

University of Nevada, Reno

Foster Care in Reno, Nevada:

**Does Aging-Out of Foster Care Increase the Presence of Risk Factors and
Criminality?**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Criminal Justice

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Abstract

Aging-out of foster care is a difficult experience to endure. Independent living facilities and assistance programs do exist, but most assistance ends when a participant turns 21 years old. This thesis examines the presence of risk factors in aged-out participants' lives. Using a Blackian Analysis as the theoretical framework, aged-out young adults are placed in models where law is present at a greater level in their lives. With no stable foundation and support from their families, most participants succumb to risk factors. Compared with state and national averages on risk factors (e.g. homelessness, alcoholism, substance abuse, etc.), aged-out foster care participants are a vulnerable sub-group. Averages show they are more likely to be homeless, drink alcohol, and experiment with drugs. Overall, the results of this study suggest that despite aged-out foster care participants being a small sub-group, they are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Foster care is a program that provides supervised care for orphaned or neglected youth. Reasons for foster care placement include: parental neglect, abuse (i.e., mental, physical, or sexual), exploitation, Child Protective Services intervention, parents/guardians lacked sufficient funds to support their child, child suffered from radical behavior, and natural disaster displaced the child. The reason for placement is a traumatic experience, likewise being taken from their families is a traumatic experience. The goal of foster care is to eventually reunite children with their parents; for some, this is not an option. Some children are never adopted and go from foster home to foster home until they are too old for the program and age-out. These young adults do not have the support of a family and become more susceptible to criminological risk factors that push them towards crime.

Criminal justice has evolved to the point where it addresses selected problems in society with proactive responses rather than reactive ones. The criminal justice system looks at areas that are problematic and focuses on responses to limit the potential strain on society. Modern models of criminal justice examine sub-groups that become involved in the criminal justice system and research policy, programs, and planning in order to measure the problem and examine the success of solutions. Though many topics are researched, very little is known about those who age-out of foster care. These children have less stability, which increases the likelihood of criminal activity as they grow older. A portion of children who enter the foster care system are never reunited with their families. Little is done to assist them when adoption is unlikely and they age-out, also

referred to as emancipate, from the foster care system. These young adults lack the stable foundation that is necessary to bridge the gap between adolescence and adulthood. Many of these young adults are cast aside when they age-out and are left to fend for themselves and experience homelessness, which can lead to involvement with crime.

The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) produces an annual report listing the entry age, current age, sex, ethnicity, goal (e.g., adoption or being reunited with their family), and outcomes of foster children. AFCARS statistics show that as the age of a participant increases, the likelihood of them being placed with a family decreases (National Resource Center for Child Welfare Data & Technology, 2013). The young adults who leave foster care to fend for themselves are either emancipated or run away, which increases the impact of criminal risk factors. Through a nationwide study, it was estimated that between 20,000 and 542,000 young adults in foster care are annually discharged to live on their own (Children's Aid Society, 2013). This estimation leaves a gap of over 500,000 between the figures of how many participants leave foster care each year; this furthers the argument that more needs to be done to monitor and assist these young adults. The young adults who leave the foster care system to fend for themselves age-out with no safety net. They are more likely to live in poverty and turn towards crime without a stable family unit to assist them (Children's Aid Society, 2013).

The presence of psychosocial risk factors, for crime, reflect an increased risk of criminality. It is believed that these factors are more prevalent in the lives of aged-out young adults, which makes them more likely to be involved in crime. This study will measure the presence of risk factors in the lives of aged-out participants and compare

them to statewide and national averages; the study will utilize multi-methods to examine aged-out young adults. The anticipated results are that these risk factors are more present in the lives of young adults who have aged-out of foster care than they are in their non-foster care peers. Due to these risk factors, the sample group will have had more contact with the criminal justice system than the average population.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impacts of aging-out of foster care in order to explore what effect these individuals have on the criminal justice system. By looking at risk factors and national averages, this study will examine the increased challenges this group faces and the connection they have with crime. How these young adults fare in life is a direct reflection of how the current foster care system and criminal justice system have performed; if these systems work, then there will be no difference from aged-out young adults and national averages. There is a need for an agency, such as foster care, but it is necessary to have a better understanding of what happens after a participant is no longer supervised/cared for by the foster care system. Though they are a small sub-group, it is necessary to examine young adults who have aged-out of foster care, because the problems they face transition into problems with the criminal justice system.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Overview

In the work of Shirk and Stangler (2004), scenarios of real aged-out young adults are documented. Reggie Kelsey functioned at the level of a third grade student and entered foster care at the age of 14. He was bounced from home to home due to other mental issues that included vivid hallucinations. Reggie became more and more worried as his 18th birthday grew nearer. In Iowa, Reggie's state of residence, he would have been eligible for programs to assist him until he was 20 years old. There were two options that were still available to him, a transitional living arrangement and vocational program, but part of the problem with foster care is that sometimes these adolescents do not know the options until a social worker or official informs them. No one informed Reggie of any other options and so, on his 18th birthday, his social worker dropped him off at a homeless shelter and closed Reggie's file with the remark, "He didn't want to help himself" (Shirk & Stangler, 2004, p. 186). Three months later, Reggie's body was pulled from the Des Moines River.

According to a nationwide study of runaway youth conducted by Thoma (2010), more than one-third of the runaways had been in foster care in the year before they took to the streets.

More than one out of five youths who arrive at a shelter come directly from a foster or group home, with 38 percent nationally saying they had been in foster care at some time during the previous year, the study found. In a new phenomenon compared

with past surveys, almost 11 percent of the youths said they were homeless and living on the streets before coming to shelters. (Thoma, 2010, p. 1)

According to the survey director, Deborah Bass, these findings were the most disturbing to emerge from a study of 170 runaway shelters, as recorded by Thoma (2010). The young adults who emancipate from foster care have nowhere to go. Experts that assisted Thoma estimate that 45 percent of those leaving foster care become homeless within a year. A study conducted in Contra Costa County, California found that one-third of children placed in foster care eventually end up homeless, and 35 percent are arrested while in foster care (Thoma, 2010). Thoma explains the evolution of this problem as being partially attributable to inadequate screening of foster families and poor placement. Some of the participants give up on foster care before they give their new families a chance. These young adults choose to distance themselves from the foster care system believing they will be better off. Being on their own becomes overwhelming and participants end up increasing the presence of risk factors in their lives.

Government assistance. In April 1986, Congress passed legislation creating the Federal Independent Living Program (ILP), which gives funds to states to assist foster care youth transition to life as self-sufficient young adults (Johnson, 2003). This was the first step of many in attempts to address the issues that young adults face when aging-out of the foster care system. The funds were periodically increased, but limitations still plague the ILP. The most burdensome of the problems is the fact that support is limited to participants age 16 to age 21; this creates a blurred line of when these young adults are considered independent. The majority of states hold that a person is an adult at the age of 18. The average age for completing school, marrying, and becoming a parent has

steadily risen. Young adults, well into their 20s, continue to juggle work and school, live at home longer, and delay marriage and creating their own families. Avery (2010) states that the median age, at which adolescents first leave home, is about 19 years of age. According to Avery (2010), it was found that 40 percent of those who leave home for the first time between the ages of 18 and 24 return to live in their parental household at some time thereafter; although usually for only a temporary period. Even young adults at the age of 24 still require assistance from family and that support system is what allows them to progress and thrive (Avery, 2010). By not increasing the age at which aged-out youth can get assistance, society unnecessarily increase the burden young adults who age-out of foster care face and leave them without a support system as they try to gain independence. These young adults lack this foundation along with social capital (resources, such as social ties or an education), which is built through social investment by their families.

In 1999, President Clinton signed the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA), which increased the budget for assisting participants who age-out of foster care. The benefits that participants receive increased from \$1,000 to \$10,000 per year (Williams, 2008). Though this was a step in the right direction, other stipulations assisting aged-out foster care youth went un-amended. This legislation only pertained to individuals who were between the ages of 16 and 21. The government failed to consider that the average person needed assistance to achieve independence at the age of 24; Avery's 2010 research suggests that adults still need assistance well into their mid-20s. The FCIA still excluded individuals older than 21 years of age so it had a limited scope of assistance.

Past studies. Johnson (2003) conducted a study examining the programs available in the Los Angeles area for youth in foster care. Programs included assistance with jobs, housing, and medical care. Though it was found that, on average, 27 youth were helped per week per program, the programs still suffered from limitations, such as the age of the youth (Johnson, 2003). A qualifying factor was being between the ages of 14 and 18. The study concluded with a poll that reinforced the information drawn from other studies. Individuals polled said the biggest thing that these agencies need is more funding and more programs in order to assist emancipated young adults with vocational training and courses teaching independent living. This trend has led to more researchers looking into the different foster care organizations and programs. In Ohio, Larimore (2009) examined five nonprofit foster care organizations. He found that one program utilized an aftercare procedure that significantly increased future success by implementing strategies to be a successful adult for its participants, another significantly lowered future success due to lack of follow through with trainings and not teaching the necessary skills to young adults, and the other three did not have a significant impact on future performance. The unsuccessful program's focus also has a problem in the fact that it teaches abstract concepts to being self-reliant rather than concrete concepts (Reilly, 2003). There are programs out there that work; the problem with the programs examined in this study is the failure to notify participants of program availability.

Many of the individuals placed in foster care suffer from emotional, mental, and physical problems. The government estimates that of the 100,000 children in foster care in 2004, 1 out of 5 have a disability (Shirk & Stangler, 2004). Problems with emotional and mental health stem from them being put into foster care for issues, such as neglect

and abuse (Owens, 2007). Such abusive backgrounds usually have an influence on future criminal activity. Owens (2007) conducted a study to examine the relationship between the different aspects of foster care (i.e., age, duration in program, and abuse) and future criminal rates. Though the study was not able to establish correlational or a causal relationship between frequently occurring factors (i.e., age, duration in program, and abuse) in foster care and criminality, Owens (2007) was able to conclude that there still exists an increased involvement in crime for individuals who were in foster care despite not being able to establish a correlation between age, duration of time in foster care, and other variables.

A recent study by Paulson (2010), tracked hundreds of aged-out foster care participants from age 17 through age 24. Paulson's study found that 60 percent of the males had been convicted of a crime and 40 percent had been homeless. Homelessness and criminality share correlational ties because those who are homeless tend to turn towards crime (Paulson, 2010); homeless individuals are more likely to commit petty crimes such as theft. If there is an increased criminality associated with being in foster care, then society can expect to see larger rates of criminal activity in participants who age-out. With no stability and no support, these participants are left to their own devices to survive. Though homelessness might mediate the relationship, Paulson's study confirms that there is a connection between criminality and foster care.

The problem with some of the studies examined is their geography. It is understood that certain aspects of foster care are problematic, yet many researchers only examine restricted locales. It would be difficult for one researcher to conduct a national study, which is why many studies are restricted to cities like Los Angeles or look at

multiple programs only in a single state. There are more data from studies in specific locations that attempt to generalize the problem; researchers hope that their findings can be applied in other locations to assist these young adults. Generally, it is documented that of all aged-out participants, 51 percent of them will be unemployed and 25 percent will experience homelessness (Williams, 2008). An article by Pera (2009) examined this crisis in Florida. Pera found that 1,365 adolescents age-out of foster care with no family support, every year, in Florida. Of these individuals, more than 20 percent will become homeless at some time after the age of 18 and one in four will be incarcerated within the first two years after they leave the foster care system (Pera, 2009). Approximately 58 percent had a high school degree at age 19, compared to 87 percent of a national comparison group of non-foster youth (Pera, 2009). Of young adults who aged-out of foster care and are older than 25, less than 3 percent earned their college degrees, compared with 28 percent of the general population (Pera, 2009). Aggregated national data on individuals who age-out of foster care could lead to a program that could help all states in assisting these emancipated young adults. An increased understanding of aged-out participants struggle and the risk factors they face is necessary to limit the chances of criminality.

Risk Factors

Risk factors are variables that can contribute to the onset of delinquency and crime. The presence of these factors does not necessarily translate into crime; their presence only increases the chance of crime. Risk factors act as push factors towards unhealthy behaviors, such as crime. There are many types of risk factors as well as many relationships that they have with one another (see Table 1(Loeber & Farrington, 2000)).

Though it is hard to decipher what risk factors cause crime, relationships can be noted and monitored for trends that link to criminality. Despite single risk factors connecting to crime, complicated relationships between factors and variables show that the right combination can also translate into crime (Loeber & Farrington, 2000).

Many risk factors share correlational components with one another. Table 1 examines how if something goes wrong with family factors, it could create a problem in the school factors. Inconsistencies with school factors could lead to problems with peer factors; all of which can lead to criminal activity (Loeber & Farrington, 2000). When analyzing risk factors to aged-out foster care participants, problems in the family spectrum are apparent; some action caused the participant to be taken out of the parent's custody. Neglect and abuse being the highest factors (Olsen, 2007), these factors can create emotional instability in the young adults. Traumatic victimization can be caused by abuse and manifests in traits that are linked to crime. Lahey, Waldman, and McBurnett (1999) believed that three key psychological and behavioral problems lead to delinquency; 1) not maintaining attention and not managing hyperactive or impulsive behavior, 2) pervasive indifference, negativity or outright hostility toward others, and 3) aggressive violations of social norms, rules, or laws via cruel or criminal behavior. These problems can be caused by traumatic victimization that is common for the individuals who are placed in foster care (Ford, Chapman, Mack, & Pearson, 2006). Feelings of rejection and abandonment develop into unhealthy emotions like anger. With clouded judgment, aged-out participants become susceptible to risk factors, which create a natural push towards crime.

Dukes, Martinez, and Stein (1997), use Hirschi's control theory and apply it psychosocially to explain how social detachment pushes young adults toward groups, such as gangs, where they are exposed to crime and drugs; this affiliation helps young adults justify their delinquency because they are a part of a group that believes that it is justified. Substance abuse has the ability to lower users' inhibitions, which make it easier to engage in criminal activity. If a foster youth starts to not do well in school, they become unmotivated and less likely to pursue higher education and become more susceptible to their peer group's influence. The bonds created by peer groups can hinder furthering an individual's education. This is a societal push towards homelessness, which is complimented by substance abuse and crime. Risk factors are correlational and show connections not causes; society can learn a lot from the connections to develop a better understanding of how risk factor relationships work with crime.

Nevada Specifics

Each state has attempted to create strategies to assist at-risk and aged-out young adults. The state of Nevada has implemented different legislation and programs to stabilize living and provide resources to aging-out and aged-out foster care participants. Transitional housing that is monitored by the courts is available for individuals at the age of 17; this housing allows participants to ease into being self-sufficient. AB 350 is legislation that has had success in providing a living stipend and other resources that promote success in participants' lives. Other Nevada programs that have shown success are independent living facilities. Privately run, these facilities provide housing and training for at-risk youth, aging-out youth, and aged-out young adults. Each program has open communication with one another, which makes it easier on individual facilities,

social workers, and the foster care system. Though each program is run and maintained differently, they have each shown a level of success for participants.

AB 350. The most useful assistance comes from the legislation AB 350. AB 350 was passed in July 2011 (Wolf, 2012). Introduced into assembly on March 21, 2011 and approved by the governor on May 18, 2011, this statute allows aged-out participants to stay under juvenile court jurisdiction until the age of 21. At the age of 17, AB 350 provides an aged-out participant a stipend of up to \$780 per month, a lawyer, a case manager, a social worker, and other opportunities to help them transition into adulthood. Its intent is to assist these young adults find employment, obtain education, be financially stable, and achieve self-sufficiency (Wolf, 2012). Though the participants are able to make their own decisions, for the most part, s/he has to prove they made a “good faith effort” in achieving goals. Teams of workers and officials help create a set of obtainable goals for the participant. AB 350 is considered a right, not a privilege. Participants are always eligible regardless of their past. One of the issues that arises is the lack of exposure a participant has to AB 350 information. Individuals that had already turned 18 years old before it was enacted are ineligible to take advantage of it despite being under the age of 21; the legislation does not work retroactively to include participants who are under the age of 21 because of when they turned 18 years old. Even though it is now available to all aging-out youth, they still must be informed of its existence, procedures, and regulations. This opportunity for support may be lost by youth who will emancipate from foster care if they are not informed of its existence/availability.

Independent living. Different housing options are available to aging-out and aged-out youth based off different criteria. Transitional housing is available to youth

who have not reached the age of 18. Independent living facilities focus on young adults above the age of 18, but take in younger participants based on the need and the situation; they provide stable housing with different educational lessons that focus on becoming independent. These two types of facilities share many qualities but differ by criteria and by management; independent living facilities are more privatized. Two of these independent living facilities in Northern Nevada are the Nevada Youth Empowerment Project and the Eddy House.

Nevada Youth Empowerment Project (NYEP). The Nevada Youth Empowerment Project (NYEP) is a program that combines resources and stable living. This facility functions as an independent living community that houses approximately 13 girls. The participants are all female and the program focuses on all at-risk young adults, not just aged-out foster care youth; 4 girls were considered aged-out while the others were recommended to the facility. The program consists of a living facility where young women learn different skills that assist in developing their personal goals, which also assists them in advancing as individuals when they graduate from the program. The defined goals of NYEP are: 1) Complete high school (traditional diploma, GED, or passing proficiencies), 2) Establish an income (employment), 3) Acquire independent housing (apartment/house, dorm, roommate situation), and 4) Become empowered (initiate life in a responsible manner, have a good relationship with money and understand how to avoid poverty) (NYEP, 2014).

The young women of NYEP are held to schedules and standards that promote independence. On-site coordinators monitor the residents to make sure they are abiding by the rules and regulations of the house. Residents receive points based off chores,

school, attitude, and events. For the first 30 days, new residents have a strict 6:00 PM curfew that is extended to 10:00 PM on weeknights and 12:00 AM on weekends for girls under 18 years of age and 11:00 PM on weeknights and 1:00 AM on weekends for girls over 18 years of age. One of the benefits of the point system is being able to “pay points” for extended curfews and other privileges (i.e., sleepovers). A participant must satisfy the following requirements to demonstrate that she can successfully live independently and graduate from NYEP: complete 90 days of all chores, 90 days of no curfew violations, follow a budget, save \$2,000, and find a place to live. NYEP will readmit those who leave and find that they require additional assistance.

Eddy House (Black Bear Project). Another one of these unique independent living facilities is the Eddy House; formerly known as the Black Bear Project. The Eddy House is a facility that focuses on aging-out male youth as well as males who have already aged-out of foster care; it currently houses 6 males. “The philosophy at Eddy House is to establish long-term connections with our residents by building supportive relationships with peers, mentors and staff. We encourage continuing education, until they have completed high school, earned a college degree or work certificate” (Eddy House, 2014). This facility is paired with the local business “Z-Pie”, which employs the participants. The house focuses on similar independent skills as NYEP: schedules chores, meetings, school, work, and budgeting skills. The Eddy House does not enforce a curfew believing that its participants are at an age where they can start making decisions for themselves. An onsite coordinator ensures the safety of participants but does not micromanage how they choose to spend their leisure time. Though less structured than NYEP, the increased ability to make choices allows participants to feel a sense of

freedom and adulthood that promotes the independence the program hopes participants achieve. “Each youth at Eddy House will be assessed as ready to “launch out” when they have reached their educational or work experience goals, established a bank account and mastered the key life skills to live independently” (Eddy House, 2014).

Chapter III

Theoretical Framework

Blackian Analysis – An Introduction

Donald Black's *The Behavior of Law* (1976) addresses criminal justice through different sociological perspectives. Black connects criminal justice and societal perspectives so a deeper analysis of different groups and sub-groups in society can be achieved by cataloguing their placement in his models. His work examines the level of criminal justice in the lives of different groups based on where they are positioned in society. By looking at predictors, such as stratification, morphology, culture, and organization, measurements of law can be established in different groups. His models explain how those who are poor, uneducated, and have other risk factors present in their lives are less represented by the law than those who have social capital, resources that make them a benefit to and benefit from society, such as social ties or an education.

Using stratification, which shows the distribution of wealth, and morphology, which shows the social worth of a group, Black examines how factors work together to create an influence of law in the lives of individuals dependent on where society casts them. At the bottom of his stratification model, groups are affected by downward law, meaning they are susceptible to laws that were created by individuals and groups that society has ranked above them (Black, 1976). This type of law is a result of upward crime, crime committed from lower level groups targeting higher level groups (Black, 1976). Culture and organization are more abstract; Black examines how, despite all culture having value, some cultures are valued over others and how organization is a key component to change.

Blackian analysis has been applied to topics as specific as nativism in Arizona (Mantle, 2011) and as broad as violent crime (Jensen, 2006). This analysis can be used to examine the social status ascribed to individuals who have aged-out of foster care along with the opportunities, or lack thereof, associated with that status. This placement in the social order has the power to increase or decrease the likelihood of criminal involvement. The increased presence of risk factors and lack of social capital is believed to be more apparent in the lives of aged-out foster care participants. This theoretical framework can be utilized by locating where society places aged-out foster care participants and examining the presence of law in their lives.

Stratification

Stratification is used to predict the type and quantity of law based on relationships, individual value, group value, power, and wealth. Stratification is commonly mistaken as the inequality of wealth, but more specifically it is the uneven distribution of materials and the means by which they are made (Black, 1976). Wealth is more than a monetary concept, wealth can be found in skills, food, and other necessities. Individuals gain wealth through social and personal progression. By associating with high ranking individuals, individuals can gain social capital, which keeps them from being subject to downward law. Aged-out foster care participants lack the ability to form some of these ties, which limits their mobility in the stratification model.

When young adults age-out of foster care, they can be cast at the very bottom of the social stratification hierarchy. Many aged-out young adults lack a completed education, are weighed down by risk factors, and have limited means to access the materials that are needed to sustain life. Black (1976, p. 9) believed, "...[s]ocial control

defines what is deviant”. Social control is laws and legislation that is impacted by officials and how much bureaucracy exists in society. Due to aged-out young adults being a small sub-group, social control impacts them with downward momentum and they are adversely defined as deviant due to their connection with risk factors.

Social stratification is more of a tear drop than a pyramid; pyramids are sharp and finite in shape while a tear drop is more fluid (see Figure 1). The fluidity of social stratification is limited more to the area from which individuals and groups are positioned by social control. Individuals can fluctuate, but the fluctuation is limited to where they have been cast by society. Aged-out foster care young adults are cast in the bottom because they lack materials (i.e., wealth, social ties, education, etc.) and the necessary stability. Being cast in this position with no way to obtain necessary materials is a push towards crime. This upward deviance causes downward laws, which keep them stagnant in the social stratification hierarchy. Society labels individuals without examining how and why risk factors transitioned into criminality. Criminality could have been avoided if downward law was working to assist the impoverished young adults rather than punish them. The push of downward law stagnates this group and hinders them from moving up in the stratification model.

Henry Thomas Buckle once stated, “[s]ociety prepares the crime, the criminal commits it” (Web.Inter, 2014). This statement is the direct embodiment of the social structure process, a process that examines how one turns into a deviant. By looking at the social process, deviance can be examined to see how it is impacted by society. Black (1976, p.15) believed, “...[a]rrest varies directly with stratification between the offender and the victim, as does prosecution, conviction, and punishment”. The position of the

offender and victim predicts the level of law, as well as other variables. The presence of risk factors and where these young adults are placed in the stratification model prevent justice officials from seeing the underlying cause of crime because they just see deviance. Social conditions increase the likelihood of criminality, but rather than examining each case and gauging societal factors, the individual is held accountable.

The social structural explanation is founded on the principle that an individual's placement in society affects their behavior. This suggests that crime can be explained by looking at key social factors, such as clubs, social groups, the work environment, and other venues for social interaction. Stratification pushes these young adults down and society keeps them there. Risk factors hinder the mobility of participants and keep them stagnant in the stratification hierarchy. Some of these individuals have to worry about survival so things, such as extracurricular activities and clubs, take a backseat and they are unable to get the momentum to propel them out of their current situation. The things that give them more social capital are less important during the present time because no one is there to teach them that these things help in the future and push them out of their current social stratum. These young adults fall further and further down the stratification tear drop and become more susceptible to the will of the higher levels. Downward law punishes individuals that could have been helped before risk factors transitioned into criminality. Wealth is not the only thing these aged-out participants lack, due to their position they also lack morphological variables that would allow them to progress in other Blackian models.

Morphology

According to Black (1976, p. 37), “[m]orphology is the horizontal aspect of social life, the distribution of people in relation to one another, including their division of labor, networks of interaction, intimacy, and integration”. While stratification focuses on types of wealth, morphology focuses on important social ties and roles. Morphology appears in the form of a bull’s-eye where the individuals in the center are individuals with more social capital, due to higher education, group participation, and having other desirable traits, versus individuals with less social capital who are in the more outer rings (see Figure 2). Stratification focuses on upward and downward law while morphology is curvilinear and focuses on centrifugal and centripetal law (law in a circular diagram), which is enforced by the socialized center to the less socialized groups surrounding it. The same reasoning that explains why people are cast at the bottom of the stratification model also explains why people occupy the outskirts of the morphology model. Aged-out foster care participants are more differentiated because the lack of a stable foundation creates inconsistencies in their housing, school, and social groups. This puts them at a disadvantage where they have fewer social ties than individuals who are more centralized. Being in foster care is a unique experience that only other participants understand. Because aged-out young adults are more interdependent, depending on themselves and on other foster care participants, there is a greater emphasis on law in their lives since they socialize within that specific group. Though the influence of law is greater because of their position, both in stratification and in morphology models, society has taken positive steps to specialize laws to assist these individuals, but larger steps are necessary.

States still maintain adulthood begins at the age of 18. The median age for completing school, marrying, and becoming a parent has steadily risen and young adults still need assistance from their family structure, which causes them to delay marriage and their own nuclear family formation. Becoming and maintaining independence at the age of 18 is difficult, sometimes assistance is necessary. Without support to achieve these milestones, aged-out foster care young adults lack the foundation along with social capital that is necessary to progress themselves. These factors push them further into the outer rings of the morphology spectrum where they are, again, more susceptible to law.

Without the safety net a stable home life provides, young adults succumb to risk factors. Unable to see a silver lining, aged-out young adults make choices that only increase the amount of law in their lives, which pushes them further from the top of stratification and the center of morphology. Morphology examines the connection of social ties and law; these individuals are less socialized so they experience more law. With the increased presence of law comes the increased chance of an individual breaking the law. In this situation, risk factors have the potential to transition into criminality.

Culture

Culture is another component of Black's theory. Black does not refer to sub-culture; even if the majority views a minority group's culture as a sub-culture, it is still the minority's primary culture. Culture is a combination of reality and concepts (Black, 1976). Black defines reality as a combination of ideas that are religious, supernatural, and practical that make up man's understanding of the world; concepts are what is considered proper and improper, moral and immoral, as well as right and wrong (Black, 1976). During the 17th century, English Poor Law acknowledged the additional burdens

orphaned youth faced. Orphans were labeled as “indentured” and could receive assistance into their mid-twenties; this was one idea that helped progress the United States’ Social Welfare Program (Children’s Aid Society, 2013). Money was collected for orphaned children and they lived with statewide families that were willing to share what they had. This practice was part of U.S. culture that tried to assist in-need children because it was morally right (Children’s Aid Society, 2013). In 1853, Brace documented about 30,000 homeless youth living in New York (Children’s Aid Society, 2013). He established The Children’s Aid Society and began “the orphan train movement”. He would take homeless children and send them on a train to “farm families” in hopes they would receive a better life. Despite good intentions, this was basically sentencing orphaned children to a life of indentured servitude. This practice creates a distinct culture of its own for the young participants, which is separate from the centralized American culture.

According to Black (1976, p. 63), “[s]ome societies have more culture than others, some groups, situations, or individuals more than others”. The history of foster care participants creates a culture all of its own, but not in the valued Blackian sense. Foster care culture consists of what these individuals have seen and grasped from their experience; a unique experience only other participants understand. Though this is a type of culture, it is not the kind that Black believes carries any weight in society. Black believes that valued culture comes from knowledge of ideas, fine art, theology, philosophy, and other categories of higher education (Black, 1976). This understanding of the world is a risk factor since it does not value the culture of foster youth which increases their susceptibility to individuals with more culture. Black (1976, p. 65) believed, “...[a]n offense by someone with less

culture than his victim is more serious than an offense in the opposite direction”. Culture reinforces the vicious cycle where a lack of social capital and resources puts these individuals in the worst spectra of stratification and morphology. In this position, laws are increasingly stacked against aged-out individuals and limit their mobility.

Organization

Black (1976, p. 85) defined organization as “[t]he corporate aspect of social life, the capacity for collective action”. The key to facilitating change is the utilization of organizations (Black, 1976). Foster care is a program but is assisted by other child advocacy organizations. The assistance foster care agencies receive comes more from other groups that fit under a broader banner of child advocacy. The International Foster Care Organization (IFCO) exists but their focus is on promoting foster care rather than improving it (International Foster Care Organization, 2010). Advertising for the need of foster families is important, but it runs the risk of attracting under-qualified families. A sad truth is foster care does pay individuals to assist these youth, so it does create a type of industry where people look for monetary compensation rather than the well-being of the child. Though foster care programs do background checks and try their best to screen parents, some individuals receive custody of children who view them as a source of income. In these cases, all organizations have failed because their goal of promoting foster care has attracted unqualified families and did not improve the position these youth are placed in. As Russell states:

...you may remember a few years ago when a couple of foster parents here in Ohio made the news by tying up their foster child and leaving him in a closet while they went on vacation. The child died from this mistreatment, a tragedy that ended up

changing many Ohio foster care laws. Most foster parents aren't that evil, but there are some of them who do more damage to their foster children than good. It's a little spoken truth in the foster care community, but there definitely are people who do this simply for the money. Most of them take in more children than they can handle, therefore promising themselves the biggest check. Unfortunately, they often ignore the needs of these children. Even if they do meet their physical needs, they neglect any emotional demands. (2010, p. 1)

Over advertising the need of foster families increases the likelihood of situations described by Russell (2010). Organization is collective action; more organization is needed to assure that individuals who are looking out for the best interest of the youth are the ones taking custody of them. Unqualified families increase the presence of risk factors, which negatively affect participants in Black's other predictors.

The issue arises that foster care agencies focus so much on the kids in the foster care system, that participants who age-out are forgotten. Though aged-out participants are a smaller group in the foster care hierarchy, these are the individuals who face increased hardships and burdens. So much effort is directed to promoting foster care, that it leaves those individuals who are preparing to age-out or who have aged-out with less organization and less opportunity for mobility in Black's other models. If a foster family is in it for the money, then society does aging-out participants the largest disservice by not giving them a fair chance at a family that will provide them with the foundation that is needed and that some luckily receive.

Application

Black's models and predictors can be applied to many groups, including aged-out foster care participants. This framework explains why aged-out participants are greatly susceptible to law due to their position in society and the presence of risk factors in their lives. By examining aged-out participants through Black's models, a more accurate understanding of how risk factors weigh participants down and affect their mobility can be achieved. It is expected that in all spectra, aged-out young adults are cast in areas where the presence of law is the greatest, which increases the chances of risk factors transitioning into criminality. Their location in the stratification hierarchy will place them with less wealth than most groups so the presence of downward law is greater. Being cast in the outskirts of the morphology model increases the push of outward law in participants' lives. Depending on position, predictor variables can show an increased amount of law in aged-out participants' lives, which increases the push to crime and criminality.

Chapter IV

Methodology

Current Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the presence of key risk factors for criminal justice involvement in the lives of young adults who age-out of foster care in Reno, Nevada. It is assumed that these risk factors are present to a greater degree in this subgroup than to the general population. Research questions this study aims to study are:

1. Do aged-out foster care young adults have more risk factors present in their lives?
 - a. What is the rate of homelessness for individuals who age-out of foster care?
 - b. What is the rate at which they graduate high school?
 - c. What is the rate at which they seek higher education?
 - d. Do they suffer from disabilities at a higher rate?
 - e. Do they have children at a younger age?
 - f. Do they suffer from substance abuse?
 - g. What is their rate for unemployment?
2. Do individuals who age-out of foster care suffer from a higher rate of criminality?
3. Do outcomes differ for individuals who aged-out of foster care compared with statewide and national averages?

Due to the relatively small size of this population in Reno, Nevada, different strategies were utilized in order to find participants who qualify for the study. Before participation, a consent form was read to the participant to explain the purpose of the study and to give the participant the opportunity to ask study-related questions. A survey

(see Appendix C) and an interview (see Appendix D) were used as the two forms of data collection. The data were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods, compared to statewide and national averages, and examined for reoccurring themes. Twenty-five participants were sampled from an estimated population of 200. Multi-methods was used to strengthen the data collected.

Eligibility Criteria

Participants qualified for this study if they: 1) aged-out of foster care, 2) were between the ages of 18 and 25, and 3) if they were fluent in writing and speaking English. The title of “aging-out” of foster care was merited if an individual was in foster care and became too old to be placed in a foster home. One individual was in foster care but was released into her estranged father’s custody though he lived in a different state and they had not been in contact in years. Though she cannot receive aged-out benefits, for the purpose of the study she is considered, by the supplied definition, an aged-out young adult. Individuals surveyed were all geographically located in the Reno, Nevada area.

The age range was identified for several reasons. Being 18 years of age meant that the individual is recognized as an adult and could willingly consent to the survey. This also meant that they would be too old to be placed in a foster home, with respect to special circumstances. The maximum age of 25 years was chosen so that the assistance they receive could be compared to younger individuals. The maximum of 25 years of age was later amended because the oldest survey participant was 24 years of age and all other participants were 23 years of age and younger.

The language criterion was selected in order to prevent confusion between the participant and the researcher. Being fluent in English, written and spoken, meant that

there would be less misunderstanding during the survey and the interview. Because the consent form was read to the participant, it was necessary that they understood what to expect. If the participant had a question, it was important that they and the researcher could communicate so that no question was overlooked.

Participant Recruitment

Aged-out foster care young adults are a small sub-group in society. There are agencies that specifically deal with this group but some participants choose no longer to be involved with the foster care system once they age-out. One agency, Children's Cabinet (2014), reported that, on average, 40 young adults age-out every year in the Reno, Nevada area. In order to find participants, targeted recruitment and snowball sampling were utilized. Flyers with eligibility criteria and researcher contact information, so that participants could anonymously set up meetings without giving out personal information, were posted at different agencies and establishments frequented by individuals who are eligible to participate in the research (foster agencies, coffee shops, and Z-Pie). The flyers were also handed out at bus stations and by social workers.

Due to aged-out foster care participants being a small sub-group, it was necessary to also use targeted recruitment. Independent living facilities, such as NYEP and the Eddy House, were contacted. Supervisors of these programs were informed about the procedures and the purpose of the research, and they allowed participants to complete the survey and interview on site. Another targeted location was the Homeless Youth PIT Count. The PIT Count was held on January 30, 2014 and was a twenty-four hour event that surveyed homeless young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 while providing them with necessities. These targeted locations played a large role in finding participants.

Snowball sampling was chosen in order to find gatekeepers; gatekeepers are individuals that lead to other individuals or groups that researchers might have difficulty accessing on their own. By finding multiple gatekeepers, the study expands the scope of participation and is able to find participants with different outcomes.

Procedure

Before the survey was given, the participant was read a consent form. The form was dictated and not signed in order to keep the participants' identities completely anonymous. The form explained the purpose of the survey and interview, why they were chosen as a participant, and the procedure. Participants were notified that it was a 40 question survey followed by a 12 question interview. The expected duration, of the survey and interview, was between 45 minutes and 75 minutes, but the individual could take as much time as necessary. Though there was no foreseeable risk or benefit, each participant was made aware that the questions asked might cause some discomfort. Because the information collected was for a thesis not backed by any agency, there was no cost or compensation for participation. The final segment explained that at any point the participant could stop taking the survey if they no longer wished to participate but also, if they later wished to be withdrawn, the primary researcher's information was given so that they could notify the researcher that they no longer wanted to be included in the research. A copy of the consent form was given to each participant as well as a contact sheet of numbers they could call if they felt any discomfort after the survey and interview.

A survey and an interview were used for data collection. The survey was composed of 40 questions beginning with descriptive variables, such as age, race and ethnicity, and

sex and ending with variables, such as time spent homeless, substance abuse history, and arrest record. The questions were modeled after different risk factors that exist to see if the participant had experienced them at a higher rate. Questions included knowledge of assistance provided after aging-out, education level, employment status, having a child, and suffering from a disability. The survey used both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The majority of the questions were dichotomous questions where the participant could choose yes or no. Categorical questions and ordinal scaled questions that provided answers that measured status or time (i.e., “What is your current employment status?” and “How long were you homeless?”) were also used. Open-ended questions provided a space beneath where the participant could write out their answer. The purpose of these different question formats was to make sure that the maximum amount of data was collected without leaving out significant information that could not be formatted by closed-ended questions or open-ended questions alone.

The interview was composed of 12 questions and was given after the survey so that the survey could be utilized in leading conversation during the interview. In order not to increase the chances of discomfort, the interview questions were written to be broad and allow the participant to interpret them. The interview had the potential to be overly intrusive if not conducted in a proper manner; though very open, the questions could be used to the advantage of the participant, allowing them to feel in control. This gave the participant the freedom to speak about what they wanted, but allowed the researcher to shift the question to get a more in-depth look at some of the answers on the survey. The question “How far have you gone in school?” can be used as a bridge to why their educational level is where it is and what the individual’s long term goals could be. The

main cause for concern for the survey and interview was the over sharing of information that could cause the participant to remember dormant problems that they might suppress. In order to alleviate some of the potential cause for concern, the survey used the final two questions as debriefing questions, a way to monitor how the participant was feeling.

Analytic Plan

The two methods for data collection, the survey and the interview, produced quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative analysis is applied to the survey where the data collected is used in a comparison between the sample group, statewide, and national averages. The data collected by the interview added qualitative elements. This facilitated the use of multi-methodology to strengthen the results; both quantitative and qualitative analysis were necessary in order to examine each individual that participated in the study.

Quantitative data. Quantitative data was able to provide the data for a statistical comparison between the surveyed group, statewide, and national averages. The questions from the survey catalogued the presence of risk factors in the lives of the aged-out foster care participants. The responses of the participants were entered into Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) software to calculate averages for the group on risk factors of interest. SPSS was used to generate graphs and format information on risk factors that were used in comparisons of averages. SPSS was also used to isolate and compare risk factors. Pairs of risk factors were examined to see how frequently they occurred simultaneously.

Averages of the participants were compared to statewide averages and national averages so a control group was not needed. Statewide and national averages allows the

study to examine the presence of risk factors on the general population in comparison to a group that is viewed as more susceptible due to the lack of stability provided by a family unit. Having 25 participants, the quantitative data uses univariate and bivariate analysis. Univariate and bivariate analysis are both descriptive tables that show basic averages, connections, and frequencies of the data. The univariate averages are the averages compared to the statewide and national levels. The bivariate analysis is composed of statistics that compare two variables (i.e., “Have you been homeless?” and “Have you ever been arrested?”) and seeing if there is a correlation. Correlations show a connection between two variables but cannot determine a cause. Though two topics might seem connected to one another, it does not necessarily mean that they cause one another. This form of data was able to examine connections and frequencies while the qualitative data was able to show patterns and trends.

Qualitative data. The questions from the interview, and the open-ended questions from the survey, were applied to a qualitative content analysis; specifically directed content analysis. This type of analysis allowed for the material to be subjectively interpreted by finding themes in what the participants discussed (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Through content analysis of the interviews, core consistencies were able to be found and the data analyzed. The process begins with initial coding by going through the materials, by hand, and identifying themes by the reoccurrence of topics and manifest content (key words) (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The primary function is to validate the quantitative data collected and interpret deeper meanings. Since the survey has qualitative formatting for some questions, the survey and interviews were both subject for review during this process. During manifest content, each document is

examined and key words are underlined, highlighted, and marked to see how often terms and ideas appear in single individual's surveys and interviews as well as the collection as a whole. Multiple copies have been made of each document in order to ensure that the original document is not degraded during this phase.

Weakness of Design

Sample size. There were foreseeable and unforeseeable limitations that occurred. The largest limitation was the lack of participants. Having only 25 out of an estimated population of 200 (Children's Cabinet, 2014) limited the application of the data in the quantitative analysis. Larger sample sizes are more generalizable and can reflect the larger population. The confidence interval is at 18.38 percent with using a standard 95 percent confidence interval, having 25 participants, a population of 200, and a worst case accuracy percentage of 50 percent. This means that if all 25 of the survey participants answered yes to a question, it might only accurately reflect 81.62 percent of the population. With a population of 200, a five percent margin of error, and a confidence interval level of 95 percent, 132 participants would be needed. The data collected are not generalizable, but is strengthened because of the multi-method approach and can still be examined for themes.

Recruitment. Snowball sampling facilitates access to populations that are generally difficult to access, but it also presents the issue of generating a sample of similar cases. Because an individual had a particular outcome, it is believed that they associate with people with similar outcomes. The targeted recruitment suffers from the same limitation. Because the participants who live at independent living facilities, such as NYEP and Eddy House, live together and follow the same structure, it is likely that

they have similar outcomes; participants from these facilities have the same rules, duties, and stipulations, so they are not as generalizable as individuals found through random sampling. Targeted recruitment is also beneficial because it provides access to sub-groups. The targeted recruitment at the PIT Count was able to open participation to a population that is very transient.

Self-reporting. The survey and interview collect self-reported data; the responses the participants gave were based on their memory and not concrete data. This might produce more opinion based responses than actual facts. Though participants responded as best they could, their responses could be more based from their personal understanding of a situation. If a memory inspired a certain emotion, it might be felt more looking back at that same moment. How they felt during a certain point and time could influence how they responded; this affected the validity of the interview more than the survey. The survey was formatted with closed-ended questions while the interview allowed participants to interpret the questions and the events; the interview was more susceptible to the limitations associated with self-reporting data.

Issues with Recruitment and Interviews

Agencies. Due to snowball sampling and targeted recruitment, it was necessary to acquire help from agencies that specialize in dealing with emancipated young adults. One agency was very helpful in setting up meetings with social workers and providing information, but notifying participants of the survey was at the discretion of social workers. At one point, two participants had readily set up a time they would be available to partake in the survey and interview. When the day came for their appointment, both individuals notified the researcher they would not like to be included in the research; they

were told by their social worker(s) not to participate. Participants were never questioned as to why the social worker(s) did not want them to participate or if there were other issues.

Transience. Transience itself is a risk factor due to being vulnerable to change and lacking a stable foundation. Most aged-out young adults do not own a vehicle and are highly transient in regard to living situations. Participant's availability as well as their living situation were fluid; they moved from place to place and couch to couch. Between ten and fifteen individuals received flyers and set up meeting places that they could reach and times that they were available; none of these participants attended their scheduled meeting. Many participants who set up interviews and did not attend did not have a stable living environment. Some never rescheduled while others set up multiple meetings and never attended. Of the 25 aged-out young adults surveyed, the majority had to pick off site locations to participate while only one was able to meet at the pre-designated area on the University of Nevada, Reno's campus. When individuals were asked about why they missed their appointment, many responded that they could not get to the location they had chosen. On average, an hour and a half was spent at each meeting location waiting for participants who did not attend; this proved to be very time consuming.

Overwhelming interviews. A personal issue the researcher experienced was the nature of information divulged during interviews. More often than not, participants were accustomed to telling their stories and were willing to divulge all the information they had about their past. Those who had the worst stories were desensitized from retelling it to multiple officials and agents so they had no problem sharing their stories with a

researcher. Some of the testimonies were overwhelming in nature due to the level of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse participants had endured. It is one thing to hear a story; it is a different thing to put a face to that story. At one point, an entire day was scheduled beginning with three interviews and a meeting with the Eddy House. It was underestimated how much and how personal the information would be. After the first three interviews, the remaining interviews had to be rescheduled; the rest of the day was used to process everything that was shared and evaluate how future interviews can be conducted.

Chapter V

Quantitative Analysis

Comparison between Statewide/National Averages

Comparing the responses from aged-out participants to statewide and national averages provides a way to measure the difference between the sub-group sample and the general population. The data displayed in Table 2 examines the study group against statewide and national averages; no one source provided all the material needed so multiple sources were used. Each of the variables listed in Table 2 are risk factors, except for being currently enrolled in college. The percentages and figures under the sample category represent the participants of the survey. What was found was that the aged-out young adults surveyed were more likely, statewide and nationally, to suffer from a disability (see Appendix A). The sample population had a larger high school dropout rate than the statewide and national averages. In contrast, they were more likely to be enrolled in college compared to statewide and national averages. All four participants with children were women who fell under the criteria for the 2010 statistics about teen pregnancy, meaning they were female and had a child, which allowed them to be used in comparison to their findings. The sample population of individuals currently unemployed was larger than the statewide average and almost four times the national average. Of the surveyed population, 24 percent are currently homeless compared to the statewide .55 percent and national 1.1 percent.

When the sample group from this research took the survey, there were questions about how frequently they used drugs or drank alcohol. The Likert scale that was used allowed them to choose from never, rarely, sometimes, socially, frequently, and all of the

time. The drug statistics used represent reoccurring usage so the range of answers participants gave was amended; responses from the level of “socially” to “all of the time” were calculated and used in the comparison against the statewide and national averages. Though this excluded part of the subject group, the sample size was still larger than statewide and national averages. The same scenario arose with drinking statistics but the usage was to a lesser extent so the sample responses were amended to represent those who were between “sometimes” and “all of the time”. Again, the sample group used alcohol to a greater extent than the statewide and national averages. The final category had no reference for statewide arrests, all statistics focused on number of crimes but offered no input on arrests that were made in the response to crimes. The national average was 4.24 percent of the population was arrested while 68 percent of the sample population was arrested.

Since all statistics came from different sources, it was difficult finding similar averages to compare to the risk factors being examined. Many of the averages are from 2010, 2011, and 2012. These can still be used as reference points to where the sample group stands comparatively. Examining the sample averages to statewide and national averages provides a necessary comparison. The findings show that the sample group had a much higher presence of risk factors in their lives.

Correlation between Risk Factors

Risk factors can be connected in many ways. By conducting a frequency matrix of the many risk factors, correlations can be made based off how frequent these risk factors occur with one another. Table 3 is a frequency matrix, which depicts the findings of the bivariate analysis on risk factors. Each factor is compared with the other factors to

see the frequency of them occurring simultaneously. Not all factors need 25 individuals to represent 100 percent; the number 4 represents 100 percent of the surveyed population who has a child. This means that 100 percent of the population with a child have a disability, felt that foster care did not prepare them for aging-out, and have experimented with drugs.

Examining the bivariate analysis, connections between topics can be seen. Many of the participants who reported drug experimentation, alcohol use, a disability, and being arrested have experienced homelessness. A closer examination shows that many of the participants with risk factors present in their lives have been homeless. This shows how the risk factors can be connected but cannot show a cause; these participants may have been homeless when they were children. Though the majority of participants graduated high school, they are less likely to pursue higher education. Graduating high school also showed the highest connection with being arrested; this is due to little variation on this variable. The majority of participants have graduated high school so it is more likely that a high school graduate be arrested than one of the five that did not graduate. The second highest risk factor associated with being arrested was drug use. Table 4 examines the frequency of drug usage with the risk factor of being arrested. What the table shows is that those who rarely use drugs were the most likely to be arrested. Though 17 out of 25 participants have been arrested, there is no information to determine whether or not those arrests were related to drug use. Table 5 examines drug usage as it occurs with unemployment. As drug usage increases, a steady stream of unemployment becomes notable. Once the table reaches “all of the time”, a shift occurs where frequent drug users have a larger employment rate and the relationship becomes curvilinear; their

employment rate surpasses those who never use drugs and those who socially use drugs. There is no information as to why this occurs. It can be speculated that these individuals take jobs that do not drug test or because they have learned to work around the employment system.

One reoccurring trend is that the majority of risk factors occur where participants did not feel prepared by foster care to age-out. Eighteen of the sample subjects, representing 72 percent of the surveyed population, reported that they were unprepared to age-out of foster care. This can be seen as one of the greatest risk factors because it has a strong correlation to the others. Being unprepared puts added strain on living accommodations. Table 3 shows how frequently risk factors occur with homelessness. All 6 sample subjects who are currently homeless believed that they were not prepared to age-out. Looking at risk factors, society can see how being homeless weighs heavily on criminality and some of the other issues these young adults face.

Chapter VI

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data were generated from open-ended questions from the survey and questions given during the interview. Several themes were identified in the data. One participant reported that he was kept with his mentally challenged twin brother, they were put into only one foster home, and the parents were loving and treated everyone equally; this is not the typical experience of the sample group. Many of the participants reported being separated from siblings, being placed in multiple homes, and being treated differently than a biological child would be treated. Responses to interview questions were examined for reoccurring trends and key words that highlighted patterns. Separation from siblings, being housed with multiple families, families being unqualified, adoption used as an incentive, group homes, lack of communication, and reunification with their biological families were issues pulled from dialogue. Some patterns were determined by physical linguistic units, such as key words, while other units of analysis were derived from individual themes, such as emotions and other abstract feelings (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Though each participant had a different story, they experienced similar emotions and problems.

Siblings

More often than not, foster care participants were housed separately from their siblings. Participants noted that their number of siblings ranged from 1 to 20; some had no idea how many siblings they had or what their names were. Several of the participants were displeased with being separated from their siblings. One younger sibling spoke about not understanding what was going on; he and his older brother were taken from

their mother's custody together, but later they were separated. Placed in different homes, he rarely got to see his older brother, who had been an instrument of support. Many of the older siblings reported serving as a parental influence to their younger siblings. Because of the level of trauma endured when with their biological parents, older siblings reported stepping into a parental role at young ages. This caused siblings to feel a greater attachment to one another and become unnerved when they were separated.

Older siblings reported that they had to act like parents and be strong for their siblings. They often tried to mask the problems at home by taking on extra responsibilities; trying to give younger siblings a chance at the childhoods that the older siblings did not have. Tasks, such as feeding and clothing, became responsibilities of the older siblings who were just kids themselves. Being thrust into this role at an early age was detrimental to older siblings who felt an increased pressure to assist their younger siblings. They felt it was their duty to shield their younger brothers or sisters from the harsh realities of the level of their neglect. This hyper-responsibility caused increased attachment to younger siblings and increased the level of trauma during separation. Older siblings needed their younger siblings just as much as the younger siblings needed them.

In one case, the older sister was the one who reported the abuse of her and her eight brothers and sisters; one baby had already died for not being treated for pneumonia. The siblings were all split up, some of the younger ones were able to stay together; few maintained a relationship with their older sister because they blamed her for the separation and being taken from their family. The young ones could not register the abuse that transpired and still missed their parents; they were either too young or did not

notice due to their older sister acting as a pseudo-mother. The older child reported how she did not understand what it was like to feel normal; she was always hungry, always dirty, always sexually and physically abused. This is what the other children viewed as normal in their house. The older sister was blamed for severing the family's ties. Though this particular instance promoted disdain between the siblings, several other participants noted that they wished they could have all stayed together.

Participants also reported when separated from siblings, they would reach out to other foster children in the home to replace that bond. One participant lives with his older biological brother and his foster care brother. The older brother understands that in his absence, his younger brother had to reach out for some level of support. Sibling relationships provide a level of stability that forms tight bonds during periods of neglect. Though separated for a period, dedicated siblings were able to maintain contact through social media and maintain some sort of relationship.

The dynamics of sibling relationships varied from case to case. A reoccurring trend was the dependency siblings felt to one another; this caused the one participant to report on her parents. She, inadvertently, caused a rift in the sibling relationship that was eventually mended when they were placed with families that were able to provide them with stability and necessities they did not receive when with their biological parents. The unique bonds shared by siblings, though different, were strong ones. The trauma of separation from brothers and sisters promoted a different type of loss than being taken from their homes. This variable is represented as a risk factor of being detached from a reliable support structure.

Multiple Families

Approximately ten participants remarked on how they did not like being moved from family to family. Two participants stayed with the same family their entire experience in foster care. One reported that he was moved around 50 times while others said they were moved around 20 times. The majority of participants reported being moved between two and four times. This constant movement hindered stability and progress. Participants felt detached from their foster families and knew that they would eventually be moved, again.

Families are unique units that are formed differently. Though all the families chose to be foster families, this does not mean that they were universal and run in the same fashion. When changing families, foster care participants were exposed to new ways of life and new ways to operate; what might have been allowed at one house might not be allowed at another. The participants are forced to conform to new structures and regulations with every move. As participants grew older, they grew restless with changing dynamics and became more rebellious. One participant stated that she stopped caring about the changing rules and just did what she wanted. These types of attitudes put a strain on the cohesion of family units; participants did not care about respecting the families or rules because they knew they would be moved.

Changing families also meant changing schools. Constant movement did not allow participants to adequately adjust to their surroundings. Transience hindered the ability to form substantial ties to friends and families. Many participants maintained the belief that forming bonds with individuals was futile since they did not know how long they would be housed in their current situation. This constant movement ties with the

theoretical framework of morphology; being unable to establish social capital through groups and other forums, participants began to harbor angst and animosity towards the foster care system. Participants believed that all families were the same and some stopped giving new families a chance. These elements put an emphasis on antisocial behaviors, such as using illegal substances. Twenty-two participants reported some level of experimentation with controlled substances. One participant stated that she would just get high to pass the time from family to family. Many of the participants reported that they would recreationally use drugs as an escape. These attitudes influence risk factors, which manifest in large levels of detachment.

Unqualified Families

Participants reported that some families were nice but overwhelmingly they were disinterested in the children. Many of the respondents remarked that they felt as though they were only viewed as a paycheck; this was their perspective. Families would provide them with basic necessities but would not provide additional non-physical resources. There is physical care and emotional care, many participants felt that they did not receive the latter of the two. Also, as different as families are, these participants were equally as different; this lead into the families being ill-equipped to deal with some of the participants and their unique backgrounds.

One subject remarked that families could not deal with her anger and would lash out at her; she reported that during one altercation, she was subdued by her foster mother who tackled her into a door. Another participant stated that he was combative as a child and suffered from anger issues. He would frequently get into trouble for fighting at school. His, constantly changing, foster parents had no idea how to stop his violent

episodes. These two stories are examples of how undiagnosed issues were problematic for foster parents, but there are instances where participants with diagnosed problems were placed with families that were unqualified.

Three participants reported that the level of abuse they endured from their biological families was so great that they were put into a special program called Rehabilitative Environment Allowing Children Hope (REACH). This program was designed to assist the placement of victims of severe abuse with families. Participants said that the program taught them skills and lessons to manage their feelings so that they would be in a better social state and be more open to new families. One participant said the placement was successful, one never graduated from REACH, and another said that even though she graduated, the families were not able to handle the level of trauma she had sustained and she was unsuccessfully placed with families.

The participant that graduated and was unsuccessfully placed suffered a high level of abuse. Her mother had abandoned her brother and her to their abusive grandmother. The woman would refuse to let them attend school and would frequently physically and mentally abuse the pair. They were kept hungry and would be locked in the bathroom for days. The damage that was inflicted was so great that the girl still cannot understand social norms and her brother has become mentally and physically handicapped; he will never be able to live on his own. When she was placed with families, they would often lose their temper with her and could not understand the level of abuse she had experienced. Other participants, who did not participate in REACH, experienced similar problems. Many of the families were not trained to deal with the issues these young adults suffered from; some did not try to understand them.

Many of the participants who were placed with families with biological children noted the difference in treatment. Older participants were used for childcare when the parents were out. Both older and younger study participants saw how they were treated differently. One participant commented on how the “real” kids would get new toys and clothes while he received the hand-me-downs. Others talked about how the biological family would eat first and then the foster kids. One participant relayed that one family she was with had a huge three story house that always had more than 15 kids. The first story of the house was the kitchen and living rooms, the second story was for the foster kids, and the third story was for the biological family and their children; one of the chores they had to do was clean the stairs between the second and third stories but were not allowed to actually go on the third story.

Unqualified families can occur due to lack of preparedness or lack of care. It is recognized that all foster care participants suffer from some level of trauma due to being separated from their family; some suffer at a greater level than others. Families are given these participants with limited understanding of how this trauma will manifest. Programs, like REACH, try to assist families by assisting those who suffer at higher levels. Participants reported that unqualified families would not take the necessary time to understand them and would give up. Other unqualified families would use the participants to their advantage. Whether they were seen as a paycheck, a babysitter, or a house-keeper, participants were able to process how they were treated and this would further the level of detachment they experienced. Some became more resilient to being placed with new families, this put a strain on family ties and increased the presence of risk factors.

Adoption Incentive

Many of the foster families did not know how to handle participants. Some families used the promise of adoption as an incentive for good behavior. Five respondents reported that their foster families made promises of adoption that never came to fruition; one participant had to seek professional help to deal with the trauma that this experience caused. She had been with her family for two years and just before she turned 18, they revoked their promise due to “conflict over age appropriate behavior”. This young woman received a scholarship to attend college across the nation due to her academic success in high school. Despite her many successes, her foster parents began accusing her of substance abuse and promiscuity; they challenged her virginity due to the fact that she was in a long-term committed relationship. She felt that the excuses given to her were just an easy way to get out of the promise of adoption made by her foster parents. She eventually went to college but came back due to emotional issues that were related to not being adopted.

Another respondent reported how her family promised to adopt her but never did because they kept receiving more foster kids and she was put to the side. Other participants reported how adoption was the light at the end of the tunnel. Being taken from their biological family and given to another is a difficult experience to endure. Left with feelings of abandonment, participants want to believe that they are wanted. Adoption is seen as a source of vindication that someone wants them in their family and their life. Though there are many ways one can leave foster care, some solutions are seen as less likely than others.

For most participants, adoption is seen as more plausible than reunification. If the family does not adopt, they are again faced with feelings of abandonment. The five study participants that were promised adoption still harbored resentment about the situation. This promise provided them with a false sense of stability that was taken away. Believing that their foster family would always be able to provide support lulled participants into a false sense of security, which increased the struggles of adulthood when the promise was left unfulfilled. Participants were left feeling abandoned for a second time and had to learn to register these feelings as young adults.

Group Homes

Some of the participants were placed in group homes instead of with foster care families. One subject talked about how he was in a group home with rules and structure; it was meant to promote stability but hindered the participant's ability to make choices. He was almost 18 years old and wanted to make his own decisions. His final confrontation with staff began when he was caught with marijuana on the premises; the site supervisor found it and confronted him. At the end of the argument, the subject packed his things and left; he did not reveal that he had purchased it from a staff member. He stated that he would rather make a bad choice and fend for himself rather than live in a place where he had no choices. The participant ended up on the streets and then with friends. In order to afford rent, his roommates would commit robbery and he would sell cocaine. This went on for months before the participant and his roommates were robbed during a drug-deal.

Another participant reported that she had sexual relations with one of her group home staff members. She reported that he was a nice guy and would show her special

attention. This attention eventually escalated into a sexual encounter in his vehicle. This same participant also reported how she would purchase prescription pills from other staff members. Her demeanor allowed staff to see her as an adult. She was seen as very mature and staff would view her as an adult since she was close to the age of 18. The participant reported that if she was “cool” to the staff, they would be the same to her and treat her like she was normal. Years later, she recognizes how this was not appropriate treatment.

These participants addressed the blurred lines of group homes. Participants are young adults but want to be treated like “full” adults. This can create a grey area where authority figures can be seen as friends. This thin line was crossed and participants did not get the help that they needed to better themselves. With older young adults, it is harder to treat them like children when all they want is to be seen as adults. The haze this creates makes it difficult to establish boundaries and be disciplined by authority figures. This sets the stage for future problems that correlate to issues in the criminal justice system. Being unable to understand authority figures and communicate with them appropriately creates another long lasting risk factor in these participants’ lives.

Communication

Once out of foster care, many participants did not feel the need to maintain contact with social workers and other officials they had to correspond with; some believed that there was no further assistance available for them while others just wanted to be in charge of their own lives. For those who did maintain relationships with foster care officials, they believe that they do not receive adequate communication of events and opportunities that are made available to them. Many believe that the workers

assigned to them are stretched too thin and that is why they are not informed and do not obtain the help that they need; participants believe that sometimes social workers forget what participants they have informed due to the large case loads.

One participant reported, though she utilizes AB 350, she had not seen her social worker in a year and has been trying to contact her lawyer for weeks with no success. Struggling being a single mom, she looks for opportunities to make extra money but routinely misses out on different courses that pay for aged-out young adults to attend because no one had informed her of the opportunities. Another participant said that he believed he did not get information because his case manager would get frustrated with his inability to make meetings due to his transience. Both participants feel that they do not receive adequate assistance and communication despite still being active with the foster care system.

Communication is an important element in the lives of adults and these young adults, by not maintaining contact and staying informed they do not know what resources are available to them. Different statewide organizations provide services for young adults; there are food drives, bread drops, clothing drives, and different opportunities to attend lectures and receive additional compensation. The level of communication between these organizations is sparse as well as their contact to this sub-group. Even though the assistance to aged-out young adults is available, participants believe that it might as well be nonexistent if they are not informed of it.

Reunification

Some foster youth are allowed visits with their parents to keep the possibility of reunification available. This practice works for some participants while for others it

reinforces how things will never change. One participant would routinely see his mother but she was never able to regain custody of him or the siblings he was separated from; he grew up believing she had chosen her lifestyle over him and his siblings. Though given opportunities, some parents are unable to make the changes necessary to regain custody of their children; a worse scenario is when parents make the change but it is not long lasting.

The foster care system is designed with reunification as the optimum result for these youth whenever possible. Sometimes the option of reunification pushes officials into believing it is what is best for them. Some of the survey subjects eventually were reunited with their families, but this would only last for so long. One girl was reunited with her mother. For her 12th birthday she was given a bottle of vodka; later that year her mother was around the neighborhood drinking with friends, one of the friend's husbands went to the house and sexually assaulted the girl. Reunification is a great result for some, but for others it can be just as damaging as when they are first taken. Reunification is an ideal solution, but it is not a viable option for all of the participants.

Other participants who were reunited with their families noted a positive change, for a while. Parents' damaging habits, such as drug use, would stop but eventually they would re-reemerge. Eventually their families would slip back into the same routines and the youth would be taken again. One participant stated how his mom regained custody for a few months before she left him at a convenience store. Another participant said he was reunited with his mother while she was sober. Eventually "she fell off the wagon" and he was forced to see her decline again before he was taken out of her custody.

By being taken from their parents a second time, participants are forced to relive the same trauma and emotions that they experienced the first time. Feelings of neglect, abandonment, and loss resurface as they are put back into the foster care system. Whether these emotions are felt at a greater or lesser degree than the initial experience, both are damaging and push towards criminological risk factors. If felt to a greater degree, participants are more susceptible to risk factors. If felt at a lesser degree, the participant has grown accustomed to these feelings; they have accepted abandonment as a common occurrence in their lives. Some parents learn from their mistakes, others do not and it is these young adults who pay the largest price.

Independent Living

One positive trend that was noted was the success of participants who resided at independent living facilities. All seven participants who are currently living, and those who had lived, in independent living facilities remarked on the positive impact this had on their lives. These participants were generally happier and felt that they were more prepared to age-out than the rest of the sample group. Facilities promoted long lasting change in their lives and were seen as more invested in participants' success than others had been.

The facilities promoted communication between members and the foster care system. It is hard for one social worker to balance large case-loads; these facilities set up times when the whole group can be together and maintain being informed of upcoming opportunities. Communication was not just promoted between a participant and the foster care system; facilities also encouraged learning appropriate communication skills with other housemates. Routine house meetings were kept where members could discuss

issues or successes. All meetings were mediated by a supervisor who was able to channel conversations to make them as effective as possible.

The participants at these facilities also had a higher rate of being enrolled in college and being employed. Despite being in different programs, each program encouraged participants towards higher education. Supervisors would actively assist in the enrollment process and show participants how to fill out necessary forms and paperwork. Participants would learn how to apply for grants, scholarships, and aid in order to pay for their education. They would also be able to utilize schedule making skills they learned on-site so that they can balance work, school, and extra-curricular activities.

These facilities also promoted stable bonds between participants and staff that would be long lasting. Staff members were seen as parental figures and not as friends, this allowed for appropriate authority figure relationships. Participants also referred to their roommates as family members. The existence of these pseudo-family groups promoted unity and stability. Having these families present in their current living situations made participants feel like they had achieved a level of stability that gave them a foundation to build from. Participants in these environments work together and push each other to succeed.

Chapter VII

Discussion and Conclusion

A select panel for the Promotion of Child Health (1981, p. 1) stated, “Children are one third of our population and all of our future.” Today’s youth become the adults of tomorrow, and the participants in this study are another generation of young adults who will fall victim to risk factors, which increasingly involves them with the criminal justice system. These individuals have a higher likelihood of criminality, yet it is overlooked and unacknowledged because when they are seen as adults, they are seen as criminals rather than as a vulnerable sub-group. Society acknowledges the importance of children, but that shifts when individuals turn 18 years old. Fewer attempts are made to improve the lives of aged-out foster care young adults and they are negatively influenced by risk factors.

When these youth are old enough to leave foster care, aged-out participants have an increased amount of risk factors in their lives. Unfortunately, this casts them at the bottom of stratification and at the outer ring of morphology. Lacking skills to help centralize them, aged-out young adults are pushed further outwards into the less centralized areas of the morphological model. Because of their location in the model, these young adults are more susceptible to their surroundings, which increase the chances of criminality. Even assistance, like AB 350, comes with stipulations and conditions. Though conditions are necessary, participants might view this as another way to be monitored and controlled by the foster care and criminal justice systems. The increased element of law in their lives produces a lack of choice, which can make participants skeptical of the assistance. These individuals are told they are adults and want to be

treated as such. When their choices are limited by rules to gain assistance from the foster care system, some individuals would rather choose not to take advantage of the assistance in order to sustain independence. Their lack of a foundation provided by family structure creates a unique culture that is a less valued form of culture; only other aged-out foster care participants understand this culture. Culture helps center individuals because culture is curvilinear, just like morphology; this becomes more apparent as society categorizes people based on similar characteristics. Irish immigrants were cast on the outside of culture when they came to America; though they had a culture, it was not the centralized American culture. This same ideology can be applied to foster care participants who have a culture, but not the centralized American culture that focuses on growth and the expansion of knowledge. The presence of independent living facilities shows how family bonds are created between residents due to the common culture they share.

Aged-out young adults have a reduced likelihood of pursuing higher education if they are not connected with an independent living facility. For participants who are on their own, they lack the necessary tools for mobility in both the stratification and morphology spectra. Aged-out participants' lives become stagnant and they cannot grow because downward and centrifugal law work against them keeping them in these lower spectra, thus only making it more apparent that attempts at bettering themselves are futile. Despite understanding the importance of young adults, little research has been composed to see what happens to those who age-out of foster care. The broad estimates that show how many young adults emancipate from foster care serve as a prime example of how time is not being taken to develop or implement viable solutions.

Negative connotations befall foster care participants, which pushes them further down in the hierarchy of social stratification. These youth are seen as “broken” and they are looked down upon, because of the families from which they come. Though they are given a chance at a new family and a new life, with every year they grow older and the chances of that new life become slimmer. At this point society stops looking at what is best for the young adults and focus on protection of the community. It sends the message that courts no longer care about the individual. The judicial system stops looking at the circumstances that the crime was committed under and stops looking at the underlying cause of the young adult’s criminality.

Though aged-out young adults are a small group, they disproportionately contribute to problems in society and exceed national averages of risk factors. This creates the need to examine this group for two different reasons. First, on a micro level, society is responsible for these individuals. As a modern society working to be proactive, there is a desire to acknowledge groups in society that need assistance. Understanding the importance of youth, society must help these individuals to reduce the level of risk factors in their lives and to avoid interactions with the criminal justice system. Aged-out young adults lack the foundation, which a family structure supplies, so it is essential for society to create programs that aim to make up for the deficiency of stability in their lives. Second, on the macro level, this problem falls upon society because if it is not dealt with, these individuals will continue to be disproportionately present in the criminal justice system. Limiting the scope of harm risk factors pose could positively affect aged-out participants so that the factors do not transition into criminality. Rather than allowing participants to be incarcerated or live on the streets, programs and facilities can be

developed to assist them. Organization of foster care focuses on advertising the need for foster families, but needs to shift to providing assistance for participants who age-out. A common term in the foster care industry is a “forever family”. Each participant is herded from event to event showcased in hopes that they will find their forever family. The presence of organization in foster care is not one that promotes order. Black states that, “Organization is a quantitative variable” (1976, p. 85); this means it can be measured. Though there is a need for foster families, measurement of foster families need to focus more on quality than quantity. More organization is necessary to ensure that each child is placed with a family that will facilitate their growth.

Establishing effective policy and planning enables society to take a stance that this group matters and can become adults that contribute to society rather than contribute to criminality. Black’s theory of organization believes that groups should work together to solve problems in criminal justice. Short term solutions only lead to future problems, and more organization from officials and groups are necessary to make positive impacts in the lives of these young adults. As much as officials shape society through politics, individuals can have the same effect on aged-out young adults that feel as though they have slipped through the cracks. A greater effort is necessary to assure their success; by continuing to not acknowledge the problem, society sacrifices more aged-out young adults to a world that they are unlikely to succeed in. Therefore, it is time society adopts a proactive stance with foster care in an attempt to limit the impact of risk factors and criminality in the lives of aged-out participants.

The results of the quantitative data show a disproportionately high presence of risk factors in the lives of aged-out foster care participants. Elements, such as homelessness

and substance abuse, correlate to criminal activity. This group, though small, is more active in crime than others in their age group nationally. Social disabilities associated with crime could cause stagnation and immobility. Though the results were not able to distinguish a cause, it showed a connection between the presence of risk factors and criminality. Lack of preparedness proves to be the greatest connection to criminal activity. In order to prevent the transfer of risk factors into criminality, more needs to be done to prepare them for when they age-out of foster care.

The qualitative analysis shows different themes that create instability and increased hardships for aged-out foster care participants. Feelings of neglect and abandonment manifest in anti-social behaviors. Being detached from foster families and different social groups forces participants to look towards one another for assistance. This creates a culture of their own but one that is separate from the centralized culture of society. Respondents from this study reported choosing to make bad choices over having no choices and abusing substances as a release. The struggles aged-out participants faced in foster care created reoccurring trends stemming from negative emotions they felt after being taken from their biological families; these emotions can cause further damage to them and lead to risk factors that connect with criminality. Foster families are not adequately equipped to deal with these emotions and high levels of trauma. Some families give up on participants, which reinforces feelings of abandonment.

It is a civic duty to examine issues, such as aging-out, to improve the lives of these individuals and society as a whole. Much like the current criminal justice system, society must move past being reactive and focus on being proactive. Through examination, the comparison between aged-out young adults and national averages showed an increased

presence of risk factors and how their positioning in society puts them at risk for increased criminality. Young adults are a precious resource and their mistreatment causes further strain on society. In order to move forward, criminal justice must examine alternative solutions to prevent criminality in this sub-group.

All participants were asked if there was anything else they would like to share at the end of the interview. One participant said, “The struggle is real”. To the aged-out young adults surveyed, the struggle is more a noun than a verb; it is a living, breathing beast that they have to face every day. The struggle is composed of homelessness, substance abuse, alcoholism, abandonment, arrests, unemployment, teen pregnancy, and many other risk factors; for aged-out foster care young adults, the struggle is very real.

Appendices

Appendix A: Terminology and Definitions

This study uses different terms to describe individuals who have grown too old to be placed in a foster home. These individuals are “aged-out young adults” and “emancipated young adults”. For the purpose of this study, the title of “aging-out” of foster care was merited to any individual that was in foster care at some point and became too old to be placed in a foster home.

“Independent living facilities” are transitional housing accommodations. These locations provide a stable living situation with rules and regulations as part of the living agreement.

Some of the survey questions deal with disabilities. There are many forms and definitions of disability. This survey uses the definition established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA (1990) states that individuals are qualified, under the law, as disabled if an individual:

(1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; OR (2) has a record of such an impairment; OR (3) is regarded as having such an impairment. A physical impairment is defined by ADA as "any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech

organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin, and endocrine."

Neither ADA nor the regulations that implement it list all the diseases or conditions that are covered, because it would be impossible to provide a comprehensive list, given the variety of possible impairments. (ADA, 1990)

Appendix B: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO SOCIAL BEHAVIORAL INSTITUTIONAL
REVIEW BOARD
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE OF STUDY: Impacts of Aging-out of Foster Care

INVESTIGATOR(S): Matthew LeClaire (xxx) 426-xxxx Jennifer Lanterman (xxx)
784-xxxx

PROTOCOL #: 2014S028

SPONSOR: N/A

PURPOSE

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to survey foster care participants who have aged-out of the system and see how it has affected their lives.

PARTICIPANTS

You are being asked to participate because:

- 1) You are between the ages of 18 and 25.
- 2) You have aged-out of the foster care system.
- 3) Read and speak English.

PROCEDURES

If you agree (or consent) to participate in this research study then you will be asked to complete a survey and brief interview. The survey and interview will involve the following procedures:

- 1) A 40 question survey will be given to you.
- 2) You can take as much time as you need.
- 3) There will be a brief interview after the survey is completed.
- 4) The researcher will ask you about the survey questions so you can elaborate on your responses in your own words.

- 5) The process should take between 45 minutes and 75 minutes.
- 6) You will only have to go through this process once and will not be contacted further.

Some of the survey questions are personal and may cause you (the participant) some emotional discomfort. The survey's responses are broad so you will have a chance to elaborate on any question during the interview or you can choose to skip questions.

The survey will be used for comparison to national averages of individuals who did not age out of foster care. The interview is to elaborate on key stories and scenarios so that you (the participant) have a chance to explain factors that might be overlooked.

The researcher(s) know the full details of the study and can answer any questions you have.

DISCOMFORTS, INCONVENIENCES, AND/OR RISKS

There is no foreseeable risk to you (as a participant) aside from discomfort caused by questions.

To protect you (the participant) from any consequences from participating in this survey, you will be able to contact the researcher to set up a meeting to discuss any questions or concerns that you may have. You are not required to give your name or any personal information so that the survey can be conducted without fear of your identity being revealed.

BENEFITS

There may be no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. You (as the participant) will get to voice your opinion about the foster care system, which might be able to influence change.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your identity will be protected to the extent allowed by law. You cannot be personally identified in any reports or publications that may result from this study.

The Department of Health and Human Service (HHS), other federal agencies as necessary, and the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board may inspect your study records.

- 1) Records will be locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's office.

- 2) Official records will be kept for one year beyond study completion before being shredded and properly discarded.
- 3) Data from the survey will be kept indefinitely but all identifying traits in the data shall be stricken.

COSTS/COMPENSATION

There will be no cost to you nor will you be compensated for participating in this research study.

If you think you have suffered a research related injury, you should immediately contact the investigator, Matthew LeClaire, at (xxx)-426-xxxx.

DISCLOSURE OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS

There are no financial interests to declare.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW

You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. If the study design or use of the data is to be changed, you will be so informed and your consent re-obtained. You will be told of any significant new findings developed during the course of this study, which may relate to your willingness to continue participation.

If you (the participant) choose to withdraw from the study, the information collected pertaining to you will be shredded and entered as a "0" in the research to represent that you existed but did not participate. You will not be eligible to retract this statement and will not be included in the research.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions about this study or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact Matthew LeClaire at (xxx) 426-xxxx at any time.

You may ask about your rights as a research subject or you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any comments, concern, or complaints to the University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board, telephone number (xxx) 327-xxxx, or by addressing a letter to the Chair of the Board, c/o UNR Office of Human Research Protection, 205 Ross Hall / 331, University of Nevada, Reno, Reno, Nevada, 89557.

Appendix C: Survey

Foster Care Survey

Please circle the answer that applies to you or fill in the blank space provided. Thank you for your assistance.

1. What is your sex?

Male Female

2. What is your ethnicity?

African American Hispanic Asian Pacific Islander

White Other (specify) _____

3. What is your current age?

4. Do you have a disability?

Yes No

5. If you answered yes to question 4, please explain the disability.

6. Did you complete high school/receive your GED?

Yes No

7. Are you enrolled in a community college/university?

Yes No

8. If you answered yes to question 7, what is your status as a student?

Part Time Full Time

9. Are you pregnant/have a child?

Yes No

10. If you answered yes to question 9, do you have more than one child?

Yes No

11. How was your experience in foster care?

12. What year did you age out of foster care?

13. Do you believe foster care prepared you for aging-out?

Yes No

14. Did foster care provide you with counseling?

Yes No

15. Did foster care provide you with any career path/vocational training upon aging-out?

Yes No

16. Did your foster care agency inform you about AB 350, a stipend that gives you a monthly check to assist in living costs and school?

Yes No

17. If you answered yes to question 16, did you use the resources AB 350 supplied?

Yes No

18. Are you employed?

Yes No

19. If you answered yes to question 18, what is your employment status?

Vocational On Call Seasonal Part Time Full Time

20. If you answered no to question 19, are you actively seeking employment?

Yes No

21. Have you ever experienced homelessness?

Yes No

22. Are you currently homeless?

Yes No

23. If you answered yes to questions 21 or 22, how long was/is the period that you have experienced homelessness?

Less than a week Less than a month Less than 6 months
Less than 1 year Over 1 year

24. Do you receive welfare in the form of money, other than AB 350?

Yes No

25. Do you receive food stamps?

Yes No

26. Have you experimented with drugs?

Yes No

27. If you answered yes to question 26, how frequently do you use drugs?

Rarely Sometimes Socially Frequently All the time

28. Have you ever sought counseling for substance abuse?

Yes No

29. Do you drink alcohol?

Yes No

30. If you answered yes to question 29, how frequently do you consume alcohol?

Rarely Sometimes Socially Frequently All the Time

31. Have you ever sought counseling for alcohol abuse?

Yes No

32. Have you ever been arrested?

Yes No

33. If you answered yes to question 32, how many times have you been arrested?

34. Have you ever had a warrant out for your arrest?

Yes No

35. Have you been convicted of a crime (excluding speeding tickets/parking violations)?

Yes No

36. Have you been to jail/prison?

Yes No

37. If you answered yes to question 36, how many times have you been in jail/prison?

38. If you answered yes to any questions from 32 to 36, what was the level of the crime(s)?

Disorderly Persons Misdemeanor Felony Both

39. If you answered yes to any questions from 32 to 36, please explain the circumstances surrounding the events.

40. Is there any other additional information you would like to share?

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Foster Care Interview

1. How far have you gone in school?

2. Do you plan on continuing your education?

3. How was your experience in foster care?

4. What did you do when you aged-out?

5. What problems have you faced?

6. Have you had trouble being on your own?

7. Have you gotten into legal trouble?

8. What is your living situation?

9. What is your employment situation?

10. Is there any other additional information you would like to share?

11. How do you feel now after the survey and interview?

12. Do you feel any discomfort?

Appendix E: Contacts

The contact information below was provided to all research participants. If they felt any duress after the survey and interview, they were informed that they could call these agencies for assistance.

Crisis Call Center

Nevada 24 hour Crisis Line

Hotline: 877-885-HOPE (4673)

Hotline: (800) 992-5757

Hotline: (775) 784-8090

Children's Cabinet – Cynthia Carstairs

777 Sinclair Street

Reno, NV 89501

Main Phone: (775) 352-8090

Direct Line: (775) 348-6749

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Tables

Table 1.

Childhood risk factors for child delinquency and later serious and violent juvenile offending

Child factors	Parents disagree on child discipline
Difficult temperament	Single parenthood
Impulsive behavior	Large family
Hyperactivity (but only when co- Occurring with disruptive behavior)	High turn-over of caretakers
Impulsivity	Low socioeconomic status of the family
Substance use	Unemployed parent
Aggression	Poorly educated mother
Early onset disruptive behavior	Family members' carelessness in allowing children access to weapons, especially guns
Withdrawn behavior	School factors
Low intelligence	Poor academic performance
Lead toxicity	Old for grade
Family factors	Weak bonding to school
Parental antisocial or delinquent behavior	Low educational aspirations
Parental substance abuse	Low school motivation
Parents' poor child rearing practices	Poorly organized and functioning schools.
Poor supervision	Peer factors
Physical punishment	Association with deviant or delinquent siblings and peers
Poor communication	Rejection by peers
Poor parent-child relations	Neighborhood factors
Parental physical and sexual abuse	Neighborhood disadvantage and poverty
Parental neglect	Disorganized neighborhoods
Maternal depression	Availability of weapons
Mother's smoking during pregnancy	Media portrayal of violence
Teenage motherhood	

Note: Adapted from Loeber and Farrington (in press) and based on Hawkins et al. (1998), Lipsey and Derzon (1998), Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, Van Kammen, and Farrington (1991), and Loeber, Farrington, et al. (1998). (Loeber & Farrington, 2000)

Table 2.

Statewide and National Averages Comparative Table

Variables	Sample	Nevada Average	National
Average			
Disability	68%	10.3% ^a	10.5% ^a
High School Drop-Out	20%	4.2% ^b	7% ^c
Enrolled in College	32%	24.6% ^d	5.5% ^e
Female with Child	4	2,398 ^f	258,505 ^f
Unemployed	60%	9% ^g	6.7% ^g
Homeless	24%	0.55% ^h	1.1% ⁱ
Drugs	40%	9.35% ^j	8.02% ^j
Alcohol	68%	18.6% ^k	31.3% ^l
Been Arrested	68%		4.24% ^m

Note: The total study sample is 25 participants. Data should be interpreted with caution.

Note: The numbers provided for women with a child are frequencies, not averages.

^aNevada/National Disability Statistics – Cornell University (2011). ^bNevada High School Graduate Averages – Ryan, C. (2011, Aug 15). ^cNational High School Graduate Averages – Institute of Education Sciences (2012). ^dNevada College Enrollment Averages – Find the Data (2014). ^eNational College Enrollment Averages Statistic Brain (2013, April 28). ^fNevada/National Female Pregnancy – The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (2008). ^gNevada/National Unemployment Averages – Bureau of Labor (2014, Mar 17). ^hNevada Homeless Averages – National Coalition for the Homeless (2009). ⁱNational Homeless Averages – National Students Campaign Against Homelessness and Hunger (2012). ^jNevada/National Drug Averages – Office of National Drug Control Policy (2010). ^kNevada Alcohol Averages – America’s Health Rankings (2011). ^lNational Alcohol Averages – Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2014, Feb 28). ^mNational Arrest Averages – Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2010).

Table 3.

Risk Factor Frequency Matrix

Risk Factors	Disabled (YES)	High School Grad (YES)	Enrolled in college (YES)	Has a Child (YES)	Prepared After Foster Care (NO)	Employed (NO)	Been Homeless (YES)	Used Drugs (YES)	Drink Alcohol (YES)	Been Arrested (YES)
Disability (YES)	0	13	12	4	13	11	13	16	12	11
High School Grad (YES)	13	0	12	3	13	10	15	17	15	16
Enrolled in college (YES)	12	12	0	2	15	12	15	17	12	11
Has a Child (YES)	4	3	2	0	4	3	3	4	2	3
Prepared After Foster Care (NO)	13	13	15	4	0	12	16	18	12	11
Employed (NO)	11	10	12	3	12	0	13	14	11	10
Been Homeless (YES)	13	15	15	3	16	13	0	18	14	14
Used Drugs (YES)	16	17	17	4	18	14	18	0	16	15
Drink Alcohol (YES)	12	15	12	2	12	11	14	16	0	13
Been Arrested (YES)	11	16	11	3	11	10	14	15	13	0

Table 4.

Participant Arrest Compared with Level of Substance Use

		Frequency of drug usage for subject						
		Never	Rarely	Some	Socially	Frequently	ATT	Total
Participant has been arrested	Yes	2	5	3	3	1	3	17
	No	1	3	1	2	0	1	8
Total		3	8	4	5	1	4	25

*ATT = all of the time

Table 5.

Participant Employment Compared with Level of Substance Use

		Frequency of drug usage for subject						
		Never	Rarely	Some	Socially	Frequently	ATT	Total
Participant employed	Yes	2	4	0	1	0	3	10
	No	1	4	4	4	1	1	15
Total		3	8	4	5	1	4	25

*ATT = all of the time

Figures

Figure 1.

Social Stratification Model

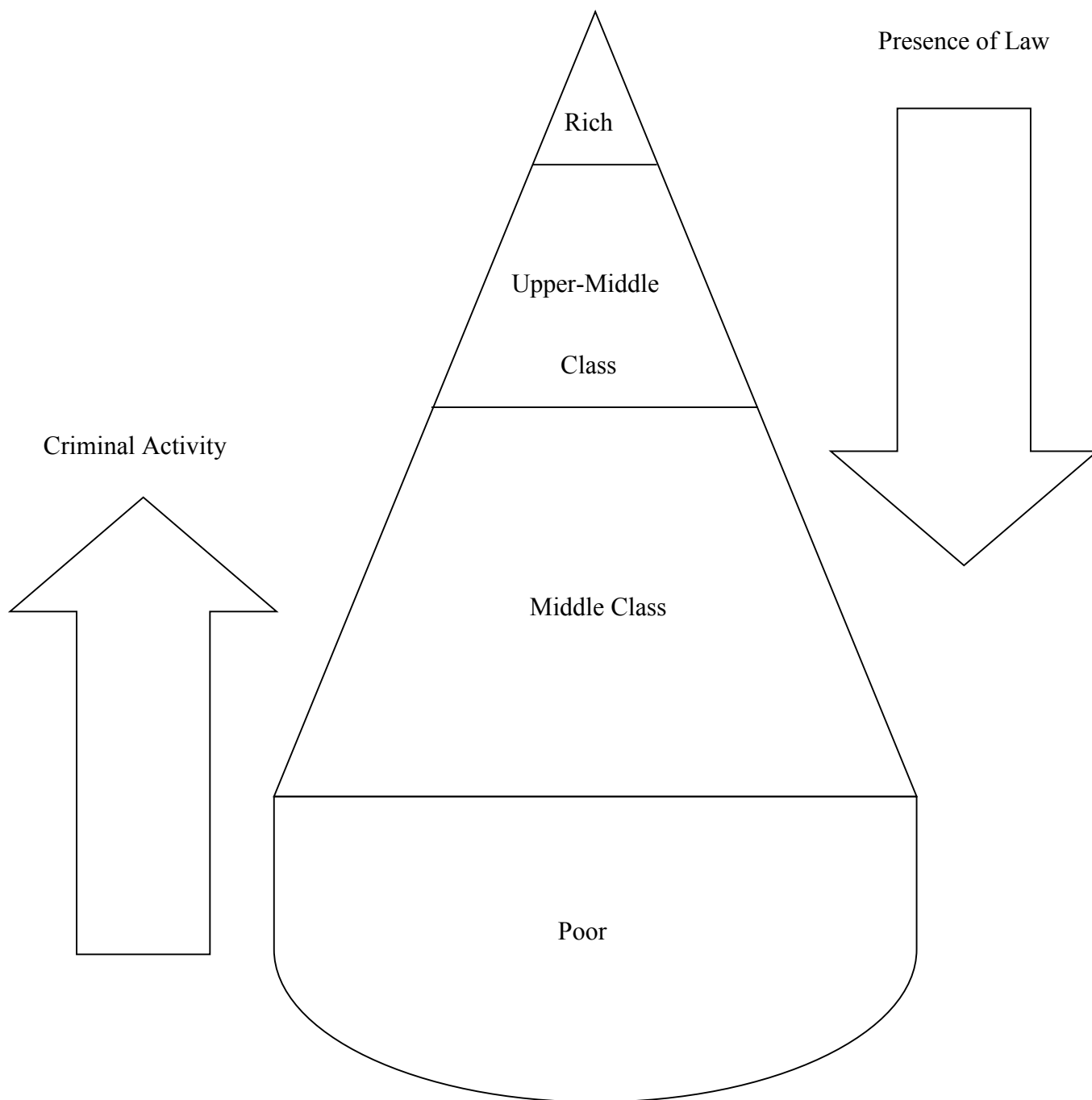


Figure 2.

Morphology Model

