

ABSTRACT

POLICY ANALYSIS OF CALIFORNIA FOSTERING CONNECTIONS TO SUCCESS

ACT OF 2010

By

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Foster youth exiting the child welfare system will have poorer outcomes such as, low educational attainment, poor employment, high criminal activity, homelessness, and higher rate of public assistance when compared to non-foster care youth. The purpose of this thesis is to look at the values, theoretical goals, implications, and the outcomes of services outlined in the California Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2010, or Assembly Bill (A.B.) 12. A.B. 12 was designed to help foster care youth who reached the age of majority (18+) and extend their foster care services to age 21. By analyzing A.B. 12, this author will take a look at what the lawmakers intended, the results of the last five years, and what we can learn for future legislation.

POLICY ANALYSIS OF CALIFORNIA FOSTERING CONNECTIONS TO SUCCESS

ACT OF 2010

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

There are approximately 59,000 foster youth residing in California and approximately 2,400 of the State total are considered to be “aging out” or emancipated from foster care each year (Needell et al., 2014). Emancipated, or “aging out” youth (18+) is considered to be the separation of a foster care youth from the State’s child welfare system (Berzin, Singer, & Hokanson, 2014). The various risk factors associated with transitional age foster youth after this separation demands a closer look at this population. Youth in transition from foster care to adulthood have an increased probability of not obtaining a high school diploma, have lower wages, lower earnings, higher rates of homelessness, an increased chance of becoming involved with the criminal justice system, and a high utilization of public welfare assistance services after exiting foster care (Courtney, Dworsky, Cusick, et al., 2007; Courtney, Dworsky, Lee, & Raap, 2010; Culhane, Metraux, & Moreno, 2011; Hook & Courtney, 2011; Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010).

Dworsky, Napolitano, and Courtney’s (2013) analysis found 36% of former foster youth had at least one experience of being homeless by age 26 and the rate of males experiencing homelessness was higher when compared to females. An example of foster youth having less desirable outcomes is seen in Culhane et al.’s (2011) comparison study of child welfare youth who aged out of foster care and the juvenile probation system.

The youth, who had both child welfare and juvenile justice system background, were two thirds more likely to have experienced a stay in jail.

The highest risk for incarceration for former foster youth was supported and found to be within the first 18 months after exiting the child welfare system (Byrne et al., 2014). In addition, 90% of these youth were recipients of public assistance after exiting the system. The study by J.S. Lee, Courtney, and Tajima (2014) used survey data ($N = 732$) and found the first year for former foster youth is the highest risk to be arrested for males (52%) and females (48%) who exited the child welfare system.

Purpose of the Study

The California Fostering Connections to Success Act, or called Assembly Bill 12 (A.B. 12) is California's legislation to improve the outcomes of foster care youth with provisions set down by the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions (FCSIA) Act of 2008. This law permits the extension of assistance to eligible child welfare and probation youth who agree to remain in foster care until age 21. The purpose of this thesis was to analyze the California Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2010, by looking at the values, theoretical goals, implications of the policy, and the outcome of services for the target and non-target populations.

Definition of Terms

Terms here are conceptually and operationally defined for better understanding of the reader(s), and directly taken from sources.

Foster child/youth: A person under 18 years of age (to 21 years of age under specific circumstances) who is being provided 24-hour care and supervision by someone

other than a parent/legal guardian in a location other than his or her own home (Department of Children and Family Services Glossary [DCFS], 2014).

Emancipation: A legal process of freeing a child from the control of their parents before they reach the age of majority; in California it is 18 years of age. Upon emancipation, the child will be able to do certain things without parental consent, such as: consent to medical treatment, apply for a work permit, and enroll in school or college (DCFS, 2014).

Foster care: The service providing temporary or long-term substitute parenting on a 24-hour basis to a child in out-of-home care, including a relative other than the child's parent (DCFS, 2014).

Independent Living Program (ILP): Are federal programs such as independent living skills, how to manage finances, designed to help current and former foster youth, ages 16-21, prepare for and succeed in the many challenges of adulthood and independence (DCFS, 2014).

Multicultural Relevance

The California child welfare care system is a diverse population with more youth emancipating each year. However, children of color or with an ethnic background (i.e., non-White) represent the majority of emancipated or aging out of foster care youth (Courtney et al., 2010). African American males are the highest foster youth population exiting the child welfare system across the nation (Freundlich, 2010; Iglehart & Becerra, 2002).

The Chafee National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD; 2013) has been keeping statistical data for the Children's Bureau since 2010. All 50 States reported on

youth from foster care in transition to adulthood that received a service funded by the Independent Living Programs. Of the surveyed population ($N = 99,974$), 58% were White, 34% African American, 19% Hispanic or Latino, 4% Native American, and 2% Asian/Pacific Islander (NYTD, 2013). By knowing what groups are the most impacted, an analysis of A.B. 12 can possibly assist exiting foster youth, and ensure an even distribution of services and aid to all former foster youth.

Relevance to Social Work

Knowing the newest laws and guidelines set down by the government both locally and nationally is essential to the performance of an effective social worker. Social workers have a duty and responsibility to advocate for a disenfranchised population like emancipated foster youth. The policy analysis of A.B. 12 can help social workers understand the impact and options now afforded to transitional age foster youth exiting the child welfare system.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The following literature review focuses on “age-out” former foster youths and their outcomes looking at the following areas of education, employment, homelessness, involvement with the justice system, and receipt of public assistance. The policies that will also be discussed in this review are: Independent Living Initiative, section 477 of Title IV-E and Social Security Act (1986), The Foster Care Independence Act (1999), and the Fostering Connection to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (2008).

Education

Former foster youths have lower levels of success completing high school, obtaining a General Education Diploma (GED), and attending a post-secondary educational institution (vocational, 2-year college, or 4-year college) than youths who were not in foster care. The education gap between the foster youth population and a non-foster youth group can be seen in many comparison studies (Berzin et al., 2014; Courtney, Dworsky, & Pollack, 2007; Courtney et al., 2010; Culhane et al., 2011; Day, Dworsky, Fogarty, & Damashek 2011; C. Lee & Berrick, 2014). The educational outcomes for foster youth attaining a high school diploma (or GED) was 45% compared to all youth in California’s public schools who had a graduation rate of 79% (Okpych & Courtney, 2014).

By not graduating high school or experiencing delays in getting a GED, former foster youths were at a higher disadvantage than non-foster youth with similar circumstances when pathways to adulthood were compared (Berzin et al., 2014; C. Lee & Berrick, 2014). According to Courtney, Dworsky, Cusick, et al. (2007) transitional youth aging out of foster care upon their 18th birthday are less likely to graduate on time which may be attributed to frequent school changes. This, in part, may be due to multiple foster home placements and a lack of proper educational assessment for foster youth with developmental or learning disabilities (Courtney, Dworsky, Cusick, et al., 2007; Culhane et al., 2011).

If former foster youth are delayed in obtaining a high school diploma or GED until they reach their early 20s, it can reduce their chances of attending a vocational school, obtaining an associate's degree, and attending a 4-year college. Seen in the comparison study by Courtney et al. (2010), youth who aged out at 18 and surveyed again at ages 23 and 24 ($N = 602$), females outperformed males in education level attainment. This study found 81% of former female foster youth achieved a high school diploma or GED by 23 and 24 versus males who had a 74% achievement rate. Of the sample who completed a high school or GED, 38% of females attended some college versus 28% of males; and 8% of women achieved a college degree, yet only 5% of males achieved a college degree. We can see through this study the delay in completing high school or a GED may lead to a lower post-secondary educational accomplishment rate. A little more than half of the study identified as "non-White" (i.e., African American at 54%), indicating the delays of achieving a high school diploma, GED, or post-secondary degree affect African Americans more than other races in the sample (Courtney et al., 2010).

Courtney et al.'s (2010) study also compared a former foster youth sample (Midwest Study, $N = 602$), with a national representative sample ($N = 1,488$), called the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, (also known as Add Health Study). The comparison showed participants of the Midwest Study were 3 times or 24% more likely *not* to have a GED, or a high school diploma by age 24 when compared to the Add Health Study sample at 7%. The differences continued with Midwest Study participants also lacked post-secondary attainment. For example, only 6% of former foster youth from the Midwest Study completed either a 2-year or a 4-year college degree, whereas 29% of the national representative participants from the Add Health Study completed the same levels of post-secondary education. The most common reason for dropping out of post-secondary institutions for former foster youth participants was the need to earn money and find employment (Courtney et al., 2010).

The poor post-secondary educational outcomes was also supported by Day et al.'s (2011) study, which showed former foster youths ($N = 444$) had a 21% rate of dropping out by their first year of a 4-year college, and also 34% left before they obtain a degree. This is significant when the non-foster youth comparison group ($N = 378$) had lower dropout rates of 13% and 18% respectively. The comparison group also had similar socioeconomic low-income statuses as the former foster youth group. Those who identified as White foster care youth (33%) were more likely to drop out than White non-foster care youth (10%) before degree completion. Also, when looking at differences between demographics, African Americans in the comparison group were more likely to drop out than White participants (Day et al., 2011). Due to a below average success rate

in education, compared to non-foster care youth of similar age, the ability to achieve an adequate higher or post-secondary education becomes difficult for foster youth.

Employment

Not having a high school diploma or GED lead former foster youth to a lower likelihood of finding employment, keeping current employment, and earning a livable wage and therefore they will not achieve an independent lifestyle (Culhane et al., 2011; C. Lee & Berrick, 2014; Macomber et al., 2008; Narccarto, Brophy, & Courtney, 2010).

The relationship between education attainment (high school diploma, GED, post-secondary education [college]), and employment outcomes of former foster youth are highly correlated when comparing them to the general population (Okpych & Courtney, 2014). For example, a study by Okpych and Courtney (2014) compared educational attainment and employment outcomes between former foster youths ($N = 564$) with a non-foster youth sample ($N = 7,479$) from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY, 97). The study included youth who came from a similar economic background, shared similar family conditions (i.e., subjects reported a history of abuse and/or neglect by family members), and similar educational achievements. The comparison study found when lower education attainment levels were the same for both former foster youth, and the non-foster youth population, the former foster youth earned roughly half the annual salary (\$28,105 vs. \$14,148) of non-foster youth. When both groups had similar post-secondary education levels (4 year college degree) the salaries and employment rates between former foster youth and the non-foster youth sample were almost even (Okpych & Courtney, 2014).

Hook and Courtney's (2011) research followed foster youth exiting the child welfare system at age 18 and assessed their employment outcomes up to age 24 ($N = 598$). Of this sample, the former foster youth who had a high school diploma or GED were 46% more likely to be in full-time or part-time employment than those who did not have a high school education. However, employed former foster youth worked at low wage earning jobs that led former foster youth incomes to fall close to or below the national poverty line (Hook & Courtney, 2011). Racial and gender disparities were also found between African Americans and their non-African American counterparts. The study found nearly 60% of non-African Americans (e.g., White and those who did not identify as African American or as White) were working, compared to only 36% of African American males and 42% of African American females. Both African American males and females spend more time looking for work due to inconsistent employment rates of 39% and 43% respectively. This was found to be significantly higher than non-African American men at 16%, and women at 20% of the former foster youth sample (Hook & Courtney, 2011).

A study by Stewart, Kum, Barth, and Duncan (2014) compared former foster youth from three states (California [$N = 2,697$], Minnesota [$N = 320$], and North Carolina [$N = 284$]), the low-income non-foster youth (CA, $N = 43,725$; MN, $N = 4,786$; NC, $N = 2,709$), and finally a national representative sample from NLSY, 97 ($N = 878$). This study wanted to know if former foster youths continued to have low earnings and employment rates when compared to their peers through their mid-20s. The study found former foster youth from all three states when compared to their non-foster care peers, and the national group, had lower rates of employment, inconsistent employment, and

lower earnings. For example, the California foster youth at age 24, earned on average \$700 per month, whereas nationally 24-year-old non-foster youth earned on average \$1,535, and the non-foster youth who reported a lower income earned \$970. Of the former foster youth who were working or had a work history by age 24 in each of the states was 61% in North Carolina, 62% in California, and 65% in Minnesota. However, the national average of non-foster youth who either were working or had a work history by age 24 was 92% (Stewart et al., 2014).

Naccarato, et al. (2010) wanted to find predictive factors that increased positive employment outcomes and a foster youth's ($N = 586$) yearly income by age 21. They found the level of education achieved was associated positively with annual wage earnings. For example, a high school diploma resulted in higher annual wage of \$7,000 more than those who did not have a high school diploma. When a former foster youth had some college then the estimated yearly earnings hovered around \$17,000 higher than those who did not have a high school diploma. In addition, participants who had a 2-year degree earned an estimated \$25,000 more than those who had some high school education but no diploma. Therefore, the higher the education level, the higher the annual income. Unfortunately, most of the former foster youth incomes in this study were at or below the poverty line. The study also found race impacted former foster youth annual earnings. Former foster youth who identified as African American, earned on average \$7,500 less annually than those who were identified as White, despite the educational level achieved (Naccarato et al., 2010).

Homelessness

When exiting child welfare, former foster youth have the added task of finding a secure and safe living environment. Unfortunately, many will fail in achieving a secure living environment and former foster youth will have an increased risk of experiencing homelessness when compared to non-foster care youth with similar backgrounds (Berzin, Rhodes, & Curtis 2011; Berzin et al., 2014). Berzin et al. (2011) research focused on the housing outcomes and stability of former foster youth and non-foster youth in the general population. In their comparison study they found foster youth experienced a 15% rate of homelessness versus 7% of non-foster youth. The study also demonstrated 8% of former foster youth received public housing assistance, whereas 2% of non-foster youth received similar aid (Berzin et al., 2011).

Research by Dworsky et al. (2013) measured the incidence of homelessness using secondary data analysis from two longitudinal studies (Midwest Evaluation and Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth Study). The analysis of the secondary data found between 31 and 46% of former foster care participants experienced homelessness at some point between the ages of 18 and 26. These findings were staggering when compared to 4% of their peers nationwide who also experienced homelessness (Dworsky et al., 2013).

A study in 2009, by Dworsky and Courtney, hypothesized that there were certain predictive factors associated with a foster youth's chances of becoming homeless. The researchers used data from the Midwest longitudinal evaluation of former foster youth samples ($N = 732$) from three states, Iowa ($n = 63$), Wisconsin ($n = 195$), and Illinois ($n = 474$; Dworsky & Courtney, 2009). They found the factors that increased the likelihood of homelessness were multiple episodes of running away from care, experiencing physical

abuse before entering foster care, and exhibiting delinquent behaviors (criminal activities). The study also found foster youth had a 68% reduction in experiencing homelessness when they had a family member to rely on. Also, foster youth who reported a perception of social support 40% had a reduced likelihood of homelessness (Dworsky & Courtney, 2009).

Courtney et al. (2010) assessed different types of homelessness. The sample size ($N = 577$) fell into three categories of homelessness: (1) those who temporarily slept on couches (i.e., “couch surfing”) of acquaintances, friends, and family members ($n = 166$); (2) those who slept where one is not meant to sleep (i.e., who did not have a residence; $n = 146$); or (3) a combination of the first two ($n = 220$). The study found since exiting care, 24% had been consistently homeless for a month, and 28% “couch surfed” for a month. Overall, those who couch surfed experienced it more often and had more repeated episodes than those who were just homeless (Courtney et al., 2010).

Justice System Involvement

A foster youth exiting the child welfare system have a higher rate of arrest and/or experienced multiple arrests when compared to their non-foster peers nationally (Courtney et al., 2010). Within Los Angeles County alone approximately two-thirds of former foster youth have had at least one stay in jail in the first year after exiting foster care (Culhane et al., 2011).

McCarthy and Gladstone (2011) summarized the percentages of 2008 data on adult inmates ($n = 2,564$) who were in foster care at some point. According to the findings, 14% of the surveyed inmates spent time in foster care during their childhood. The length of stay varied between less than 2 years (19%), or more than 5 years (56%). Within that

14% of the former foster care inmates surveyed, 20% were in foster care until they aged out at 18 years old (McCarthy & Gladstone, 2011).

A study by Cusick, Havlicek, and Courtney (2012) also found the median time of arrest was 18 months after exiting care, and almost half or 46% ($n = 337$) of the whole sample size ($N = 728$) experienced an arrest. Of the 46% who experienced an arrest, 32% were arrested on drug charges; 36% were arrested for nonviolent crimes, such as property damage or petty theft; and 32% were arrested for a violent crime or crimes against an individual such as robbery or assault (Cusick et al., 2012). J. S. Lee et al. (2014) used the same sample and found of the former foster youth who experienced an arrest within the first year, 34% were women and 59% of men, which is a significant difference. What was additionally significant, the participants who were employed had a 32% reduction in their risk of arrest, and those who had the intent to attend college and graduate from college had a 24% reduction of their arrest risk (J. S. Lee et al., 2014). The commitment to work and a motivation to attend a post-secondary school reduced the chances of experiencing an arrest when compared to participants who had no college aspirations or current employment (Cusick et al., 2012).

Public Assistance

The combination of low employment and low educational outcomes has consequences which effects former foster youth's living conditions and will continue to make them a vulnerable population (Osgood et al., 2010). Former foster youth had higher rates of public assistance reliance than the rest of the population (Courtney et al., 2010). In California, older youth exiting foster care had a harder time adjusting to adult self-sufficiency and continued to rely on public support services (Byrne et al., 2014). The

results of a study by Byrne et al. (2014) showed 28% of the sample ($N = 7,492$) needed assistance at some point and the research found differences in foster youth genders and the type of public assistance received (CalWORKS vs. General Relief [GR]). A “crossover” demographic representing youth with child welfare and juvenile justice systems backgrounds received the most assistance and males typically received aid from GR whereas women received funding from CalWORKS (Byrne et al., 2014).

Courtney et al. (2010) also found gender differences in the type of government assistance received by former foster youths ($N = 583$). The biggest differences between males and females were recipients of food stamps (62% women vs. 20% males), public housing/rental assistance (10% women vs. 2% males), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or TANF (7% women vs. 2% males). These differences were found to be associated with single mothers (89%) who provided for one or more children. Even when compared to their national peer group, former foster youths were more likely to continue to receive government benefits.

Research by Mares (2010) found that the percentages of former foster youth receiving aid decreased depending on age. At 18 years, 72% received public assistance, and by age 21 only 33% received public assistance. While that is a significant drop between age groups, the percentages were still high when compared to the national average (7%) of public assistance recipients between the ages 18 to 24.

Previous Policies

The Child Welfare System (CWS) has been the primary social service provider to families and children who were at risk for neglect and abuse. The promotion of CWS’s standards for safety, permanence, and well-being has fallen mainly to each individual

state. The U.S. Government, by 1986, started taking a more active role and more responsibility towards older foster youth who were not reunified or adopted out of foster care by providing services that addressed the needs of exiting foster care youths (Foster Care Independence Program [FCIP], 1986). This was achieved by passing the Independent Living Initiative, known as the Independent Living Programs (ILPs) amendment, section 477 under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (FCIP, 1986).

1986 Legislation

The Federal Independent Living Program (ILP) of Title IV-E paved the way to increase funding, and services to youths exiting foster care, and to integrate the ILPs into existing State child welfare programs (FCIP, 1986). Each state was given a portion of the federal allocated monies (\$70 million annually) to provide services for youth 16 and older to make the transition to independent living (FCIP, 1986). This included a wide range of services such as, daily living skills, education, employment services, counseling, and transitional independent living plans (FCIP, 1986). However, helping emancipating youth with room and board was not authorized in the policy guidelines (FCIP, 1986).

The outcomes of transitional aged youth did improve between 1986 and 1999 but only slightly and not as significantly as lawmakers expected after passing the 1986 legislation (Scannapieco, Schagrin, & Scannapieco, 1995). For example, in one of the few studies that demonstrated positive results, Scannapieco et al. (1995) took a look at two groups, an ILP group ($N = 44$) designed to help foster youth transition to independence by providing life skills and employment preparedness trainings and a foster youth group ($N = 46$) who did not receive an ILP service. Compared to those who attended the ILP did benefit by completing high school at a higher rate (50% vs. 6%) then

those who did not attend. Also, the ILP group had a higher rate of employment at discharge (52% vs. 26%) and was considered to be more self-sufficient (48% vs. 17%) than the transitional youth who did not attend an ILP. The comparison study also found that 87% of the foster youth who *did not* attend or become involved in any ILP also *did not* complete high school (Scannapieco et al. 1995).

In a comprehensive review of ILP programs in the United States between 1987 and 1996, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1999) demonstrated the majority of ILP recipients were 16 and 17 years old (32% vs. 33% respectively) with 18, 19 and 20 year olds making up 35%. Racially, 50% were White, 38% African American, and only 9% Hispanic. Surprisingly, a third or 37%, of foster youth who were eligible for ILPs did not receive services. The findings also showed that after exiting care, emancipated youth still faced the difficulties of completing a high school diploma, acquiring and keeping employment, accessing health care, and paying for housing expenses (USDHHS, 1999). This is consistent with other studies that found the majority of youth participating in ILPs, when compared to transitional age foster youth who did not participate in ILPs, continued to experience rates of housing instability, homelessness, poverty, needing public assistance, low educational achievement, non-marital childbearing, criminal behavior, and poor employment outcomes (Cook, 1994; Courtney et al., 2001; Lindsey & Ahmed, 1999).

1999 Legislation

Despite the legislation effort of the 1986 Act, exiting foster youths needed more assistance from the federal government; consequently the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) of 1999 was passed to help expand aid and services to those who met ILP

eligibility requirements (FCIA, 1999). The FCIA legislation increased federal funding from 70 to 140 million dollars per year and provided more comprehensive services, including mentoring, employment training, educational training, room and board, life skills training, and extended Medicaid services (FCIA, 1999). In California, the services that were offered through ILP's were housing assistance, employment assistance, educational resources, essential daily living skills, money management, and decision-making skills (Hatton & Brooks, 2009). The FCIA legislation also provided universal measures and guidelines to assess State ILP performances, and set up a national database framework to record the individuals served and their outcome assessments (FCIA, 1999).

In 2001, additional amendments to the 1999 Act provided monetary vouchers per year for foster youth who were interested in post-secondary schooling up to age 23 (Collins, 2004). While these amendments aimed to enhance comprehensive services, there was little to no direction from the federal to the state level addressing how the funds should be allocated; instead, it was completely up to the state to decide what services were necessary from a list of *potential* services that could be offered (e.g. financial management, college preparation, vocational training, preventative trainings, daily living skills, career exploration, housing assistance, etc.). Collins (2004) found some of these programs, such as vocational training to be unaffordable for exiting foster youth. Additionally, some of these ILPs lacked connections to potential employers, transitional housing had limited availability, and the support services provided to youth after they left the system were almost non-existent. The amendments did focus on the needs of the foster youth but lacked uniformity in services across the country (Collins, 2004).

Between the 1999 Act and 2008, a number of studies were conducted to find the impact of ILPs. For example, a study found former foster youth who participated in ILPs felt significantly prepared (57%) versus those who did not attend a ILP (32%) when exiting foster care (Lemon, Hines, & Merdinger, 2004). Former foster care youths also reported having longer lasting relationships with counselors, and were more likely to continue onto a post-secondary education after attending ILPs (Hatton & Brooks, 2009). However, many ILPs did not tailor the skills and services to the individual's needs and therefore a “cookie-cutter” method was utilized. This lack of fit between needs and services led to unsuitable aftercare services for youth once they transitioned out of the system, and experienced many of the same poor outcomes as in previous years (Delgado, 2013; Hatton & Brooks, 2009).

For example, Lenz-Rashid (2005) conducted a comparison study between foster care youth ($n = 104$) and youth never placed in foster care ($n = 147$) in which both groups received an ILP employment training designed for homeless youth. Encouraging results showed 60% of each group obtained employment 3 months after the training. However, the foster care group earned a mean wage of \$8.88 per hour, whereas non-foster care youths earned \$9.55 per hour. This is consistent with the Goerge, Bilaver, Lee, Needell, Brookhart, and Jackman, (2002) study, which found in the state of California, former foster youths with ILP interventions earned on average \$6,000 less per year than the non-foster youth comparison group, who had an unemployment rate of 23%. Even with ILP employment training services, former foster youths continued to fall behind their peers.

A comprehensive analysis by Edwards, Bryant and Bent-Goodley (2011) took a look at what influenced the legislation leading up to the 2008 Fostering Connections to

Success and Increasing Adoptions Act. The study determined the level of influence by analyzing the affiliations between the witness testimony, their political background, and the political backgrounds of committee members in Congress. They found Congress, between the years 1999 and 2008, listened to 484 testimonies within 33 hearings about the child welfare system. Of those who submitted testimonies to the hearings over the years, a surprising percentage favored private organizations/ advocacy groups at 45% and Government Agencies (e.g. Department of Health and Human Services) were a distant second at 24%. The lowest number of testimonies submitted belonged to research organizations at 5.6%. What is interesting to note from this study is the low percentage of testimony from former or current foster youths at 2.7%. The main consumers of policy (foster youth and former foster youth) may have had some level of influence; but were most likely to be considered minor when compared to government agencies and private organizations when assessing the levels of influence that created the subsequent policy (Edwards et al., 2011).

2008 Legislation

The 1986 and 1999 policies did provide the framework for more support to “aging out” foster youth. However, they did not sufficiently address all of problems facing exiting foster youths. Passing the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (FCSIA) of 2008 was the latest federal legislation to try and help former foster youth transition into healthy independent adults. This legislation made changes to Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to increase Federal Governmental responsibilities to exiting foster youth. The noticeable functional changes of the FCSIA was the extension of age eligibility to age 21 and the reimbursement guidelines of federal monies to States

for adoption services, foster care services, and guardianship assistance (FCSIA, 2008). The FCSIA (2008) also reinforced and expanded ILPs to adopted or legally placed youth under 18 that met the eligibility requirements. Although all 50 States continued to get federal reimbursements for legal placements of 18 to 21 year old foster youths, they must now provide a transition plan 90 days prior to a youth's 18th birthday by an assigned child welfare worker. This shift of support and service extension to age 21 is only mutually beneficial to the youth and State if the youth is in school (high school or equivalency program), in postsecondary/vocational school, is employed 80 hours per month, or has a physical, mental handicap or medical condition preventing them from meeting the other requirements (FCSIA, 2008).

The main pieces of the 2008 federal legislation offered monetary support for kinship care, allowed for the reimbursement of state expenses, and more importantly provided the foundation for California to pursue their own legislation (Mosley & Courtney, 2012). According to Mosley and Courtney (2012) state lawmakers looked towards research evidence and were sympathetic to the disenfranchised population aging out of child welfare. After hearing testimonies the drive to get legislation passed was strong among lawmakers. In December 2008, California lawmakers, Karen Bass and Jim Beall, introduced the Fostering Connections to Success Act, or Assembly Bill 12. Signed into law in 2010, this was California's legislation to improve the outcomes of foster care youth with provisions set down by the FCSIA Act of 2008. This law permits the extension of assistance to eligible child welfare and probation youth who agree to remain in foster care until age 21 (Assembly Bill [A.B.] 12, 2010).

Despite additional services for longer periods of time emancipated youth continued to experience poor outcomes. Therefore a detailed analysis of A.B.12 is required.

Summary

The literature in this review shows the outcomes of former foster youths is not very favorable when compared to the outcomes of the national population (Lee & Berrick, 2014; Berzin et al., 2014). Former foster youth are not graduating high school or achieving post-secondary education at the same rates as their peers (Okpych & Courtney 2014). Additionally, former foster youth have had poor employment and low success in earning livable wages, or achieving a similar annual wage to their peers (Hook & Courtney, 2011; Okpych & Courtney 2014). When former foster youths have difficulties in education and employment then it is not hard to imagine they will have higher rates of homelessness and then difficulties in becoming productive members in our communities (Berzin et al., 2011; Berzin et al., 2014). The poor outcomes also include involvement with the criminal justice system with about a third of foster youth experiencing one or more arrests, and a greater need of public assistance once exiting the child welfare system (Byrne et al., 2014; Courtney et al., 2010; Culhane et al., 2011; Cusick et al., 2012; Osgood et al., 2010).

Due to the numerous challenges that youth in foster care experience, three federal policies were passed. In 1986, the Federal Independent Living Program of Title IV-E addressed the negative outcomes by allocating money to various programs in which to help guide aging out foster youth into adulthood (FCIP, 1986). However, the foster youth continued to have poor outcomes and the federal government did not revisit the problem until 1999. Through the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, money was

doubled to 140 million to increase services to foster youth, and changed how those services would be delivered (i.e., ILPs). However, the 1999 Act still fell short for youth aging out of the child welfare system (Collins 2004). Finally, in 2008 the federal government passed the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, which incentivized all states to extend services for foster youths to age 21 if the youth agreed to stay within the foster care system. With the 2008 Act every state now has the opportunity to increase aid and services to foster youth aging out of care. California's Assembly Bill 12 is one of the most recent acts of legislation designed to help this vulnerable population achieve successful outcomes.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Research Design

This thesis is a qualitative design analyzing secondary and primary data in exploring the California Fostering Connections to Success Act. The components developed by Gil (1992) involve topics, such as, the issues dealt with by the policy, the objectives (overt and covert), the values underlying the policy, the theory behind it, whom it targets, and the implications and outcomes of the policy on society.

Policy Analysis Framework

Gil's (1992) methods are well established and will provide a clear and concise outline to a complex issue.

SECTION A: ISSUES DEALT WITH BY THE POLICY

1. Nature, scope, and distribution of the issues.
2. Casual theory(ies) or hypothesis(es) concerning the issues.

SECTION B: OBJECTIVES, VALUE PREMISES, THEORETICAL POSITIONS, TARGET SEGMENTS, AND SUBSTANTIATIVE EFFECTS OF THE POLICY

1. Policy Objectives: overt objectives and covert objectives.
2. Value premises and ideological orientations underlying the policy objectives: explicit and implicit value premises.

3. Theory(ies) or hypothesis(es) underlying the strategy and the substantive provisions of the policy.
4. Target segments(s) of society- those at whom the policy is aimed:
 - a. Ecological, demographic, biological, psychological, social, economic, political, and cultural characteristics.
 - b. Size of relevant subgroups and of entire target segments projected over time.
5. Short and long-range effects of the policy on target and non-target segment(s) in ecological, demographic, biological, psychological social, economic, political, and cultural spheres.
 - a. Intended effects and extent of attainment of policy objectives.
 - b. Unintended effects.
 - c. Overall costs and benefits.

SECTION C: IMPLICATIONS OF THE POLICY FOR THE OPERATING AND OUTCOME VARIABLES OF SOCIAL POLICIES

1. Changes concerning reproduction, socialization, and social control.
2. Consequences of changes concerning resources, work and production, rights, governance and legitimation, and reproduction, socialization, and social control, for:
 - a. Circumstances of living of individuals, groups, and classes.
 - b. Power of individuals, group, and classes.
 - c. Nature and quality of human relations among individuals, groups, and classes.

d. Overall quality of life. (Gil, p.71-75)

Sampling

The data collected on the California Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2010 consisted of primary and secondary related sources. Primary sources consisted of congressional hearings, government reviews, and government databases. Secondary data sources such as scholarly and peer reviewed articles of Assembly Bill 12 was also reviewed. The location of data pertinent to the analysis of A.B.12 came from the legislation itself, various government document, and scholarly journals.

Data Collection

All primary and secondary information was gathered via Internet. The access to various websites included databases, the California Child Welfare Indicators Project, EBSCO, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, the Chapin Hall Database at the University of Chicago, and the CSULB Library database. Other websites involved government or government linked sites from the Children's Bureau, California Department of Social Services (CDSS), the Social Security Administration, etc. Finally, the use of Google and the links to other information sources were found in the reference sections scholarly journals.

Limitations

The analysis of the California Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2010 is limited due to the time available to investigate all of the relevant information regarding this act. The author's personal bias in this area was influenced by the selection of data sources and materials that were used for this policy analysis. The research articles and

documents selected for this thesis also included personal biases of those authors and therefore is an additional limitation.

CHAPTER 4

POLICY ANALYSIS

California Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2010

With more and more foster youth aging out of the child welfare system than any other state, California was one of the first to take advantage of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. By passing the California Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2010, also known as Assembly Bill 12 (A.B.12), the child welfare system extended their services to foster youth from ages 18 to 21. This legislation is an attempt to better the outcomes of foster youth by delaying exit, improving support, and providing further aid and services to this at risk demographic. In this chapter this researcher will explore the A.B.12 legislation and its future implications of expanding the age range and services by using Gil's (1992) Social Policy Analysis Framework.

Issues Dealt with by the Policy: Nature, Scope, and Distribution of the Issues

Overall the number of children and youth in foster care has decreased, yet in 2010, more than 24,000 youth aged out of foster care at the age of 18 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2012). Despite the reason children enter the foster care system, foster care is meant to be a temporary situation with an end goal of family reunification (Gardner, 2008). However, as more and more foster youth turn 18 and exit out of the child welfare system and into adulthood, it is clear that former foster youth need additional support beyond the age of majority (18) (Atkinson, 2008).

The California Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2010 attempts to address the negative outcomes that are affecting former foster youth (i.e., low employment, poor education, homelessness, high arrests, and continued public assistance). The poor educational outcomes and delays in achieving a high school diploma or GED can impact successful post-secondary achievements, employment opportunities, and adequate housing/living conditions (Berzin et al., 2011; Hatton & Brooks, 2009; Goerge et al., 2002). Inadequate educational achievement when exiting at age 18 can be linked to multiple foster care placements within the foster care system. Removal from the home due to child maltreatment, multiple housing placements, disruptions by changing schools and changes in classroom structure are stressors linked to poor educational outcomes (Pecora et al., 2006). These disruptions can cause poor attendance, negative classroom behavior, and falling behind in course work leading to delays in achieving a high school diploma or GED (Courtney et al., 2010; Courtney et al., 2007; Culhane et al., 2011).

Former foster youth face difficulties supporting themselves and have inadequate financial independence due to high rates of unemployment or underemployment (Hook & Courtney, 2011). When comparing foster youth to the rest of the nation they make less per hour (\$8.88 vs. \$9.55) and also annually (\$28,105 vs. 14,148) (Lenz-Rashid, 2005; Okpych & Courtney, 2014; Stewart et al., 2014). Poor employment outcomes and low wages have a direct relationship to insufficient educational attainment (Naccarato et al., 2009; Okpych & Courtney, 2014).

Studies also find episodes of homelessness affects foster youth more than other young adult populations (Berzin et al., 2011; Berzin, et al., 2014; Dworsky et al., 2013). Roughly 30 to 40% of exiting foster youth will have a homeless episode(s) that can last

from a single night to several months (Dworsky et al., 2013). This is partly attributed to the lack of any guidance or support structure many exiting foster youth do not adequately have and are unprepared for the harsh realities of adulthood (Atkinson, 2008). After exiting foster care, the youth may have nowhere to go, and may try to re-connect/return to family members prior to child welfare system intervention. The birth parent(s) or legal guardian(s) may not want the child to return back to the home or are unable to care for the child since they were not able to reunify prior to the child reaching age of majority (18). Lack of parental support is a risk factor that can contribute to homelessness among former foster youths (Dworsky & Courtney, 2009; Dworsky, et al., 2010).

Former foster youth will tend to have high utilization rates of public assistance, such as, Medicaid, California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), and/or Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP also known as CalFresh or “Food Stamps”) (Byrne et al.2014). This is due, in part, to the low self-sufficiency brought on by poor education, unemployment/underemployment, and no support system (Osgood et al., 2010).

The exiting foster youth also have higher rates of arrest within the first few years exiting child welfare (Courtney et al., 2010; Culhane et al., 2011). Depending on the offense committed an arrest will have a long-lasting effect on future employment opportunities. For instance, the highest percentages of crimes committed by former foster youth were drug violations, nonviolent crime like property damage or petty theft, and crimes against an individual such as robbery or assault. Arrests and convictions may result in years of missed opportunities for employment due to serving jail sentences, and

the stigma of a conviction lowers employment options and therefore delays self-sufficiency (Berzin et al., 2014; Culhane et al., 2011; Cusick et al., 2012).

Former foster youth fail or fall behind their peers in education because the disruption to their lives when removed from the home and placed in multiple foster care placements provided by the child welfare system (Berzin et al., 2014; Courtney et al., 2007; Stewart et al., 2014). The result is a lack of a high school diploma or GED, which leads to low success at a post-secondary education, and limits applying for many jobs due to education requirements (Okpych & Courtney, 2014). Former foster youth who are unemployed or underemployed will also not be able to sufficiently pay rent or find stable housing (Berzin et al., 2011). An unstable living environment leads many former foster youth to episodes of homelessness. Some of these episodes may last for months (Courtney et al., 2010). The young adults who have a limited educational attainment, are unemployed, and at high risk of homelessness may also rely on criminal activity out of necessity (Cusick et al., 2012; J. S. Lee et al., 2014). These poor outcomes may also lead to a utilization of public assistance to supplement the lack of employment and/or a housing shortcoming (Osgood et al., 2010; Byrne et al., 2014). Foster care is meant to be a temporary institution that removes children from abuse and/or neglect, and not properly caring for younger foster youth in the child welfare system may lead to the poor outcomes for many former foster youth (Atkinson, 2008).

There is evidence that supports the increase of services (such as ILPs) to exiting foster youth, and the extension to age 21 can improve exiting foster youth outcomes. Brown and Wilderson's (2010) research found that former foster youth who received residential services (ILPs) designed specifically for them had better outcomes than youth

who received residential services designed for the general homelessness population. Also, reports from foster youth who participated in ILPs stated that they felt slightly more prepared for living on their own than those who did not participate in ILPs. They reported longer lasting relationships with counselors creating connections and support from authority figures (Brown & Wilderson, 2010). Those who attended an ILP were also more likely to continue on to post-secondary schooling leading to greater resiliency and self-sufficiency (Hatton & Brooks, 2009). Also as an adolescent who builds up an employment history, while attending supportive services (ILPs), will increase the likelihood to self-sufficiency (Lenz-Rashid, 2005).

When an extension of educational services can be provided to those in foster care then applying to post-secondary educational institutions is more likely to be successful (Courtney et al., 2010). For example, Lemon et al. (2004) compared and found youth who received an educational ILP service were more likely to have the basic knowledge of how financial aid works than their non-ILP peers. This increased their ability to navigate and apply for financial assistance when filling out collage applications. Also they received concrete life skill lessons, such as how to open a bank account, how to find employment, and how to find a place to live. The non-concrete support, such as the development of psycho-social/emotional skill, taught the group how to ask for help, how to set and achieve goals, and how to find opportunities in employment. When surveyed, the foster youth who attended an ILP felt 57% better prepared for life than those who did not participate (32%) (Lemon et al., 2004).

Dworsky and Courtney (2010) assessed the findings from the longitudinal Midwest study, and compared homelessness among the three sample sites from Iowa, Wisconsin,

and Illinois. Statistically, the foster youth who stayed in care longer (Illinois) had lower rates of homelessness at earlier ages than the other two samples (Iowa and Wisconsin). Unfortunately, over time the rates of homelessness between all three-sample sites evened out, because all three samples lacked supportive services after exiting care (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010). However, when looking at education, the longitudinal Midwest study found that the longer a youth was in care, beyond age 18, the more likely they would achieve higher education (i.e., higher rates of high school completion and GEDs) (Courtney et al., 2007).

Peters, Dworsky, Courtney, and Pollard (2009) study found when foster care was extended to age 21, and former foster youth were given better access to post-secondary education, then their earnings increased over their lifetime. What was significant about the study was the cost ratio of 2 to 1. This means for every dollar spent on extending foster care after age 18 the return is two dollars in increased earnings for the former foster care youth. Youth with post-secondary education also increase their chances to obtain employment and find better employment leading to greater self-sufficiency. The benefits of a post-secondary education can also lead to healthier personal and familial choices, which then lead to improvement of future generations (Peters et al., 2009).

Objectives, Values Premises, Theoretical Positions, Target Segments, and Substantive Effects of the Policy

Assembly Bill 12 main components are the extension of foster care benefits to qualifying youth up to age 21; the extension of Adoptions Assistance Program (AAP); the extension of CalWORKs; benefits to youths living with a nonrelated legal guardians (NRLG), and the conversion of the Kin-GAP program to receive Title IV-E funding. The 2010 Act, defines the former exiting foster youths as “nonminor dependents” (NMD).

The terminology is important for the separation between adult (18+) foster youth and minors (those not yet 18 years of age or younger) in the child welfare system (A.B. 12, 2010).

In order to receive continued support after the age of 18, the youth will sign an agreement to stay in extended foster care (EFC), be a dependent of the juvenile justice system, live in a pre-authorized 18+ placement, and meet one of the five conditions that make eligibility possible: (1) in the progress of obtaining a high school diploma or GED; (2) enrolled and attend post-secondary education or vocational school, at least part-time; (3) participate in a job placement program; (4) be employed and working at least 80 hours per month; (5) or be unable to fulfill any of the mentioned requirements due to a medical condition or disability (A.B. 12, 2010; Courtney et al., 2013).

A youth can decide not to participate and make arrangements to be discharged from the child welfare system at age 18. A review hearing, prior to the youth's 18th birthday, is held to determine if the youth understands their individual rights; to see if the youth understands the consequences of their decision to leave foster care; the rules of returning to the EFC system should the youth choose to do so; and to finalize the transitional independent living plan (TILP). The foster youth and the social worker develop the TILP 90 days prior to the hearing. The TILP must include a plan to find housing, acquire health insurance, employment and education (A.B. 12, 2010; Delgado et al., 2013).

The California Fostering Connection to Success Act also expanded the Adoptions Assistance Program (AAP) by changing the eligibility for children to be able to receive additional federal funding. A.B. 12 separated AAP from the Aid to Families with

Dependent Children (AFDC) income requirements and age restrictions of 1996. AAP now allows funding to be awarded to children with special needs and extends that aid to age 21 (A.B. 12, 2010).

The A.B. 12 revision to the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment (Kin-GAP) program now allows California to receive federal Title IV-E funding. The child who is eligible for Title IV-E foster care benefits under Kin-GAP must fall into one of the following categories: dependent of the juvenile court; live with a relative-guardian, be in a voluntary placement; have Kin-GAP established by a juvenile court; or be dismissed by courts at the establishment of a permanent guardianship (A.B. 12, 2010; Schwartz et al., 2014).

Assembly Bill 12 also absorbs several state approved placements and extends them to nonminor dependents, such as the home of a relative, an foster home or foster home agency, a group home, or with a non-related legal guardian. A.B. 12 created two new options in addition to the previous state approved placements called THP-Plus Foster Care (FC), and the Supervised Independent Living Program (A.B. 12, 2010; Delgado, 2013).

The THP-Plus-FC extended foster care services and assistance to nonminor dependents up to age 21 in a supervised placement that is partially backed with Title IV-E reimbursement funds (A.B. 12, 2010). This new program structure allows nonminor dependents an opportunity to continue with foster care housing and receive comprehensive supportive services in a more independent age-appropriate setting. An example, of services would include counseling, job preparedness training, mentoring, and living skills training (Delgado, 2013). The youth will meet with a social worker on a

monthly basis and be required to have bi-annual review hearings in dependency court. The reviews are in place to see if the nonminor dependent is in compliance with the A.B.12 requirements (A.B. 12, 2010; Delgado, 2013; Schwartz et al., 2014).

The second placement created by A.B.12 is the Supervised Independent Living Program (SILP). The intention of SILP is to provide former foster youth with an independent housing assistance but without the supportive services. The funding is provided directly to the youth with a starting rate of \$820 a month, which is significantly less when compared to \$2,284 - \$2,871 given to a THP-Plus-FC provider (Lemley & Sepe, 2014). The program costs less than THP-Plus-FC because it is less restrictive in requirements for the nonminor dependent and easier for the county to implement. Finding an acceptable living placement can be practically anything approved by the state, such as apartments, rooms for rent in a house, college dormitories, and single room occupancy hotels to name a few. The state has two steps in approving a SILP. Step one is the assessment of the foster youth to determine if he or she has the appropriate financial skills, is developmentally ready, and is emotionally ready to live independently. The second step is determining if the living arrangement meets the health and safety standards of state guidelines. However, SILP's main living restriction is not living with a biological parent. Per A.B. 12 guidelines, no funding shall go to the residence of where the child was originally removed (A.B. 12, 2010; Delgado, 2013).

The "phase-in" stipulation of Assembly Bill also limited the age of eligibility over three years. For youth who turned 18, between the signing of A.B. 12 and the first stage of implementation, special considerations were made to allow these youth to continue with foster care services. The extension of services started for 19 year olds on January

1st, 2012. The extension then included 20 year olds in 2013, and finally the inclusion of 21 year olds in 2014 (A.B. 12, 2010).

Covert Objectives

The development of A.B. 12 did not adequately address the role of biological parents after the child reaches the age of majority. The biological parent involved in the child welfare system is typically assumed to be guilty of child maltreatment by policy makers (Jimenez, 2010). This leads to limited programs or no forethought to biological parents who could benefit along with NMDs. A.B. 12 reaffirms the separation of parent and child by limiting the services to the youth if they decide to return to live with that parent. For example, the SILP program is a way to care for NMD but the main restriction to SILP is not allowing them to live with their biological parent. The youth is reinforced to stay away from the birth parent through the government's supply of housing assistance; otherwise the youth will not receive any assistance under the EFC program (A.B. 12, 2010; All County Letter [ACL] 11-69, 2011b). Additionally, once the youth turns 18, the court system is no longer required to notify the biological parent of future legal hearings (exception: Native American youth and the rights of the Tribe will continue to receive court notifications) (ACL 11-69, 2011b). The transitional independent living case plan (TILP) required by A.B. 12 prior to every foster youth's exit no longer requires, includes, or attempts to provide services for NMD and their biological parents (ACL 11-15, 2011a). The parent is not consulted or informed what transitional plans have been made for the NMD, because the only signature required belongs to the NMD.

Value Premises

Part of the thought process, or hypothesis, is that aging out foster youth will take on more adult like roles once they exit foster care, however, NMDs are still learning and have not yet emerged as fully capable adults (Berzin et al., 2014). The presumption is a foster youth will instantly gain insight, financial acuity, and the emotional maturity to be independent upon his/her 18th birthday (Krinsky, 2010). Believing an individual can accomplish these achievements by 18 is based in a strong work ethic deeply rooted in the traditional Puritan American culture. This tradition believes in hard work, to take pride in that work, and rewarding an individual's perseverance to acquire wealth (Porter, 2010).

A.B. 12 gives assistance to nonminor dependents with housing because it continues to promote the hard work ethics of our American culture. To qualify for the assistance a NMD must meet specified requirements that are value laden in educational achievement and employment training to improve the individual's self-reliance. By directing these beliefs lawmakers seek to end and/or reduce the negative outcomes impacting NMD, which will also decrease future dependency on assistance programs.

Theoretical Positions

The California legislators wanted to take purposeful actions with the design of A.B. 12. By increasing services, youth might deter the negative outcomes of homelessness, low educational attainment, low employment, high public assistance reliance, and justice system involvement (i.e., multiple arrests or jail). Extending services, providing adequate housing placements, promoting educational achievement, and the development of life skills (e.g. employment training) will lead foster youth to

positive outcomes after exiting at age 21 and to self-sufficiency (Courtney, Dworsky & Pollack, 2007).

To help reduce the negative outcomes and increase the self-reliance, the state can facilitate an intensive concentration of services coordinated to serve an at risk population in order to deter future use of public assistance programs after exiting child welfare system at age 21. For example, A.B. 12 helps NMDs navigate housing and financial assistance for school and basic necessities while under extended foster care. Without A.B.12, if on their own, young adults will have to traverse several different social service mazes in order to receive aid (Courtney et al, 2013).

Based on the longitudinal Midwest study, increasing foster care services beyond age 18 was determined to cost an average of \$20,800 annually (Peters et al., 2009). This is an estimate that covers housing and basic living assistance costs. This is cost effective to lawmakers as it gives NMD services to become future productive self-sufficient members of society, but also benefits NMD from possibly avoiding an ever-decreasing welfare system with time limits (The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act [PRWORA], 1996).

The percentage of public assistance programs that are used by exiting foster youth could be high and instituted by many different social service agencies (Byrne et al., 2014). By giving assistance under A.B. 12, some program costs (Kin-GAP) can be offset and therefore beneficial to both the consumer and the state. Assembly Bill 12 gives the state a financial incentive to take the uncertainty of transitioning out of child welfare, and provides the guidance young adults need to achieve independence (A.B. 12, 2010).

Foster youths usually do not have, or will have minimal, support in place after exiting foster care. Typically, non-foster youth will have a family structure to rely on and have access to resources through their family's support when seeking post-secondary education or employment (Atkinson, 2008). Non-foster youth will then fair better in self-sufficiency when compared to NMD due to an on-going support structure beyond age 18 (Atkinson, 2008; Courtney et al, 2010). The implementation of A.B. 12 creates a pseudo-family support structure with financial funding to NMD and gives them a better chance to be on the same level as their non-foster youth peers. If NMDs gain an equal footing to non-foster youth then they may succeed more. As the "surrogate parent" the state understood their responsibility and the importance of providing a better transition plan for foster youth into independent adulthood (Courtney, 2009). By giving more transitional support services, a NMD will have better access to education and employment opportunities, which will lead to self-sufficiency (A.B. 12, 2010).

Target Segment(s)

The targeted populations are all children in child welfare services who reach the age of majority (18) and agree to stay in the foster care system. There is an average of 60,000 foster youth residing in California and approximately 4,400 are considered to be "aging out" or emancipating from foster care each year (Needell et al., 2015).

Prior to A.B. 12, between 2008 and 2010, approximately 13,000 youth emancipated from California child welfare system. The demographics over this time frame were 2% for Native Americans, and 1% for Asian/Pacific Islanders. The percentages stay relatively constant during this time frame for African Americans (30-

33%), Whites (25%), and for Hispanics/Latinos (35%-37%). Also, each year females emancipated between 56 and 58%, whereas 46 to 48% were males (Needell et al., 2015).

Short and Long-Range Effects of the Policy

The research for this thesis started in the fall of 2014 and was concluded in the spring of 2015. Therefore, since the implementation of the law began in 2012, only short-term effects of this legislation are presented in this analysis.

One of the first tasks of A.B 12 was informing the county workforce of the changes in the child welfare system. It took the state almost two years (2010 and 2012), to prep the county workers with a series of All County Letters (ACL), which broke down A.B. 12 and the implementation of new services (TILP, Kin-GAP, THP-Plus-FC, SILP, etc.). Staff members reportedly felt a lack of understanding regarding A.B. 12 due to the numerous ACL notifications spread out over time, and this delay in knowing on how to implement A.B. 12 made the county workers feel as if they were “playing catch-up” (Courtney et al., 2013 p. 27).

The slow implementation of workers knowledge about the new programs and services contributed to youth not knowing about the services and therefore not receiving services.] For example, the All County Letters (ACLs) informed social workers of TILP mid-October of 2011, which was approximately 3 months before the implementation of TILP on January 1st, 2012 (A.B.12, 2010; ACL 11-69, 2011b). The Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) requirements for social workers involve NMDs and develop permanent connections in the community, prepare an independent living plan, and to gain responsibility with adult decision-making (ACL 11-69, 2011b). The TILP requirements increased the work responsibilities of social workers, and the late ACL

distribution did not give social workers adequate time to be aware of, to understand, and prepare NMDs of all the requirements, guidelines, and objectives of TILP. The delay between the enactment and the All County Letters informing social workers may of impacted NMDs who might of benefited from those services but were unaware of the services. This pocket of time may have led to many exiting youth being unaware of the opportunity to stay due to county workers being unaware of the opportunities available to NMDs.

Another requirement of A.B. 12 was conversion of Transitional Housing Placement-Plus program (THP-Plus) to the THP-Plus-FC program, which is designed for youth (18-21) to stay in Extended Foster Care (EFC) by offering supportive services and housing covered under Title IV-E funding (ACL I-40-11c) to the THP-Plus-Foster Care (FC) (A.B.12, 2010). Approximately, 70% of funding provided to create THP-Plus-FC came directly from the existing THP-Plus program in order to maximize the funding potential under Title IV-E (Lemley & Byrnes, 2010). This changeover saved money for the state of California because the THP-Plus-FC received Title IV-E funding. Both programs adhered to local county approval, which required suitable housing and supportive services to promote self-sufficiency. The main differences is THP-Plus as only available to former foster youths for only 24 months between ages 18 to 24, instead of A.B. 12's covers three (36 months) consecutive years ages 18 to 21 Another difference includes the monthly supervision for only THP-Plus-FC youth who meet the five A.B. 12 conditions (Lemley & Byrnes, 2010). The adaptation of THP-Plus-FC services should have gone fairly smooth due it being a program based off of a pre-established THP-Plus program (Delgado, 2013; Lemley, Kimberlin & Smith, 2011). However, between 2010

and 2012, the THP-Plus-FC program was practically non-existent. In the January ACL of 2011, the placement is mentioned as an option for NMD, but the program was delayed until “placement agreements for THP-Plus-FC are developed” (p.10). By July 2011, ACL I-40-11 informs county workers the THP-Plus-FC is now available, but “the specifics of this program are being currently developed” (p. 5).

The John Burton Foundation surveyed 2013-2014 providers and analyzed the number of THP-Plus-FC placements (Lemley & Sepe, 2014). The foundation saw a very low attendance rate among NMDs in THP-Plus-FC placements, with 273 youth reported in 2013, and 1,031 youth by June 2014 (Lemley & Sepe, 2014). The increase of NMDs served is important, however, the number of placements is barely 25% of the 4,000 to 5,000 exiting foster youths (Needell et al., 2015). The results for THP-Plus-FC placements were slow to materialize among providers in sufficient numbers.

Lawmakers did not provide any language in A.B. 12 on how to increase the number of programs to cover both THP-Plus and THP-Plus-FC without increasing the funding to these programs. The language in A.B. 12 instead imposes to each county a state-mandated requirement to serve both THP-Plus and THP-Plus-FC programs leaving each county to come up with their own service programs (A.B. 12, 2010). At first this was agreeable to both the county and the state, however, “as implementation planning progressed it became increasingly clear that many counties lacked the capacity and/or the inclination to create an efficient approval process for THP- Plus-FC providers”, Courtney et al., 2013 p. 16).

A.B. 12 implemented a “rate structure” to satisfy Title IV-E standards by using the average rate of all of the counties payment to housing services (2010 p. 2). This rate

was introduced to serve as many youth as possible in addition to controlling Title IV-E costs. All counties budgets for THP-Plus-FC placements were averaged and divided by the number of counties, establishing one payment or rate for every county regardless of population density. The cost of services to NMD may differ significantly from one county to another based on population and availability of resources. The rate for THP-Plus was not changed due to the fact it is a county supported program and not entitled to Title IV-E funds provided through A.B.12. The initial estimates predicted THP-Plus-FC would not to have a lower average rate than THP-Plus at \$2,400 per youth (Lemley & Byrnes, 2010). The THP-Plus-FC placement had an average rate of \$2,600 per NMD from fiscal year 2012-13 (ACL 12-44, 2012), and had a 2.7 increase or \$2,675 per NMD from 2013 to 2014 (ACL 13-62E, 2013). At the moment, the rate covering the costs for youth in THP-Plus-FC is sufficient, but will need to be reassessed when the cost of living increases. For example, for one adult living anywhere in California will need minimum \$1,941 per month (\$11.20 per hour or \$23,300 annually) to be considered earning a living wage or above the poverty line (Glasmeier, 2015).

The SILP is offered as an acceptable option for both the youth and the state. SILP provides former foster youth with basic financial support and the freedom to have a residency of their choosing (A.B. 12, 2010; Delgado, 2013). The popularity of SILP is the resemblance to independence not all that dissimilar to their non-foster youth peers (Courtney et al., 2013). The only significant condition is if the residency is appropriate and the NMD does not reside with the parent or guardian the youth was originally removed from (A.B. 12, 2010; ACL I-40-11, 2011). Early on the popularity of SILP was evident when it alone accounted for 30% of NMD placements by 2013, whereas a year

before the program accounted for only 9% in 2012 (Delgado, 2013). In April 2014, the number of NMD placed at THP-Plus-FC was about 10% ($n = 1,031$) of the 2013-2014 NMD populations, whereas 41% of NMDs choose SILP (Lemley & Sepe, 2014). Even with a surge in NMDs choosing SILP as a placement option, NMDs will lose supportive services such as counseling, independent living skills, job assistance, etc. These supportive services can provide needed skills to the NMD to avoid the several poor outcomes of homelessness, poor employment and education, and continued dependence of public assistance (Courtney et al., 2013; Delgado, 2013).

A.B. 12 may have also led to the inadvertent causes and unforeseen negative outcomes, because the lawmakers may not have understood, or considered, the potential harmful consequences of their intentional actions (Stone, 1989). The state of California's child welfare system is made up of multiple counties and local governments who have different perspectives and budgets on how to deliver A.B. 12 services. A.B. 12 uniformed ILP and housing programs across all counties and made each county responsible for those programs. However, different approaches to the level of service may create a mixture of dissimilar programs across the state (Courtney et al., 2014). For example, a NMD may have three ILP options and two housing opportunities in county 'A', while 2 miles away, in another county, there are 10 ILP options and 5 housing options in county 'B'. In this example, both counties are providing the mandatory services but each county is different in being able to provide the number of services. This may have an unintended effect on the outcomes of NMDs through inconsistent programs spanning from one county to the next. For example, Dworsky and Courtney

(2009) found if the number of services (i.e., housing assistance) is higher, then there was a 70% reduction of homelessness among former foster youth.

Within California's counties comes each individual county's responsibility to train their county employees on new legislations, policies, and procedures. Unfortunately, there is currently a lack in uniform trainings that would satisfy all of the different types of county employees (i.e., probation, social workers, judges, lawyers, etc.) who have interactions with the NMD population (Delgado, 2013). A lack of uniformity could lead to misinformation within an organization, between organizations, and also between the organization and the client. For an example, Paul-Ward (2009) found the possible fallacy of multilayered communication systems from the director, to the supervisors, to the case managers, to the notification of foster parents and youth. If we expand on this and include the state, the county, and inter-counties, then information can be altered or misrepresented to the ones who require it. At each layer, or depending on the number of layers, the inconsistent communication from agency to client, and client to agency is a barrier to successful transition to adulthood (Paul-Ward, 2009).

Implications of the Policy for the Operating and Outcome Variables of Social Policies

Exiting foster youths may find the extension of rules, restrictions, and requirements by participation in EFC programs designed to foster a healthy transition a bit discouraging (Delgado, 2013). This can be due to NMD's being in the child welfare system for years, and "aging out" could be seen as a type of pardon from a system they dislike or may feel resentment towards (Courtney et al., 2014). Their willingness to participate will be based on their individual child welfare experiences plus their developmental and maturity levels (Delgado, 2013). The NMD's participation also relies

on their knowledge of how A.B.12 benefits NMDs (Courtney et al., 2013). The comprehensive services provided under THP-Plus-FC are job readiness training, ILPs, a necessity allowance, mentoring, etc. (Courtney et al, 2013). Unfortunately, the delays between 2010 and 2012, providing supportive housing options, and county workers scrambling to understand all of the new service opportunities to NMDs, the chances of exiting youth being unaware of all options is a realistic consequence.

If given time, A.B. 12 can increase the level of services provided and introduce new opportunities for NMDs on a state and local county levels. More money given to the housing assistance programs (SILP and THP-Plus-FC), allow NMDs to stay safe and secure in a stable environment to reduce the high rate of homelessness among exiting foster care youth. Also, the enrollment NMDs through A.B. 12's EFCs program continues the counseling and therapy services afforded to foster care youth. The access to counseling or other services can be very beneficial to NMD's future and adjustment to self-sufficiency.

A.B.12 implies a high value on education and employment. Requiring an NMD to achieve a higher education (or to obtain employment) as a condition of Title IV-E funding will motivate service providers to encourage NMDs to succeed. This affirmation of educational improvement can enhance the skills and employment prospects for NMDs and improve their futures.

Changes Concerning Rights and Responsibilities for the Target Population and Non-Target Population

This is a relatively new area for lawmakers as the "surrogate parent" (Courtney, Dworsky, & Napolitano, 2013). A young adult (18+) has rights and the State has furthered their responsibilities to exiting foster youths with the California Fostering

Connections to Success Act. There are budget concerns in California, which can negatively impact the programs outlined in A.B. 12. For example THP-Plus-FC is still a mandatory program for each county to provide. If the budget is stretched too thin then supportive services such as counseling, mentoring, life skill training, or job readiness training to name a few may be cut to balance the county budget but will negatively impact NMD population (Courtney et al., 2013).

The increase in the nonminor dependent population can also impact the caseloads for social workers, which will also go up due to the age extension guidelines of A.B. 12. By increasing the amount of services but not increasing the hiring of new personnel can strain already overworked employees. By adding caseworkers, that the older foster youths will need until they “age-out” at 21, may add to county budget expenditures and drain resources for the state (Courtney et al., 2013; Delgado, 2013). The caseload increase could be seen as a burden on professionals with unknown ramifications. One possible outcome could be professional “burnout” and a loss of trained personnel. Also, caseload increases can lead to sub-standard attention of each individual (Delgado, 2013).

The relationship between former foster youth and the social worker will also change under the A.B. 12 guidelines (Delgado, 2013). The former foster youth (18+) is now legally an adult, and the social worker will have to respect their decisions. The social worker will now take on an advisory role instead of an authoritative or supervisory role. The social worker assigned to these caseloads will have the added responsibility of knowing all of the complexities of A.B. 12 to best serve nonminor foster youths.

Finally, the nonminor dependent has a new found freedom and a responsibility for self-determination. As an adult (18+) they will have the right to determine where their

life will go by refusing services or to continue accepting support. Knowing what works, and what does not work will require the NMD to provide information to social workers in a new way as their roles change. The child welfare system will also have to find a balance between respecting the individual's rights but also to provide the level of care NMDs need.

Summary

The California Fostering Connections to Success Act (A.B. 12) of 2010 is a new way to care for youth beyond age 18 in extending foster care. A.B. 12 also increases payment benefits and transitional support services for Kin-GAP, Foster Care, Transitional Housing Programs (THP-Plus-FC and SILP), and Adoption Assistance Program (AAP). The increase of services, provided by A.B. 12 to youth, may deter the negative outcomes of homelessness, low educational attainment, low employment, high public assistance, and justice system involvement (i.e., multiple arrests or jail) by the extension of services and support in the extended foster care system until age 21. Since California has the largest population of foster care youth, it made sense to take advantage of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008. The A.B. 12 legislation allows the state, along with the permission of the nonminor dependent, to continue to be a “corporate parent” to those who need the additional services to become a self-sufficient adult (Courtney et al., 2014).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This thesis's purpose was to analyze the California Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2010, by using Gil's policy framework to look at the values, theoretical positions, the implication of the policy, and the outcome of services for the target population.

Summary of Findings

For many years former foster youth, approximately 4,000 to 5,000 annually, exited the foster care system and were left without the support and tools they needed to succeed. Low educational achievement (high school diplomas, GEDs, or college degrees) and poor employment options for exiting foster youths can result in high rates of homelessness, public assistance, and criminal activity (arrests). The proportion of exiting foster youth facing these poor outcomes is quite significant when compared to non-foster youths across the nation (Courtney et al., 2010; Okpych & Courtney, 2014; Stewart et al., 2014).

The California Fostering Connections to Success Act in 2010 immediately followed the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (FCSIAA) passed by Congress in 2008. California lawmakers took advantage of the FCSIAA's Title IV-E federal funds now allocated to extend foster care, Kin-GAP, and adoption assistance program benefits to age 21 (A.B. 12, 2010). The official implementation of A.B. 12 started in extension covered January 2012 to cover 19 year olds, then 20 year olds in 2013, and finally 21 year olds in 2014 (A.B. 12 Fact Sheet, 2010).

Two new placements developed specifically for nonminor dependents (18-21) were the THP-Plus-FC program and SILP. The THP-Plus-FC program provides additional services to NMDs such as financial and banking service, job preparedness training, life skills training, counseling, and mentoring. These additional services available to NMD makes THP-Plus-FC an excellent choice for NMDs who want adult freedoms but with support to rely on. Unfortunately, the general lack of THP-Plus-FC placements made this program unavailable to accommodate an increasing foster youth population (NMDs). Over the years (2012-2014) the number of THP-Plus-FC placements has increased but still are only able to assist one fourth of NMDs in a given year. The state of California will need to increase the volume of placements, significantly to provide space and services. This can be done by increasing the monetary support of each county in need of creating and maintaining THP-Plus-FC placements.

An alternative placement option was SILP, and has been used the most by NMDs accounting for a third of NMD placements in the first years it was available (2012-2013). SILP is a good option to balance an individual's right to self-determine but only benefits those who are capable of living independently. However, the program offers no supportive services to the NMD, such as ILPs, counseling, or job preparedness. With that said, the financial support to NMD under SILP has a universal rate structure of approximately \$800 dollars monthly. When considering the changes in living conditions between counties, the housing allowance may be insufficient to attend to the NMD's needs and the cost of living. A change to housing assistance should be adjusted when factoring cost of living trends. Also, while in SILP, ILPs and/or other training services, other than a monthly meeting with a caseworker should be offered to the NMD on a

voluntary basis. For example, if a NMD wanted to learn more about finances then they can sign up for a class or for one on one instruction.

The lawmakers have also infused the American work ethic throughout A.B. 12. Nonminor dependents agree to either work on achieving a higher level of education, or they must be working or taking active steps to obtain employment. This American tradition of believing rewards will come from personal achievement and working hard has been ingrained into our culture. A.B. 12 is another piece of government influence to future generations by providing a chance to improve themselves through hard work and education. However, this author believes that in order to increase the motivation for an educational and work ethic ideal from NMDs, a monetary incentive is needed regardless to received services provided by A.B.12. This can be done by achieving established goals laid out in the TILP or by an additional contract between the nonminor dependents, the counties, and the state of California. For example, if John wanted to obtain his GED and attend culinary academy by age 20, he should be rewarded beyond current A.B. 12 services if he achieves either one of those goals or both. There would be no penalty for not achieving the goals, but if one or more is achieved then the incentive would be on a sliding scale laid out in the contract.

Implications for Further Research

A longitudinal study focusing on the effects of A.B.12 should be used to assess the outcomes of NMDs. Currently, there is a general lack of studies that assess this population on a large enough scale to help with the validity of poor or positive outcomes. The study should acquire at least 2,000+ former foster youth who are in the EFC, and also youths who opted to not participate in A.B. 12 services and compare their successes

and negative outcomes. The continuing analysis of emancipated youth and their outcomes will need to be a combination of survey (quantitative) and interviews (qualitative) at various stages or intervals. Additionally, professionals (i.e., social workers) and service providers would be ideal sources for data gathering. Finding out the areas of A.B. 12 that are working, not working, and areas in need of improvement by providers, professionals, and emancipated youths will help us better understand and improve future legislation.

Implications for Social Work Practice and Policy

Social work is an evolving and multifaceted profession. This thesis of the California Fostering to Success Act of 2010, lends itself as another tool for social workers. As social workers, we have a moral and ethical duty to advocate for disenfranchised populations. It is this author's belief that in order to effectively advocate, one must first become knowledgeable about the subject matter. Therefore it is important for students, like myself, to aid the social work profession and help bring awareness to various subjects of interest. To current and future social workers this thesis may provide as a roadmap to inform professionals of A.B. 12's intentions, and might help increase a social worker's awareness of the poor outcomes facing emancipated foster youths.

Future legislation for aging out foster youth should include new considerations to extend foster care services to age twenty-five on a case-by-case basis. The current extension of services to age 21 may not provide enough time for some foster youth to be self-sufficient. Instead an extension to age twenty-five may allow a NMD enough time to enroll and complete a four-year college degree.

Lastly, an increase of federal funding to include THP-Plus in addition to THP-Plus-FC should also be considered. Even though the implementation of THP-Plus-FC

was slow to start it offers a well-rounded step to independence through the additional services it provides. The THP-Plus offers similar services but is supported by county and state funding only. If the THP-Plus could receive federal funding then expansion could service a higher percentage of NMD than the current 25%. More federal funding could also increase the effectiveness of A.B. 12 by creating a specifically trained case management department for NMDs. Case specific workers attached to the local county's DCFS offices will only be assigned to NMDs, which could ease the workload of child social workers, and be knowledgeable in issues specific to NMDs.

The California Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2010 is a positive step in the right direction. For too long the negative outcomes of exiting foster care youth were either ignored or unknown to the general public. By analyzing this policy we bring awareness to the populations of emancipated youths and the positive effects of local and state government. This author is confident the positive effects of A.B. 12 will out shine the slow start up.

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