MENTORING PROGRAM TO EMPOWER AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE:

GRANT PROPOSAL

A Graduate Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts Interdisciplinary Studies

By

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ABSTRACT

MENTORING PROGRAM TO EMPOWER AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE:

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The purpose of this project was to design a program, identify potential funding sources, and write a grant to secure funding for a mentoring program at Global Business Incubation (GBI) to empower African American female youth and young adults aging out of foster care residing in Los Angeles County. An extensive literature review increased knowledge about the negative outcomes of this vulnerable population and provided information on the potential benefits of mentoring programs. A search for potential funding sources online resulted in the selection of the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation as the best funding source for the project. A grant was then written to support a mentoring program held at Loyola Marymount University, whom GBI has partnership. Actual submission and/or funding of the grant was not required for successful completion of the project.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

In Fiscal Year 2012, there were an estimated 397,122 children living in foster care across the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2013). In the same year, an estimated 23,396 youth exited the foster care system due to emancipation or “aging out” without being reunified with their parents or adopted (USDHHS, 2013). Foster youth often experience many different foster home placements and relational disruptions (Avery, 2011). Therefore, a significant proportion of youth aging out of foster care have little or no social network for emotional and financial support, and many are ill-prepared for living independently and struggle to successfully transition into adulthood (Torrico, 2010).

The Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) of 1999 (Public Law No. 106-169) was passed “to provide States with more funding and greater flexibility in carrying out programs designed to help children make the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency.” (Child Welfare Information Gateway, n.d., pg. 95). The Act led to the implementation of independent living programs, providing various services and support for foster youth to prepare for independent living. The Act also provided states with funds to provide services to former foster youth aged 18 to 21 (Child Welfare Information Gateway, n.d.).

However, research indicates that after almost 15 years since the passage of the FCIA, youth who aged out of foster care continue to experience significant adversity in young adulthood (Courtney, Dworsky, Lee, & Raap, 2010; Dworsky & Courtney, 2010;
It is well documented that those who aged out of foster care experience high rates of educational failure (Hudson & Nandy, 2012; Pecora, 2012); unemployment (Henig, 2009; Stewart, Kum, Barth, & Duncan, 2014); homelessness (Drowsky, Napolitano, & Courtney, 2013); substance abuse (Hudson & Bandy, 2012; Pecora, 2010); mental illness (Pecora, 2010); unwanted pregnancy and out-of-wedlock parenting (Dudley, 2013; Geiger & Schelbe, 2014; Oshima, Narendorf, & McMillen, 2013; Scott, 2012); and involvement in the criminal justice system (Gallegos & White, 2013).

Racial, gender, and class disparities are of critical concern. In 2012, Whites made up 77.9% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), but accounted for 42% of the foster care population (USDHHS, 2013). In comparison, African American made up 13.1% of the general population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), but accounted for 26% of the foster care population (USDHHS, 2013). Of those African American foster children, most were removed from poor black mothers who were their primary caretakers (Roberts, 2012). The risks for foster care placement were shared almost equally between males (52%) and females (48%; USDHHS, 2013). However, according to a study conducted by Jackson, O’Brien, and Pecora (2011), girls were significantly more likely than boys to be sexually and emotionally abused prior to placement in foster care, and female foster care alumni were more likely than their male counterparts to have had a past year diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These findings suggest that community-based, gender-specific intervention programs designed to empower African American female foster youth and young adults are urgently needed.

Research shows that mentoring programs are needed and desired by foster care youth (Hudson, 2013; Munson, Smalling, Spencer, Scott, & Tracy, 2010) and, if done
correctly, can have positive effects on youth aging out of foster care (Ahrens et al., 2011; Avery, 2011; Munson, Smalling, Spencer, Scott, Collins, Ward, & Smashnaya, 2010). Hudson (2013) conducted a qualitative study in foster care youth to examine their perceptions about mentoring and found that participants expressed the need for authority figures and career mentoring in their lives. Munson et al.’s (2010) study also indicated that mentoring relationships could provide youth aging out of the system with consistency and an opportunity “toward healing and safe, growth-fostering connection with another person” (p. 534). Also, Jones’s (2012) study found that the availability of social support and having independent living skills were among the factors positively associated with resiliency and successful outcomes in foster care youth aging out of the system.

**Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this thesis project was to develop a grant proposal to secure funding for a culturally competent, empowering mentoring program for African American female youth and young adults aged 17 to 21, who are aging out of foster care in Los Angeles County, California. The program consisted of recruitment, screening and training of mentors, recruitment of mentees, matching mentors with mentees, case management, monitoring and evaluating the program. The primary goal of the proposed program was to provide these youth and young adults with a mentor to offer support and guidance. The secondary goal of the proposed program was to increase their independent living skills in the areas of money; housing; employment; education; physical, mental, and sexual health and well-being; daily living skills; personal and social relationships; and legal rights and responsibilities. The proposed mentoring program addressed the
individual needs of these youth and young adults. Therefore, a thorough psychosocial assessment was conducted prior to developing a client-centered treatment plan and mentoring was provided accordingly.

In the next chapter, Chapter 2, the researcher establishes a literature review to justify the significance of the project, while providing information on the potential benefits of mentoring programs.

**Definitions of Terms**


*Mentoring:* “A structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee… Mentors are good listeners, people who care and want to help young people bring out strengths that are already there.” (Mentor, n.d., para 1.)

*Youth in foster care:* “Individuals at least age 13 years who are in the child welfare system.” (Geiger & Schelbe, 2014, p. 26)

*Youth aging out:* “Older youth who reach adulthood without returning to their birth families to being adopted” (Yaroni, Wetts, & Ross, 2010, p. 2). “Youth in foster care with emancipation as their goal as well as those who are in the process of becoming independent after recently leaving care.” (Geiger & Schelbe, 2014, p. 26)
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review includes existing literature on topics related to the challenges and outcomes of youth aging out of the system; racial, gender, and class disparities; and the benefits of and issues with mentoring programs.

Challenges and Outcomes of Youth Aging Out

Today’s young people face challenges such as high unemployment rates, limited and/or low paying jobs, expensive housing, and growing debts, often forcing many to continue to depend on family members well into their 30s (Torrico, 2010). Youth aging out of foster care do not have a family to turn to and are expected to make a successful transition into adulthood and independence with limited, if any, support (Jones, 2012). They face additional challenges due to the adversities they experienced, including the trauma of maltreatment and removal from their home, as well as multiple placements and changes in residential location, schools, and social relationships (Jones, 2012; Yaroni, Wotts, & Ross 2010). Unfortunately, research indicates that youth aging out are more likely to experience negative outcomes (i.e. poverty, homelessness, poor physical and mental health, and incarceration), many of which are interrelated and present cumulative challenges to this population (Children’s Rights, 2014; Courtney et al., 2010; Torrico, 2010; Yaroni et al., 2010).

Education

Research shows that former foster care youth are significantly more likely to have poor academic outcomes compared to youth in the general population (Courtney et al., 2010; Pecora, 2012; Yaroni et al., 2010). Courtney et al. (2010) conducted a longitudinal
study to examine the adult functioning of former foster youth and followed a sample of 732 young people from three Midwest states, Illinois (N=474), Iowa (N=63), and Wisconsin (N=195), as they aged out of the system and transitioned to adulthood. Four waves of survey data were collected in 2002-2003, 2004, 2006-2007, and 2008-2009. All of the youth in the baseline sample were 17 or 18 years old, and the fourth wave interviews were conducted when all of the participants (N = 602) were 23 or 24. The researchers found that by age 23 or 24, only 2.5% of former foster care youth had a 4-year college degree, while 19.4% of youth in the general population had completed college (Courtney et al., 2010). Hudson and Nandy (2012) also conducted a study among homeless youth with and without a history of foster care placement and found that homeless former foster youth were significantly less educated compared to non-fostered homeless youth. Also, according to Children’s Rights (2014), 40-63% of youth who age out of foster care do not have a high school diploma. In fact, youth aging out of the system often lack basic reading and math skills, making it almost impossible for many to find employment, secure housing, or access other opportunities for independent living (Yaroni et al., 2010).

For former foster care youth and young adults, continuing their education is particularly challenging. The study of former foster youth conducted by Courtney et al. (2010) found that almost 40% of the young adults who were not currently enrolled in school reported that not having enough money to pay for school was the reason preventing them from continuing their education. Also, 24.5% of young women as opposed to 2.2% of young men reported that the need to care for their children was a barrier that was preventing them from continuing their education (Courtney et al., 2010).
Educational achievement is significantly associated with employment and higher wages (Hook & Courtney, 2010). These findings indicate that youth aging out of foster care need continued support such as encouragement as well as gender-specific assistance to further their education.

**Employment and Economic Self-Sufficiency**

Research shows that former foster care youth have significantly higher unemployment rates than youth in the general population (Henig, 2009; Hook & Courtney, 2010; Yaroni et al., 2010). According to Children’s Rights (2014), one year after aging out of the system, 25-55% of former foster youth are unemployed and those employed have an average earning below the poverty level. More specifically, the previously mentioned Midwest study, Courtney et al. (2010) found that only 48% of former foster youth ages 23 and 24 were currently employed compared to 75.7% of young adults in the general population. Of those who were employed, the median hourly wage for former foster youth was $9.45, while the median hourly wage for young adults in the general population was $12. Also, the median annual income for former foster youth was $8,000 compared to $18,300 for young adult in the general population (Courtney et al., 2010). Hook and Courtney (2010) estimated that 22% of foster care alumni who are employed had earnings that would not lift them out of poverty.

Research also indicates that youth who lived in group care or residential treatment are especially vulnerable. Hook and Courtney (2010) found that youth exiting these facilities were 60% less likely to be employed than those who were living in family foster care right before the transition. There are two possible explanations for this gap. First, youth who lived in group care or residential treatment may be particularly unlikely to
have adults in their lives that assist them in obtaining employment. Second, they may be likely to have emotional and behavioral problems that prevent them from obtaining employment (Hook & Courtney, 2010).

**Homelessness and Couch-Surfing**

Research shows that one of the main challenges facing youth and young adults who age out of foster care is obtaining a safe and affordable place to live (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010). In the previously mentioned Midwest study, being homeless is defined as “sleeping in a place where people weren’t meant to sleep, or sleeping in a homeless shelter, or not having a regular residence in which to sleep” (Courtney et al., 2010, p. 10). Couch-surfing is defined as “moving from one temporary housing arrangement provided by friends, family or strangers to another” (p. 10). In the same study, the researchers found that by age 23 or 24 years, 24% of youth who aged out had been homeless, 28% had couch surfed, and 37% had been homeless or couch surfed since exiting foster care (Courtney et al., 2010).

Dworsky and Courtney (2010) conducted a study to examine whether allowing young people to remain in foster care until age 21 reduce their risks of experiencing homelessness. The researchers found that doing so prevents them from becoming homeless before age 19 and, to a lesser extent, age 21. However, they found that allowing them to remain in care until they reach 21 does not appear to reduce their risk of becoming homeless by age 23 or 24.

Dworsky et al. (2013) also conducted a study to estimate the incidence of homelessness during the transition from foster care to adulthood and found that between 31% and 46% of their study, participants had been homeless at least once by the time
they are 26 years old. The researchers also found that running away while in foster care and frequent placement changes were associated with homelessness. These experiences indicated instability. The researchers suggested that this instability may limit youth’s ability to connect with community-based programs that could provide them with assistance for obtaining housing. They also found that having a history of childhood physical abuse and having symptoms of mental health disorders were factors associated with homelessness among young people who aged out of foster care (Dworsky et al., 2013).

Research shows that homelessness is associated with various negative consequences such as sexual victimization and substance use (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010; Hudson & Nandy, 2012). Homelessness can also prevent youth from pursuing education and finding employment, thus making it even more difficult for them to become self-sufficient (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010). These findings indicate that more efforts need to be made to help youth and young adults aging out of foster care obtain a place to live.

**Sexual Behaviors and Pregnancy**

Research shows that risky sexual behaviors are of concern among youth and young adults who aged out of foster care (Courtney et al., 2010; Oshima et al., 2013; Oshima, Narendorf, & McMillen, Scott, 2012). Courtney et al. (2010) found that there were few differences between sexual behaviors reported by young adults who aged out of foster care and those in the general population. For example, in their study, 90.4% of foster care alumni and 91.5% of young adults in the general population ages 23 or 24 reported that they had been sexually active during the past year. However, the study
found that foster care alumni, regardless of gender, were less likely to report using birth control consistently than young adults in the general population (46.9 % vs. 65.8%). Also, 9.4% of foster care alumni reported ever being paid by someone to have sex, compared to 3.9% of young adults in the general population (Courtney et al., 2010). Scott (2012) also found that among young adults aged 18 to 21 who aged out of foster care, only 23.6% reported using condoms every time they had sexual intercourse in the past 3 months and 45.8% reported never using them.

Research also indicates that youth who aged out of foster care are at greater risk of becoming pregnant than those in the general population (Courtney et al., 2010; Oshima et al., 2013). According to Children’s Rights (2014), 40-60 % of the young women become pregnant within 12 to 18 months of leaving foster care. Courtney et al. (2010) also found that 77% of the young women ages 23 or 24 years, compared to 40% in the general population, had ever been pregnant. The researchers also found that nearly 70% of those who had been pregnant had had more than one pregnancy. Another finding from their study was that, of those who were pregnant, only 34.6% reported that they wanted to become pregnant, indicating that over 60% of these young women had an unplanned pregnancy. Finally, the researchers suggested that the reason why so many of young women who aged out of foster care had an unplanned pregnancy can be explained by the fact that only 9% of them had received any services related to family planning during the past year (Courtney et al., 2010).

Oshima et al. (2013) also conducted a study to identify risk and protective factors for pregnancy among youth transitioning out of foster care between ages 17 and 19. The researchers found that at age 19 years, 55% of female youth had experienced pregnancy
and 23% of male youth had fathered a child. They found that female youth with a history of arrest were at increased risk for pregnancy between 17 and 19. They also found that female youth who were not sexually active at age 17 were at decreased risk for pregnancy (Oshima et al., 2013).

Research shows that the negative outcomes of foster care such as low educational attainment, unemployment, and homelessness are more likely for foster youth who experience early pregnancy and parenting (Dudley, 2013; Geiger & Schelbe, 2014). Early pregnancy and parenting has also been found to be associated with increased risk for child abuse and neglect (Geiger & Schelbe, 2014). Furthermore, mothers with a history of abuse have a significantly higher risk of abusing their children and lower levels of self-control compared to mothers without a history of abuse (Henschel, Bruin, & Mohler, 2014). These findings indicate that, in order to break the cycle of intergenerational child maltreatment, parenting and childcare issues should be incorporated into intervention programs targeting this population (Geiger & Schelbe, 2014).

Mental Health and Substance Use

Research shows that mental health outcomes among youth in and out of foster care are disproportionately poor compared to the general population (Harpin, Kenyon, Kools, Bearinger, & Ireland, 2013; Pecora, 2010). Harpin et al. (2013) conducted a study to compare youth in foster care and youth in the general population in terms of mental distress and risk and protective factors. Participants were youth living in foster care (N=5,516) and their peers who are not in foster care (N=5,500) in 6th, 9th and 12th grades. The researchers found that youth in foster care reported higher levels of emotional
distress and suicidal thoughts than their peers. They also found that foster care youth had fewer protective factors than their peers. Specifically, foster care youth reported lower degrees of parental caring, school connectedness and GPA than their peers. Their multivariate analysis revealed that these factors were significantly associated with mental health distress in foster care youth. Jackson, O’Brien, Pecora, (2011) also found that approximately 20% of foster care alumni aged 20 to 51 experienced PTSD in the 12 months prior to the study interview. The researchers also found that female alumni were more likely to have a past year diagnosis of PTSD and were significantly more likely to have experienced sexual and emotional abuse prior to foster care placement than male alumni.

Hudson and Nandy (2012) conducted a study to compare homeless youth and young adults aged 15 to 25 with and without a history of foster care placement in terms of depressive symptoms and substance use. Participants were 156 homeless youth and young adults, of whom 44 had a history of foster care placement. The researchers found that homeless youth and young adults with a history of foster care placement were more likely to have depressive symptoms compared to their counterparts (21% vs. 17.5%). The researchers also found that youth and young adults with a history of foster care placement are significantly more likely to report methamphetamine use (60% vs. 33%) and heroin use (43% vs. 27%) compared to their counterparts (60% vs. 33%) (Hudson & Nandy, 2012).

Criminal Justice Involvement

Research indicates that former foster youth of both genders were significantly more likely that youth in the general population to be involved in the criminal justice
system (Courtney et al., 2010; Hook & Courtney, 2010). The Midwest study found that, at age 23 or 24 years, 81.2% of young men who aged out of foster care had been arrested, compared to 17.4% in young men in the general population. Among females, 57.2% of those who aged out of foster care had been arrested, compared to 4.3% in young women in the general population (Courtney et al., 2010). In addition, 58.8% of young men who aged out of foster care had been convicted, compared to 10.3% of young men in the general population, and 28.2% of young women who aged out of foster care had been convicted, compared to 1.6% of young women in the general population (Courtney et al., 2010).

Racial, Gender, and Class Disparities

African American children are disproportionately represented in the foster care system. In 2012, African American children made up 26% of the foster care population (USDHHS, 2013), even though African American made up only 13.1% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Wildeman and Emanuel (2014) conducted a study to estimate the cumulative probability of foster care placement between birth and age 18. The researchers found that in 2005, the cumulative risk of placement was 5.91% for all U.S. children, and the risks were 4.86% for White children, 5.35% for Hispanic children, and 2.14% for Asian children. In comparison, the risks were 10.99% for African American children and 15.44% for Native American children, indicating that African American children (as well as Native American children) are at significantly higher risk of being placed in foster care (Wildeman & Emanuel, 2014).

Knott and Giwa (2012) also conducted a review of literature published between 1983 and 2011 to examine the racial disproportionality of African American children and
youth in child protective services (CPS) and foster care systems, as well as to examine disparate access and use of CPS referred support services such as mental health, counseling, employment and housing services among African American and non-African American children, youth, and their families (Knott & Giwa, 2012).

One of the key findings was at each critical decision point within these systems, African American children and youth were disproportionately represented. The researchers found, for example, that African American children and youth are twice as likely to be placed in foster care and, once placed, spend nine months longer in care, compared to White children and youth. Another key finding was that African American children and families are not offered the same amount of support services. For example, they found that African American children are twice as likely to be placed with foster parents that are relatives; however, foster parents who are related to the children receive fewer and lower quality services, especially mental health, counseling, and drug treatment services, compared to foster parents who are unrelated to the children. The study also found that African Americans are less likely to receive adequate employment services and housing support (Knott & Giwa, 2012). These findings are consistent with Roberts’s (2012) assertion that the need for protecting children from parental harm is “usually linked to poverty, racial prejudice, and the state’s approach to caregiving, which addresses family economic deprivation with child removal rather than services and financial resources” (p. 1484).

In addition, an examination of the outcomes of youth aging out of foster care by race reveals a large gap between African Americans and Whites. For example, Hook and Courtney (2010) examining employment rates among young adults who aged out of
foster care found that only 36% of African American men and 41% of African American women were employed, while over 60% of White men and women were working. The researchers also found that 40% of African American men and 44% of African American women had looked for work in the past 4 weeks, while only 12% of White men and 16% of White men had done so. Furthermore, they found that 19% of African American men were out of the labor force due to incarceration, compared to 12% for White men (Hook & Courtney, 2010).

Gender and class disparities are of critical concern as well. Although the differences were small, females have a higher risk of foster care placement than males (Wildeman & Emanuel, 2014). In addition, Roberts (2012) argues that in the United States, the foster care and prison systems operate to oppress poor African American women. She argues:

The prison and foster care systems are marked by glaring race, gender, and class disparities. The populations in both are disproportionately poor and African American, and both systems are particularly burdensome to poor black mothers. About one-third of women in prison are black and most were primary caretakers of their children. About one-third of children in foster care are black, and most have been removed from black mothers who are their primary caretakers…this statistical overlap is evidence of a form of punitive governance that perpetuates social inequality. (pp. 1476-1477)

Many of African American female foster care youth and young adults are mothers. In the Midwest study, almost 70% of the young women who aged out of foster care had at least one child by age 23 or 24, compared to 30% in the general population (Courtney et al., 2010). Of those young women who had at least one child, approximately 22% reported that they had a child who was in foster care (Courtney et al., 2010).

Also, low-skilled African American mothers are often perceived by potential employers as single mothers and therefore problematic employees, making it especially
difficult for these young women to obtain employment (Hook & Courtney, 2010). In fact, Knott and Giwa (2012) found that African American women make up a large portion of Child Protective Services (CPS) clientele; however, they receive fewer CPS referred job training support programs or other employment placement programs, compared to non-African American women or African American men. These findings indicate that there is a need for a gender-specific intervention programs designed to empower this vulnerable population.

**Mentoring Relationships**

There are two types of mentoring relationships: natural or informal mentoring relationships and formal mentoring relationships fostered by programs that are designed to match mentors and mentees (Spencer, Collins, Ward, & Smashnaya, 2010). Despite many different foster home placements and relational disruptions that youth experience while in care, research shows that many youth aging out of the system reconnect with their family of origin and some form close relationships with their biological parents and/or siblings (Courtney et al., 2010). Also, some maintain connections with their natural mentors or “supportive non-parental adults” (Ahrens, Dubois, Garrison, Spencer, Richardson, & Lozano, 2011, p. 1012). Non-parental adults can be divided into three categories: family members, adults involved with the youth in an informal role, and adults involved with the youth in a professional role (Ahrens et al., 2011). Munson et al. (2010) found that the most common types of mentors were friends of the family and staff at former placement, followed by other supportive adults including teachers, caseworkers, clergy/church members, and neighbors.
Research indicates, however, that a significant proportion of youth aging out of foster care lack strong and stable social network of support (Courtney et al., 2010; Torrico, 2010). For example, in the Midwest study, many former foster youth reported having no one whom they could count on to be there to listen (7.5%), help with favors (7.8%), or encourage goals (10%). Therefore, formal mentor programs, designed to foster relationships that benefit youth aging out of foster care in the same ways that natural mentoring relationships can benefit them, have gained popularity as a potential strategy for supporting this population (Avery, 2011).

The Benefits of and Issues with Mentoring Programs

Research on the efficacy of formal mentoring relationships on the lives of youth aging out of foster care is virtually nonexistent (Spencer et al., 2010). However, research on natural mentoring relationships among youth in and out of foster care can inform social work policy and practice (Munson et al., 2010). Munson et al. conducted a qualitative study to examine the nature of natural mentoring relationships among youth aging out of foster care. Participants were 189 youth aged 19 years, of which 65% were female and 58% from racial minority groups. Several themes related to the qualities of natural mentors and qualities of the natural mentoring relationships emerged. Qualities that participants valued in their natural mentors included being approachable, easy to talk to, understanding, and similar to youth’s personality, interests, life experiences or background. Qualities of mentoring relationship that were especially important to participants included consistency and maintaining contact, longevity, trust, authenticity, respect, and empathy. Based on these findings, the researchers suggested that, in developing formal mentoring programs and recruiting mentors, it is important to find
adults that have had similar experiences and backgrounds as the mentees (Munson et al., 2010).

Ahrens et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study to identify factors that affect the formation, quality, and duration of natural mentoring relationships. Participants (N=23) were a racially/ethnically diverse group of foster youth alumni aged 18 to 25, residing in Seattle, Washington. Several themes related to barriers and facilitators of the initial connection and ongoing relationship emerged.

Barriers to the initial connection to form a relationship with non-parental adults identified by the study participants were the following: youth’s fear of being hurt emotionally, fear of indebtedness to the mentor, fear that the mentor will fail the youth, the mentor pushing to bond too quickly, youth’s resistance to directive advice, and adult’s lack of understanding of youth’s culture or background. Facilitators to the initial connection identified by the participants were the following: adults demonstrating patience and persistence, adults displaying authentic affection, adults opening up and sharing their own experiences, adults going beyond proscribed relationship, youths having some characteristics in common with the mentor, and youth experiencing a period of vulnerability and extreme emotional need (Ahrens et al., 2011).

Barriers to the ongoing relationship identified by the participants were the following: logistic barriers such as foster care placement change, going to jail or other types of move; loss of the mentor’s contact information; the mentor moving away; and youth’s fear of not living up to adult’s expectations. Facilitators of the ongoing relationship are the following: mechanism in place to maintain regular contact with the mentor, the mentor helping youth understand what to expect, the mentor planning
activities that incorporate the youth’s interests, the mentor displaying confidence, the mentor being responsive to youth’s needs, and the mentor demonstrating consistency between actions and words (Ahrens et al., 2011).

The researchers also found that mentoring relationships had various positive impacts on the socio-emotional, cognitive, and identity development of foster youth and functioning as adults. The positive impacts on the socio-emotional development identified by the participants included learning conflict resolution, emotional self-regulation, and ability to set boundaries in other relationships. The positive impacts on the cognitive development identified by the participants included learning how to plan and problem-solve, and acquisition of independent living skills that youth previously lacked. The positive impacts on the identity development identified by the participants included improved self-worth and increased social capital. Based on these findings, the researchers concluded that “mentoring relationships have the potential to strengthen adult outcomes for youth who have been in foster care” (Ahrens et al., 2011, p. 1020).

Despite the potential benefits of mentoring programs, it is important to remember that research indicates that not all relationships fostered by these programs lead to positive outcomes, and the positive impacts are often modest (Avery, 2011; Spencer et al., 2011). Also, research cautions that mentoring programs can have no impact or even negative impact on youth and young adults who participated in the programs (Avery, 2011; Spencer et al., 2010). For example, as indicated in Ahrens et al.’s (2011) study, youth and young adults aging out of foster care can have difficulty establishing close relationships with mentors due to their maltreatment history and fear that they might be abandoned again. Therefore, if mentors are ill-suited to mentoring this population and
simply abandon the relationship, the impact on the mentee can be devastating (Spencer et al., 2010).

To avoid potential pitfalls and maximize potential benefits of the formal mentoring programs, it is important that the program includes “a rigorous process for carefully screening mentors that includes clear descriptions of program focus and goals and of the youths being served, along with forthright discussion of the challenges posed by forging a relationship with youths in such circumstances” (Spencer et al., 2010, p. 230). Similarly, based on the findings of the study described earlier, Ahrens et al. (2011) made several suggestions in creating formal mentoring programs. These include: involvement of important non-parental adults into transitioning planning, enhanced training for mentors to improve the quality and duration of mentoring relationships, improved criteria on which mentees are matched with mentors, assistance for youth to improve their interpersonal awareness and skills, and initiating the program during times of need (Ahrens et al., 2011).

In the next chapter, Chapter 3, the researcher outlines the methods that were utilized for the project, including a description of the target population, the host agency, the process of procuring funding sources, the selected foundation, and application procedures, and the needs assessment and data collection.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This chapter discusses the target population, host agency, the process of finding funding sources, the selected foundation and application procedure, and needs assessment and data collection.

Target Population

The target population for this grant project was youth and young adults aging out of foster care. The proposed project was specifically targeted African American female foster care youth and young adults aged 17 to 21 residing in Los Angeles County, California.

Host Agency

The host agency for this grant project was Global Business Incubation (GBI), a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, in Los Angeles, California. The mission of GBI is “to promote the development and growth of global enterprises through customized innovative financial programs, business incubation, global banking solutions and other cooperative strategies” (GBI, 2014, n.p.). As the name of the organization indicates, GBI’s mission focuses on the development of global businesses; however, GBI serves as a facilitator of diverse projects, including youth training and job training programs and workshops in disadvantaged communities, particularly in African American communities (GBI, 2014).

GBI has partnered with colleges and universities to provide various support services to empower youth and young adults in urban communities. One example of such programs is Get Ready for Success. In partnership with California State University,
Long Beach, GBI provides a 12-week program that offer participants opportunities to work with business leaders and mentors in their chosen fields on real projects and to learn to leverage academic, business, and government resources to launch their career and/or business. A letter from the agency agreeing to involvement in this project can be found in Appendix A.

**Strategies for Identifying and Selecting Potential Funding Sources**

An extensive Internet search was conducted to identify and select potential funding sources for this project. The grant writer looked into websites such as the Grantsmanship Center (http://www.tgci.com) and Fundsnet Services (http://www.fundsnetservices.com). The grant writer found the Grantsmanship Center website to be particularly useful, as it provided links to each of the 40 top grant making foundations in California listed on the website. The grant writer evaluated all the 40 foundations listed based on the criteria such as the field of interest, geographic focus, and available funding, and was able to narrow the search down to 3 foundations. After thoroughly examining the 3 foundations, the grant writer selected the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation because in addition to meeting all the criteria, the foundation has approved numerous grants for programs designed to assist youth aging out of foster care.

**The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation**

The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation is an organization which was established in 1961 by Ralph M. Parson. Parsons established his engineering company in 1944, and then in 1961, founded the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation as the charitable giving arm of his company. In 1976, two years after he passed away, the foundation became fully independent of the company. In 1978, the foundation established a multidisciplinary
grantmaking program. Today, the foundation invests in the fields of social services, health care, the arts and higher education. It strives to improve “the well-being of Los Angeles County residents by investing in quality nonprofit organizations responding to people’s social, civic and cultural, health, and educational needs” (The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, 2014, n.p.).

The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation’s funding priorities fall into the following four categories: Social Impact, Higher Education, Health, and Civic & Cultural. The foundation has approved grants for various “programs focused on providing services to traditionally underserved and disadvantaged populations,” including youth and young adults aging out of foster care (The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, 2014, n.p.). The foundation supports programs that “change lives by helping one person at a time” (The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, 2014, n.p.). The foundation’s median grant award is about $50,000; however, reviewing individual grants in the foundation’s grant database shows that numerous agencies have received more than $200,000 in the past. The foundation award about 200 grants every year (The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, 2014).

The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation’s proposal requirements include a letter of inquiry, a narrative of no more than three pages. The letter of inquiry should include a description of the program to be funded, the amount requested, and background information about the applicant organization. The letter of inquiry must be accompanied by the organization’s most recent audit or financial statement. If, based on the letter of inquiry, the foundation makes a decision to explore specifics of the grant request in more detail, the organization will be asked to submit a full proposal. The foundation accepts
letter of inquiry at any time throughout the year (The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, 2014).

The actual grant application must follow the outline provided by the foundation, which includes: organization information summary and summary of proposed activity for which grant is requested. The 1-page organization information summary must include: (a) history and mission of applicant organization; (b) concise summary of overall activities of applicant organization, including utilization of volunteers; and (c) quantitative and demographic information on the population being served. The summary of proposed activity, which should be no more than 8 pages, must include: (a) problem statement and justification for need; (b) description of activity; (c) goals and objectives; (d) plans for administration of operation; (e) timeline; (f) plans for evaluation; (g) itemized project budget; and (h) specified amount requested from the Foundation (The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, 2014).

The grant application must also include the following supplemental information: (a) names of Board of Directors and their business affiliations; (b) frequency of Board Meetings and description of standing committees, if any; (c) audited financial statement; (d) current operating budget – organization as a whole, with itemized sources of revenues and expenses; (e) Copy of IRS letter of notification indicating type of classification qualifies for, plus all subsequent communications from IRS concerning tax-exempt status; (f) Copy of IRS Form 990 for most recent fiscal year, including all attachments and schedules; and (g) resume or bio of agency executive director/chief executive officer (The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, 2014).
Needs Assessment and Data Collection

Needs assessment and data collection consisted of researching numerous sources including books, academic journals, and Internet websites. Most peer-reviewed journal articles included into the problem statement and literature review were found through online databases from the California State University Northridge (CSUN) library. Statistical information on youth aging out of foster care, disparities, and mentoring programs were found through CSUN online library, as well as Internet websites of organizations such as U.S. Census Bureau and USDHHS. Information on the host agency, GBI, was found through the GBI websites. In the next chapter, chapter four, the researcher provides the grant proposal, which includes the organization information summary, problem statement and justification of need, description of the activity, goals and objectives, plans for administration of operation, timeline, evaluation, and budget narrative.
CHAPTER 4

GRANT PROPOSAL

Organization Information Summary

Global Business Incubation (GBI) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization located in Los Angeles, California. The mission of GBI is “to promote the development and growth of global enterprises through customized innovative financial programs, business incubation, global banking solutions and other cooperative strategies” (GBI, 2014, n.p.). As the name of the organization indicates, GBI’s mission focuses on the development of global businesses; however, GBI serves as a facilitator of diverse projects, including youth training and job training programs and workshops in disadvantaged communities, particularly in African American communities (GBI, 2014).

GBI has partnered with colleges and universities provide various support services to empower youth and young adults in urban communities. One example of such programs is Get Ready for Success. In partnership with California State University, Long Beach, GBI provides a 12-week program that offer participants opportunities to work with business leaders and mentors in their chosen fields on real projects and to learn to leverage academic, business, and government resources to launch their career and/or business.

Board of Directors consists of following members: Chairman, CHEF Richard Petty (OKRA Restaurant Group); President, Tonia McDonald; Treasure, Trevor, M. Allen, Sr. (Eco Social); Secretary, Phillip Brown (Brown Thumb Development); Director, Paul G. McDonald; Director, Dr. George Hess (LMU); and Director, Paul G. McDonald, Jr. (BCBG Maxima). The meeting is held once a year in December.
Problem Statement/Justification for Need

In Fiscal Year 2012, there were an estimated 397,122 children living in foster care across the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2013). In the same year, an estimated 23,396 youth exited the foster care system due to emancipation or “aging out” without being reunified with their parents or adopted (USDHHS, 2013). Foster youth often experience many different foster home placements and relational disruptions (Avery, 2011). Therefore, a significant proportion of youth aging out of foster care have little or no social network of emotional and financial support, and many are ill-prepared for living independently and struggle to successfully transition into adulthood (Torrico, 2010). A review of literature substantiated the need for those youth and young adults aging out of foster care; it is well documented that those who aged out of foster care experience high rates of educational failure (Hudson & Nandy, 2012; Pecora, 2012), unemployment (Henig, 2009; Stewart, Kum, Barth, & Duncan, 2014); homelessness (Drowsky, Napolitano, & Courtney, 2013); substance abuse (Hudson & Nandy, 2012; Pecora, 2010); mental illness (Pecora, 2010); unwanted pregnancy and out-of-wedlock parenting (Dudley, 2013; Geiger & Schelbe, 2014; Oshima, Narendorf, & McMillen, 2013; Scott, 2012); and involvement in the criminal justice system (Gallegos & White, 2013).

In addition, a literature review revealed that African American female youth and young adults aging out of foster care are especially vulnerable to those negative outcomes. In 2012, African American made up 13.1% of the general population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), but accounted for 26% of the foster care population (USDHHS, 2013). Of those African American foster children, most were removed from poor black mothers
who were their primary caretakers (Roberts, 2012). Also, a longitudinal study of foster youth alumni found that almost 70% of the young women who aged out of foster care had at least one child by age 23 or 24, compared to 30% in the general population, and of those young women who had at least one child, approximately 22% reported that they had a child who was in foster care (Courtney et al., 2010). In addition, low-skilled, African American mothers are often perceived by potential employers as single mothers and therefore problematic employees, making it especially difficult for these young women to obtain employment (Hook & Courtney, 2010). In fact, Knott and Giwa (2012) found that African American women make up a large portion of CPS clientele; however, they receive fewer CPS referred job training support programs or other employment placement programs, compared to non-African American women or African American men. These findings indicate that there is a need for a gender-specific intervention programs designed to empower these girls and young women, and research shows that mentoring programs can have positive effects on this vulnerable population (Ahrens et al., 2011; Avery, 2011; Munson et al., 2010; Spencer et al., 2010).

Description of Activity

The proposed program is a culturally competent, empowering mentoring program for African American female youth and young adults aged 17 to 21, who are aging out of foster care in Los Angeles County, California. The program activities will include: (a) recruitment, screening, and training of volunteer mentors; (b) recruitment of mentees; (c) matching mentors with mentees; (d) monitoring and case management; and (e) evaluating the program. This mentoring program will link these girls and young women with trained volunteer mentors who share similar background and interests.
Volunteer mentors will undergo careful screening and training orientation. These mentors will be required to engage in activities with the mentee for a minimum of 2 hours per week, 8 hours per month for a 1 year period. These volunteers will have direct contact with the program coordinators whenever they have questions or concerns. The proposed mentoring program will address the individual needs of these youth and young adults. Therefore, a thorough psychosocial assessment will be conducted prior to developing a client-centered treatment plan and mentoring will be provided accordingly. Anticipated outcomes for the participants may also vary depending on each individual and his or her needs assessment.

**Goals and Objectives**

The program goals and objectives of this proposed program are as follows:

**Goal 1:** To provide these youth and young adults with a mentor to offer support and guidance.

**Objective:** There will be a 50% or greater increase in subjective feelings of having social support measured by the Medical Outcomes Study (MOS) Social Support Survey (Sherbourne & Stewart, 1991).

**Goal 2:** To increase their independent living skills in the areas of money; housing; employment; education; physical, mental, and sexual health and well-being; daily living skills; personal and social relationships; and legal rights and responsibilities, according to the individual needs and goals of the participants.

**Objective:** There will be a 50% or greater increase in life satisfaction and optimism about the future measured by the life satisfaction survey (used in the Midwest Study conducted by Courtney et al., 2010).
Plans for Administration of Operation

To achieve these goals and objectives of the proposed program, the following activities will be administered by two program coordinators, two recruiters, and ten volunteers at Loyola Marymount University (LMU), whom GBI has a partnership.

(1) Recruitment and screening of mentors: One of the objectives of the proposed program is to increase subjective feelings of having social support by 50% or more measured by the MOS Social Support Survey. To achieve this objective, the program coordinators will actively recruit volunteers online (e.g., Facebook and Craigslist) and by contacting volunteer agencies and creating and posting flyers on the message boards of various colleges, universities, and other civic organizations. Once volunteer mentors have been recruited, the programs coordinator will meet with each one personally to determine whether their personal qualities, mental capacities, attitudes and interests compatible with the purpose of this mentoring program. A background check on all volunteers will be conducted.

(2) Orientation and training of mentors: Volunteer mentors who have passed the screening and background check will be required to attend a 4-hour training orientation. At this orientation, clear descriptions of program focus, goals and objectives, and of the youths and young adults being served, as well as challenges of forming and maintaining mentoring relationships with people in such circumstances will be presented and discussed. The intensive training will also include information about the foster care system, the difficulties and outcomes youth and young adults aging out of the system tend to experience, various resources available to support this population, and the monitoring and support available for the mentors. Also, potential mentors will complete
a questionnaire for matching purposes to indicate personalities, interests, life experiences and background. Once they are matched with a mentee based on these factors, they will be introduced to the mentee by one of the program coordinators.

(3) Recruitment and assessment of potential mentees: The program coordinators will contact and receive referrals from the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The program coordinators will meet with each one to determine whether the youth or young adult’s mental and cognitive capacities and interests are compatible with the program. The recipients of this mentoring program must be free from major psychiatric conditions. The MOS Social Support Survey (Sherbourne & Stewart, 1991) and the life satisfaction and future orientation survey will be utilized at initial meeting for assessment and evaluation purposes. A thorough psychosocial assessment will also be conducted to create a client-centered treatment and mentoring plan. If it is determined that the youth or young adults are in need of more intensive clinical services, the DCFS will be notified so that they will receive the services and care they need. Those who are suitable for this program will complete the same questionnaire about their personalities, interests, and life experiences, as well as their preferences with regard to the volunteer mentor who will be matched with them.

(4) Matching mentees with mentors and ongoing monitoring and support for mentors: The program coordinators will match a youth or young adult with a volunteer mentor based on factors such as shared interests and life experiences. The first meeting will be supervised by one of the program coordinators. This will be a general introduction and a time to get to know each other. The volunteer mentor and the mentee will agree on the goals, plan, frequency of contact, and schedule. They will also discuss
and plan for activities that both can enjoy and especially meet the youth/young adult’s interests. The program coordinator will confirm with both the mentor and the mentee to ensure they are comfortable with their match. If no problems are found, mentoring starts. If the mentors have any questions or concerns they will contact the program coordinator. The program coordinators will be available for in-person meetings, telephone conversation, and/or email. Support group for mentors and ongoing training to cover additional topic pertinent to this population will be conducted every month. In addition, program evaluation surveys will be conducted to solicit the mentee’s opinions and determine opportunities for improvement in the program every three months.

Timeline

In Month 1, the following activities will be conducted: (a) full-time program coordinators are hired; (b) material and supplies are purchased; (c) volunteer mentors are recruited, screened and trained; (d) mentees are recruited and assessed; (e) mentees and mentors are matched; and (f) mentoring begins. In Month 5, 8, and 11, evaluation surveys are conducted. In Month 12, the mentoring program ends.

Evaluation

Evaluation will be a part of the program throughout the year. Mentees will complete the evaluation surveys every three months, allowing the program coordinators to assess the effectiveness of the program. The program will also be evaluated for meeting its goals and objectives. At the end of the year, it will be determined whether there has been a 50% or greater increase in subjective feelings of having social support measured by the MOS Social Support Survey. In addition, the program will be evaluated for meeting its objective of increasing levels of life satisfaction and future orientation
measured by the life satisfaction survey, as well as the evaluation survey to determine if the program helped participants achieve individual goals in terms of independent living skills formulated prior to the intervention.

**Budget Narrative**

The proposed program will require a projected budget of $155,000, not including in-kind support. This includes the salary for two full-time program coordinators and 10 stipends for volunteer mentors. The projected budget also includes direct program cost such as office supplies and materials that are needed to help develop the program. The space for the program will be donated in-kind by LMU, which partners with GBI.

The two program coordinators will be responsible for administrative tasks, recruitment of volunteer mentors and mentees, program assessment, monitoring and providing support to mentors, and daily operations. This position requires a master’s level degree and a minimum of two years of professional work experience in the social services field. The yearly salary and benefits for this position is $70,000 each.

The mentor positions are volunteer positions; however, each volunteer mentor will receive a $500 cash stipend at the end of their minimum one year commitment, totaling $5,000 per year.

Office supplies and materials such as pens, pencils, paper, folders, markers, and printing costs for training materials, flyers, and surveys are estimated to cost $10,000. Please see Appendix B for the itemized project budget.

Chapter 5 includes a discussion of lessons learned for implementing the grant proposal, which include understanding need and potential funding sources for the proposal program, as well as strategies that enhanced the likelihood of funding.
CHAPTER 5
LESSONS LEARNED

Identification of Need for Proposed Program

In addition to the literature review, the need for the mentoring program for African American female youth and young women aging out of foster care was identified by the grant writer who has been working in the field for over 5 years. Currently, the thesis writer works for an agency providing services for domestic violence survivors and homeless women including foster care alumni, many of who are African American. As the case manager, the grant writer is familiar with the needs of the population. The grant writer’s desire to help African American girls and young women aging out of foster care motivated her to talk to Executive Director of GBI, Phillip Brown, about the need for the proposed program. With Mr. Brown’s approval and encouragement, the grant writer started the process of finding potential funding sources for the mentoring program.

Identification of Potential Funding Sources

Through the process of identifying potential funding sources and selecting the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, the grant writer acquired important knowledge and skills about grant writing. The grant writer learned that the use of the Internet is an efficient and convenient way to find potential funding sources. By using Google’s search, the grant writer was able to discover several useful websites such as Grantsmanship Center (http://www.tgci.com) and Fundsnet Services (http://www.fundsnetservices.com). The grant author found the Grantsmanship Center website particularly useful because it identified 40 top giving foundations in California. The grant writer evaluated all of them based on the criteria including the field of interest, geographic focus and available
funding. The grant writer learned that developing criteria helps grant seekers evaluate an organization in a time efficient manner. For example, the grant writer was able to quickly eliminate some foundations whose geographic focus did not include Los Angeles or interest did not include helping foster youth alumni. The grant writer was able to identify and select the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation because it met all the criteria and it has approved numerous grants for programs designed to assist youth aging out of foster care.

**Strategies to Enhance the Likelihood of Funding**

The grant writer used some strategies to enhance the likelihood of funding. First, the grant writer realized that any grant making foundation would ask for a strong problem statement that clearly identified the issues and needs being addressed. Therefore, it became clear to the grant writer that she must gain a deep understanding of the issues regarding youth and young adults aging out of foster care, including difficulties they tend to face, negative outcomes they tend to experience, and racial, gender, class disparities that affect African American girls and young women. Through a thorough review of literature, the grant writer also gained a good overview of the benefits of and issues regarding mentoring programs. In addition, the grant writer realized that it is important to make certain that all the questions required in the grant application were answered and all documents required were made available. Thanks to the cooperation from Mr. Brown, Executive Director of GBI, the grant writer was able to gather required information.
References


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June 20, 2014

To whom it may concern,

For over twenty years, GBI founders have researched the most successful models of institution building, infrastructures, business incubators, cooperatives, teaching and testing factories and research consortia that create community economic wealth, to develop successful urban community business incubators in disadvantaged neighborhoods…

These include neighborhood cooperatives, job training programs, youth training, and entrepreneurial programs. Collectively, these provide a synergistic approach to reviving the economic fiber of urban communities…

To this end, GBI has authorized Chauntelle Ratcliff, a candidate for California State University Northridge, (CSUN) to incorporate GBI’s non-profit 501 (c) (3) as the fiscal agent into her theses as part of her program to develop a grant proposal for empowering Foster-care youth and young adults (17 – 21).

Please fill free to contact me for any additional information that you may need, including a copy of GBI’s tax-exempt letter: EIN# 95-4532333

Sincerely,

Phillip Brown
Executive Director
Global Business Incubation (GBI)
## ITEMIZED PROJECT BUDGET

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