

Assessing the Help-Seeking Behaviors of Foster Care Alumni within their Own Social Networks

John Seita¹, Angelique Day², Ann Carrellas² & Greg L. Pugh³

Abstract

This study utilizes survey data to assess the social network orientation of 66 foster care youth and alumni. Specifically, it measures the perceptions of foster care alumni concerning the efficacy of seeking help from their support system. Correlation analysis revealed that longer lengths of stays in foster care, higher numbers of placements, and a lack of permanency arrangement were all associated with being less likely to ask for and accept assistance from those in their social networks. Multivariate analysis indicates that the number of placements while in care was the only significant predictor of social network orientation. Implications for policy and practice include increased efforts by state agencies to maintain permanent and stable relationships in the lives of older youth as they transition from care and ensuring that the first placement is the best fit when out-of-home placements are suggested.

Keywords: Foster care, Network Orientation Scale, social supports, social functioning, placement history

1. Background and Significance

There is widespread recognition of the need to improve the well-being of youth in foster care. Indeed, the experience of having been in foster care is believed to have a number of deleterious impacts on adult functioning. Studies of former foster care children as adults (foster care “alumni”) show that they have poor educational outcomes, higher involvement in the criminal justice system, physical health problems, (Anctil, McCubbin, O’Brien, Pecora, & Anderson-Harumi, 2007; Beuhler, Orme, Post, & Patterson, 2000; Courtney et al., 2005; Courtney & Heuring, 2005; Farruggia, Greenberger, Chen, & Heckhausen, 2006; Kerman, Wildfire, & Barth, 2002) as well as economic and employment difficulties, homelessness, depression and other mental health issues (Berzin, Rhodes, & Curtis, 2011; Collins & Ward, 2011; Macomber et al, 2008; Pecora et al., 2005; White, Gallegos, O’Brien, Weisberg, & Pecora, 2011). Foster care alumni are also less likely to be able to form and sustain positive social relationships (Ahrens et al., 2011; Beuhler et al., 2000; Cook-Fong, 2000; Courtney et al., 2005; Courtney & Heuring, 2005; Kerman et al., 2002). This study is concerned with the social network orientation of foster care youth and alumni as it impacts their ability to engage with social support systems.

1.1 Defining Social Functioning as a Measure of Well-being

Social functioning is one of four domains of child well-being defined by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (2012) that also includes cognitive, behavioral and emotional functioning, and physical health and development. Social functioning is indicated by the ability to develop social relationships, to be socially skilled, and to be able to show adaptive functioning (DHHS, 2012).

¹ Michigan State University, School of Social Work, 116 Baker Hall, East Lansing, Michigan, 48824, USA.

² Wayne State University, School of Social Work, 5447 Woodward Ave., Detroit, Michigan, 48202, USA.

³ Portland State University, School of Social Work, PO Box 751, Portland, Oregon, 97207, USA.

Poor social relationship outcome is often measured by youths' feelings of loneliness, their perceived inability to make friends (Courtney & Heuring, 2005), marital dissatisfaction (Jonson-Reid, Scott, McMillen, & Edmond, 2007), poor relationships with biological parents and siblings (Wojciak, McWey, & Helfrich, 2013), lower life satisfaction, (Beuhler et al., 2000), and social isolation (Cook-Fong, 2000; Keller, Cusick, & Courtney, 2007).

1.2 Placement Instability and Social Functioning

The numerous changes in homes, schools, and communities are often cited as reasons foster care alumni have difficulty forming positive social relationships (Beuhler et al., 2000; Courtney & Barth, 1996; Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith, 2001; Kerman et al., 2002; Pecora et al., 2005). On average foster youth experience from two to eight placements (Courtney & Barth 1996; Kessler et al., 2008; Pecora et al., 2005). Researchers have consistently connected placement instability with poor adult mental health and social relationship difficulties experienced by foster care alumni (Beuhler et al., 2000; Cook-Fong, 2000; Courtney et al., 2001; Kerman et al., 2002; Krebs & Pitcoff, 2006; Pecora et al., 2005; Unrau, Seita, & Putney, 2008). However, Courtney and Barth (1996) found that moves in and out of the foster care system were more predictive of poor outcomes, than were the number of placements within the system.

1.3 Formal Child Welfare Service Provision and the Development of Social Functioning

Krebs and Pitcoff (2006) point out that foster care youth tend to wonder if their relationships are with adults who authentically care about them, or only care because they are paid to do so. Even if youth trust in the supports available to them, disruption may occur when they age out (Courtney et al., 2001; Denuwelaere & Bracke, 2007). In some cases, a single positive adult relationship can be a protective factor against poor relationship outcomes, buffering the effects of stressors or negative life events, as well as depressive symptoms (Ahrens et al., 2011; Beam, 2002; Day, 2006; Farruggia, et al., 2006; Kerman et al., 2002; Salazar, Keller, & Courtney, 2011; Shirk & Strangler, 2004; Taussig, 2002). However, others have cautioned that a single, temporary positive relationship or minimal number of supportive relationships were not significant protective factors (Anctil et al., 2007; Perry, 2006; Shirk & Strangler, 2004). Other research suggests it is the quality, not the quantity, of a social support system that is the more critical factor (The Pew Charitable Trust, 2007; Vaux and Athanassopoulou, 1987).

1.4 Biological and Non-Biological Permanency and Social Functioning

After aging out of foster care, many alumni go back to their biological families for support (Courtney & Heuring, 2005, Pew Charitable Trust, 2007), despite whatever conflict, rejection, or maltreatment they have encountered (Courtney & Heuring, 2005; Shirk & Strangler, 2004). In addition, there is a compelling need to maintain or reestablish relationships with siblings (Courtney & Heuring, 2005; Courtney et al., 2001; Kerman et al., 2002; Keller et al., 2007), largely because siblings can relate to one another's foster care experiences (Samuels, 2008; Wojciak et al., 2013;). Foster care alumni are looking to establish relationships that may include previous social networks.

Non-parental adults may also have a significant impact on the lives of foster care alumni (Ahrens et al., 2011; Day, 2006; Martin & Sifers, 2012). Barone, Iscoe, Trickett, and Schmid (1998) found there to be three networks: family, peers, and non-family adults. Beam (2002) suggested that the very important non-parental adults provide guidance and advice that would not be respected from peers or accepted from parents. Natural mentoring is defined as having at least one adult who offers social support, (Munson & McMillen, 2009) which may lead to positive outcomes, such as more effective asset development, better mental health, improved social relations and greater life-skill competency (Ahrens et al., 2011; Day, 2006; Farruggia et al., 2006; Greeson, Usher, & Grinstein-Weiss, 2010; Munson & McMillen, 2009; Munson, Smalling, Spencer, Scott, & Tracy, 2010; Zand et al., 2009).

2. Social Network Orientation and Social Functioning

Social network orientation (SNO) refers to individual beliefs and attitudes about seeking and accepting help from others (Cecil et al., 1995; Forbes & Roger, 1999; Lawrence, Gardner, & Callan, 2007; Tata & Leong, 1994; Tolsdorf, 1976; Vaux, 1985). SNO has been found to be a critical element for at-risk populations, because it effects help-seeking behavior, from both informal social networks and professional providers (Barone et al., 1998; Keller et al., 2007; Tata & Leong, 1994; Yoo, Goh, & Yoon, 2005). Clapp and Beck (2009) found that social network orientation acted as a moderating agent between adults with posttraumatic stress disorder who been victimized as children and levels of social support accessed during an adult trauma.

Higher scores of PTSD were positively related to more negative social network orientation which led to less perceived social supports (Clapp & Beck, 2009). The social network's size, density, complexity, reciprocity, closeness, presence of family in network, and satisfaction with support received can all effect the perception of support (Burda, Vaux, and Schill, 1984; Vaux & Harrison, 1985). Perry (2006) identified three important networks for foster care youth: biological family, foster families, and peers. Placement instability weakened network connections, especially those with adults, as opposed to peers (Perry, 2006).

3. Current Study

The current study is a secondary data analysis from a larger study that focused on health care outcomes among foster care alumni concerned with disparities in their access to physical and mental health care (forthcoming). Research concerning the social functioning of at risk populations has investigated the impact of different factors on the quality of social relationships among alumni (Beuhler et al., 2000; Cook-Fong, 2000; Courtney et al., 2005; Courtney & Heuring, 2005; Kerman et al., 2002). However, studies related specifically to the network orientation of foster care youth and alumni are lacking. The limited studies that do exist include qualitative, mixed methods, and literature analyses (Ahrens et al., 2011; Collins & Ward, 2011; Havlicek, 2011; Samuels, 2008; Unrau et al., 2008). This study seeks to quantitatively describe the influences of factors on the social network orientation of a sample of former foster care youth. The specific research question asks: Does the length of stay in foster care, the number of placements, and permanency arrangement increase or decrease the likelihood of having a negative or positive social network orientation? The following hypotheses further explicate the intentions of this study: 1) foster care alumni who spent more time in foster care will have higher scores of negative network orientation than those alumni who spent less time in foster care; 2) alumni with larger numbers of placements while in care will have higher scores of negative network orientation than those with smaller numbers of placements; and 3) alumni with no permanency arrangement upon exiting foster care will have higher scores of negative network orientation than those who left care with a permanency arrangement. Control variables of age, gender, and race were included in the analysis as well.

4. Methodology

4.1 Sample

This study used a convenience sample of foster care alumni age 17 and older who had transitioned out of foster care. Research participants were recruited using existing relationships that the investigators had with public and private child welfare agencies and foster care alumni networks across the state of Michigan. The sample for this study included 66 young adults who had exited foster care and therefore were no longer receiving child welfare case management services. The study was conducted over an 18-month period from 2006-2008.

4.2 Measures

Two instruments composed the survey that was administered to participants. The first instrument collected basic demographic information (i.e., race, gender, age, education level, and foster care status including length of time in care, number of placements experienced and final permanency disposition). Social support functioning was measured using the Network Orientation Scale (NOS), one of very few standardized instruments measuring attitudes towards the efficacy of social support (Vaux, Burda, & Stewart, 1986). The NOS is a 20-question instrument designed to measure negative network orientation, that is the perspective "that it is inadvisable, impossible, useless" or risky to seek help from others (Tolsdorf, 1976, p. 412). Respondents used a 4-point rating scale that ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). A higher score on the Network Orientation Scale indicates a more negative attitude about the efficacy of seeking help and support. Ten scale questions are worded positively such as, "In the past, friends have really helped me out when I've had a problem" and ten negatively, such as, "Other people never understand my problems" (Vaux et al., 1986). The NOS measures unwillingness to maintain, nurture, or utilize those supports that one has (Tolsdorf, 1976). The instrument has been used with multiple populations in the United States, including college students (Vaux et al., 1986; Vaux, 1985), community adults (Vaux et al., 1986), mothers, and children over ten years old (Belle et al., 1991), psychiatric patients diagnosed with schizophrenia and major affective disorders (Cecil et al., 1995), sexually abused women (Gibson & Hartshorne, 1996), Chinese-American university students (Tata & Leong, 1994), Australian nurses (Lawrence et al., 2007), and black, South-African university students (Pretorius, 1993).

The average scores for several studies of general populations were around 42 (Belle et al., 1991; Lawrence et al., 2007; Pretorius, 1993; Tata & Leong, 1994). The survey took study participants about 25 minutes to complete. Higher scores on the NOS are interpreted to mean that respondents were more unwilling to maintain, nurture or utilize the social supports that are available to them.

The current study is the first to use the NOS with a sample of foster youth. Previous studies have reported acceptable validity and reliability, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .60 to .88 and a test-retest Pearson's correlation of .85 (Vaux et al., 1986). The Cronbach's alpha for the current study is .71, indicating that the selection of this instrument is suitable for use with our target population.

4.2.1 Independent variables

The major independent variable of interest was foster care history. It was measured using a compilation of three separate variables: two continuous variables (length of stay, and number of placements) and one dichotomous variable (permanency status). Permanency was defined as the status of being reunified, adopted, or placed in relative guardianship. Those without permanency arrangements were those who had aged out of foster care and were living in independent living, or who had left their placements without legal permission (AWOLP). Other independent variables included gender (male and female), race (white and nonwhite), age (20 and younger vs. 21 and over), and education level (less than high school, high school diploma, or high school equivalency program vs. some college courses to degrees up to a Ph.D. or law degree). To ensure an adequate sample size for the analysis, these variables were all dichotomized for the bivariate and multivariate analyses.

4.2.2 Dependent variables

The outcome measure, social network orientation, was a continuous, dependent variable. It was measured using total score results, as depicted on the Network Orientation Scale.

4.3 Procedures

Advertisements for recruiting students were sent out through the state program that administers the Education Training Voucher and through the State Youth Board Network. Additional youth and young adults were recruited through snowball methods via other survey takers. The survey was distributed to foster care alumni at networking meetings (48%), or provided to participants individually via phone (12.5%), mail (12.5%), or individually scheduled, face-to-face meetings (27%). The survey was self-administered, and took about 25 minutes to complete. For those interviewed via phone, the survey was read to them verbatim, and responses were recorded as directed by the study participant. This study was approved by the University Institutional Review Board at Michigan State University. Participants were compensated for their time with a \$20 store gift card.

4.4 Data Analyses

Survey data were entered into SPSS statistical software, version 19, and data were explored using descriptive statistics, bivariate and multivariate analysis. Significant variables derived from the bivariate tests were controlled for in the final linear regression model, as were the major variables of interest ($p < .05$). The linear regression analysis was used to explore relationships between participants' foster care history (i.e., length of stay, number of placements, and final permanency status) and their scores on the Network Orientation Scale. Two-tailed tests were used in the analysis, and the alpha level was set at .05. Effect sizes were calculated for findings that drew statistically significant results.

5. Results

Descriptive analyses of the survey data found that young people in the current sample experienced an average of 5 (SD= 3.7) placements and were in care for approximately 7 (SD = 4.8) years. The majority (60.6%) had aged out of care without a permanency arrangement while other alumni in the study entered into permanency arrangements that included reunification with family (16.7%), adoption (10.6%), or independent living (9.1%). The average age of participants was 24, with a median age of 21. Of the sampled foster care alumni, slightly more than two-thirds were female ($n=45$), and about 41% percent were African-American ($n=27$). Fifty-one of the youth (79%) who were placed in the foster care system in the sample had heightened NOS. The range of scores on the NOS for this sample was 29-61; the mean score was 47.8 (SD=6.5). See Table 1 below for additional descriptive information.

Table 1 Participant Demographics and Characteristics

Characteristic (N=66)		n	%
Gender	Female	45	68.2
	Male	21	31.8
Race	White	33	50.0
	African American	27	40.9
	Other	6	9.1
Age	20 years and under	28	42.4
	21 years and over	38	57.6
Permanency Status	^b No Permanency	47	71.2
	^c Permanency	19	28.8
Education Level	No College	30	45.5
	Some College	36	54.5
Social Relationships (N=63)			
Experienced intimate partner violence in last 12 months	Yes	6	9.5
	No	57	90.5
NOS Score	Mean (SD)	Median	Range
	47.8 (6.48)	48	29-61
Number of years in care	7.32 (4.83)	6.00	0.5-19.0
Number of placements	5.27 (3.69)	4.50	1-14

^a Other--American Indian, Asian, or Hispanic

^b No Permanency—Aged Out, Independent Living, AWOLP

^c Permanency—Reunified, Adopted, Kinship Guardianship

Mann Whitney tests and a Spearman's Rho Correlation tests were used for the bivariate analysis because none of the variables were normally distributed. NOS scores did not differ significantly by gender [males (Mdn= 46) vs. females (Mdn = 49.25)], $U=383.00$, $z= -1.11$, $P<.27$, $r= -.14$, age [20 and under (Mdn= 48) vs. 21 and older (Mdn= 47)], $U=496.00$, $z=-.29$, $P<.77$, $r= -.004$, race [white (Mdn=46) vs. non-white (Mdn=50)], $U=329.00$, $z=-1.73$, $P<.08$, $r=-.22$, or education level [high school diploma, equivalency, and below (Mdn= 48) vs. some college and above (Mdn=46)], $U=416.00$, $z=-1.40$, $P<.16$, $r=-.17$. There was a statistically significant difference in NOS scores among participants based on their permanency status, however. Those who found permanency through reunification, adoption or kinship guardianship had significantly lower NOS scores (Mdn= 43) than did those without permanency (aged out, independent living, AWOL) (Mdn= 48.5), $U=293.00$, $z= -2.08$, $P<.03$, $r=-.26$.

Findings from the Spearman Rho Correlation indicate a significant positive relationship between the length of stay and number of placements ($r=.319$, p (two tailed) $< .01$). We also found a significant positive relationship between length of stay and total NOS score ($r=.298$, p (two tailed) $< .05$) and between number of placements and total NOS score ($r= .319$, p (two tailed) $< .01$). Those who had longer stays in out-of-home care, those with a higher number of placements, and those who never received permanency were less likely to respond positively, ask for and accept help from others in their social network. The findings from the linear regression analysis indicate that number of placements was the only significant predictor of scores on the network orientation scale so it is likely that this variable is the best predictor of negative network orientation for youth in out-of-home placements. See Table 2 below.

Table 2: Linear Regression Analysis

	B	SE B	B	95% CI
Constant	43.29	1.86		[39.56, 47.02]
Length of Stay	.27	.17	.21	[-.06, .61]
# of Placements	.41	.23	.24*	[.05, .87]
Age	-1.13	1.56	-.09	[-4.26, 2.00]
Permanency Status	1.41	1.79	.10	[-2.17, 4.99]

* $p< .05$

6. Discussion

The mean score on the NOS was 47.8, larger than the mean scores for other populations included in previous studies, which consistently reported means on or about 42 (Belle et al., 1991; Lawrence et al., 2007; Pretorius, 1993; Tata & Leong, 1994). Negative network orientation may be a larger issue for foster youth than for other at-risk populations. Specifically, it is placement instability that is most associated with negative network orientation, and placement instability is, by and large, an issue unique to those placed in out-of-home care. This finding is similar to research on foster care outcomes previously noted concerning placement instability and social supports (Beuhler et al., 2000; Courtney & Barth, 1996; Courtney et al., 2001; Kerman et al., 2002; Pecora, et al., 2005; Perry, 2006). Multiple placements may undermine trust, the ability to attach and maximize positive social functioning long into adulthood. Likewise, Unrau et al., (2008) found that adults who had multiple placements while in foster care as children were likely to have difficulties in forming relationships as adults and were less likely to trust others. This study found that the more placements experienced, the more difficult it is for youth to seek and accept support and assistance, both during the transition out of foster care and into young adulthood (Unrau et al, 2008). Emerging adulthood is typically defined as occurring between the ages of 18 and 25 when young adults in industrial societies are “exploring various possible life directions” (Arnett, 2000). In order to complete this transition successfully, alumni, before exiting care, need stable and reliable social networks in place that can guide and support them through this crucial developmental stage. Another important finding is that age is not significantly associated with NOS score. This has huge implications for this population. Social network orientation negatively influenced during the foster care experience continues to have an impact long after foster care stays are over. This finding is also consistent with other studies, which purport that a life of instability is a correlate to a host of negative outcomes, such as social disconnectedness (Courtney et al., 2005; Stott & Gustavsson, 2010) and inability to form strong social relationships long into adulthood (Buehler et al., 2000; Cook-Fong, 2000; Courtney et al., 2005; Courtney & Heuring, 2005; Kerman et al., 2002; Perry, 2006).

7. Implications for Policy, Practice, and Future Research

Negative social network orientation can be mitigated through purposeful efforts to build and maintain permanent and stable relationships in the lives of older foster youth. Policy changes that promote building supportive relationships include ensuring that the first placement is the best fit when out-of-home placements are necessary. Formalized efforts should be employed to increase permanent connections to both biologically and non-biologically related caring adults. Federal child welfare legislation has moved to address many of these concerns. For example, the Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA) (1997), the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) (1999), and the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (FCSIA) (2008) offer increased incentives to support transition planning, independent living, and permanency. ASFA contains provisions that require states to initiate court proceedings to free a child for adoption, once that child had been waiting in foster care for at least 15 of the most recent 22 months, and provides incentives to states to increase the number of adoptions being made (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2014). Specifically, FCIA provides funding for states to promote interactions with mentors and other dedicated adults who provide personal and emotional support for foster youth (FCIA, 1999). Most recently, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act was enacted (2008). This law provides incentives and support for placements with relatives and extends transitional services and child welfare case management support to youth to age 21. It also requires states to make reasonable efforts to place siblings together in foster care, adoption, or guardianship placement.

Furthermore, the legislation addresses school mobility in efforts to maintain relationships with teachers, peers, and other school personnel in a child's original community (FCSIA, 2008). States should be encouraged to implement these laws to the fullest in order to find permanent homes for foster care youth as they transition from care. There is also a need to put in place incentives for states to create and operate mentoring programs specifically for foster care youth. Building natural mentoring relationships during out-of-home placements and involving mentors in the transition process may facilitate the development of a positive network orientation. In short, there is a need to reorient the system in a way that emphasizes establishing social and community connections as a cornerstone of transitioning out of child welfare systems, especially for high-risk youth and young adults who have no remaining links to any biological family, siblings, or a strong non-parental adult network (Beam, 2002; Courtney & Barth, 1996).

From a practice perspective, more emphasis is needed on building professional development around the relationship of social network orientation to social functioning for foster care workers, foster parents and others who work with this population.

Given the findings of this study which illustrates the relationship between multiple placement moves and negative social network orientation and other studies examining trauma cited (Clapp & Beck, 2009; Rittner, Affronti, Crofford, Coombs, & Schwam-Harris, 2011; USDHHS, 2012), improved competencies within the child welfare workforce in attachment and loss, grief, traumatic stress and post trauma stress disorder youth development, resilience (Hass and Graydon, 2009), and the application of family privilege (Seita & Brendtro, 2005) might be in order. Planning that emphasizes the presence of caring adults in the youth's life who are involved before, during and after transition from foster care would likely improve outcomes for youth as they establish an adult life with appropriate relationships in the home, school, and workplace. Future directions for research include examining the relationships between the social network orientation of foster care alumni and factors such as reason for removal from the home, the type of abuse and/or neglect experienced, contact with siblings while in care, and having a mentor. A future study might look at the impact of social media on increasing positive network orientation. Additionally, further study would elucidate the relationship between network orientation and the availability of social supports.

8. Limitations

This research study is limited by its use of convenience sampling. The sample is small which creates problems with external validity and therefore, we are not able to generalize these results to all foster care youth and alumni. Research could be strengthened by using stratified randomized sampling methods to control additional confounders, including relationship status (were those with higher NOS scores less likely to be married or co-habiting) in addition to access to a larger sampling pool. Additionally, information about the use of social media was not collected and it is possible that social media would provide more opportunities for alumni to connect socially with peers and others through such platforms as Facebook.

9. Conclusion

The success of foster care alumni depends on their abilities to independently provide for themselves and manage their economic, social, emotional and physical well-being. However, few adults live truly independent, self-reliant lives (Samuels & Pryce, 2008). The findings of this study suggest that foster care alumni need stable placements, as this is associated with higher help-seeking during and after foster care stays. Multiple relationship disruptions during childhood are predictive of negative network orientation long into adulthood. Efforts to build skills among young adults aging out of foster care must attend to both their economic and physical well-being, but to developing social networks that ensure their socio-emotional well-being.

10. References

- Ahrens, K.R., DuBois, D.L., Garrison, M., Spencer, R., Richardson, L.P., & Lozano, P. (2011). Qualitative exploration of relationships with important non-parental adults in the lives of youth in foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(6), 1012-1023.
- Anctil, T.M., Mc Cubbin, L.D., O'Brien, K., Pecora, P., & Anderson-Harumi, C.A. (2007). Predictors of adult quality of life for foster care alumni with physical and/or psychiatric disabilities. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 31(10), 1087-1100. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2007.05.005
- Adoptions and Safe Families Act of 1997. Pub. L. 105-89. (1997).
- Arnett, J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469-480. doi: 10.1037//0003-066X.55.5.469
- Barone, C., Iscoe, E., Trickett, E., & Schmid, K.D. (1998). An ecologically differentiated, multifactor model of adolescent network orientation. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 26(3), 403-423. doi:10.1023/A:1022159104542
- Beam, M.R. (2002). The nature of adolescents' relationships with their "very important" nonparent adults. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30(2), 305-325. doi: 10.1023/A:1014641213440

- Belle, D., Dill, D., & Burr, R. (1991). Children's network orientations. *Journal of Community Psychology, 19*(4), 362-372. doi: 10.1002/1520-6629(199110)19
- Berzin, S.C., Rhodes, A. M., & Curtis, M.A. (2011). Housing experiences of former foster youth: How do they fare in comparison to other youth? *Children and Youth Services Review, 33*(11), 2119-2126. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.06.018
- Beuhler, C., Orme, J.G., Post, J., & Patterson, D.A. (2000). The long-term correlates of family foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review, 22*(8), 595-625. doi: 10.1016/S0190-7409(00)00108-0
- Burda, P.C., Jr., Vaux, A., & Schill, T. (1984). Social support resources: Variation across sex and sex role. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 10*(1), 119-126. doi:10.1177/0146167284101014
- Cecil, H., Stanley, M.A., Carrion, P.G., & Swann, A. (1995). Psychometric properties of the MSPSS and NOS in psychiatric outpatients. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 51*(5), 593-602. doi:10.1002/1097-4679(199509)5
- Children's Defense Fund (2010). *Promising approaches in child welfare: Helping connect children and youth in foster care to permanent family and relationships through Family finding and engagement*. Retrieved from <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/promising-approaches.pdf>
- Child Welfare Information Gateway (2014). Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, P.L. 105-89: *Overview*. Retrieved from https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/federal/index.cfm?event=federalLegislation.viewLegis&id=4
- Clapp, J.D., & Beck, J.G (2009). Understanding the relationship between PTSD and social support: The role of negative network orientation. *Behavior Research and Therapy, 27*, 237-244. doi:10.1016/j.brat.2008.12.006
- Collins, M.E., & Ward, R.L. (2011). Services and outcomes for transition-age foster care youth: Youths' perspectives. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies, 6*(2), 157-165. doi: 10.1080/17450128.2011564226
- Cook-Fong, S.K. (2000). The adult well-being of individuals reared in family foster care placements. *Child & Youth Care Forum, 29*(1), 7-25. doi: 10.1023/A:1009440422651
- Courtney, M.E., & Barth, R.P. (1996). Pathways of older adolescents out of foster care: Implications for independent living services. *Social Work, 41*(1), 75-83. doi:10.1093/sw/41.1.75
- Courtney, M.E., Dworsky, A., Ruth, G., Keller, T., Havlicek, J., & Bost, N. (2005). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster care youth: Outcomes at age 19*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Retrieved from http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/ChapinHallDocument_4.pdf
- Courtney, M.E., & Heuring, D.H. (2005). The transition to adulthood for youth "aging out" of the foster care system [Chapter Two]. In D.W. Osgood, E.M. Foster, C. Flanagan, & G.R. Ruth, (Eds.). *On your own without a net: The transition to adulthood for vulnerable populations* (pp. 27-67). Chicago: University of Chicago, Press.
- Courtney, M.E., Piliavin, I., Grogan-Kaylor, A., & Nesmith, A. (2001). Foster youth transitions to adulthood: A longitudinal view of youth leaving care. *Child Welfare, 80*(6), 685-717.
- Day, A. (2006). The power of social support: Mentoring and resilience. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 14*(4). 196-198. URL: <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.wayne.edu/docview/214193422?accountid=14925>
- Denuwelaere, M., & Bracke, P. (2007). Support and conflict in the foster family and children's well-being: A comparison between foster and birth children. *Family Relations, 56*(1), 67-79. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2007.00440.x
- Farruggia, S.P., Greenberger, E., Chen, C., & Heckhausen, J. (2006). Perceived social environment and adolescents' well-being and adjustment: Comparing a foster care sample with a matched sample. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 35*(3), 349-358. doi:10.1007/s10964-006-9029-6
- Forbes, A., & Roger, D. (1999). Stress, social support and fear of disclosure. *British Journal of Health Psychology, 4*: 165-179. doi: 10.1348/135910799168551
- Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, 42 U.S.C. § 1305.
- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, 42 U.S.C. § 1305.
- Gibson, R.L., & Hartshorne, T.S. (1996). Childhood sexual abuse and adult loneliness and network orientation. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 20*(11), 1087-1093. doi:10.1016/0145-2134 (96)00097-X

- Greeson, J.K.P., Usher, L., & Grinstein-Weiss, M. (2010). One adult who is crazy about you: Can natural mentoring relationships increase assets among young adults with and without foster care experience? *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32(4), 565-577. doi: 10.1016/j.chidyouth.2009.12.003
- Hass, M. & Graydon, K. (2009). Sources of resiliency among successful foster youth. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31(4), 457-463. doi:10.1016/j.chidyouth.2008.10.001
- Havlicek, J. (2011). Lives in motion: A review of former foster youth in the context of their experiences in the child welfare system. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(7), 1090-1100. doi: 10.1016/j.chidyouth.2011.02.007
- Jonson-Reid, M., Scott, Jr., L.D., McMillen, J.C., & Edmond, T. (2007). Dating Violence among emancipating foster youth. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 29(5), 557-571. doi 10.1016/j.chidyouth.2006.12.008
- Keller, T.E., Cusick, G.R., & Courtney, M.E. (2007). Approaching the transition to adulthood: Distinctive profiles of adolescents aging out of the child welfare system. *Social Service Review*, 81(3), 453-484. doi: 10.1086/519536
- Kerman, B., Wildfire, J., & Barth, R.P. (2002). Outcomes of young adults who experienced foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 24(5) 319-344. doi:10.1016/S0190-7409 (02)00180-9
- Kessler, R.C., Pecora, P.J., Williams, J., Hiripi, E., O'Brien, K., English, D.,...& Sampson, N.A. (2008). Effects of enhanced foster care on the long-term physical and mental health of foster care alumni. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 65(6), 625-633. doi:10.1001/archpsyc.65.6.625
- Krebs, B., & Pitcoff, P. (2006). *Beyond the foster care system: The future for teens*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Lawrence, S.A., Gardner, J., & Callan, V.J. (2007). The support appraisal for work stressors inventory: Construction and initial validation. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 70(1), 172-204. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2006.09.003
- Macomber, J., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Duncan, D. Kuehn, D., McDaniel, M., Vericker, T.,...& Barth, R.P. (2008). *Coming of age: Employment outcomes for youth who age out of foster care through their middle twenties*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/fosteremp/report.pdf>
- Martin, S.M., & Sifers, S.K. (2012). An evaluation of factors leading to mentor satisfaction with the mentoring relationship. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(5), 940-945. doi:10.1016/j.chidyouth.2012.01.025
- Munson, M.R., & McMillen, J.C. (2009). Natural mentoring and psychosocial outcomes among older youth transitioning from foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31(1), 104-111. doi: 10.1016/j.chidyouth.2008.06.003
- Munson, M.R., Smalling, S.E., Spencer, R., Scott, L.D., & Tracey, E.M. (2010). A steady presence in the midst of change: Non-kin natural mentors in the lives of older youth exiting foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32(4), 527-535. doi: 10.1016/j.chidyouth.2009.11.005
- Pecora, P.J., Kessler, R.C., Williams, J., O'Brien, K., Downs, A.C., English, D.,...& Holmes, K. (2005). *Improving family foster care: Findings from the northwest foster care alumni study*. Retrieved from <http://www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/ImprovingFamilyFosterCare.htm>
- Perry, B.L. (2006). Understanding social network disruption: The case of foster care youth. *Social Problems*, 53(3), 371-391. doi: 10.1525/sp.2006.53.3.371
- Pew Charitable Trust (2007). *Time for reform: Aging out and on their own*. Philadelphia, PA: Author. Retrieved from http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Foster_care_reform/Kids_are_Waiting_TimeforReform0307.pdf
- Pretorius, T.B. (1993). Willingness to use social support: Use of the network orientation scale with black South African students. *Psychological Reports*, 73(3), 1011-1017. doi: 10.2466/pr0.1993.73.3.1011
- Rittner, B., Affronti, M., Crofford, R., Coombes, M., & Schwam-Harris, M. (2011). Understanding responses to foster care: Theoretical approaches. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 21(4), 363-382. doi:10.1080/10911359.2011.555654
- Salazar, A.M., Keller, T.E., & Courtney, M.E. (2011). Understanding social support's role in the relationship between maltreatment and depression in youth with foster care experience. *Child Maltreatment*, 16(2), 102-113. doi: 10.1177/1077559511402985

- Samuels, G.N. (2008). *A reason, a season, or a lifetime: Relational permanence among young adults with foster care backgrounds*. Chicago: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Retrieved from <http://www.chapinhall.org/research/report/reason-season-or-lifetime>
- Samuels, G. M., & Pryce, J.M. (2008). What doesn't kill you makes you stronger: Survivalist self-reliance as resilience and risk among young adults aging out of foster care. *Children & Youth Services Review* 30(10): 1198-1210. doi: 10.1016/j.chilyouth.2008.03.005
- Seita, J., & Brendtro, L. (2005). *Kids who outwit adults*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- Shirk, M., & Stangler, F. (2004). *On their own: What happens to kids when they age out of the foster care system?* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Stott, T., & Gustavsson, N. (2010). Balancing permanency and stability for youth in foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32(4), 619-625. doi:10.1016/j.chilyouth.2009.12.009
- Tata, S.P., & Leong, F.T.L. (1994). Individualism-collectivism, social-network orientation, and acculturation as predictors of attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help among Chinese Americans. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 41(3), 280-287. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.41.3.280
- Taussig, H.N. (2002). Risk behavior in maltreated youth placed in foster care: A longitudinal study of protective and vulnerability factors. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 26(11), 1179-1199. doi:10.1016/S0145-2134(02)00391-5
- Tolsdorf, C.C. (1976). Social networks, support, and coping: An exploratory study. *Family Process*, 15(4), 407-417. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.41.3.280.x
- United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (2012, April 17). Information memo: Social and emotional well-being, trauma, screening and assessment, evidence-based and evidence-informed practices (ACYF-CB-IM-12-04).
- Unrau, Y.A., Seita, J.R., & Putney, K.S. (2008). Former foster youth remember multiple placement moves: A journey of loss and hope. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30(11), 1256-1266. doi: 10.1016/j.chilyouth.2008.03.01
- Vaux, A. (1985). Factor structure of the Network Orientation Scale. *Psychological Reports*, 57(3f) 1181-1182. doi: 10.2466/pr0.1985.57.3f.1181
- Vaux, A., & Athanassopoulou, M. (1987). Social support appraisals and network resources. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 15(4) 537-556. doi: 10.1002/1520-6629(198710)15
- Vaux, A., Burda, P., & Stewart, D. (1986). Orientation toward utilization of support resources. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(2) 159-170. doi: 10.1002/1520-6629(198604)14
- Vaux, A., & Harrison, D. (1985). Support network characteristics associated with support satisfaction and perceived support. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 13(3), 245-268. doi: 10.1007/BF00914932
- White, C.R., Gallegos, A.H., O'Brien, K., Weisberg, S., & Pecora, P.J. (2011). The relationship between homelessness and mental health among alumni of foster care: Results from the Casey Young adult survey. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 5(4), 369-389. doi: 10.1080/15548732.2011.599754
- Wojciak, A.S., McWey, L.M., & Helfrich C.M. (2013). Sibling relationships and internalizing symptoms of youth in foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(7), 1071-1077.
- Yoo, S.K., Goh, M., & Yoon, E. (2005). Psychological and cultural influences on Koreans' help-seeking attitudes. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 27(3), 266-281. URL: http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA134576375&v=2.1&u=lom_waynesu&it=r&p=ITOF&sw=w&asid=7a3f8bf5958e68a2d78b61dab4b9bbc2
- Zand, D.H., Thomson, N., Cervantes, R., Espiritu, R., Klagholz, D., La Blanc, L., & Taylor, A. (2009). The mentor-youth alliance: The role of mentoring relationships in promoting youth competence. *Journal of Adolescence*, 32(1), 1-17. doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2007.12.006