes and stuff...and as a teen you want to dress you want to have more stuff. I have had to work for it. That’s why I feel that I am good...but then I look at people...other kids in other situations and they don’t have stuff. Basically more help for them, more money for them to have for themselves...to feel like you don’t depend on people.

Tremaine T at HS B, stated:

I wouldn’t really know what to say. I would obviously implement better activities; you know...cuz [because] I would say... I would try to accommodate most of their needs. Like...I would just...I don’t

know...more sports programs...I don't know. I don't know what to say...better outings...Yeah...cuz [because] I don't know...cuz [because] idle time is really not good for me. So just...as long as I am busy and as long as they got something to do and having fun...yeah...that's what I would do.

Institutional Resources: Administrative Perspective

An interview with Ms. Nancy Samuels, LAUSD coordinator, dealing with children at-risk provided additional information on specific program for young men living in out-of-home care. Ms. Samuels detailed the specific institutional resources that are available to these young men attending comprehensive high schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District. She responded by describing two specific LAUSD programs (Foster Care and Neglected, Delinquent, and At Risk Youth) and then the types of resources available to these youths. She stated:

Ok. Well, we have the Foster Care Unit that has counselors that are... full time counselors, Pupil Services and Attendance and part of their role is to provide advocacy, to train school about legal mandates, and...updates, to also attend educational meetings for our youth, to provide the advocacy, because frequently the caregivers are absent from those meetings. And then we, also, do even though we have a very small unit, we do case management. So, that is the Foster Care Unit. The Neglected, Delinquent, At-Risk Youth Program, is another program and the part, that is called neglected, is actually youth that are in group homes that are

licensed facilities for foster youth and we have a multi-disciplinary team that's a part of that program.

Ms. Samuels discussed with the researcher a variety of programs available to these students living in out-of-home care. She stated that LAUSD provides home tutoring for students living in group homes and residential care facilities. Moreover, she stated that they provided a tutorial program called, Voyager to assist students in group homes and residential care facilities. In addition, to the software for the Voyager, LAUSD provided the computers and printers in the homes.

Besides academic tutoring, LAUSD provides counseling to assist students as they transition to their next level of education (college, career, or armed services). The primary focus of these services is on the needs of all children living in out-of-home care.

She stated:

So, we had a pilot that we did this year, because we spend so much of our time focused on kids that are doing poorly, that we wanted to focus on kids that are doing well. Even though we know that all foster youth are challenged, there are gifted, I mean we see everything that is in that population that we see in our general population. So, about 3% of the kids in our district have been identified as gifted. So, we wanted to provide some support for those students.

The transition program focused on the gifted children in out-of-home care. Ms. Samuels reported that 90% of the participants went on to college and were given the additional support they needed to be successful.

Another service LAUSD provided was bedside tutoring for those students who were too ill to attend school. This program allowed students to maintain their academic standing. Also, LAUSD coordinated services with the juvenile/family court system, DCFS, and the Probation Department to develop a program called, Cognitive Behavior Intervention Therapy (CBIT). She stated of this program:

Last year, we implemented a program called CBIT. It is a program focused on kids who have been traumatized. It was actually created here in our district [LAUSD] by School Mental Health looking at kids who were immigrants coming to our country. So, we looked at that to see so many of our kids were traumatized both foster and probation kids. And so those are some of the things we do.

Nancy further discussed the support programs for that difficult transition period from middle school to high school since it is at this time that most students in out-of-home care drop out. That transitional program centered on prevention and intervention. Ms. Samuels stated of that program:

It is very different and for a lot of our kids, you know, they have problems with their records, and their grades, and so helping them really understand what the difference is between middle and high school. They have just socially promoted, all of a sudden, now they have to earn the grade. For a lot of our kids, that are in out-of-home care, especially those that are living with non-relatives caregivers, we find that there is very little support frequently for them. Very little assistance frequently for them even for kids that are interested, there is not that extra, getting them to the library or

providing internet access, or something as simple as that. We think everybody should have that now.

Another transitional program, Ms. Samuels discussed was one for young men moving from probation to foster care and vice versa. She commented:

Well this year or last year, we also worked, because there's a group of foster kids called foster cross-over. They start in foster care and move into probation and out of probation and back to foster care. So, this year we actually have another pilot. So we work a lot with our community partners, where we are looking at kids that are in camps and we start transitioning them back to our district while they're still in camp. So we start 90 days before they are released with that whole transition process, working to identify resources, services, school placements that they would need, post release.

Nancy mentioned a new Assembly Bill [AB12] which would allow students to remain in placement longer [to age 21] to earn a high school diploma or GED.

According to Ms. Samuels:

There's a new piece of legislation that's coming out in January...2012 Assembly Bill 12, that we hope will help them because they will be able to stay in care longer and so we're hoping that that will help to earn either the GED or their diploma because they will have extended time in care. So we're hoping that we will be able. We do have a large group of our kids that are probation that go into continuation schools. They go into community day schools. So we're hoping that with the extended time and

care that we will be able to see some improved outcomes for those youth. And with a better coordinated effort, between school districts and the agencies that are case managing them such as probation, department of children and family services, we're hoping to see an increase in the number of kids that are actually graduating.

Ms. Samuels also discussed programs for out-of-home care youth who see college [community college and four-year university] as a realistic option. Nancy stated:

We are also using that information that is coming back to us to identify kids that are on grade level or above, because some are above grade level, to target those students for services and resources that are available to them. Because for all of our foster youth that do well there are scholarship opportunities available to them. There are some services on many of our college campuses including community colleges as well as four-year universities specifically targeted for them, to support them and helps them not only get onto the campus, but to stay there long enough to earn their degree. Assemblywoman Barbara Bass was our assemblyperson, [for example] passed legislation to support our kids. She implemented a program to keep [college] dorms open [during the summer vacation]. Because our kids [students living in out-of-home care] would say, we don't have a home. They [students living in out-of-home care] would end up dropping out because they [could not] find a place to stay and get a [summer] job and they didn't go back [to college]. There has been a lot of

legislation that has been passed that's really been supportive of our youth [students living in out-of-home care].

During his interview, Jesus B. talked about students in out-of-home care having money for typical teenage expenses. Ms. Samuels discussed this issue:

And we do have programs, like last summer, we funded, thanks to President Obama, an opportunity for some of our youth that are in care to [get jobs] and we worked with Beyond the Bell to [find jobs] working and collaborating with other programs to blend or combine our resources to provide services. Our students were able to go to day camp, during the summer and we were working with the Department of Public and Social Services and the city, the mayor's program, to look at jobs for our kids.

Home and Personal Resources

Finally, the following data address research question three: How does their living in out-of-home care environment influence their academic success? The responses to this RQ were obtained by asking the students what personal resources (family, friends, programs, etc.) at home do they utilize to help them become successful at school. Students were asked who at home (foster care, group home, residential facility, or biological parents) do you trust or feel comfortable with to talk to about your personal problems. Eric O. from HS C stated, "Of course I trust my parents...but I don't tell them my real personal stuff."

Ten students (77%) stated that they had someone in their home environment that they could trust and confide in regarding personal problems. Only one respondent, of the thirteen, stated that he did not have anyone in his home in which he could confide in.

Next, students were asked during the focus groups and interviews, if anyone at home had discussed their educational options, if they were not graduating in June 2011. While all students indicated that they would graduate in June and intended to be productive post-secondary either in college, military, or into the workforce, two of the students from HS E expounded on their responses indicating someone from Utopian had discussed their educational options after high school. Terrell Y. stated:

They [Utopian staff] talked to me about how Utopian can help pay for my college like if I wanted to go to a community college. They also let me know about how I could get in [to college] and how I can get money in my pockets, since I am in foster care.

Thomas S. responded:

I have a lot of options for me after high school. I feel like I'm not ready for college yet, because I don't think I have the skills to go through it so I wanted to go to the Job Corps. I have a lot of people talking [to me] and they think I don't need Job Corps. I can do it [Job Corps] regardless.

John M. indicated that he spoke with his legal guardian and social worker about his educational plans after high school. He stated:

I discussed it with my legal guardian and my social worker to let them know that I'm planning to go to the Marines and after that, use the Marine money to go to college and probably after college join the CIA or FBI.

The remainder of the participants did not elaborate on this question because it did not reflect their thinking. Only one student stated that no one from his placement [Utopian] talked to him about his educational options after high school.

Next, participants were asked to explain how living in their situation has influenced the overall school experience. Information obtained from the interviews and focus groups indicated that living in out-of-home care had a positive effect on all of the students. According to Joseph Y. at HS E, he stated:

Utopian influenced me well. I was in a house before I got here, I had been doing bad and you know that I was in a gang. I didn't know what else to do, and when I got to Utopian, it basically it changed my whole life.

Utopian told me that you can do more, that I can do positive things, and while I was in there I didn't think that I'd be doing these things that I am doing now. As in positive things, that's about it.

In the same focus group, Terrell Y. said:

For me, I think that Utopian helped me in a great way. I say I have more to lose. Knowing that I have people that didn't raised me or people's that's not blood related, helping me out and always pointing out the positive, when I point out the negative and I want to say that Utopian helped me a lot because, it's like Jason said. For example, going job searching...Utopian staff helped me with getting a job. I never picture myself out in the society wearing a suit, doing interviews. I always felt like I was the dude that just followed the crowd, I was kind of doing my own little thing here and there. But being at Utopian, it pointed out my leadership qualities. Utopian helped me. If I was doing badly in school, it's not like I got yelled at, and I got punished and that's the end of it.

Utopian staff was more like, what we do to help you with what you having

trouble on? Utopian staff kind of helped me figure out what I have to do. That helps a lot because Utopian helps me in different parts of my life. So I don't want to lose none of that. Being, at least having a 2.0 helps. Knowing that I have people there [HS E] to help me with that. Knowing that I have my counselors here [Utopian] my counselors there [HS E] working together. To me, it helps. And if I didn't have Utopian, that's a lot of when somebody is pushing you to do positive, what do you call that?

Thomas S. shared a similar feeling toward Utopian. He stated:

Especially with Utopian, they [Utopian staff] help me a lot. Learn the way normal people act. And that was a big thing for me because, I, all I knew was everyone always trying to be mean. Everyone's always trying to do something hurtful to me. And I have to defend myself anyway possible. And, Utopian, can, Utopian taught me that not everyone was out to get me. And there were ways around the negatives in life and there was a different way to look at it.

Alan N at HS C had mixed feeling regarding the resources he had available at the different group homes and foster care homes he lived in. He said:

I don't know. It's both good and bad. I mean there were some good things that all of the group homes did for me, but then they didn't do enough... Yeah. I mean they never came to talk to my teachers or my counselor. Only this group home that I'm in now sort of does. They come

to my games sometimes or talk to my teachers. But the other ones never did. They didn't allow me to play sports or anything either.

Both Brian M. and John M. were unanimous in their response to the question of the influences that living in out-of-home care has had on their overall school experiences. They both answered, "Its good." Neither student elaborated on his response.

Summary

The study yielded information about the availability of specific resources on their high school campuses for these young men living in out-of-home care, which general resources they utilize on their high school campuses, and which resources are available to them in their personal lives. The data from the written student surveys indicated that the majority of students (10) utilized at least one of the school support services and that those support services helped them in school (13) and in their personal lives (11). Of the support services listed, contact with a counselor was the one service used the most frequently (8). The responses from the focus groups and interviews students indicated similar results. However, during the focus groups and interviews, students did not have a list of possible school resources, which was provided on the written surveys, so participants indicated that only tutoring was the resource they utilized.

Grades that were self-reported by the students showed that more students were doing better in mathematics than any other subject while PE and electives had the least number of students doing poorly. Ten students indicated that they were doing poorly in a specific subject and that they sought assistance (tutoring) after school and that the tutoring helped them. When asked about classroom environment, a large majority of the

students (11) stated that they performed better in a classroom where the teacher was in control but allowed for active classroom participation.

In the area of personal support, eleven students indicated that there was at least one person on campus that they could talk with about a personal problem. The same number of students stated that there was also a person at their home that they could speak with about personal issues. These individuals included social workers, staff members, relatives, case managers, probation officers, and foster parents. Eleven students indicated that at their homes they were given a place and the time to study while twelve students had someone at home to supervise them while doing homework. Moreover, they had access to district provided hardware and software to assist them academically. Within their community, participants indicated that they access to a public library.

Transiency is an issue that heavily impacts the academic success of students living in out-of-home placement (Fein, Maluccio, & Kluger.; Hicks & Nixon as cited in Lyman & Bird, 1996). Over half of the students surveyed stated that they had attended more than one high school. Additionally, twelve of the thirteen participants stated that they have lived in at least two or more placements. Despite of these facts, all of the respondents rated graduation from high school as very important to them and of these students; ten stated that they were interested in attending college. These responses were consistent with the findings from the student focus groups and interviews. All of the participants stated that they were happy with their present high school and satisfied with the resources/supports they received from their schools.

An overview of the supports provided by LAUSD was obtained through an interview with the program coordinator, Ms. Nancy Samuels. Supports provided by LAUSD included:

- One-on-one and group counseling
- individual tutoring
- transition services
- probation counseling
- hardware and software for academic support
- counselor assistants

In addition, Ms. Samuels provided information about State legislation (AB12, AB167, and AB490) which supports students by allowing them to continue to receive services until they reach the age of 21 years old, by the changing the graduation requirement so that they may meet only the state requirement to graduate instead of the district requirements, and by allowing them to stay at home school despite placement changes. Also, Ms. Samuels provided information about the coordination of services/programs through the Education Coordinating Council, whose goal is to improve the lives of all youth living in out-of-home care.

Finally, Ms. Samuels identified counseling services as critical students living in out-of-home care. She stated,

One is because our youth, whether they are foster or probation, usually have experienced some level of trauma. So, they've been abused, or if they've been in abusive homes. For probation youth, they've been traumatized not necessarily by abuse, but many of them experience their peers, their family members dying and

many are involved in gangs. So they're being traumatized, but in a different way. She also states that transiency is another problem which results in students losing credits and repeating classes which results in students becoming frustrated and lost.

Based on the information gathered from the focus groups and personal interviews, students were well-adjusted to their present living situation (foster care, group home, residential care facility, or probation) and high school. They relied primarily on the adults in their lives at home and in their respective schools to assist them in navigating both systems (educational and social) and were satisfied with their efforts. Further implications of this study and suggestions for future research will be discussed in Chapter V.

Chapter V: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter begins with a summary and purpose of the study. Next, a detailed analysis of the findings of Chapter 4 is shared in the discussion section. Following the discussion, implications for policy and practice are presented. Lastly, the chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

Overview of the Problem

Most students living in out-of-home care come to the public school system with a myriad of challenges. Many of these students have diagnosed learning disabilities. In addition to learning disabilities, many student living in out-of-home care, also deal with the challenge of learning gaps which are due to multiple home and school placements. Moreover, many students are dealing with emotional and psychological issues that must be addressed on the school site and results in them taking psychotropic medication (resulting in changes in perception, mood, consciousness and behavior) to deal with depression, schizophrenia, and behavior disorders. Others must see school psychologists or outside therapists to deal with anger management problems, low self-esteem, and effects of child abuse. Some have the stigma of reporting to a probation officer daily due to prior involvement with the juvenile justice system. Too often, these students feel unwanted by their family and society (Casey as cited in DeCesare, 2004 p.219). Many exhibit anti-social behaviors as a reaction to being in out-of-home care, while others join groups (positive and negative) to obtain a sense of belonging that was lost in their transition to the child welfare system (DeCesare, 2005 p. 220). Herrington et al (2006) sums the difficulty in educating many students living in out-of-home care, “A closer look

at their learning needs is imperative because their learning needs are so different from the typical student” (p. 2).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to develop an improved understanding of the educational experiences of 18 year old high school-aged male students living in out-of-home care in order to identify strategies and programs that comprehensive high schools can implement to increase their chances of a positive high school experience and achieve a high school diploma. The California Youth Connection (2006) says that while 70% of the teens that emancipate from foster care express an interest in attending post-secondary education, less than 50% earn a high school diploma. In addition, this study examined and documented support programs that exist presently in high schools to facilitate academic and social success. The perceptions of these young men as it pertained to present support services in their high school were also explored in this research. Finally, recommendations are proposed regarding additional supports services that high schools can implement to increase academic and social success for 18-year old male students living in out-of-home care.

Research Questions

The qualitative study was guided by the following primary questions:

- What general institutional resources are important in facilitating their success?
- What specific institutional resources are available to students living in out of home care to facilitate their academic success?

- How does their out-of-care environment (persona/home resources) influence their academic success?

Methodology

A qualitative approach was used to examine the perceptions of 18-year old males who lived in out-of-home care of the resources at their current comprehensive high school and home resources (human, monetary, technology, program, etc.) that facilitate their academic and social success. As a supplement to the qualitative design, a descriptive student questionnaire designed to capture their school and home experiences was also administered to the participants. In this study, the participants were sampled from five large comprehensive high schools within the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). LAUSD is known to have large populations of male students living in out-of-home-care.

For the qualitative portion of this study, a total thirteen 18 year old males living in out-of-home care enrolled across the five high school sites participated in student focus groups or student interviews. The goal of the student focus group and student interviews was to document the personal and educational experiences of high school males living in out-of-home care, by understanding the level of support they had available to them in both their home and school setting. The study also included an interview with the coordinator of the Los Angeles Unified School District's Foster Care Unit and The Neglected, Delinquent, At-Risk Youth Program to describe the role it played in supporting the educational experiences of high school males living in out-of-home care.

Discussion

This section begins with a discussion of the patterns that emerged from the descriptive survey. The following descriptions were evident relative to support resources available to 18-year old males living in out-of-home care:

1. Students (n=11) used a small number of the support services, listed on the instrument, available to them at their high school campuses which are in place to assist them in their academic and social success.
2. Students (n=11) living in out-of-home care are largely unaware of the specific institutional support services available to them at their high school campuses that could further support their academic and social success.
3. Most students (n=10) utilized home and personal support services (communicated with home caregivers, library, and home tutoring services) that support their academic and social success.
4. Many students (n=12) are connecting with an adult on their respective high school campus to assist them with personal and school related problems.
5. Students (n=9) have an adult in their respective home that they can talk to, who provides a place and time for them complete their homework and additionally supervise the completion of their homework.
6. Students (n=11) indicated that of all available resources on their campuses, tutoring was widely used and had a positive effect on their grades.

We know from the research that most of these young men will need additional specific support beyond what most of their non-foster care/group home/probation peers receive. Herrington et al (2006) sums the difficulty in educating many students living in

out-of-home care, “A closer look at their learning needs is imperative because their learning needs are so different from the typical student” (p. 2). LAUSD recognized the special educational needs of these students by providing programs and supports. Ms. Samuels, Coordinator, discussed one such program called Cognitive Behavior Intervention Therapy (CBIT). She stated, “It (CBIT) is a program focused on kids in out-of-home care who have been traumatized.” Psychological traumas that have been experienced by students in this study included: parental deportations, parental incarcerations, student incarceration, death of parents and siblings, domestic violence, and sexual abuse.

In addition to the CBIT program, Ms. Samuels cited teacher assistants as another example of specific support service for students living in out-of-home care. Teacher assistants according to Ms. Samuels are responsible for supporting at-risk youth that are falling behind academically and those out-of-home youth that have been hospitalized.

Moreover, the transiency rate among students living in out-of-home care is still, as Ms. Samuels stated, “too many [change of placements] and too often.” As a result of the high transiency rate, students in out-of-home care who enter school after the official opening, feel lost, lack support from their new living environment, and become despondent. While LAUSD does not have a specific program to address this need, they have fully implemented AB 490, which deals with school stability and is discussed later in this chapter.

Counseling is one important resource on all high school campuses. However, do to the most recent state and school district budget cuts; high school counseling norms are

currently at 600 to 1 and the future norm tables appears to increase the number of students to counselor ratio (LAUSD 2012). Eighteen year old males living in out-of-home care are lost with such a tremendous load on each counselor. Schools with high numbers of foster care, group home, treatment facilities, and probation students would benefit from an additional counselor solely dedicated to addressing their needs. Moreover, a counselor assistant would reduce the work load of the school counselor. Also, because these counselor assistants are directly connected to the Foster Care Unit and the Neglected, Delinquent Youth, and At-Risk Youth offices, they are aware of additional services available to these young men on and off of the high school campus. Unfortunately, not all schools have been assigned these counselor assistants, therefore it is recommended that there be better coordination between the Foster Care unit and schools to ensure that that these counselors are in-place at the schools that need them the most. Of the eleven support services listed on the survey, student participants utilized on average twenty percent of these support services available to them on their high school campus. This may suggest that student participants are either not aware of all of these services or do not know how to access them. This is an area that can be addressed by the presence of a counselor assistant on high schools with large numbers of foster youth.

Another specific service that young men living in out-of-care have on most high school campuses are tutors. Ms. Samuels discussed tutors that come to the homes, institutions, and hospitals of these young men, but also having specific tutors at school to aid them in difficult classes. Returning to or entering in to a different home or school environment can be very traumatic for most of these young men. In their new environment “everything seems unfamiliar and strange...foster children feel like

unwanted guests in someone else's house where everything they do including simply existing in that setting, feels wrong" (Herrington et al, 2006, p. 3). In addition to having a counselor on campus to discuss issues and program classes, having a personal tutor on campus relieves the stress of the transition from one learning institution to another. It further removes the fear of not knowing something in class and being able to ask and receive help in a more relaxed atmosphere.

A final specific institutional support service that is important to the success of these young men is the knowledge and understanding of the three assembly bills (AB12, AB490, and AB167). During the focus group, only two students indicated that they were aware of AB167 but not of the other two assembly bills. This is important because according to the research transiency rates among young men living in out-of-home care are high. AB490 and AB12 allows for school and placement stability respectively. AB167 amends the graduation requirement for these young men and allows them to remain in school until they reach twenty-one years old. So despite resident changes, students can remain in a particular school and will not be penalized for lost credits. It is important that counselors share this information about these assembly bills with students and caregivers and enrollment office at each high school, so that students and caregivers are aware of these options. If counselors are not aware of these legislative bill, it is important that they become knowledgeable so that they can ensure students are aware of and receive this information.

Finally, the survey findings indicated that home support for these young men was evident. According to the student survey instrument, 11 of the 13 student respondents had a specific place and time in the home to complete homework. Moreover,

approximately ten participants indicated that there was an adult in the home who supervised the completion of their homework assignments. Eleven student participants also indicated through their response on the survey instrument that they had the technology (computers and printers) and access to the internet readily available in their home. Lastly, eleven student participants stated that they had access to a library in their community for after school studying. This indicates that the majority of these young men have the necessary support (time, place, adult assistance, and technology) at home to facilitate successful completion of assigned homework. Additionally, eleven student participants stated that they had someone (foster parent, social worker, staff member, probation officer, case manager/therapist, etc.) in their home that they trusted to talk to about their personal problems.

While these statistics may indicate that these young men have access to the necessary support services to do well or better, many do not use these resources available in their homes or community. For example, eight student participants indicated that they actually used the public library less than three times before the administration of this survey instrument. It is important for the schools to ensure that regular contact is made with the care takers of these students. These young men must have an opportunity to cultivate all support services in the home and community in order to be academically and socially successful.

In the qualitative component, three areas emerged from the information gathered from the interviews and surveys. These areas included student perceptions of their knowledge of and use of general institutional support services, specific institutional support services, and home/community resources. In addition, participants discussed

which support services they felt were important to them and the challenges they faced. Moreover, they discussed their goals and aspirations for the future.

General Institutional Resources

In this study, participants viewed general school support services as those school personnel who had access to or could gain access to programs/services (social capital) for them and not the support program or service. While these findings from interviews and focus groups indicated that the participants were aware of many of the general support services available to them at their high schools, most did not report using those resources extensively. Surprisingly, the results of the survey indicated that they were using a variety of services on campus. The participants in this study built strong relationships with school personnel as a means to gaining access to their schools' support services. For example, these young men cited counselors, teachers, discipline deans, and tutors as someone on campus they felt comfortable enough to talk about their personal problems in addition to their school issues. What was interesting about this phenomenon was that regardless of the students living situation, they had some adult on each of their respective campuses that they felt they could rely on when problems arose. Terrell Y., from HS E, sums up the majority of the student responses when he talked about his teacher Mr. Wendell whom he felt was non-judgmental and a positive role-model for him. This is important because when challenges arise, these young men need guidance from an adult that they trust to assist them in making responsible choices.

Specific Institutional Resources

In our discussion about the specific support services on their respective school campuses that were available just for them, participants were aware of very few. The

majority of the participants mentioned tutors that helped them in the classroom or outside the classroom. However, most did not know why they were getting this service. Those participants who were on probation, knew about the probation officer on their campus, but did not realize that they were there to support them. The majority of the participants did not even know if there was a probation officer on campus. One surprise for me was the knowledge two of the participants from HS E had regarding AB 167 and AB 490. Both of these bills have major impact on the success of students living in out-of-home care, because they modify California Education Code requirements to help mitigate many factors that put additional stress on all students living in out-of-home care and allow them to earn a high school diploma.

Despite the lack of knowledge of many of the specific support services (assistant counselors, tutoring, and transition programs) available to these young men on their high school campuses, Ms. Samuels reported many such programs available to these young men. For example, she discussed counselor assistants, on most high school campuses, whose primary responsibility was to assist all students living in out-of-home care with all facets of school. At HS A, students mentioned Alan W. who was a non-participant in the focus group, but students knew him as someone who could “help us out.” Alan W. is a counselor assistant, but none of the students knew that. She also validated the student participants’ knowledge of tutors at the various school sites. One important aspect of the interview with Ms. Samuels was the number of programs and resources that the LAUSD has for this most vulnerable group. These specific resources begin with the coordinated efforts of the Education Coordinating Council. This group, created by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, is comprised of six school districts within Los Angeles

County that tend to have the highest concentration of out-of-home care youth. This group includes the Department of Children and Family Services, the Child Dependency Court, LA County Mental Health, legal counsel, and the Probation Department. The goal of this council is to support the success of students living in out-of-home care, by bringing together additional outside resources (agencies that are involved with youth living in out of home care) to aid in their endeavors. Additionally, teacher assistants who are placed primarily in the hospitals to focus on at-risk youth who are falling behind or are ill, provide services, so that those youth do not fall further behind academically. In her interview, Ms. Samuel enumerated additional support services available to youth living in out-of-home care.

Personal/Home Support Services

Based on the information collected from the student focus and interviews, the student participants in this study had limited knowledge of the support resources available to them in their current living arrangements. Jesus B. from HS D indicated that he had a tutor come to his home [foster home] to help him with school work. Another student participant Alan N. from HS B stated that he had Wrap-A-Round services come to his home [group home]. This service included, a psychologist, the group home staff, a parent, among others who all come together to determine what is best for the student. Finally, John M. from HS A indicated that a California Youth Connection (CYC) program that helped him in his current placement. [CYC or California Youth Connection is a group of foster youth and supportive adults to provide a vehicle for California foster youth to learn leadership and advocacy skills and to engage directly with policy makers to improve the foster care system] (CYC, 2012).

Conversely, the information collected from the personal interview of Ms. Samuels, LAUSD, through the Foster Care Unit and the Neglected, Delinquent Youth, and At-Risk Youth program, suggested a variety of support programs available to these young men in their current living arrangements and their communities. In addition to those programs mentioned in the preceding section, Ms. Samuels discussed summer youth employment programs. She stated, “Our students [students living in out-of-home care] were able to go to day camp during the summer and we were working with the Department of Public and Social Services and the city (the mayor’s program) to look at jobs for our kids [students living in out-of-home care].” Summer jobs for these young men would not only provide them with personal spending money so do not feel dependent on adults, but also provide them with jobs and teach them adult responsibilities. Helping them enter the work force is important because the unemployment rate among these young men (16 -19 year olds) is at 34.2% as compared to the general population (12.5%) of the same age group (Lin, 2011).

Another program that is vital to many of the young men in this study is the foster cross-over pilot program. According to Ms. Samuels, this pilot program assists “kids that are in camp” to transition back in to the school district while they are still in camp and begins ninety days before students are released. Ms. Samuels’ office also identified resources, services, and school placements these students would need post release. These post-release services would ensure they receive appropriate school placement, counseling services, and tutoring to help them make a smooth transition from incarceration to school. These services also help to mitigate their feelings of loneliness, disconnection, and feeling lost at a new home and school.

There are additional support programs similar to the three outlined in this section that are vital to the academic, social, and emotional success of these young men living in out-of-home care. However, it is more important that the information get to them [students], to someone in the home, or at the school site, so that these students take advantage of the resources and are able to effectively utilize them. It would be a travesty if these resources were to dissolve due to a lack of use.

Implications for Policy and Practice

It is critical for the academic, emotional, and social success of students living in out-of-home care to have access to and utilize the support services that are available to them at their high schools. Regrettably, these students are not always aware of the services available to them. The problem of coordination and communication among these support services exists. There appears to be a disconnection between home and school (not all caregivers communicate with their student's school regarding academic progress) and between schools and students (not all students are aware of all of the general and specific support services available to them). As per Ms. Samuels this disconnect is caused by the State budget cuts which hampers the information from the District to the school personnel. Additionally, due to the increase number of counselee, counselors do not have the time to spend with these students to explain all of the resources available to them and monitor their use of these resources. Moreover, many caregivers, at home, have outside employment during the school day and are not able to meet with school personnel periodically.

The data gathered from the student surveys, focus groups, and interviews indicate that the student participants are not availing themselves of or are simply unaware of all of the resources available to them at their school sites. This may be due to the lack of communication among the district, school, caregivers, and students. To mitigate this lack of effective communication, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Upon registration in a new school there should be an intake meeting among all support providers (counselor, dean, probation officer, guardian, etc.)
- The meeting should include an analysis of student needs to ensure that the resources are available on campus to facilitate student success. After this initial meeting, these young men should know what is available to them, how to access these services on campus, and have clear expectation of what the school has for them.
- Caregivers should be giving a list of available support services available on campus along with contact information of key personnel on the high school campus.
- School districts must provide lists of available resources for these students to each high school along with information on legislation that targets these students.
- School must designate one person on campus who coordinates all services for these students.

Results from the study indicated that students are connected with at least one adult on campus with whom they are able to share their personal and school problems. These adults ranged from a probation officer to athletic coaches. However, these adults may not be aware of all of the appropriate resources on the campus available to assist these

students. In order to effectively help students living in out-of-home care, schools need to understand the academic needs and family history of these young men. Therefore it is recommended that:

- Schools accurately identify students living in out-of-home care and disseminate that information to other support personnel on campus as well as teachers.
- Support personnel (teachers, counselor, probation officer, etc.) need to meet at regular intervals to perform a progress monitoring and share updates with the caregiver.
- School district need to train a school facilitator who in turn will in-service teachers and staff on the specific challenges and needs of these students.
- Schools assign a “veteran out-of-home care student” to mentor new students to help them navigate their new school.

Providing services for students living in out-of-home care should not be a hit and miss proposition. It should be a well-communicated and coordinated operation that focuses on the needs of each individual student. Due to the structure of the foster care system, many young men in out-of-home care do not have someone to advocate for them. Therefore, it is important for school personnel to take on that responsibility.

Qualitative findings from the focus groups and personal interviews indicate the student participants were unaware most of the specific resources available to them on their high school campuses, in their current living environment, or in their community. Therefore, the Los Angeles Unified School District in conjunction with the Education Coordinating Council, (comprised of all of the agencies in the Southern California area that deal primarily with this population) will benefit from reinstating the annual meeting

of all high school administrators, counselors, deans, and other school and home support staff to inform this group of the resources available to these young men at the high schools as well as in the home and community. Moreover, utilizing the staff (counselor assistants and tutors) from the District's Foster Care Unit and the Neglected, Delinquent, At-Risk Youth Program to talk directly to all youth living in out-of-home care is equally important. Findings from this study revealed that, the young men who participated knew very little of the support services available to them.

Although the literature states that many young men living in out-of-home care felt marginalized (Blome, as cited in Zetlin et. al. 2006, p. 20), findings from the qualitative component indicate that these young men did avail themselves of one important school and home resource, caring adults. Therefore, it is important for schools to ensure that these students are aware of all resources available to them and inform teachers and support personnel who these students are so that they may reach out to them.

From the literature we know that many of these students initially lack the social capital that they would need to compete with their other students living with their biological parents at the new school(s). However, the young men in this study have relied on school personnel to assist them to gain access to the school's support resources. In this era of budget cuts, it is vital that schools and school district continue to provide funding for these support services that is critical to the success of these students.

Finally, the qualitative component of this study indicates that these young men felt comfortable about their living in out-of-home care and did not feel stigmatized by divulging their current living situation among their peers. However, there was some

concern when it came to being stigmatized by the adults on some of their high school campuses. Therefore, schools, school districts, and community organizations must make a concerted effort to inform those that interact with these young men on a daily basis of who they are, why they are where they are, and what specific support services are available to assist them. If they do this, then these young men may become successful academically, socially, and emotionally on their school campuses, in their homes, and respective communities.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the results of this qualitative study, several recommendations for further study are suggested by the researcher.

- Expand student participation to include a larger number of students across grades 9 – 12 males living in out-of-home care. These groups have an equally important story to tell regarding their living circumstances and would add greatly to the body of knowledge of this very vulnerable group of students on our high school campuses.
- Include both male and female students to determine if both groups have similar or diverse needs.
- Include interviews with school personnel who deal most directly with these students to ascertain what they are doing to assist these students to succeed on the high school level.
- Include a survey of high schools to determine what specific resources they have available on their campuses to aid these young people to a high school diploma,

and what they are doing to ensure that all of these students are aware of and utilize the support services.

- Interview teachers of these students to understand the classroom challenges and successes of these students
- Expand the types of schools (including but not limited to continuation and charter schools) involved in the research. With the growing number of public school choices, parents, guardians, social workers, and courts have more options for their child
- Compare the success of students living in different types of out-of-home care environments (foster care, group homes, residential care, and probation).
- Use a longitudinal approach that follows these students after graduation until they reach twenty-one years old, to determine the level of support they received beyond high school. Moreover, to determine if there is a correlation between these academic and social supports and financial independence and academic success.
- Examine age differences to determine whether age is a factor in how students living in out-of-home care utilize support services.

Concluding Statement

I began this research in hopes of validating a lot of the biases that I had regarding the total disregard of these young men on any typical comprehensive high school campus. From my twenty-five years of experience in the field of young men living in out-of-home care, the anecdotal information I received from many of the young men living in the group homes, residential treatment facilities, and foster care, and listening to many of my

colleagues describe their negative encounters with these young men, I thought I was going to hear horror story after horror story about the abuse these young men had to encounter at school, in their home(s), and in their communities. Based on the findings from the quantitative and qualitative components of this research I was wrong. The young men, who participated in this study, were positive about their school, their current living placement, and their biological families. Despite some of the hardships that these young men related to me, they are very resilient. After all, most eighteen year old young men in their situation would likely have dropped out of high school. I have encountered too many [out-of-home care dropouts] even today, who have taken this easier path (dropping out). So, I would like to commend these young men for staying the course and remaining positive against some formidable odds. In my estimation, they are already a success. Finally, I would also like to commend the Los Angeles Unified School District for being a pioneer in the fight for these young people living in out of home care. The resources that LAUSD have put in place to assist these young men and women to give them an equal opportunity to be academically, socially, and emotionally successful is laudable. In the end, however, it comes down to communication. If we [society] truly want these young men and women to be successful in whatever way each of us defines it, then we must make every effort to get the word out to those families and institutions that bring these children in their homes and programs, that there is help.

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Appendix A: Student Survey

Instructions: The questions below will ask you about your experiences as a high school student and living in out-of-home-care (group home, relatives, foster home/non-relatives etc.). Please answer all of the questions to the best of your ability.

Demographics

Directions: Circle the answer for each question that best describes you and/or your situation.

1. Based on the credits that I have earned today, my current grade in school:
 - a. 9th
 - b. 10th
 - c. 11th
 - d. 12th
 - e. not sure

2. My race/ethnic background: (Please choose only one)
 - a. First Nation/Alaskan Native
 - b. Bi/Multi-racial: _____
 - c. Black, African American
 - d. Chinese
 - e. Hispanic/Latino/Spanish
 - f. Japanese
 - g. Korean
 - h. Hawaiian
 - i. White
 - j. Samoan
 - k. Pacific Islander
 - l. Other: _____

3. I am currently living:
 - a. With my relatives (not foster care)
 - b. With my relatives (foster care)
 - c. With foster care (non-relatives)
 - d. In a group home
 - e. In a residential treatment facility
 - f. With adoptive parents
 - g. With a friend's family (not foster care)
 - h. Other: _____

4. The home address where I am currently living is located in (zip code):
 - a. 91311
 - b. 91344
 - c. 91343
 - d. 91335
 - e. 91303
 - f. 91325
 - g. 91346
 - h. 91306
 - i. 91340
 - j. 91342
 - k. 91411
 - l. Other: _____

5. I have lived in out-of-home care for:

- a. One month to six months
 - b. six months to one year
 - c. one year to three years
 - d. four years to six years
 - e. seven years to nine years
 - f. ten or more years
6. I have lived in my **current** placement for:
- a. One month or less
 - b. Two to six months
 - c. Six months to one year
 - d. One year or more
7. I was first placed in out-of-home care system because:
- a. I was physically abused by a family member
 - b. I was sexually abused by a family member
 - c. I was neglected by my biological parent(s)
 - d. I was abandoned by my biological parent(s)
 - e. Other: _____
8. I have lived in:
- a. One to two placements
 - b. Three to four placements
 - c. Five to six placements
 - d. Seven or more placements
9. I was placed in my present living situation by: (Circle more than one if needed)
- a. Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)/Social Worker
 - b. Probation Department
 - c. Other: _____
 - d. I do not know/I cannot remember.

School Life

Directions: Circle the answer for each question that best describes you and/or your situation.

1. How long have you attended this school?
- a. Less than a semester
 - b. One semester
 - c. One year
 - d. Two years

- e. Three years
 - f. Four or more years
2. In terms of academic grades, how would you rate yourself? (Mostly means 3 or more.)
- a. Mostly As
 - b. Mostly Bs
 - c. Mostly Cs
 - d. Mostly Ds
 - e. Mostly Fs
3. What subject (s) do you feel you do well in? (Rate each subject 1 – 6 where 1 is the subject you do well and 6 is the subject you do poorly.)
- a. ___ Mathematics (Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, or other)
 - b. ___ English
 - c. ___ History/Social Science
 - d. ___ Science
 - e. ___ Physical Education
 - f. ___ Elective (Art, Foods, Drama, Computers, etc.)
4. If you are doing poorly in English, math, history, or science do you stay after school to get help?
- a. Yes
 - i. Is the support helping you in class?
 - 1. Yes
 - 2. No
 - b. No
 - i. Why not?
 - 1. Work
 - 2. Night school
 - 3. Home obligations
 - 4. Not interested
 - 5. Other: _____
5. I do better academically in classes when the teacher has: (Choose only one)
- a. Little or no control of the class. (Students can do as they please)
 - b. Some control of the class. (Little instruction from the teacher. Students work independently.)
 - c. Teacher controls the class. Student can share ideas. (Instruction is given, students clearly understand with support from the teacher.)
 - d. Teacher has total control of the class. (Teacher rules. Students cannot express their views.)
6. After you received your first class schedule when you checked in to this school, how many additional times have you spoken to your counselor

- a. 0 (Skip to Question #7)
 - b. 1 to 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 or more
7. If you speak with your counselor, what are your typical conversations about?
- a. Class schedule/changes
 - b. Conflicts with another student (s)
 - c. Problems with a teacher (s)
 - d. Personal problems
 - e. College preparation
 - f. Career preparation
 - g. I have spoken to my counselor about: _____
8. In your current school, how many times have you been asked to leave class for discipline reasons?
- a. 0 (Skip to Question #10)
 - b. 1 -2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 or more
9. Typically, what was the reason(s) for you being asked to leave the class? (Choose one)
- a. I was not prepared for class. (Textbook, notebook, other school supplies)
 - b. I talked too much in class.
 - c. I used profanity toward the teacher or another student.
 - d. I was fighting in class.
 - e. I came late to class.
 - f. Other: _____
10. Do you feel the teacher was justified in sending you out of the classroom?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
11. What support services do you use on campus? (Circle all that apply)
- a. Nurse
 - b. Psychologist
 - c. Probation Officer
 - d. Academic Counselor
 - e. Dropout Prevention Counselor
 - f. College Office
 - g. Career Office/Work Experience Counselor
 - h. School Police
 - i. Special Education Office

- j. Administration
- k. Tutorial Services

12. In addition to the services already mentioned, list two additional services that you think will benefit you and other students living in out-of-home care.

- a. _____
- b. _____

13. Have the support services that you used on campus helped you to do better in school?

- a. Yes. The service(s) that I use on campus help me.
- b. The service(s) helped me a little
- c. The service(s) on campus have not helped me at all
- d. I do not use any of the services offered on this campus

14. Have the support services that you used on campus helped you to do better in personal life?

- a. Yes. The service(s) that I use on campus help me.
- b. The service(s) helped me a little
- c. The service(s) on campus have not helped me at all
- d. I do not use any of the services offered on this campus

15. What challenges have you had at your high school? (Circle all that apply)

- a. Making friends
- b. Getting along with the teachers, deans, counselors, or administration
- c. Conflicts with another student (s)
- d. Keeping up with class and home work
- e. Not aware of the resources available to me
- f. Finding a group to hang with
- g. I do not have any problems at this school
- h. Other: _____

16. Do you have an adult on campus who you can talk with about personal problems?

- a. Yes
- b. No

17. If you answered yes to #16, what is the person (s) job at school?

- a. Teacher
- b. Counselor
- c. Dean
- d. Administrator
- e. Other: _____

18. How many high schools (regular, continuation, independent study, juvenile hall, etc.) have you attended beginning in the 9th grade?

- a. 1

- b. 2
- c. 3
- d. 4 or more

19. Graduating from high school is:

- a. Very important to me
- b. Somewhat important to me
- c. Of little importance to me
- d. Of no concern to me

20. After graduating from high school, I want to:

- a. Go to college (four year university or two year community college)
- b. Get a job
- c. Go to the military
- d. Other: _____

21. If I was not forced to go to school right now, I would:

- a. Get a job
- b. Go to the military
- c. Hang out with friends
- d. Other: _____
- e. This question does not reflect my thinking about going to school.

Home Life

Directions: Circle the answer for each question that best describes you and/or your situation.

1. In your present living situation, do you have a specific time and place to do your homework?
 - a. Yes (Go to Question #2)
 - b. No (Go to Question #3)
2. If you answered "Yes" to Question #1
 - a. When: _____
 - b. Where: _____
3. If you answered "No" to Question #1
 - a. Why not? _____
4. In your present placement, is there an adult to ensure that you complete your homework?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. In your present placement, do you have access to a computer, printer, and the internet?
 - a. Yes

- b. No
- 6. Has an adult from your present placement come to school to discuss your academic progress with a counselor, teacher, or administrator?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 7. Do you have access to a library in your community after school?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No (Go to Question #9)
- 8. How many times have you visited a library in your community this month? (Not at school)
 - a. 0
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3
 - e. 4 or more
- 9. Is there an adult in your home that you can talk to about your personal problems?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 10. If yes to #8, is that person:
 - a. Relative
 - b. Social Worker
 - c. Staff member
 - d. Probation Officer
 - e. Case Manager/Therapist
 - f. Other: _____
- 11. List two additional support services outside of school that you think will benefit you and other young men living in out-of-home care.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

Thank you for completing this survey. I appreciate the time that you have taken to answer these questions honestly.

Please remember that your responses will be kept confidential.

Appendix B: Student Focus Group Questions

1. Describe your educational experiences beginning at elementary, then middle school, and finally high school.
 - a. Have these experiences been positive/negative?
 - b. What do you attribute these positive/negative experiences to?
2. How has living in out-of-home care influenced your overall educational experiences?
3. Do you feel this school meets your academic and social needs?
 - a. In what ways (areas) does it meet (does it not meet) your needs?
4. Are you aware of the different support services available to you at this school?
 - a. Have you utilized any of the different support services at this school?
 - b. Why/why not?
5. How long have you lived in out-of-home care?
6. Do you feel comfortable telling adults and other students on campus that you live in out-of-home care?
 - a. Why/why not?
 - b. If you do tell other students or adults on campus, what is their reaction?
7. Do you feel that adults and other students perceive you differently because you live in out-of-home care?
 - a. Why/why not?
 - b. Do you care?
8. Who on this campus or at home do you trust or feel comfortable with to talk to about your school or personal problems.

- a. What is it about this person (these individuals) that allows you to talk to them about your personal feelings?
 - b. Without going in to detail, can you tell us what topics do you discuss with this person(s)?
9. Will any of you graduate in June 2011?
- a. If you are not graduating in 2011, what is preventing you from graduating in June 2011?
 - b. Has anyone at this school or at home discussed your educational options if you are not graduating in June 2011?
10. After you earn a high school diploma (if that is your plan), what do you see yourself doing in life?
- a. Where would you live?
 - b. What about 5 years from now, what do you see yourself doing and where would you live?
11. If you were in charge of improving programs for out-of-home care, what types of programs would you offer?
- a. Can you describe this program? (What would it look like?)
12. Is there anything else that you would like me to know about you, your experiences in high school, or your experiences in out-of-home care?

Appendix C

Director of Foster Care Office Interview Protocol

1. What is the mission and goal(s) of your office?
2. What types of support programs are available to students living in out-of-home care in LAUSD?
3. What is the annual budget allotted for programs and services for foster care students in LAUSD and what is the funding source? Has this office been hurt by the budget problems in the district?
4. What kinds of data are collected on foster care students enrolled in LAUSD?
 - a. How often is it reviewed?
 - b. How is the data communicated to schools?
 - c. What are some challenges to data collection?
5. What are some of the challenges faced by foster care youth in LAUSD schools?
6. How are district personnel, particularly at the school site, prepared to work with out-of-home care students?
7. How many additional staff members work in the Foster Care Office?
8. How do foster care students and families become aware of the services available to them in LAUSD?
9. How long has LAUSD provided services to this student population?
10. How long have you been involved with foster care youth?
11. What external agencies or programs do you collaborate with to provide services for foster youth in LAUSD?
12. What additional support services can the district offer to students in foster care?

13. How many students living in out-of-home care are presently enrolled in LAUSD schools?