

Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service

**IMPROVING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE SERVED BY
THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM**

Muskie
School
University of Southern Maine

96 Falmouth Street
P.O. Box 9300
Portland, Maine 04104-9300



**IMPROVING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE SERVED BY
THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM**

BACKGROUND PAPER

December, 1997

Submitted to:

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
701 St. Paul Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Submitted by:

Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service
National Child Welfare Resource Center for
Organizational Improvement
Institute for Child and Family Policy
400 Congress Street
Portland, ME 04101

Project Staff

***National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational
Improvement
Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service
University of Southern Maine***

Elizabeth D. Jones, Ph.D.	Principle Investigator
Marty Zanghi, LMSW	Research Associate
Anita St. Onge, Esq.	Research Associate
Alfred M. Sheehy, Jr., M.A.	Research Assistant
Erin Oldham, M.A.	Consultant
Tammy Richards, M.Ed.	Administrative Assistant

***National Resource Center for Youth Services
University of Oklahoma***

James M. Walker, MHR	Director
Peter R. Correia III, MSW	Associate Director
Rebecca Jo Copeland, MS	Trainer/Consultant

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. SIZE AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOSTER CARE POPULATION.....	2
AGE OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.....	4
GENDER OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE	4
RACE/ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE	5
LENGTH OF STAY OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE	6
CURRENT PLACEMENT SETTING OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.....	7
MOST RECENT CASE PLAN GOAL FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE	8
REASON FOR DISCHARGE OF CHILDREN EXITING FOSTER CARE	9
III. YOUTH LABOR MARKET PARTICIPATION.....	10
CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH	10
<i>Early Employment.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Early Parenting.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>High School Completion.....</i>	<i>13</i>
LABOR MARKET AND COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS.....	13
<i>Labor Market Characteristics.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Community Characteristics.....</i>	<i>14</i>
STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE YOUTH LABOR MARKET PARTICIPATION	15
IV. EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH LEAVING FOSTER CARE.....	18
EDUCATION	18
<i>Educational Outcomes at the Point of Leaving Care.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Educational Status after Leaving Foster Care.....</i>	<i>26</i>
EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES.....	27
<i>Employment at the Time of Leaving Care.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Insert table 5 page 1</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Insert table 5 page 2</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Employment at Follow-up.....</i>	<i>30</i>
V. BARRIERS OF FOSTER CARE YOUTH TO SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS TO ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE	32
DEVELOPMENTAL BARRIERS	33
<i>Mental Health</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Cognitive Delays.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Physical Health.....</i>	<i>38</i>
DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE	39
DELINQUENCY AND INCARCERATION	40
HOMELESSNESS	41
VI. RESILIENCY FACTORS.....	43
DEVELOPMENT OF A SUPPORT NETWORK.....	44
MENTORING	45
OTHER EFFORTS TO EMPOWER YOUTH	46
VII. FUTURE RESEARCH AND PROGRAMMATIC DIRECTIONS.....	47
KEY FINDINGS	47
SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	51
NEXT STEPS.....	53

List of Charts

Chart 1	Age Distribution of Children in Foster Care on September 30, 1996	4
Chart 2	Gender of Children in Foster Care on September 30, 1996.....	4
Chart 3	Length of Stay for Children in Foster Care on September 30, 1996	6
Chart 4	Current Placement Setting of Children in Foster Care	7
Chart 5	Most Recent Case Plan Goal of Children in Foster Care on September 30, 1996 ...	8
Chart 6	Reason for Discharge of Children Exiting Foster Care	9

List of Tables

Table 1	Ethnicity of Children in the Foster Care Population on September 30, 1996	5
Table 2	Comparison of AFCARS and CWLA Placement Data.....	8
Table 3	Critical Elements for Employment Programs Serving Youth.....	17
Table 4	Educational Outcomes for Foster Care Youth.....	20
Table 5	Employment Outcomes for Foster Care Youth.....	28
Table 6	Barriers to Economic Self-sufficiency	34

IMPROVING ECONOMIC OPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE SERVED BY THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

BACKGROUND PAPER

I. INTRODUCTION

In October, 1997, the Annie E. Casey Foundation in collaboration with Casey Family Services and the Casey Family Program awarded a grant to the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement of the University of Southern Maine and the National Resource Center for Youth Services of the University of Oklahoma to complete a background paper concerning the economic opportunities for young people who are preparing to exit the foster care system. The goal of this effort is to define the current knowledge base regarding the transition of youth out of foster care and to examine effective practices and policies which may improve opportunities for youth to become fulfilled, productive adults. Understanding who this population is, what they need and how services can be delivered effectively and efficiently is a complex, yet important, task.

Our project involves two interrelated components:

- a background paper synthesizing the current research related to the transition of foster care youth into adult roles; and
- a working paper which incorporates youth's experiences with this transition and outlines an approach to programmatic, policy and research development to improve economic success.

The background paper is based on secondary sources of information identified through a literature review. In contrast, the working paper will focus on primary data collection from a broad range of constituencies: independent living coordinators, youth advisory councils, and key informants from research, policy and practice arenas. Finally, this effort will culminate in a think tank summit in which interested parties will have the opportunity to review the background summary and working paper, in order to help with formulating a programmatic and research agenda to address the identified gaps in knowledge regarding the most effective and efficient strategies to enhance the economic opportunities for youth leaving foster care.

This current document is the background paper which summarizes the most recent research on what happens to youth when they leave care. The guiding question throughout the paper is the following:

- What are the diverse needs of foster care youth as they make the transition to adulthood which will enable them to obtain employment, pursue secondary education, and become economically self-sufficient?

In particular, we focus on the following five specific questions:

1. How large is, and what are the demographic characteristics of the foster care population who drop out or age out of the system nationally each year?;
2. What are the differences in the transition to adulthood outcomes between youth raised in foster care and the general population of youth?;
3. What follow-up studies have been conducted on youth who exit the foster care system?;
4. What are the general barriers to employment and education among youth, and what barriers are specific to the foster care population?; and
5. What resiliency factors among youth formerly in foster care have been documented in the current literature as enhancing their transition to economic self-sufficiency?

Our discussion is divided into six sections. We start with an overview of the numbers of youth in foster care, focusing specifically on age, race, gender, length of time in care and number of placements. In Section III, we set the stage for understanding educational and economic outcomes of foster care youth by reviewing the youth labor market literature. In Section IV, we review the most recently published studies which examine educational and employment outcomes for youth as they leave care. These studies are divided into two types: those which look at educational and employment status at the time youth leave care and those which examine economic outcomes at a follow-up point after leaving care. In Section V, we present information on some of the barriers identified by previous studies as hindering youth who have been in foster care from reaching economic self-sufficiency. Section VI reviews resiliency factors among adolescents which help foster care youth make a successful transition. In the final section, we present research and programmatic recommendations based on the needs of foster care youth drawn from this review of the literature.

II. SIZE AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOSTER CARE POPULATION

Two sources of national data exist which provide a comprehensive picture of youth in foster care: 1.) the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis System (AFCARS) and 2.) Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) Annual Child Welfare Data. AFCARS, a federal data collection effort implemented on October 1, 1994, is structured on semi-annual reporting periods which close on March 31 and September 30 of each year. Statistics reported by CWLA reflect a combination of several sources of information including AFCARS data, collected through CWLA administered surveys of state child welfare systems and data collected by the American Public Welfare Association (APWA) which is reported through the Voluntary Cooperative Information System (VCIS).

While AFCARS represents one of our best sources of data, a number of limitations to the AFCARS system exist. First, at this writing AFCARS is a voluntary system, therefore it does not represent all states. In fact, only 33 states submitted data for the April and September reporting periods of 1996. Second, of the state data sent to AFCARS a significant portion is not available to the public. Data from as many as 22 states were excluded from each of the tables the AFCARS administrators produce to illustrate the state of children in the foster care system. Data are excluded primarily for two reasons: 1.) concerns about data quality and 2.) specific state requests to have their data excluded.

Keeping these shortcomings in mind, we selected the time period of April to September, 1996 as the focus for our AFCARS estimates. It represents the most recent usable data and it covers a period two years after AFCARS inception, allowing ample time to correct initial data reporting problems. The data presented in the following tables are estimated by AFCARS to represent 55 percent (data from 33 states) of the children served by state child welfare foster care systems in FY 1996¹. Thus, in each chart, data will be presented for the 291,825 actual children reported on. We supplement the AFCARS data with CWLA information in instances where the CWLA information addresses an issue important to this current inquiry.

Based on the AFCARS data, we can estimate that as of September 30, 1996 there were 423,147 children in foster care in the entire United States. This is determined from the fact that the 291,825 actual children reported on in the charts represents 55% of the entire population of children served by the child welfare systems in FY 1996. The 1995 CWLA data, based on reports from all 50 states places the number of children in out of home care at 483,629² for an increase of 21 percent over their 1990 estimate of 400,398 children in care.

The characteristics of foster care youth described below were selected because they represent some of the key indicators identified in our literature review as impacting how youth fare economically as they prepare to leave foster care. It is important to note, however, that this type of data does not capture the complexities of youth's and children's lives and will necessarily not include important variables such as the influence of the family and social networks. In the tables which follow, we include children and youth of all ages in the foster care system. One of the major disadvantages of both of these data collection systems is that they only provide aggregate level data, a feature which precludes focusing on specific age populations. We will suggest later in this paper that preparation for adult transition activities needs to occur during early adolescence, therefore, our depiction of children of all ages is meant to serve as an estimate for the demographic and case characteristics of youth who will be in need of assistance with planning for adulthood.

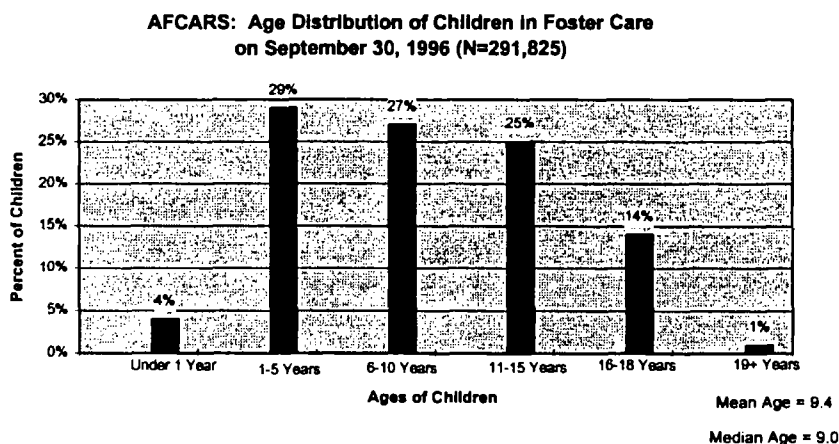
¹ For more information on AFCARS, see their web site www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/stats/index.htm#AFCARS.

² 1990, APWA VCIS (1994 December); CWLA (1996) State Agency survey

Age of Children in Foster Care

The age distribution of children in foster care as of September 30, 1996 is illustrated in Chart 1. Forty percent of the children in foster care on this date are between 11 and 19+ years of age, and, according to the AFCARS data, 50 percent of the children in care are nine years old or older.

Chart 1

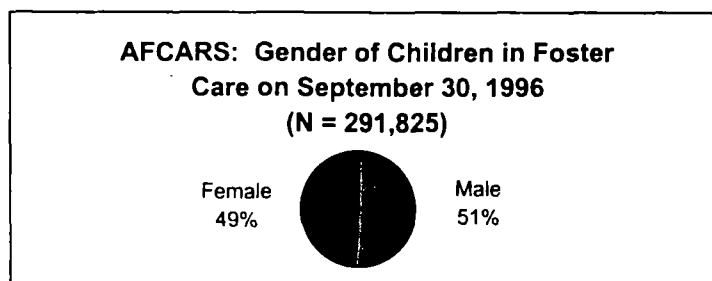


Using data from 31 states, CWLA also reports that 40 percent of the individuals currently in care are adolescents.

Gender of Children in Foster Care

As shown in Chart 2, females made up 49 percent (146,424) of the children in foster care as of September 30, 1996, the remaining 51 percent (148,831) were males. CWLA data support the same gender proportions.

Chart 2



Race/Ethnicity³ of Children in Foster Care.

The racial/ethnic make up of children in foster care on September 30, 1996 is displayed in Table 1 below. African-American children at 44 percent of the total (128,403 children) represent the largest racial/ethnic proportion of the foster care caseload at this point in time. White children make up 38 percent of the foster care caseload (110,894 children). Hispanic children represent 14 percent of the foster care caseload on September 30, 1996 (40,856 children). The remaining four percent of children categorized as other in the chart below are composed of 2 percent Native American children (5,837 children), one percent Asian children (2,918 children) and one percent (2,918 children) of unknown ethnicity.

Comparing the racial/ethnic composition of the foster care population to the racial/ethnic composition of the general population of the United States underscores the fact that children of color are over-represented in the foster care system. As shown in the next table the percentage of African-American children in the foster care system is 3.67 times that of African-Americans in the general population. In contrast, white children make up 38 percent of the foster care population, compared to the 73.6 percent of the U.S. general population that is white. Hispanic children make up 14 percent of the foster care population, a proportion slightly larger than the proportion of the general population that is Hispanic.

CWLA data on race/ethnicity largely parallels that of the AFCARS system. CWLA, based on data from 28 states, reports a racial/ethnic breakdown of 41 percent white, 3 percent higher than AFCARS, 44 percent African-American, identical to AFCARS, 12 percent Hispanic, 2 percent lower than AFCARS, and 3 percent other, 1 percent lower than AFCARS.

Table 1
Ethnicity of Children in the Foster Care Population
On September 30, 1996

Race/Ethnicity	Foster Care Population (AFCARS)	CWLA	United States Population ⁴
African American	44 %	44 %	12 %
White	38 %	41 %	74 %
Hispanic	14 %	12 %	10 %
Other	4 %	3 %	4 %

³ The category "Other" includes 1% Asian, 2% American Indian, and 1% unable to determine.

⁴ *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1995*. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, p.19.

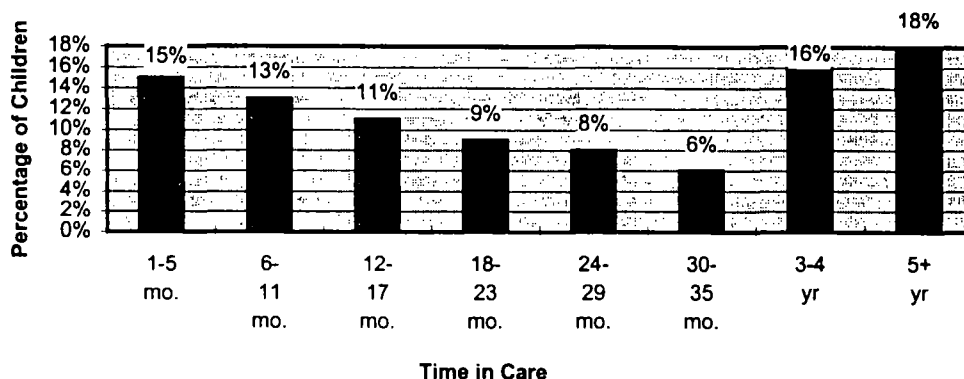
Length of Stay⁵ of Children in Foster Care

The length of stay of children in foster care as of September 30, 1996 is displayed in Chart 3 below. This chart presents data from AFCARS. In general, this chart shows that youth either have fairly short stays, less than a year or that they stay in care for three years or more. Twenty-eight percent of the children (81,711 children) had been in care between one and eleven months as of September 30, 1996. Twenty percent of the children in care as of this date (58,365 children) had been in care between 12 and 23 months. Fourteen percent of the children in care (40,856 children) had been in care between 24 and 35 months as of September 30, 1996. Thirty-four percent of the children in care as of September 30, 1996, (99,221 children) had been in care for over three years.

An examination of 99,221 children who had been in care for over three years as of September 30, 1996 reveals that 53 percent of these children (52,599 children) have been in care for more than five years as of September 30, 1996.

Chart 3

AFCARS: Length of Stay for Children in Foster Care on
September 30, 1996 (N=291,825)



CWLA data on length of stay is presented as the “median number of months children spend in care”. These data are presented by state. CWLA found that the median number of months in care for the 31 reporting states was 22.1 months with a reported low median number of months of 6.6 and a highest reported median months in care of 79 months.

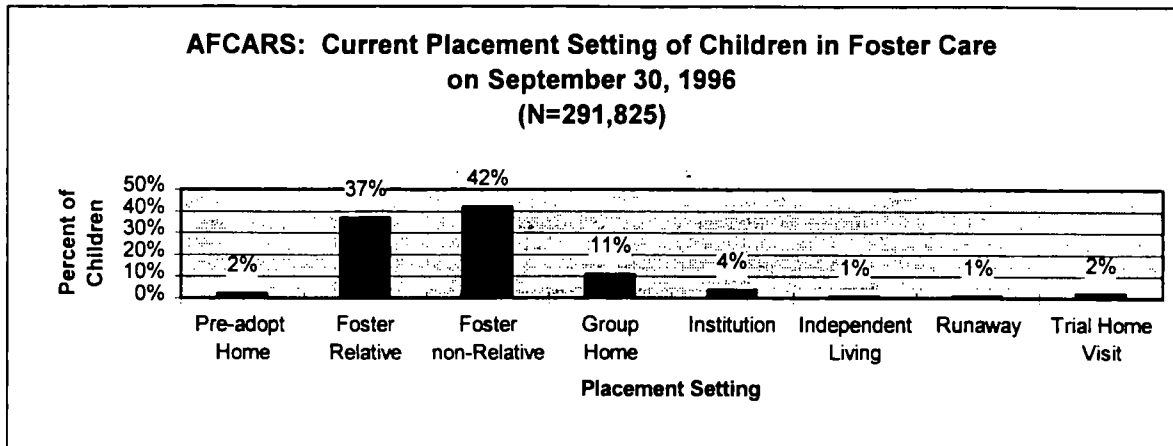
CWLA also presents data on the average number of months children spend in care by race/ethnicity. African-American children have the longest average stay in care at 25.1 months, followed by American Indian/Alaskan Native children at 21.9 months, “Other” children at 21.4 months, and White children at 20.1 months. Asian/Pacific Islander children

⁵ Length of stay is measured from first entrance into foster care to status on September 30, 1996.

Current Placement Setting of Children in Foster Care

The current placement setting of children in foster care is illustrated in Chart 4 below.

Chart 4



In 1996, almost half of children in foster care, 42 percent (122,567 children) were in non-relative foster home placements. Over one-third, 37 percent of the children in care, 107,976 children, were placed with relatives. Fifteen percent of the children in foster care (43,774 children), were in either group home or institutional placements. Two percent of the children in care (5,837 children) were in pre-adoptive placements on September 30, 1996. Another two percent of the children in care were experiencing trial home visits as of September 30, 1996. Finally, one percent of the children in care (2,918 children) were classified as runaways as of September 30, 1996. The statistic that is important for this current examination is rather misleading. Although AFCARS reports that only one percent (2,918 children) were in independent living placement settings, this statistic does not truly reflect the number of youth involved in independent living. Because an individual youth participating in independent living services may be in a placement such as a group home, institution or foster home, that individual is not represented in the statistic reported. However, CWLA presents a more reliable statistic; 55,449 youth in foster care are participating in independent living services, based on data from 40 states.

The CWLA presents data from 46 states on the placement type of children in out-of-home care. CWLA presents placement data differently than AFCARS, utilizing nine types of placements compared to eight placement types reported by AFCARS. Table 2 illustrates both CWLA and AFCARS placement data, to facilitate comparison of the two data sources.

Table 2
Comparison of AFCARS and CWLA Placement Data

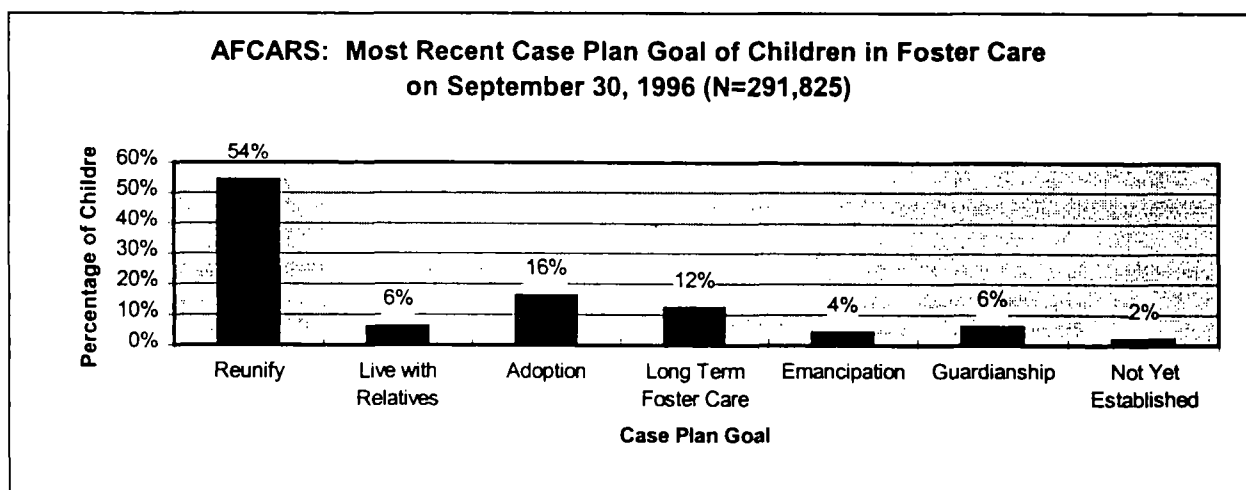
Placement	AFCARS	CWLA	Dif
Family foster care	37 %	49 %	12 %
Kinship	37 %	23 %	-14 %
Residential Treatment	NR	2 %	-
Group home	11 %	9 %	2 %
Emergency shelter	NR	6 %	-
Therapeutic foster care	NR	2.2 %	-
Independent living	1 %	0.4 %	0.6 %
Psychiatric hospital	NR	0.9 %	-
Other	NR	7 %	-
Pre-adoptive home	2 %	NR	-
Runaway	1 %	NR	-
Trial home visit	2 %	NR	-

*NR denotes not reported as a placement category.

Most Recent Case Plan Goal for Children in Foster Care

The most recent case plan goal for children in foster care on September 30, 1996 is displayed in Chart 5.

Chart 5



For 54 percent of the children in care (157,586 children), the case plan goal is to return home. Sixteen percent of the children (46,692 children) have a case plan goal of adoption, while 12 percent of the children in foster care (35,019 children) have a case plan goal of long

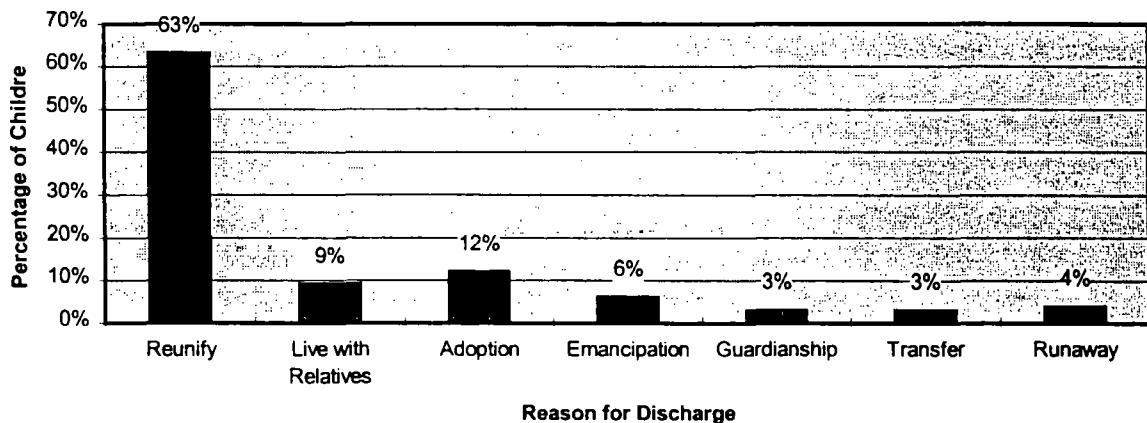
term foster care. Six percent of the children (7,510 children) have a case plan goal of living with relatives; another six percent of the children have a case plan goal of guardianship. Four percent of the children in foster care, 11,673 children, have a goal of emancipation, while two percent of the children in foster care, 5,837 children, did not have an established goal as of September 30, 1996. CWLA does not present data on case plan goals.

Reason for Discharge of Children Exiting Foster Care

As shown in Chart 6, almost two thirds, 63 percent (27,459 children) of the children discharged from foster care during this period were reunified with their families. The next largest group, 12 percent (5,230 children) were discharged to adoptive families. Nine percent of the children discharged (3,923 children) were discharged to live with relatives. Six percent of the children (2,615 children) were discharged as emancipated, while four percent of the children (1,743 children) were discharged from care as runaways. Three percent of the children discharged (1,308 children) were discharged to guardianships, while the remaining three percent of the children discharged were discharged as transfers.

Chart 6

**AFCARS: Reason for Discharge of Children Exiting Foster Care during
the period April 1, 1996 through September 30, 1996
(N=43, 585)**



We turn now from national-level descriptive data to an in-depth look at the factors related to economic success among youth in general and youth formerly in foster care in particular.

III. YOUTH LABOR MARKET PARTICIPATION

One of our best sources of information about improving the chances of youth successfully transitioning out of foster care into the labor market comes from reports regarding the youth labor market in general. Examining the factors that determine successful and unsuccessful transitions into the labor market among youth in general will allow us to develop strategies and recommendations for programs seeking to prepare youth transitioning out of foster care for the work force. We will organize our discussion by moving from the exploration of human capital influences to structural influences on the labor market success of youth. Thus, we will first examine the effect of characteristics and direct experiences of the youth on labor market participation. Second, characteristics of the labor market and community/neighborhood influences will be explored. These factors will be considered within the context of racial/ethnic and gender differences. Finally, we will discuss strategies that have been implemented and evaluated in order to improve the labor market participation of youth.

Characteristics and Experiences of Youth

In March of 1996, the Department of Labor reported that 6.5 million teenagers were in the labor force which indicated a 55.8 percent participation rate (U.S. Department of Labor, 1996). The unemployment rate for teenagers differed by race and by gender. The unemployment rate for teenage males was 19.4 percent, teenage females was 15.4 percent, white teenagers was 14.8 percent and black teenagers was 33.5 percent. We can begin to understand the differences in unemployment between teenagers of differing race and gender by looking at what factors affect the employment of teenagers. Garansky (1996), using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, looked at factors affecting teenage employment, adult employment and adult wages. The main factors positively affecting adult labor force participation were graduating from high school on time (by age 19) for men and prior work experience for both men and women. The single significant factor that negatively affected adult employment was the presence of health problems. The main determinant of wages at age 27 for both men and women was greater educational attainment. Thus, teenage employment and educational levels are critical for later successful employment.

Garansky (1996) also looked at a variety of influences on teenage employment and educational attainment. Factors affecting on-time graduation included:

- teenage employment
- greater household income
- higher intelligence score
- religious involvement
- teenage parenting

- Black
- Hispanic
- White

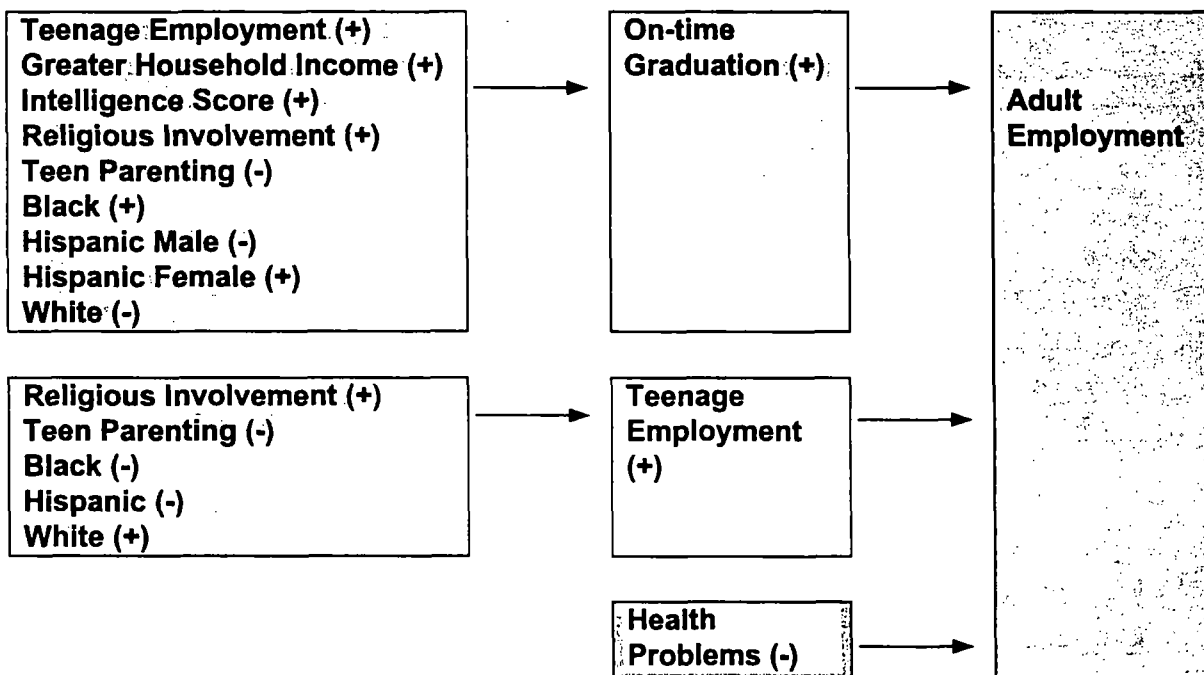
Factors affecting teenage employment included:

- teenage parenting
- religious involvement
- Black
- Hispanic
- White

Factors affecting adult employment include:

- on-time graduation
- teenage employment
- health problems

The conceptual illustration of the direction of the influence of each factor, with positive relationship denoted by a (+) and negative relationship denoted by a (-), in Garansky's model follows:



Please note that Garansky's model only incorporates variables he chose to measure. However, Garansky's study gives us a good idea of the range of variables that affect long-term

adult employment. The amalgamation of information from recent research supports the particular importance of employment, teen parenting and education. We will now explore these three variables and the effect they have on short and long-term employment.

Early Employment

Early employment experiences during the high school years have favorable short- and long-term effects on employment and earnings outcomes (Sum, Fogg & Fogg, 1997). However, when considering the advantages of early employment, one must also consider outcomes in other domains. For example, teen employment, especially when it involves long hours (over 20 hours per week), was associated with short- and long-term increased use of alcohol and short-term decreased involvement with one's family (Mihalic & Elliot, 1997; Mortimer et al, 1996; Mortimer & Shanahan, 1994). On the other hand, moderate amounts of work (20 hours or less per week) are associated with higher grades in high school (Mortimer et al., 1996; Ruscoe, Morgan & Peebles, 1996). Early employment, when that employment leads to the development of useful skills, has been found to enhance youth's values regarding employment (Mortimer, Pimentel, Ryu, Nash & Lee, 1996). The conclusion we can draw from the extant literature is two-fold: (1) the formation of occupational values and valuable work experience during the teen years may lead the youth in the direction of successful adult employment and (2) intensive teen employment involving long hours should not be encouraged especially at the expense of completing one's education.

Early Parenting

Early parenting is associated with many deleterious outcomes and unfortunate situations. While direction of effects has not been clearly established, early parenting among men and women is associated with poverty, single-parent households, minority status, lower educational attainment and drug use (Pirog-Good, 1996; Markey, 1988). Although reports on teenage childbearing indicate a decline in rates in recent years, the absolute numbers of those having children before the age of 21 is still problematic. Most of the empirical work on the association between early parenting and employment outcomes has focused on differential earnings. Pirog-Good's recent study on adolescent fathers showed that teen fathers completed fewer years of education, were less likely to finish high school and earned less over time than males who delayed parenting. While women's wages are already less than men's wages (Marini, 1989), mothers' wages are even less than non-mothers' (Elliot & Parcel, 1996). Thus regardless of their skills and work experience, mothers are making less than non-mothers. However, the finding that mothers earned less than non-mothers only held true for non-black women, possibly indicating that black women are already discriminated against on the basis of race regardless of their mother status (Elliot & Parcel, 1996). Findings of lower earnings for teen parents is especially disturbing taking into account that lower earnings have to support greater numbers of family members.

High School Completion

The importance of completing high school or completing a GED to future economic opportunities are clear. Numerous studies have now documented the inhibiting qualities of low educational attainment (Gleason & Cain, 1997; Sum, Fogg & Fogg, 1997; Lerman, 1996; Klerman & Karoly, 1994). Sum, Fogg & Fogg (1997), looking at data from the 1995 Current Population Survey, found that at the age of 24 only 36 percent of high school dropouts were employed full time while 87 percent of college graduates were employed full-time. Klerman & Karoly (1994), in their study using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, cited similar statistics: 81 percent of college graduates are employed one year after leaving school compared to 48 percent of high school dropouts. However, while obtainment of an educational degree is helpful in securing employment, solutions to youth labor market problems are not as simple as increasing rates of graduation. Low educational attainment is associated with other problematic background variables such as family income, parental education, criminal involvement and early parenting (Sum, Fogg & Fogg, 1997, Markey, 1988). While some of these background variables might improve from prevention strategies, they are already extant in a substantial portion of the population (especially the foster youth population) indicating that we need to take these variables into account when designing programs for youth. Furthermore, discrepancies in rates of high school graduation do not fully explain the differences in employment between white and black youth. These issues will be explored in the next section on characteristics of the labor market and influences of community on youth employment outcomes.

Labor Market and Community Characteristics

Labor Market Characteristics

The second half of the puzzle involves structural influences on the labor market participation of youth. These include market characteristics and community influences. Kazis and Kopp (1997) suggest that in order to develop and understand the full complex picture of youth labor participation, the market characteristics in addition to individual youth characteristics must be considered. Within the category of market characteristics are trends in the labor force, trends in available jobs and trends in employer demands. Competition is increasing in the labor force for 18-24 year old youth, with the number of 18-24 year old youth increasing steadily through the year 2010 (Sum, Fogg & Fogg, 1997). Furthermore, competition is expected to grow more intense due to the increasing number of immigrants entering the labor pool and from young adult women entering the workforce after transitioning from welfare (Sum, Fogg & Fogg, 1997; Holzer, 1994). Availability of jobs, especially jobs for youth, may become a problem as the labor pool increases (Sum, Fogg & Fogg, 1997). Gleason & Cain (1997) found that the low levels of teenage job availability contributed significantly to the low employment levels of black youth. Current trends in job availability cited by Kazis and Kopp (1997) include decreases in manufacturing jobs, increases in service employment and a movement of jobs from the cities into the suburbs. Availability of jobs may become complicated by the expectations of employers as compared to the qualifications of

today's youth. According to Kazis & Kopp (1997), 60 percent of twelfth graders cannot perform at a level of basic math proficiency. With employer's expecting more complex skills from entry-level workers (Kazis & Kopp, 1997; Skinner, 1995), many youth may be unable to secure employment. Most employers prefer experience, occupational skills, references, and no criminal record (Lerman, 1996). Thus, the combination of increased competition, lack of availability of jobs and increased employer demands may be detrimental to rates of youth labor participation.

Community Characteristics

Next, we will investigate the influence of the community which we consider to be family, peers and neighborhood. The family and peers of an individual can be characterized by their ethnicity and the influence they wield concerning employment values. The neighborhood has an impact on the individual through school, home and the surrounding infrastructure. Thus, while local labor markets may provide the opportunity, the context of family, peers and neighborhood may provide the motivation to get a job. We will begin with an examination of employment differences by ethnicity.

The factors guiding youths into or away from employment differ by ethnicity. It is acknowledged that white youth are working more and earning more than black youth (Gleason, 1997; Skinner, 1995). Unfortunately, this trend extends into adulthood (Holzer, 1994). Discrimination in hiring, higher rates of illegal activity, a mismatch of skills, competition from immigrants and location of employment in suburban areas are all valid possibilities (Desaran & Keithly, 1994; Holzer, 1994) for the disparity in rates of employment and earnings among white and black youth. Theories as to the cause of this range from "culture of poverty" theories in which the individual is to blame for lack of employment (Murray, 1984) to "opportunity-structure" theories in which the insufficient opportunities afforded the individual through the school system and the labor market are to blame (Johnson, 1989). While support can be found for both theories, it is clear that there are no simple solutions. As stated previously, obtaining a high-school diploma does not uniformly lead to a job for every individual. Therefore, we need to determine what other factors are making a difference in the rates of participation in employment.

Although ethnicity appears to be a key variable in determining an individual's employment outcomes, it is closely related to many other important variables. For example, ethnicity is associated with poverty status, type of residence, location of residence, discrimination in the workplace and the quality of the public school system. Thus, it is not truly ethnicity that is the cause of disparity in economic outcomes, but those variables closely associated with ethnicity. Therefore, the solutions for closing the gap in employment participation lie in those associated contextual variables (Skinner, 1995). For example, Skinner (1995) suggests that funding urban housing and infrastructural development along with combating racial discrimination in housing, hiring and job ladders is needed.

Findings from a study by Powers (1994) also support the need for increased attention to contextual variables especially with regard to non-white populations. Powers examined the inactivity of youth (not being in school, in the military or employed), which is viewed as a problematic outcome in and of itself and is related to future economic prospects. Powers (1994) found that inactivity among white youth is primarily determined by socioeconomic factors (parents' education, family income, welfare status) while inactivity among black and Hispanic youth is primarily determined by sociocontextual factors (family structure, residence, influential others). Specifically, youth from single parent homes, who lived in urban areas and interacted with individuals who discouraged employment were more likely to be inactive. Thus, one's neighborhood, family and peers do play a role in determining the economic outcomes of non-white youth.

For any intervention program to be successful in increasing participation in the labor market, it must attend to complex problems and devise complex solutions. Successful programs will be aware of the characteristics of the individual, the current conditions of the labor market and the influence that the community can have on the individual. Not only are community effects important for the economic prospects of the individual, but regional effects will become more important in the future as jobs move farther away from inner cities and thus the possible employment boundaries widen. Next, we discuss interventions programs addressing problems associated with youth employment.

Strategies to Improve Youth Labor Market Participation

In this section we will discuss programs designed specifically to address some of the aforementioned problems associated with youth unemployment. The focus of interventions has been to improve the economic prospects of youth. We will not expound a comprehensive review of the past and existing youth employment programs in this review (See Swanson & Spencer, 1991 for an overview) but will instead address suggested and successful components to be used in future youth employment programs. To reiterate, the *barriers* to successful employment explored in the previous sections included:

- low educational attainment;
- lack of employment experience;
- lack of credible references;
- early parenting;
- health problems;
- competition for and location of available jobs;

- place of residence;
- influential others, and
- unfair housing and hiring practices.

Youth labor market management strategies based on previous research either directly or indirectly address most of these barriers. Solutions suggested are multifaceted and take into account the complexities of the lives of the youth in need (Swanson & Spencer, 1991).

Themes that emerge from the literature include staying in school, completing an educational degree, providing positive role models, and providing for employment experiences. Walker (1997), in a recent review, offered the following four suggestions for successful youth training programs:

- promote long-term mentoring relationships between the youth and a trained adult;
- develop strong connections to employers in an effort to place the youth in employment;
- promote the continuation or completion of an educational degree, and
- encourage independence and confidence in the youth while acknowledging a long-term relationship with that youth.

These goals are reiterated by researchers (Lerman, 1996) and are articulated by the youth themselves (DeJesus, 1997). Lerman (1996) expands this list by adding work experience in the form of part-time jobs that are linked to school curricula. Lerman advocates use of the School-to-Career (STC) curricula (in part sponsored by the School-to-Work Opportunities Act) that are being implemented through schools or independent programs across the country. Within these programs, youth are taught about possible career paths through direct work-based learning. Enhancing the employment experience of youth while encouraging and continuing their education has proved successful. Lerman notes that students involved in STC programs are more likely to enter college, have positive attitudes about work and school, have better relationships with their teachers, and through credible references and experience may even increase their chances of getting and maintaining a job.

While the previous recommendations by Walker and Lerman have resulted in positive results in past and current job training programs and initiatives (JTPA, Job Corps, Big Brother/Big Sisters, YouthBuild), at-risk youth may need additional services to ensure their success (Swanson & Spencer, 1991). To address problems among the most disadvantaged youth, assistance with adequate housing, food, appropriate clothing, counseling and medical support should be provided (Walker, 1997).

Additionally, strategies to combat negative community influences are needed. Lerman (1996) offers the School-to-Career programs as a possible solution in that they expose youth to positive peer and adult role models and may help in delaying early childbearing and criminal activity by involving the youth in positive and engaging activities. DeJesus (1997), in interviewing youth in job training programs about what they saw as the most important components, found that youth longed to be involved in activities that build self-esteem and self-confidence. Suggestions from the youth included working with adults who expressed genuine concern for their well-being and working in activities that allow them to be of service in the larger community. Civic involvement is also a technique supported by Walker (1997) to build self-esteem while building respect for the positive aspects of the youths' environment. DeJesus (1997) found that those youth who had a greater sense of social awareness and community were more successful in obtaining long term employment.

Table 3

Critical elements for employment programs serving youth:	
<i>Important for all programs:</i>	<i>Particularly important for vulnerable youth:</i>
1. Promote long-term mentoring relationships	1. Expose youth to positive peer and adult role models
2. Develop strong connections to employers	2. Engage youth in positive activities in effort to delay teen parenting and criminal activity
3. Promote the continuation or completion of an educational degree	3. Promote activities that build self-esteem
4. Encourage independence and confidence in the youth	4. Encourage civic involvement
5. Provide work experience that is linked to school curriculum	

Thus, the suggestions made for youth job training programs do address most of the individual, labor market and community barriers illustrated in the first two sections. In addition, the job training recommendations added a couple of factors not entirely explored by the youth labor market literature such as self-esteem, decreasing criminal activity and community involvement. Prause & Dooley (1995, 1997) did report that youths who are unemployed or underemployed suffer from low self-esteem. One omission from suggested youth training programs is the provision of health care insurance. The health of the individual is important for success in the labor market (Garansky, 1996).

Past employment training programs have been criticized for not reaching the most vulnerable youth (Skinner, 1995, Swanson & Spencer, 1991). It may be that extra steps are needed for these youth. Youth coming out of foster care between the ages of 18 and 21 may well be members of the most vulnerable group of youth based on data below regarding educational deficits and health and mental health issues. It is quite possible that youth leaving foster care need extra steps to be taken and may even need more help according to their special needs. In particular, it will be important to understand the individual youth's social network to better comprehend the available strengths and possible barriers. We will now explore the employment and educational outcomes for youth transitioning out of foster care.

IV. EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH LEAVING FOSTER CARE

In this section, we review studies which examine educational and employment outcomes for youth as they leave foster care. Such studies fall into two categories: 1.) those which look at outcomes for youth as they leave care and 2.) those which examine these outcomes for youth at some follow-up point after leaving care. While we discuss education and employment outcomes separately, most of the studies cited examined both. In total, since 1960, only 14 studies have addressed this issue. Such studies vary in scope and geographic location, with only one nationally representative study of Independent Living Programs (Cook, 1991) and only one drawn from a nationally representative sample of youth, the High School and Beyond Survey (Blome, 1997). The other studies are state specific: in California (Iglehart, 1994); Kentucky (Mangine, 1990); West Virginia (Jones and Moses, 1984); Wisconsin (Courtney, Piliavan and Grogan-Taylor, 1995); and Minnesota (Meier, 1965) or city specific, such as: New York City (Festinger, 1983); San Francisco (Barth, 1990); Seattle (Fanshel, 1990); New Orleans (Zimmerman, 1982); and Boise (Wederen, 1994). One study was conducted in Paris, France.

Education

Following the format used by Mech's (1994) summary of outcome studies, we summarize all of the outcome studies focusing on education in Table 4. Specifically, for each study, we indicate the sample, study method and findings on four outcomes:

- high school and GED completion;
- enrollment in college preparatory classes;
- enrollment in secondary school; and
- vocational classes.

Other noteworthy outcomes are listed in the final column of the table. While the types of educational outcomes examined varied, the two most commonly collected outcomes include the percentage of youth completing high school or GED (some present it as percentage dropping-out) and the percentage of youth enrolled in post-secondary school. Despite the different samples and definitions used, one findings is consistent: the educational completion rates for foster care youth are lower than the general population of youth both at the time they leave care and as they move through their early adult years.

Educational Outcomes at the Point of Leaving Care

The most recent and comprehensive study of educational outcomes for youth in care is Blome's (1997) research on what happens to youth once they have "aged out" of foster care. This study relied on data from the "High School and Beyond" survey administered every two years by the Department of Education from 1980 through 1986. Existing data included a subset of 167 foster youth. These youth were matched with non-foster youth on age, gender, race, verbal abilities and math abilities (total n = 334). This study represents a departure from the other foster care youth studies as it uses an longitudinal quasi-experimental design in which foster care children were matched with a comparison group of non-foster care youth. Although matched comparison groups have been used in previous research, studies in which the same questions are asked of the matched youth at the same time are virtually non-existent. Regarding high school performance, Blome found the following:

- Foster care youth were more likely to have dropped out of high school than non-foster youth (37 percent vs. 16 percent), though both groups were equally likely to agree that dropping out of high school was not a good idea.
- Foster care youth who dropped out of high school were less likely to have received a high school diploma or a GED certificate (77 percent vs. 93 percent).
- Foster care youth were less likely to be enrolled in college preparatory classes than non-foster youth (15 percent vs. 32 percent).
- Foster care youth spent less time studying than non-foster youth.
- Participation in school activities and clubs did not differ between the two groups.
- Foster youth participated more in vocational clubs than did non-foster youth.
- Foster youth were more likely to report that they had been disciplined in school, suspended, and had been in "serious trouble with the law".

Table 4

Educational Outcomes for Foster Care Youth

Design			Outcomes				
Study	Sample	Method	High School/GED Completion	Enrollment in College Prep	Enrollment in Secondary School	Vocational Classes	Other
Blome, W.W., 1997	High School and Beyond National Survey, bi-annual survey, 1980-1986, 167 foster care youth matched with 167 non foster care youth (N = 334)	Longitudinal quasi experimental design, youth matched on age, gender, race, verbal and math abilities	37% foster youth dropped out vs. 16% comparison	15% foster youth vs. 32% comparison	Lower than comparison group, although 45% of foster youth had taken higher education courses	More foster youth than comparison	
Dumaret, et. al., 1997	Targeted 63 adults from severely dysfunctional families in France who had been in care for at least 5 years, final sample size was 59	semi-structured interviews	67% had no educational diploma, 7% had completed high school, compared to 32% for national norm			42% vocational diploma	
Courtney, et. al., 1995	141 youth in Wisconsin who had been in out-of-home care for at least 18 months, 17 years old, were not developmentally disabled	Currently study reports only descriptive data about the sample. Extensive multivariate staistical analyses will be conducted	90% still in high school		79% expect to enter college, 63% expect to complete college		26% read at 12th grade, 32% read below 8th grade, 30% failed at least one grade, 37% enrolled in special ed, 20% had to stop school for at least one month at some point

Table 4

Educational Outcomes for Foster Care Youth

Design			Outcomes				
Study	Sample	Method	High School/GED Completion	Enrollment in College Prep	Enrollment in Secondary School	Vocational Classes	Other
Mech, 1994	1,465 former foster care youth aggregated across 4 outcome studies: Barth, 1990; Festinger, 1983; Jones-Moses, 1984; and Cook 1991	All used interview data, aggregated to focus on education, employment, housing, support and cost-to-community	58% had completed high school				
Wedeven, et. al., 1994	68 former foster care youth from Boise, Idaho Casey Family Program	Survey	94% had completed high school or GED		57% had post-secondary education		
Barth, R. 1990	55 young adults who left foster care, San Francisco Bay area/Sacramento	Interviews, 76% in person and 24% by phone	62% completed high school degree		33% enrolled in college		
Cook, R. 1990	810 former foster youth from Arizona, California, North Carolina, Illinois, Missouri, Pennsylvania, New York, Tennessee; multi stage probability	Interviews conducted 2.5 to 4 years after youth discharged from care. 69% conducted on phone, 31% in person	54% had completed high school degree		18% enrolled in college		

Table 4

Educational Outcomes for Foster Care Youth

Design			Outcomes				
Study	Sample	Method	High School/GED Completion	Enrollment in College Prep	Enrollment in Secondary School	Vocational Classes	Other
Fanshel, 1990	Targeted 180 former foster care youth from Seattle Casey Family Program, 106 youth in final sample	Interviews, conducted an average of 7 years after leaving care	Does not report rates of completion				
Jones and Moses, 1984	607 former foster care youth in West Virginia targeted; 328 youth in final sample. Had been in foster care for a minimum of one year.	Pre-coded interview schedule. 89% conducted in person, 11% by phone or mail	51% had completed high school degree		7% had at least one year of college		Lagged behind their peers in education by one year
Festinger, 1983	364 former foster care youth in New York City targeted, 277 were interviewed	Structured interview	65% had completed high school or GED at the time of discharge		34% completed some college, 5% graduated from college.		
Zimmerman, 1982	61 former foster care youth, ages 19 to 29 at follow-up in New Orleans	Interviews comparison to general population of southern blacks	39% completed the 12th grade compared to a 69% completion rate for all southern blacks				

Blome attributes the observed differences between foster care youth and their counterparts to several factors. School stability played a key role. Foster care youth changed schools more frequently than other youth, often three or more times since fifth grade. The lack of family support for educational endeavors among foster care youth may also contribute to poorer school outcomes. Foster care mothers and fathers were less likely to monitor their children's homework than were non-foster care parents. In addition, foster care parents were less likely to attend teacher conferences, visit the classroom or volunteer at school. Part of this difference may be due to that fact that 20 percent of foster care youth were living independently their senior year as compared to 3 percent of the other youth. It is also important to note that foster care youth may have decided to become employed rather than complete school as those foster youth who did drop out were almost twice as likely to be employed than comparison group members (50 percent vs. 26 percent).

Blome's study also looked at foster care youth after high school. While 45 percent of foster youth had taken higher education courses, this percentage was less than non-foster youth. Fewer foster youth who had dropped out of high school were enrolled in a GED course than non-foster youth (27 percent vs. 75 percent). However, foster youth were more likely to report participating in training programs (on-the-job and classroom based) than non-foster youth after high school. Of those youth enrolled in higher education courses, only one-fifth of the foster youth were receiving supportive monies from their families while 38 percent of non-foster youth were receiving supportive funds. Perhaps more importantly, foster youth were receiving, on average, far less money (\$600 vs. \$2000) than non-foster youth for their schooling.

Another strength of the Blome study was examination of educational aspirations. As sophomores, more foster youth thought they would be homemakers, more foster youth thought they would finish their education by age 19 (indicating no plans for higher education) and fewer foster youth thought they would work just after high school. In many respects, foster care youth's educational aspirations are no different than other youth. The authors surmise that the discrepancy in educational aspirations and attainment between foster youth and non-foster youth may be due to different expectations with regard to ability and outcomes for each group. This finding is particularly important as the researchers controlled for actual ability in this study.

The Blome study raises several important concerns. First, it is imperative that workers and teachers have equal expectations for foster youth and encourage them to go as far in their education as possible. Equal emphasis should be placed on educational attainment for foster youth as is for non-foster youth. Second, the authors advocate training foster parents to monitor school performance, training service providers to track the youth's progress in school, and encouraging birth parents to be involved either physically or mentally in the youth's school progress. Third, considering the higher rate of school change among the foster youth and the possible deleterious effects of this, service providers may want to factor in the effects of school change in their decision of when and where to place the child. The final concern relates to financial assistance for higher education. The disparity between foster care youth and other

youth of equal ability in financial assistance suggests that setting aside formal foster youth funds for help with education and living costs would significantly improve foster care youths' chances for advanced education.

The Blome study provides an important view of educational outcomes for foster care youth, but since the focus of the original study was not foster care, the subjects' history in foster care is unknown. Two other studies examine educational outcomes using samples of drawn specifically from agencies or programs serving foster care youth which help us understand the relationships between educational outcomes and characteristics of care.

Courtney and his colleagues at the University of Wisconsin (Courtney, Piliavin, and Grogan-Taylor, 1995) are currently conducting a longitudinal study of the post-care experiences of youth who have had relatively long stays in out-of-home care. Their sample was identified through the Wisconsin Human Services Reporting System (HSRS) which includes youth from Milwaukee and 41 other counties within the state. The sample included 141 youth who met the following criteria: 1.) had been in out-of-home care for at least 18 months; 2.) were at least 17 years old at time of sample selection; and 3.) were not developmentally disabled. This on-going study includes three waves of structured in-person interviews. The interviews require approximately 60-80 minutes to conduct and respondents are paid for their time. Wave 1 was conducted between February and May of 1995. Wave 2 will be conducted after the youth have been out of care for approximately 6 months and Wave 3 will occur at approximately 18 months after the youth have left care.

The 1995 wave of this study provides useful information about the educational status of youth as they prepare to leave foster care. At that point, at age 17, 90 percent of the sample were still attending high school. A full 79 percent expected to enter college and 63 percent expected to complete college. These figures corroborate Blome's findings that educational self-expectations of foster care youth are similar to youth in general. At this point Courtney et al do not provide any comparison statistics. While the enrollment figures are promising, this sample did report some educational difficulties. In particular, one-third read at or below an eighth grade reading level, though one-quarter read at a twelfth grade or higher level. Thirty percent of the sample had at some point failed to complete a grade and 37 percent had been enrolled in special education classes at some point in their educational careers. One-fifth of the sample (20 percent) revealed that they had to stop school for at least one month at some point in the past.

The Wisconsin findings are based on a sample which is 57 percent female, 65 percent Caucasian, 27 percent African-American, and 6 percent Native-American. Regarding the types of maltreatment these youth experienced, 66 percent reported neglect, 57 percent reported an incident of physical abuse, 31 percent reported a history of sexual abuse. One-quarter (25 percent) reported physical abuse as the primary reason for removal, 12 percent reported neglect as primary reason, and 11 percent reported sexual abuse. Sixteen percent reported their placement as voluntary, however, all cases in the sample were in placement due to court order. Though no information is yet available about how long they had been in foster care other than the 18 month minimum required for sample inclusion or how many different

placements they had experienced, the youth were generally satisfied with their placements and agreed that the placements were necessary. Three-fourths of respondents agreed with the statement that they were "lucky" to have been placed in out-of-home care. Seventy-two percent were generally satisfied with their experiences in out-of-home care. Eighty-seven percent agreed with the statement that "foster parents have been a help to me," although only 50 percent felt the same way toward social workers. Moreover, 85 percent of respondents have received training in education, job seeking and decision-making skills. While over one-third (39 percent) indicated that the primary source of their training was their foster parent(s), 32 percent got most of their training from specialized independent living training programs. The fact that the majority of these youth feel positive about their placements and have some type of independent living services or support from their foster parents may relate to the fact so many of them are still enrolled in school.

The federally funded Westat (Cook, 1991; Cook, 1987) evaluation of Independent Living Programs affords the only nationally representative picture of how foster care youth fare as they make the transition to adulthood. The Westat study, conducted in 1987, consisted of two parts: 1.) a process study in eight randomly selected states including 47 counties which resulted in case record reviews of 1,644 randomly selected youth who were discharged from care between January 1987 and July of 1988; and 2.) a follow-up study of approximately half of these youth (N=810) two and one half years to four years following discharge from foster care.

The first phase of the Westat study found that only 48 percent of the 18 and 19 year olds had completed high school at the time of discharge. The national high school completion rate for the same age group was 64 percent, indicating that adolescents leaving care had large educational deficits. To place these findings in context, it is important to understand the demographic and case histories of these youth. Seventy percent of these youth had entered the foster care system as adolescents. Minority and male youth, however, were more likely to have entered care at younger ages. The majority (82 percent) experienced only one episode of out-of-home care, with the median length of stay of 2.5 years. However, almost 60 percent resided in three or more placements during that time period. By the time of discharge, one third had experienced a serious emotional disturbance, 17 percent of the females had become pregnant; 17 percent had abused drugs; 9 percent had health problems; and almost half had run away at least once. With regard to Independent Living Services, over half of the sample (60 percent) had received some type of independent living services prior to discharge, but only one-third were enrolled in an independent living program. In assessing the impact of these services on educational outcomes at discharge, the Westat study found that youth who received the most comprehensive Independent Living Services while in care fared better educationally than did their counterparts who did not receive Independent Living Services.

Educational Status after Leaving Foster Care

Educational outcomes were among the important issues focused on by studies that followed the lives of youth leaving foster care. While these studies provide important information, it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions as the ages at follow-up vary considerably, from age 18 to 29. In addition, as all these researchers acknowledge, these samples represent only those who could be found (Cook, 1991; Festinger, 1983). It is unknown whether those who could not be found would be doing worse or better than the sample members who were interviewed.

At the follow-up point, 54 percent of the Westat sample had completed high school. The median age at the time of these interviews was 21, with a range of 18 to 24. Young parenthood appeared to affect education completion at the follow-up interview, as 60 percent of young women had given birth to at least one child and these women were half as likely to complete further schooling than the former foster care women who had not given birth. Two and one half to four years after foster care emancipation, these youth's economic situation, in part due to the lack of educational attainment, resembled those of individuals living below the poverty line.

Festinger's (1983) follow-up study of 277 youth who had been discharged from care in New York City in 1975 conducted in 1979-80, though somewhat dated, also provides useful information about educational outcomes for foster care youth. The youth had been in care for at least five years and were ages 18 to 21 years old at discharge; three-fourths had been discharged from foster homes while the remainder had been in group facilities. Festinger (1983) found that 65 percent had completed high school and among that group, only 40 percent stopped their education at high school graduation. An additional 25 percent of the high school graduates reported college enrollment. While Festinger's high school completion rates are higher than other foster care studies, educational achievement was an area in which youth formerly in foster care differed greatly from the norms of the general New York City population. For example, males who were formerly in foster care completed college at a rate of 2.3 percent, compared to a rate of 22.1 percent for the general population of New York City.

Other studies of educational outcomes have estimated lower levels of high school completion than did Festinger's study. Barth interviewed 55 young adults who left foster care in the San Francisco area and found that only 45 percent reported high school completion. Zimmerman (1987), studying primarily southern black foster care youths found that while 70 percent of those discharged from foster care had entered high school, only 39 percent had completed 12th grade, compared to a 69 percent completion rate for all southern blacks. Finally, one study reported comparable levels of high school completion to Festinger's study. The Child Welfare League of American Study (Jones and Moses, 1984) of 328 former foster care youth in West Virginia found that 63 percent had completed grade 12 or earned a GED. Approximately 60 percent also expressed interest in obtaining additional schooling. Our best estimate of high school completion comes from a study by Mech (1994) in which he reanalyzed

the four studies described above (Barth, 1990; Cook, 1991; Jones and Moses, 1984; Festinger, 1983). By combining data across the four studies, he found a 58 percent high school completion rate.

While estimates vary as to the percentage of youth who had completed high school after leaving foster care, it is clear that a substantial percentage of the youth are not reaching an adequate level of educational attainment. To get a sense of whether the lack of education is affecting youth's rate of employment, we will now explore employment outcomes.

Employment Outcomes

Most of the studies cited above examined employment and economic status in conjunction with education. Employment outcomes typically included the following: 1.) percentage employed at time of follow-up, 2.) wages or income and 3.) percentage of youth receiving public assistance. The Westat study attempted to measure sustained employment by measuring the percentage who had been in the same jobs for at least one year. The employment outcomes from these studies are summarized in Table 5. With the exception of the Festinger sample, the employment and economic status outcomes of the former foster care sample resemble that of people living at or below the poverty line.

Employment at the Time of Leaving Care

Courtney et. al. (1995) found that of the 141 Wisconsin youth, at age 17, 80 percent reported being employed at some time. Fifty-seven percent held a job at the time of the interview. A majority, 92 percent of the respondents, were either "very optimistic" or "fairly optimistic" about their hopes and goals for the future. Among the Westat sample, 39 percent had been employed at some point before they left care, a figure much lower than the Wisconsin study. Comparing the Westat figures with employment figures of the general population of 16-19 year olds suggest a much lower level of employment among youth in foster care. In 1986, 56 percent of young men and 55 percent of young women were employed. It is difficult to interpret the meaning of employment percentages for youth who may still be in school. Indeed, some youth may not be able to work because of school commitments. On the other hand, employment while in school may represent an important avenue to job experience, job "socialization", and networks for finding future job.

Table 5

Employment Outcomes

Design			Outcomes				
Study	Sample	Method	Employed	Employed at Least One Year	Annual Wages	AFDC	Other
Courtney, et. al., 1995	141 youth in Wisconsin who had been in out-of-home care for at least 18 months, 17 years old, were not developmentally disabled	Currently study reports only descriptive data about the sample. Extensive multivariate staistical analyses will be conducted	80% employed at some point before interview, 57% employed at time of interview				92% optimistic about future employment
Cook, R. 1991	810 former foster youth from Arizona, California, North Carolina, Illinois, Missouri, Pennsylvania, New York, Tennessee; multi study probability	Interviews conducted 2.5 to 4 years after youth discharged from care. 69% conducted on phone, 31% in person	49% at time of follow-up	38% at time of follow up	~ \$10,000 per year	39% at time of follow-up	
Booth, R. 1990	55 young adults who left foster care, San Francisco Bay area/Sacramento	Interviews, 76% in person and 24% by phone	75% at time of follow-up, mostly full-time		~ \$10,000 per year	47% at time of follow-up	
Jones and Moses, 1984	607 former foster care youth in West Virginia targeted; 328 youth in final sample. Had been in foster care for a minimum of one year.	Pre-coded interview schedule. 89% conducted in person, 11% by phone or mail	32% full-time or part-time work, greater employment for high-school grads			16% at time of follow-up, mostly food stamps, 34% since discharge	

Table 5

Employment Outcomes

Design			Outcomes				
Study	Sample	Method	Employed	Employed at Least One Year	Annual Wages	AFDC	Other
Festinger, 1983	364 former foster care youth in New York City targeted, 277 were interviewed	Structured interview	90% held job at some point after care, 75% males at follow-up, 55% females at follow-up			34% of females, 10% of males	
Zimmerman, 1982	61 former foster care youth, ages 19 to 29 at follow-up in New Orleans	Interviews, comparison to general population of southern blacks	75% self-supporting				over 33% below poverty line

Employment at Follow-up

Most of the studies of employment of foster care youth focus on some follow-up point after leaving care. Of all the follow-up studies, the Westat one is the most comprehensive. Nearly half (49 percent) of the 810 of the Westat sample was employed at the follow-up interview, with the median income being \$10,000. The Westat (Cook, 1991) study used employment for at least one year as their primary employment outcome. Over one-third (38 percent) of their follow-up sample achieved this outcome. Those youth who received multiple skills training were more likely to have held jobs for longer than a year than youth who did not receive multiple skills training, regardless of whether they were involved with Independent Living. The particular combination of skills training which enhanced employment outcomes was training in the following areas: money management skills, consumer skills, establishing and maintaining credit, education and employment. The Westat study also showed that apart from skills training received while in foster care, other characteristics were related to employment stability. Finishing high school before leaving care and having at least one job during foster care were also positively related to maintaining a job for at least one year. Further, African-American youth were less likely than either white or Hispanic youth to be employed for one year or longer. Additionally, youth who were assessed as either emotionally disturbed or handicapped were less likely to be employed. Finally, drug problems and chronic health problems were negatively related to job stability.

In addition to employment, the Westat study also looked at public assistance dependency which they called "cost to community." Thirty-nine percent of the Westat sample were either receiving public assistance, institutionalized, or using Medicaid at the time of the follow-up. As was the case with employment stability, the types of skills received made the difference between those who were receiving public assistance and those who were not. The five core skill areas were money management, consumer skills, establishing and maintaining credit, education and employment. White females who had been in foster care, even with no skill training, were the least likely to be a cost to the community. African-American males, with no skills training, were most likely to be receiving public assistance or institutionalized. However, with skills training in all five core areas mentioned above, young African-American males were no more likely than others to be receiving public assistance at the follow-up period. Several other factors were related to receiving public assistance, including age at foster care entry, number of months in foster care, and number of placements while in care. Youth who entered foster care at older ages were more likely to be receiving public assistance at the follow-up point as compared to those who entered care at younger ages. Youth who were in care for a longer period of time and those who experienced multiple placements were also more likely to be receiving public assistance or institutionalized than their counterparts with shorter stays or fewer living arrangements. Females were more likely to be on welfare than males, most likely due to early parenthood. Physical handicaps and drug abuse also increased a former foster care youth's chances of receiving public assistance at the follow-up.

Other follow-up studies have found varied percentages of employment after leaving care. In Festinger's sample, 70 percent of the males were employed and 55 percent of the females were employed. Barth found that nearly three in four of his sample were employed, mostly full-time. For those reporting full-time employment, annual income was only \$10,000 (in 1987), a figure similar to that found in the Westat study. One third of Barth's sample indicated that limitations in education and job skills were obstacles to better paying jobs. In the Jones and Moses study, 40 percent reported having a job at the follow-up. Those who had high school degrees were more likely to be employed than those who did not.

Clearly, having a high school degree is important for foster care youths' long term employment. However, the low wages cited in the studies above raises concern about the long term economic self-sufficiency of these young adults.

While the exact percentage of foster youth participating in the labor market is not clear, what is clear is that a substantial percentage of youth exiting foster care are unable to get and maintain a job. As explicated in the first section on economic prospects among the general youth population, solutions to increase the economic success of youth are not simple. The population of youth coming out of foster care is varied and cannot be easily characterized; some of the youth are capable and have the personal resources to get a job while others need multiple services just to help them survive.

Fanshel (1990) expanded the research conversation by considering extensive background characteristics that may affect an individual's education and thus economic success. Fanshel examined educational outcomes of graduates of the Casey Family Program and found a modest linkage between the educational performance while in care and educational attainment after leaving care. The youth who had experienced severe abuse as children performed less well in school while in care, a pattern which followed them into their adult life. This was especially true for males who had been physically abused.

The review of existing studies of employment and educational outcomes for youth after they leave care illustrates two common themes. First, among youth raised in foster care, high school completion rates lag behind youth in general. Second, with respect to economic well-being, foster care youth, on average, resemble individuals living at or below the poverty line. These two themes point to several important areas which need to be addressed.

To help improve the educational achievement of youth raised in foster care, the following are important:

- School stability is a key factor in ensuring high school completion and where possible, placement decisions need to account for such continuity.
- It is unrealistic to assume that youth raised in foster care can continue higher education without some social or institutional support, therefore, the emancipation age for children in foster care should be 21 in all states.

- The disparity in financial resources for higher education between youth in foster care and youth in the general population suggests that setting aside scholarships for former foster care youth would improve their chances of school completion.
- The encouragement and involvement of foster care providers in the educational progress of youth is critical to staying in school, therefore training and support need to be available for foster care providers to achieve this goal.
- Given the similarity in aspirations between foster care youth and other youth, foster parents and school personnel need to help youth to plan for steps that need to be taken to reach their educational goals. Starting this process at earlier ages would prove most beneficial.

From the literature on employment outcomes, we offer the following observations:

- As teenage employment is an important predictor of adult employment, foster care youth should be encouraged to obtain employment experience either through part-time work or through volunteering.
- Helping youth acquire multiple independent living skills, particularly money management skills, consumer skills, education about credit acquisition and maintenance, as well as assistance with continuing education and employment skills, will increase their chance of adult employment.
- Given the prevalence of discrimination in youth employment, employers and employees need to be trained in cross-cultural interactions.

While a certain percentage of youth coming out of foster care will succeed, a substantial proportion have serious problems that need to be addressed in future descriptive and multivariate research as well as in development of and evaluation of interventions. In order to make recommendations for future research and interventions, we need to fully understand the barriers to employment and the resiliency factors that make a difference in the short and long term educational and economic outcomes of youth.

V. BARRIERS OF FOSTER CARE YOUTH TO SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS TO ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

While deficits in education and employment preparation hinder the ability of youth raised in foster care to become economically self-sufficient, they are also more likely to experience additional challenges which make finding and sustaining employment difficult. In particular, previous research identifies four areas of concern:

- significant developmental barriers including mental health, developmental delay and physical health problems;
- drug and alcohol problems;
- justice system involvement; and
- homelessness.

The studies examining barriers to employment are summarized in Table 6.

It is important to note that these issues were among those identified by youth labor market experts as barriers to employment for youth in general. Because of the greater incidence of these barriers among youth in foster care, the impact of these barriers on youth may be magnified.

Developmental Barriers

Mental Health

While most would agree that youth raised in the foster care system suffer emotional trauma stemming from childhood abuse and/or placements within the foster care system itself, relatively few studies have attempted to document the prevalence of mental health problems among youth in out-of-home care. Fortunately, some recent studies have acknowledged the importance of mental health issues. In particular, Fanshel (1990) has been an important advocate for the consideration of mental health issues within foster care studies.

The most predominant mental health problems found in children in out-of home care have been psychological and/or behavioral. As can be seen in the descriptions of concurrent and longitudinal foster care studies, consistency of measures and definitions are problematic. Thompson and Fuhr, (1992) found evidence of psychopathology in 60 percent to 80 percent of the children in their out-of-home-care sample. Hulsey and White, (1989) found that the mean behavior scores on the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist for maltreated children in out-of-home-care were significantly higher than for those of a control group who had never been in care. Mech, Ludy-Dobson, and Hulseman (1994), in a study of 534 older adolescents in care, report that half to three-quarters of their study group had social-emotional adjustment problems. Finally, Iglehart (1994) interviewed 152 adolescents in care in California and subsequently reported that 22 percent of her sample had mental health problems. Furthermore, adolescents with mental health problems had difficulty taking responsibility and taking care of themselves, creating a supportive physical and emotional environment and being ready for employment. Thus, Iglehart goes as far as to recommend specialized programs for adolescents with mental health concerns.

Table 6

Barriers to Economic Self-Sufficiency

Design			Outcomes			
Study	Sample	Method	Mental Health	Delinquency/ Incarceration	Homelessness	Drug/Alcohol Problems
Roman and Wolfe, 1997	21 homeless service organizations throughout the country	Combination of case record reviews of 1,324 people, survey data from 1,209 homeless and case studies of former foster care residents who are homeless			36% had foster care history	
Courtney, et. al., 1995	141 youth in Wisconsin who had been in out-of-home care for at least 18 months, 17 years old, were not developmentally disabled	Currently study reports only descriptive data about the sample. Extensive multivariate statistical analyses will be conducted	47% received mental health services. Psychological distress is higher in foster care youth (including both White and Black subjects) than in the general population.	71% reported committing a delinquent act		
Iglehart, 1994	152 youth (16+) in out-of-home placements in California	Interviews with youths, caseworkers and caregivers	22% of the sample had mental health problems			

Table 6

Barriers to Economic Self-Sufficiency

Design			Outcomes			
Study	Sample	Method	Mental Health	Delinquency/ Incarceration	Homelessness	Drug/Alcohol Problems
Cook, R. 1991	810 former foster youth from Arizona, California, North Carolina, Illinois, Missouri, Pennsylvania, New York, Tennessee; multi-study probability	Interviews conducted 2.5 to 4 years after youth discharged from care. 69% conducted by phone, 31% in person	~ 47% were handicapped; 38% were diagnosed as mentally disturbed.	25% in trouble with law, 4% incarcerated	25% spent at least 1 night without a place to stay.	42% alcohol used within 30 days (vs. 62% general population), 13% marijuana use (vs. 13% general population), 50% never use illegal drugs (vs. 51% general population).
Mangine et. al., 1990	74 homeless persons in Lexington Kentucky	Survey and structured clinical interviews at homeless drop-in center and soup kitchen	No different from general population		16% had foster care history	
Jones and Moses, 1984	607 former foster care youth in West Virginia targeted; 328 youth in final sample. Had been in foster care for a minimum of one year.	Pre-coded interview schedule. 89% conducted in person, 11% by phone or mail				20% problems with alcohol
Festinger, 1983	364 former foster care youth in New York City targeted, 277 were interviewed	Structured interview		Arrest rates no different from general N.Y.C. population		

Table 6

Barriers to Economic Self-Sufficiency

Design			Outcomes			
Study	Sample	Method	Mental Health	Delinquency/ Incarceration	Homelessness	Drug/Alcohol Problems
Zimmerman, 1982	61 former foster care youth, ages 19 to 29 at follow-up in New Orleans	Interviews, comparison to general population of southern blacks	50% needing or seeking mental health services, 5% hospitalized for mental illness	10% incarcerated		

In the recent Wisconsin sample, nearly half (47 percent) reported receiving some form of mental health or social service, primarily individual counseling or therapy. The RAND Mental Health Inventory was used to measure psychological stress in the Wisconsin sample. Lower scores on this measure indicate greater psychological distress. Interestingly, although scores for the foster care sample as a whole were lower (indicating more psychological distress) than the general population, mental health scores did not differ by ethnicity. The average score for Whites in the Wisconsin sample was 65.7, compared to an average of 70.9 in the RAND sample (drawn from the general population.) The mean for sample Blacks was 65.8, compared to a RAND sample mean of 75.4

Studies of individuals after they leave foster care also support that about half needed or were seeking mental health services, with about 5 percent being hospitalized (Zimmerman, 1982). Unfortunately, many longitudinal studies have not specifically tracked mental health outcomes. Former foster care youth in the Westat study were asked about their satisfaction with life. Eight percent of the youth volunteered that they felt depressed and were reported as having emotional problems. Had a direct measure of mental health problems been used, rates for problems may have been higher. As can be seen in the descriptions of concurrent and longitudinal foster care studies, consistency of measures and definitions of mental health problems is a difficult issue that needs to be addressed.

In addition to studies concentrating on clinical or quasi-clinical diagnoses of mental health problems, a number of studies have focused on problems relating to self-image and self-esteem. A recent study attempted to examine the differences in self-image between male adolescents in foster care and their peers in the normal population and to relate specific foster care characteristics to self-image development (Lyman and Bird, 1996). The study sample was comprised of 58 12-19 year old residents of a group home in Virginia. Eighty percent were placed for the first time after age 10, 65 percent had been in care for two years or less, with the remainder spanning up to 15 years in care. Seventy-nine percent had been in one or two placements, the remaining 21 percent had experienced 3-10 placements. Over 70 percent of the sample came from families with less than \$15,000 in annual income. All of the youths had contact with at least one parent. All respondents attended public school and had the opportunity to participate in community activities. Eighty percent of the youths were white, and 20 percent were African-American. The comparison group was the normative population of 1,385 adolescents used to establish the standardized norms for the Offer Self-Image Questionnaire for Adolescents (OSIQ). The 130 item instrument measures self-image in 11 domains considered to be important in the psychological world of the adolescent. The study revealed that there were no differences in global self-esteem between the adolescent males in foster care and their counterparts. There were differences, however, in specific domains of self-esteem. The foster care sample scored significantly higher than the normative sample on the social relations sub-scale and scored significantly lower on the family relations and emotional health sub-scales. The study supports the findings of Evans and Hoffman (1988) who found that when family support is low, social relationships gain importance. The study findings suggest that the family relations domain was the most depressed for these adolescents. Consistent with the findings of Fanshel and Shinn (1978), 25 percent of the sample had self-image scores in the emotional

health domain that fell outside the normal range, indicating the presence of severe psychopathology. This study suggests that while foster care youths lack family support, relationships other than with family may be providing the support necessary for the majority of youths to establish a healthy self-image. However, there is apparently a substantial portion of the youth who lack family support and have not been able to develop a positive self-image through their social network. Interestingly, the study did not find that any of the characteristics of foster care, such as number of placements or length of stay to be related to differences on self-image.

Cognitive Delays

Children in out-of-home-care also appear to have elevated rates of developmental delay and educational problems. Evidence of developmental delay has been found in 25 percent to 61 percent of pre-school children (Hochstadt, 1987, Kendall, et.al., 1995) while 45 percent to 75 percent of school aged children have had school problems (Fanshel and Shinn, 1978, Hochstadt et. al., 1987). Thirty-five percent to 48 percent of children in out-of-home care have failed at least one grade (Chernoff, et. al, 1994, Sawyer and Dubowitz, 1994). The Westat study examined the issue of special education specifically in terms of an adolescent population and found that 37 percent of the youth involved in the foster care system were receiving special education services.

Although substantial proportions of youth have been placed in special education services, a comparable amount of study on this issue has not resulted. Oversights in recent research have demonstrated the need for an increase in the awareness of the connection between foster care and the presence of disabilities. While a number of studies examining foster care populations have noted the high incidence of developmental delay, there are few studies focusing on children in foster care who also have disabilities. Some studies have even excluded developmentally delayed or disabled youth from their sample which unfortunately contributes to our lack of information regarding this population (Courtney, 1995). In addition, large studies of children with disabilities such as the National Longitudinal Transition Study, have not typically examined the relationships within the family as related to the disability resulting in a dearth of information regarding foster care involvement among children with disabilities (Wagner, personal communication, 1997).

Physical Health

The youth labor market literature indicated that health problems can seriously interfere with finding and maintaining employment. Regarding health problems, several studies indicate that youth raised in foster care experience far more health problems than other adolescents. The Wisconsin study used the RAND General Health Rating Index to assess the health status of the 141 youth in their sample (Courtney, et al., 1995). Whites scored 68.0 compared to RAND sample Whites 72.4, indicating that youth in foster care did have lower health scores.

Interestingly, there was no difference in the health status among African-Americans in Courtney's sample compared to a sample from the general population.

While the health information on adolescents as they leave foster care is limited, the health status of children in care gives some indication of the extent of health problems in this population. Recent studies of children entering care have found that while 87 percent to 95 percent have at least one physical health problem, 50 percent to 60 percent have multiple physical abnormalities. (Hochstadt, et. al., 1987; Chernoff, et. al., 1994.) Further studies of current children in foster care suggest that these children are not obtaining the health care they need to remedy their health issues. Moffat, et. Al., (1985) reported from a sample of 257 foster children, 79 percent of whom had been in care for more than one year, that 18 percent had no known source of health care and that nearly half had not been examined in the past year.

Thus, a particular problem facing the foster care population seems to be the receipt of services. The data presented in this section reports relatively large portions of the children and youth in foster care as having physical and mental health problems as well as developmental delays. Despite reports of high incidence, many children and youth are not receiving appropriate services. For example, Simms, (1989) reported that 60 percent of the children with developmental delays were not involved in any treatment program, although they had been in foster care for an average of six months. Additionally, Dubowitz, et. al., (1990) reported that of 144 children diagnosed as depressed or having emotional problems, only 18 (12.5 percent) were receiving treatment. Finally, Risley-Curtiss et. al., (1996) reported on the health care use by 291 children entering foster care. They found that fewer than 50 percent of referrals for physical, dental and mental health care were completed despite the fact that the children were part of a new health project designed to improve their health care and in the custody of an agency under a federal consent decree specifically requiring the provision of adequate health care. Health care access is evidently still a problem when youth leave care. The Westat study reported that 30 percent of emancipated youth did not have adequate access to medical care when needed.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Use and abuse of drugs and alcohol may present a barrier to educational attainment, employability and ultimately one's economic success. A substantial number of foster care placements have been initiated due to alcohol and drug abuse. The U.S. General Accounting Office estimates that drug and alcohol abuse play a role in more than 75 percent of the placements of all children in care. In fact, substance abuse has been the most significant factor in the increasing number of children in foster care (Child Welfare League of America, 1997). Not only are alcohol and drug abuse a problem in the biological families of the youths, but among the population of youths in foster care themselves. The Child Welfare League of America, in their discussion guide for the Take this Heart campaign, report that 56 percent of

adolescents in care report using street drugs. Other studies have not reported such high levels of incidence. The Westat study reported illegal drug taking in 50 percent of their foster care youth population which is comparable to the rate of illegal drug taking in the general high school senior population. The Westat study also reported that the rate of alcohol consumption was actually less than in the general population (42 percent vs. 62 percent). Although the rate of substance use may reflect levels in the general population, this is not to say that the issue should be ignored. Because youth coming out of foster care have many other associated risks, the use of substances could lead to more serious short and long term detrimental effects for those youth.

Abuse of alcohol and drugs in the family of origin may exacerbate or lead to other risk factors. Substance-abusing family environments are associated with low self-esteem, depression, anger and acting-out in adolescents (McGaha, 1995). Furthermore, depression is related to the onset of alcohol abuse (Chaffin, 1996) which has also been implicated in negative developmental outcomes for children and youth (Levendosky, Okun & Parker, 1995). Children from alcohol and drug abusing families have much longer stays in foster care and are more likely to have multiple periods of placements as their families typically have a harder time maintaining a safe home (Child Welfare League of America, 1997).

Delinquency and Incarceration

Involvement with the juvenile justice system represents another barrier to economic self-sufficiency. The studies which address this issue reveal mixed results. Of the 141 youth in the Wisconsin sample (Courtney, et.al., 1995), 71 percent reported committing a delinquent act, with the number of delinquent acts committed ranging from one to more than seven. Acts committed ranged from public rowdiness and petty theft to dealing in stolen goods, auto theft, assault with intent to do serious harm and drug dealing. The study does not indicate how many members of the sample were adjudicated delinquents, however. In Zimmerman's follow-up study of 61 former foster care youth in New Orleans, he found that 10 percent were incarcerated at the time of the follow-up. Finally, the Westat study reported that 25 percent of the youth had been in trouble with the law and 4 percent were incarcerated. It is noteworthy that many of the studies following youth formerly in foster care report that attrition rates were in part due to incarceration (Fanshel, 1990).

In contrast, other studies suggest that incarceration among former foster care youth is no different than the general population. Festinger's (1983) follow-up study of 364 former foster care youth in New York City showed that their arrests were comparable to the general New York City population.

Homelessness

The majority of follow-up studies did not look at homelessness as an outcome. However, a number of studies of the homeless population indicate that former foster care youth are disproportionately represented in homeless shelters. Figures range from 23 percent with foster care histories in homeless shelters in New York City to 45 percent in Chicago (Roman & Wolfe, 1997). The Westat study (Cook, 1991) did look at homelessness as an outcome and reported that 25 percent of the sample had spent at least one night without a place to stay. While 45 percent of those particular youth were able to stay with friends, 19 percent spent the night in a shelter and 36 percent lived on the street or in a car.

In a national study of the relationship between foster care and homelessness, Roman and Wolfe (1997) found individuals with foster care history were over-represented in the homeless population. The study also found that those with childhood foster care placement tended to become homeless at earlier ages and remain homeless for longer periods of time than did homeless individuals who had not been in foster care. The Roman and Wolfe study relied on multiple sources of data: 1.) foster care history on 1,134 individuals supplied by 21 homeless service organizations around the country; 2.) survey data on 1,209 homeless individuals collected by 40 homeless service and housing providers; and 3.) ten case studies of former foster care residents who are homeless. Each of the three Roman and Wolfe study components revealed remarkably consistent findings. The information collected from the 1,134 individuals provided by the Homeless Service and Housing Providers showed that 36.2 percent had a foster care history. The survey data from the 1,209 homeless individuals revealed that 43 percent had lived outside of their home as children. The ten case studies provided some insight into why former foster care youth were likely to become homeless. Some respondents pointed out that the lesson learned from multiple placements is that the way to deal with problems is to leave and go somewhere new. Other respondents confirmed that the previously reported problems foster children experience in developing support networks contributes to potential homelessness.

The four barriers discussed in detail in this section represent some of the most serious problems one can expect to encounter in a subset of the youth leaving out-of-home care. However, there are other factors that will exacerbate or at least add to the problems encountered when trying to plan for the self-sufficiency of a population of foster care youth. First, teenage and early parenting may have an impact on self-sufficiency success rates. The Westat (1990) study reports that 60 percent of the young women had given birth to a child two to four years after discharge from foster care (24 percent of men had also fathered a child in this sample). Having a child may have a multiplicative effect in that many other factors are affected: employment, high school graduation, higher education, financial responsibilities, need for social support, family planning and psychological well-being. Furthermore, one must always consider the background of the youth when trying to understand and alleviate the present barriers. Although the situations of the youth are unique to the individuals, it is clear

that all the youth have experienced some kind of trauma that initiated their entrance into foster care. For example, Courtney (1995) reports that 66 percent of the sample members had experienced situations constituting neglect, 57 percent had experienced physical abuse and 31 percent had experienced sexual abuse.

Finally, we present our observations with regard to the barriers to economic opportunities. Barriers to economic opportunity include biological (cognitive deficiencies) and environmental factors (home environment). From extant research it is virtually impossible to determine causal links between these types of factors (what caused what). Thus, current research typically assumes that bi-directional, interactional influences are prevalent between biological and environmental factors. Following this logic, our observations with respect to barriers to economic opportunity relate to the individual barriers as well as the broader aspect of barriers as a whole. Thus, our observations follow:

- Children and youth who need comprehensive social services do not always receive them. Thus, efforts should be made to coordinate and deliver appropriate services.
- Systematic reform needs to occur in the area of foster care research and practice with respect to our knowledge, awareness and appreciation of children with disabilities within the foster care system.
- The over-representation of foster youth among the homeless population is alarming. Preventative measures are needed to ensure successful independent living.
- Concentrating on the alleviation of barriers will not be sufficient to ensure continued self-sufficiency in youth leaving foster care. Positive youth development is a critical component of any successful youth intervention (Nixon, 1997).
- When considering impact models of barriers on economic viability, we promote the use of a holistic perspective. That is, one should consider not only the connection of the individual barriers to out-of-home placement but the connection of the various barriers to each other.

Understanding the barriers to economic opportunity gives us part of the picture. In order to understand the actual impact of these barriers on short and long-term economic stability and to set the stage for developing interventions to alleviate these barriers, we need to understand the factors that contribute to the resilience of individuals.

VI. RESILIENCY FACTORS

The term resiliency is used in this paper to identify factors that research indicates will enhance a child's ability to overcome life situations that place youth at risk. Research on risk and protective factors looks at individual or environmental hazards that increase the young person's vulnerability to negative developmental outcomes and at the factors which mitigate against a negative outcome in spite of these hazards. The presence of risk factors does not guarantee a negative developmental outcome, but rather increases the odds, the possibilities that problem behavior will occur. Even in the face of overwhelming odds, some children exhibit a remarkable degree of resilience (Werner, 1990). Research which examines both individual and community protective factors seeks to enhance an individual's ability to overcome circumstances which have placed that individual at risk.

For the past thirty years, research in the area of juvenile delinquency prevention has focused on prevention strategies that look at the factors that place youth at risk for delinquency or violent behavior and at the protective factors that either reduce the impact of those risks or change the way a person responds to them (OJJDP, 1995).

It is clear that the foster care youth we are dealing with have experienced numerous risk factors both within the family of origin, and to some degree, through their experience within foster care (Kumpher, 1993). Again, focusing on juvenile delinquency prevention strategies, the National Juvenile Justice Action Plan, *Combating Violence and Delinquency*, identifies several areas where enhancement of protective factors can increase an individual child's ability to be successful. These areas focus not only on individual skills and abilities but on changing and improving social systems that create or contribute to risk conditions:

- Protective factors in the social support network, such as maintaining and encouraging contact with siblings, birth parents, mentors and foster care providers, are substantial. The provision of love, especially as expressed through involvement in the youth's activities and through monitoring and supervision, is important. Other family-oriented protective factors include family stability and adequate financial resources.
- Positive *personal attributes*, such as intelligence, a steady disposition, social skills (including the ability to solve problems without resorting to violence) and a conventional belief system.
- *Schools* that positively shape the behavior of young children and teenagers due to stern policies on violence and drugs, and teachers who care about students and illustrate their concern for their students' social and academic growth also help to insure successful development. When youth are prepared for school, succeed in school, and are committed to the educational system they are less likely to become delinquent.
- *Communities* that provide opportunities and social controls. Communities that exhibit a high level of organization and cooperation, with neighbors working together to meet

common objectives, channel youth behavior towards positive outcomes. For example, communities with active PTAs, after-school activities, churches and religious organizations and youth social clubs help to protect youth from the temptations and hazards that exist in society.

- *Youth participation* in and acceptance by prosocial peer groups. Peer influence is particularly important during adolescence.
- *Adult supervision* of and involvement in youth group activities to provide added protection against developing delinquent behavior. (U.S. Dept. of Justice, 1996)

Resiliency research focusing on adolescents who are moving to independent living from foster care, have focused primarily on two issues: the ability of young people exiting foster care to develop a support network (Mech, 1994), and the influence of an informal role model or mentor (Rhodes, 1995; Mech, 1995).

Development of a Support Network

Mech describes the research on family, social, and community support indicators as impressionistic, anecdotal, and quite general (Mech, 1994). In Barth's report of 55 young adults who left foster care in the San Francisco area, nearly 90 percent reported some contact with former foster parents or group home personnel after leaving care. The average number of contacts was five times per year. Most indicated an intention to continue contact. Although one in four identified foster/group home parents as their psychological parents, nearly 15 percent were unable to identify a psychological parent or someone of significance to turn to for advice. In Festinger's sample of 277 young adults in New York City, less than 50 percent of those who left care from foster homes reported keeping in contact with their biological families. A high percentage of those leaving a foster home arrangement, however, kept in frequent contact with their last foster family (87 percent). In contrast, a majority of those discharged from group placements reported contact with their own parents or relatives (Festinger 1983).

The West Virginia study (Jones and Moses 1984) administered a 10-item informal support scale to respondents. Females were reported to have stronger informal support systems than males. Caucasian respondents were rated lower in social supports than non-Caucasian respondents. The living arrangements of respondents was significantly associated with the relative strength of his or her support system. The highest support system ratings were obtained by respondents who lived with a spouse or partner. Those who lived only with siblings received the lowest rating on the support scale. The authors concluded that "formalized attachments and obligations produce a stronger support network" (Jones and Moses 1984). Overall, in the West Virginia sample, only 30 percent reported belonging to a

community, social or religious organization. Most of the community affiliations reported were church-related.

In the Westat follow-up study (Cook, 1991), youths were asked to identify up to five people in their lives who provided strong support for them. The majority of youths (86 percent) were able to identify at least one person in their lives. On the other hand, 14 percent of the youth in this study could identify no one. When asked to identify up to two of the most important people in their lives, the largest number (45 percent) identified a friend. Other important people included birth/adoptive parents (24 percent), foster parents (23 percent), other relatives (20 percent), significant other (20 percent), counselor/social worker (18 percent), siblings (17 percent), child, teacher, employer, other (less than 10 percent for each) (Cook, 1991).

Mentoring

Mentoring is increasingly being used as a support service to assist older foster care youths to make the transition to adult living (Mech, Pryde & Rycraft, 1995). These relationships can be either natural or assigned mentor relationships and to date have not been the subject of rigorous research efforts.

At the invitational research conference, Preparing Foster Youths for Adult Living, Jean Rhodes presented a paper entitled: Natural and Assigned Mentor Relationships with At Risk Youth: Promising Directions for Research and Intervention. She noted that adolescents who grow up under extremely difficult circumstances, and yet somehow succeed, often credit their success to the influence and informal role model of mentor (Anderson, 1991; Freedman, 1993; Lefkowitz, 1986; Williams & Kornblum, 1985). Reports of mentors' protective influence are supported by a growing body of research which strongly suggests that relationships with caring adults can make an important difference in the lives of vulnerable children and adolescents (Cowen & Work, 1988; Garmezy, 1985; Rutter, 1990; Werner & Smith, 1982). She cautions, however, that very little research on the underlying characteristics of mentor relationships has actually been conducted. Her subsequent study on mentor relationships and the career development of pregnant and parenting African-American teenagers (Klaw & Rhodes, 1995) examines the influence of natural mentor relationships on the career outlook and overall life optimism on the sample, 204 students at an alternative school for pregnant and parenting students in a large midwestern city. Natural mentors are defined as a role model or mentor, other than your parents or whoever raised you, who you go to for support and guidance. Participants were told that a mentor is not someone around your age or a boyfriend. Several characteristics of the mentor relationship were then listed, including: (1) that you could count on this person to be there for you, (2) that he or she believes in and cares deeply for you, (3) that he or she inspires you to do your best, and (4) that knowing him or her has really affected what you do and the choices you make, (5) that he or she is a model for the kind of person you would like to be, and (6) that he or she is a model for the kind of career successes you would like to have. The study revealed that the existence of natural mentor relationships was

positively related to participants' increased life optimism as well as their participation in career-related activities and beliefs that education would lead to future jobs which were each positively related to increased life optimism. Natural mentor relationships are characterized as a powerful, supportive emotional ties between older and younger persons in which the older member is trusted loving, and experienced in the guidance of others (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson & McKee, 1978; Merriam, 1983). In this study, the majority of participants (57.8 percent) nominated adults whom they considered to be mentors. Nearly half (46.3 percent) had known their mentors for at least 15 years and more that 80 percent expected to maintain the relationship forever. Nearly half (47.7 percent) of the participants reported that they saw their mentors daily, and an additional 48 percent reported that they saw their mentors at least once a week. Similar findings regarding the important protective influence of natural mentors were revealed in a study of mentoring among young Latino mothers (Contreras, Rhodes & Mangelsdorf, 1993).

Mech and others examined the use of mentoring programs as an intervention for youth considered to be at-risk, vulnerable, or likely to be unprepared for adult living. The programs fell generally into five categories: (1) transitional life-skills mentors who attempt to provide mentees with social support, friendship, and serve as role models to facilitate the acquisition of independent living skills, and to assist mentees to develop tangible and intangible life skills; (2) cultural-empowerment mentors who are matched with the individual from the same cultural or ethnic group. The rationale for this model is that minority status groups are recipients of negative societal messages and that a positive role model from their minority group can have a beneficial influence on mentee identity, aspiration levels and future orientation; (3) corporate/business mentors who tend to be private sector/business community members that are matched with older foster adolescents. This model provides jobs, monitors work experience and offers career development opportunities for mentees who successfully complete a prescribed program; (4) mentors for young parents. In this situation, young mothers are matched with experienced mothers. Mentors share their child rearing experiences and try to help young mothers develop responsibility confidence and a positive orientation toward raising children; and (5) mentor homes in which four to six foster adolescents are placed in a home with an adult mentor. The mentor is in residence and is responsible for guiding the activities of the youth in terms of education, employment and community involvement.

Other Efforts to Empower Youth

There has also been research on programs designed to empower youth in foster care through culturally specific rites of passage. The African American Rites of Passage Program (AA-RITES) seeks to further the knowledge base of participants about their African American heritage and to empower them through the operationalization of African-centered principles and values. Preliminary interviews of program participants reveal several themes: (1) positive racial identification; (2) positive self-concept; (3) importance of learning through education; (4) intrinsic view of success; (5) inner power; (6) self-responsibility; (7) responsibility to community; (8) importance of cultural heritage; and (9) respect for women. While the study

authors caution that the study was conducted without an experimental design and therefore will not allow inferential analysis and generalizability of findings, the themes that did emerge from these interviews were consistent with program goals (Gravassi, Alford & McKenry, 1996).

Research from successful youth employment programs identified certain factors that contribute to successful outcomes. DeJesus sought to discover what worked for successful youth by talking to youth who had been consecutively employed for at least one year. These young people participated in job related programs including the Center for Employment Training (CEDT), Jobs Corps, Conservation Corps, YouthBuild, STRIVE, JTPA, IIC programs, privately funded initiatives and alternative/charter school. His research found that the most critical outcome of these programs was a change in mentality, attitude or outlook on life. Several things contribute to this change:

1. activities that engage and expose young adults with positive adult role models;
2. activities that build self-confidence and self-esteem;
3. activities that teach interpersonal and communication skills;
4. activities in which young adults feel support and genuine concern;
5. activities that help young adults realize their educational objectives; and
6. activities that allow young adults to be of service in the larger community.

Although there is still very little research on the impacts of programs designed to enhance protective influences on adolescents in placement, the literature, specifically that related to adolescent development and prevention of juvenile delinquency suggests that specific protective factors can influence a child's ability to cope with difficult and stressful circumstances.

VII. FUTURE RESEARCH AND PROGRAMMATIC DIRECTIONS

Key Findings

The review of the literature has provided many answers to our questions but in many ways has raised additional questions or alerted us to gaps in the extant research. For each question raised in the beginning of the paper, we highlight the key lessons learned and what questions need further investigation.

- How large is and what are the demographic characteristics of the foster care population who drop out or age out of the system nationally each year?;

National data on the size and demographics of the foster care population illustrate several striking facts⁶. First, forty percent of the children in foster care (169,259 children) are adolescents, and over one third of these children (59,241 children) are between the ages of 16 and 21. These older youths will be leaving care within the next one to five years. In most cases, these youth will live independently of any significant familial support. Over half of these youths will have lived in the foster care system for a minimum of two years; most of the guidance and support they have received to prepare them for adult roles will have been delivered through the foster care system. Based on 1996 AFCARS data we know that six percent of the children discharged during the six months period from April through September (3,792 children) were discharged as emancipated, and additional four percent (2,527 children) were discharged as runaways and are also attempting to live self-sufficiently. Doubling the figure (to estimate 12 months of discharge data) our estimate would result in a figure of 12,638 children discharged as either emancipated youth or runaways. These estimates are conservative when compared to other estimates in the literature. Cook (1988) estimated that approximately 18,000 youths exit foster care at age 18 each year, and in the same year Senator Daniel P. Moynihan (1988) estimated that 25,000 to 30,000 teenage youth were likely to be discharged from the foster care system.

We also know that if these youths parallel the racial/ethnic makeup of the foster care population as a whole they will be 44 percent African-American, 38 percent White, 14 percent Hispanic, two percent Native American, one percent Asian, and one percent children of unknown ethnicity. These youth will have come from a variety of placements reflecting a continuum of restrictiveness in their living situations.

- What are the differences in the transition to adulthood between youth raised in foster care and the general population of youth?

Leaving adolescence and taking on adult roles is a critical transition for all youth. Viewed from a life course perspective, this transition includes a combination of any of the following: completing one's education, obtaining one's own residence, becoming employed full-time, having a child, or getting married. As Mech (1994) points out, relationships with family, friends, and community supports are being redefined during this period. While many of these transitions may be dependent on one another, the key adulthood transition discussed in this paper was becoming gainfully employed and economically self-sufficient. When making the transition, youth raised in foster care and youth in the general population must face many of the same hurdles: educational attainment, employment experience, maintaining credible references, remaining financially afloat, and obtaining health insurance. While the follow-up research on youth raised in foster care shows great variability in educational and employment success, the foster youth population, on average, tends to experience many of the same difficulties as vulnerable youth mentioned in the literature on the general youth labor force. In addition to the problems encountered by youth such as early parenting, cognitive deficiencies,

⁶ In this summary paragraph AFCARS estimates are inflated by a factor of 1.45 to allow the projection of AFCARS data (representing 55 percent of the children in foster care), to an estimate of all children in foster care.

and participation in illegal activities, youth raised in foster care tend to have a number of additional barriers such as mental health issues and homelessness. Examining the general youth population is illustrative of some of the factors that may hamper the transition to economic self-sufficiency, but it is critical to view the population of youth raised in foster care as unique in that their experiences before foster care and while in care produces different needs and requires increased levels of support as they move into adulthood.

- What follow-up studies have been conducted on youth who exit the foster care system?

We reviewed studies involving educational and employment outcomes at the point of leaving care and at some time after leaving care. It was clear that youth leaving foster care lagged behind in terms of high school completion rates. Furthermore, although a portion of the former foster care population were employed after care, as a whole, the former foster care population resembled the population of those living in poverty. This was evidenced by low labor force participation rates, low wages for those who were employed, homelessness, and welfare dependency.

However, it is important to point out that these findings are based on only a few studies that followed youth once they left care. Thus, longitudinal educational and economic outcomes are still an area for further exploration. Four research design issues are important for improving the quality and robustness of future follow-up studies. First, to further understand the differences between youth raised in foster care and other youth it is critical to use appropriate comparison groups which reflect individual characteristics of these groups. Looking at aggregate comparison figures, such as percent of a city's population of a certain age range who is employed does not allow us to examine the impact of specific demographics, foster care history or academic abilities on educational or employment outcomes. The second issue involves examining individuals of the same age and during the same timeframe. Researchers who study what happens to youth while they are in care agree that picking a cohort and following them through time produces results which can best inform policy. The same approach should be used to study this group after leaving care. Furthermore, comparable measures must be given to each group so that differences can be rigorously studied. Finally, larger sample sizes are required to have sufficient power to test complex multivariate hypotheses.

- What barriers to employment and education are encountered among youth in general and what barriers are specific to the foster care population?

Barriers to employment and education for the general youth population include low educational attainment, lack of employment experience, lack of credible references, early parenting, health problems, competition for and location of available jobs, place of residence (urban vs. rural), influential others and unfair housing and hiring practices. Barriers for the foster care population include the above barriers in addition to housing issues, mental health issues, social support issues, high incidence of disabilities (cognitive, emotional, behavioral and social), and the lack of positive adult role models. Furthermore, many of the barriers that

exist for a minority of youth in the general population are seen in substantially higher numbers among youth raised in foster care (early parenting, cognitive deficiencies). Finally, some of the barriers to youth, especially those youth that have spent a substantial amount of time in the foster care system, are more intangible. In general, the notion of turbulence in one's life from multiple placements and the lack of contact with one's birth parents and family can negatively affect the development of foster care youth. Overall, barriers to youth in foster care are magnified and multiplied as compared to youth in the general population.

Barriers also exist to researchers and practitioners attempting to examine and develop strong and effective interventions programs. Certain sub-samples of youth have been neglected in recent research. Children and youth with disabilities are one of those neglected samples. These children have special needs that would need to be addressed in any successful transition program. Making the review of the literature even more difficult was the lack of comparability in definitions of developmental disabilities across studies. There is a need for a large scale collaborative effort across studies of youth transitioning out of foster care to make the data comparable and easier to understand. Additionally, most studies addressing barriers to economic self-sufficiency have not looked at individual barriers but have focused in on the interactions between barriers. In order to get a true sense of what services need to be put in place for the youth to succeed, we need to know exactly what barriers exist and how the barriers interact with each other to affect the individual's outcomes.

- What resiliency factors among youth who have been in foster care have been documented in the current literature as enhancing their transition to economic self-sufficiency?

The research reviewed pointed to several potential protective factors among adolescents in general. Personal attributes that may serve as protective factors are intelligence, a steady disposition, social skills and a conventional belief system. Protective factors beyond the individual include the development of a support network and the influence of an informal role model or mentor. The provision of educational support within the school and in the community by individuals in the youth's support network is critical for the youth's continued success. In addition, cultural supports, in the form of specifically designed youth empowerment programs, are a necessary ingredient to positive youth development and economic success.

While a number of protective factors have been identified, very little research has been conducted in this area with foster care youth. Therefore, our understanding of exactly how such protective factors work to enhance the ability of youth raised in foster care to achieve economic success is limited.

Suggestions for Future Research

To understand more clearly what types of adulthood preparation youth need as they leave foster care requires a comprehensive and careful account all the factors addressed above. While the current studies on educational and economic outcomes, barriers and resiliency factors provide useful information about how to best help this population, they fail to adequately address these issues simultaneously and therefore fail to answer important questions. Some questions remaining to be answered include:

- What is the relative effectiveness of various supportive interventions for improving the economic self sufficiency of youth as they leave care?
- What specific program components are necessary to improve youth's economic and educational outcomes?
- What specific supports are necessary to assist youth who have developmental delays or mental health problems?
- Are some supportive programs more effective for certain types of foster care youth than for others?

After reviewing the literature, we propose the following model which draws on some of the strongest aspects of previous studies.

<u>BACKGROUND VARIABLES</u>	<u>BARRIERS</u>	<u>PROTECTIVE FACTORS</u>	<u>OUTCOMES</u>
History of Abuse and Neglect	Early Parenting	Social support system	Education
Turbulence- # of placements	Mental Health Problems	Mentors (natural or assigned)	Employment
Type of placement	Cognitive Delay	Intelligence	Economic self- sufficiency
Foster Care Experience	Behavioral Problems	Social skills	
Ethnicity	Physical disabilities	Ability to form secure attachments	
Gender	Substance abuse		
	Living arrangements/ homelessness		
	Delinquency/ incarceration		

Moving from this general model to specific recommendations, we recognize that three of the previously mentioned studies have strong components which need to be incorporated into future research on this topic. Fanshel's study of Casey Family Program youth represents an excellent model of including clinical and child maltreatment background. This study, in contrast to the others, was able to give us some indication of the impact of early childhood maltreatment and the trauma of separation had on later life success. Second, Courtney and his colleagues' current study of what happens to youth once they leave care provides a strong prospective longitudinal study design. It also collects critical information about social support, health, mental health, substance use, juvenile delinquency, and aspirations. The type of information collected by the Courtney study is similar to the types of information collected on well known data sets which address youth employment, such as the National Longitudinal Study of Youth. Finally, the programmatic information about Independent Living services included in the Westat study are an important component to help us understand how services should be structured, what should be offered and how soon we should begin working with youth to prepare them for adulthood roles.

Finally, to improve upon some of the methodological weaknesses of earlier studies, the type of research which needs to be conducted should have the following design:

- a prospective longitudinal study;
- the sample should be drawn from current youth in a variety of settings;
- the sample should be followed at set intervals of time until the sample is in their late twenties; and
- special sub samples should be drawn of youth with mental health issues and developmental delays to further explore the needs of this population.

As has been pointed out by all the researchers who conducted follow-up studies, actually locating their sample proved to be an onerous task. Starting the study at the point at which youth are still in the care would reduce the difficulty of attempting to find youth. Courtney and his colleagues at Wisconsin are using this approach and it should be replicated using a more representative sample.

Next Steps

A key area not addressed in this background paper is that of the types of transition services available to youth and the effectiveness of those services. The next phase of this project will be devoted to collecting information about such services. In addition, we are currently collecting information from a variety of youth about their experiences with transitional services and their own concerns regarding future education and employment. Such information will help us begin to formulate more clearly the questions about what programmatic and policy avenues need to be pursued to assist these youth. In addition, we are surveying Independent Living programs, Casey Family Programs and other programs serving youth to understand the types of programs available. The specific questions to be addressed in the next phase are:

- What are the types and utilization of transitional services offered by public and private agencies?;
- What are foster care youth and providers' views on service needs?;
- From foster care youth and providers' perspectives, which transitional services are most effective?;
- What types of access do these youth have to post-secondary school or training?;

- Does the child welfare system's philosophy and program structure contribute to feeling of dependency?;
- What is the impact of other social service systems (such as schools and job training programs like JOBCORPS) on assisting youth who leave care?;
- What are employers' experience hiring foster care youth?;
- What is the communities role in supporting foster care youth's transition to economic self-sufficiency?; and
- What is the role of family support in fostering a successful transition?

We will also supplement the educational and economic outcomes information presented in this current paper with information based on the responses to the youth survey. The youth survey will be distributed to approximately 1500 youth across the country. We will examine how youth fare on the following indicators: living arrangements, high school completion, employment, welfare dependency, parenting, substance abuse and armed services participation.

The goal of the second phase of this project will be to combine what we have learned from the literature review and from our own data collection effort to derive a set of questions to guide a programmatic and research agenda. In addition we will suggest an approach to determine the extent to which adult transition support services for foster care youth should be separate or integrated with support services for youth not in the foster care system, such as Upward Bound. It will also describe a process for determining realistic outcomes and measures of accountability for transitional employment services for foster care youth. Finally, we will suggest an approach to determine which types of programs are most successful in assisting youth who grew up in the foster care system to become economically self-sufficient. In essence, we would outline an evaluation plan which tests the effectiveness of several diverse approaches on adult transition outcomes. Such an evaluation plan could be designed as a quasi-experimental design which compares various approaches which are revealed through our surveys (e.g., Foster Care Transition Model, Family Support and Connectivity) with a group of foster care youth who are not part of these services. This approach would allow us to determine which program elements are most successful for which youth. This information will be used to help suggest some "best practice" models which could then be the basis of a research and demonstration initiative.

References

- A National Foster Care Awareness Campaign (1997). A family discussion guide for the film Take this Heart. Child Welfare League of America, Washington, D.C.
- Allen, M., Bonner, K. & Greenan, L. (1988). Federal legislative support for independent living. Child Welfare, 67(6), 515-527.
- Anderson, E. (1991). Neighborhood effects on teenage pregnancy. In C. Jencks & P.E. Peterson (Eds.), The Urban Underclass (pp. 375-398), Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
- Ayasse, R.H. (1995). Addressing the needs of foster children: The Foster Youth Services Program. Social Work in Education, 17(4), 207-216.
- Barth, R.P. (1990). On their own: The experiences of youth after foster care. Child and Adolescent Social Work, 7(5), 419-440.
- Barth, R.P. (1986). Emancipation Services for Children in Foster Care. Social Work, May-June, 165-171.
- Bilchik, S. Delinquency Prevention Works: Program Summary of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 1995.
- Blome, W.W. (1997). What happens to foster kids: Educational experiences of a random sample of foster care youth and a matched group of non-foster care youth. Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 14(1), 41-53.
- Bogensneider, K., Small, S. & Riley, D. (1995) An ecological, risk-focused approach for addressing youth-at-risk issues. University of Wisconsin: Madison, Wisconsin.
- Brinkman., A.S., Dey, S., & Cuthbert, P. (1991). A Supervised Independent-Living Orientation Program for Adolescents. Child Welfare, 70(1), 69-80.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Cited in Hamilton, S.F. (1990). Apprenticeship for adulthood. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Burrell, K. & Perez-Ferreiro, V. (1995). A national review of management of the federally funded Independent Living Program. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Washington, DC.
- Chaffin, M. (1996). Onset of physical abuse and neglect: Psychiatric, substance abuse and social risk factors from prospective community data. Child Abuse & Neglect, 20(3), 191-203.

Cook, R. (1994). Are we helping foster care youth prepare for their future? Special Issue: Preparing foster youth for adulthood. Children and Youth Services Review, 16(3-4), 213-229.

Cook, R. (1991). A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth, Phase 2, Final Report. Rockville, M.D.: Westat, Inc.

Cook, R. (1988). Trends and needs in programming for independent living. Child Welfare, 67(6), 497-514.

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.

Courtney, M., Piliavin, I., Grogan-Taylor, A. (1995). The Wisconsin Study of Youth Aging Out of Out-of-Home Care: A Portrait of Children About to Leave Care. Institute for Research on Poverty: Madison, Wisconsin. [Http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/socwork/foster/](http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/socwork/foster/).

Cowen, E.L. & Work, W. (1988). Resilient children, psychological wellness, and primary prevention. American Journal of Community Psychology, 16, 591-607.

Petit, M.R. and Curtis, P.A. (1997). Child Abuse and Neglect: A Look at the States. 1997 CWLA Stat Book, Washington, D.C.: CWLA Press.

Desaran, F.A. & Keithly, D. (1994). Teenagers in the U.S. labor force: Local labor markets, race and family. Rural Sociology, 59(4), 668-692.

DeJesus, E. (1997). Tales from the bright side: Conversations with graduates of youth employment programs. In Sum, A. et al (Eds.), A Generation of Challenge: Pathways to Success for Urban Youth. Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies: Baltimore, M.D.

Dubowitz, et al (1990). The physical and mental health and educational status of children placed with relatives: Final report. Baltimore, MD: University of Maryland at Baltimore, Department of Pediatrics.

Dumaret, A., Coppel-Batsch, M. & Courand, S. (1997). Adult outcomes of children reared for long-term periods in foster families. Child Abuse and Neglect, 21(10), 911-927.

Elliott, M. & Parcel, T.L. (1996). The determinants of young women's wages: comparing the effects of individual and occupational labor market characteristics. Social Science Research, 25, 240-59.

English, D.J., Kouidou-Giles, S. & Plocke, M. (1994). Readiness for independence: A study of youth in foster care. Special Issue: Preparing foster youth for adulthood. Child and Youth Services Review, 16(3-4), 147-158.

Fanshel, D., Finch, S.J. & Grundy, J.F. (1990). Foster children in a life course perspective. Columbia University Press: New York, New York.

Festinger, T. (1983). No one ever asked us...A postscript to foster care. Columbia University Press: New York, New York.

First, R.J., Rife, J.C. & Toomey, B.G. (1994). Homelessness in rural areas: Causes, patterns and trends. Social Work, 39, 97-108.

Freedman, M. (1993). The kindness of strangers: Adult mentors, urban youth and the new voluntarism. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Furlong, A., Biggart, A. & Cartmel, F. (1996). Neighborhoods, opportunity structures and occupational aspirations. Sociology, 30, 551-65.

Galaway, B., Nutter, R.W. & Hudson, J. (1995). Specialist foster family care for delinquent youth. Federal Probation, 59, 19-27.

Garansky, Steven (1996). Exploring the effects of childhood family structure on teenage and young adult labor force participation. Discussion Paper no. 1111-96. Institute for Research on Poverty: Madison, Wisconsin.

Garmezy, N. (1985). Stress resistant children: The search for protective factors. In J.E. Stevenson (Ed.), Recent research in developmental psychopathology (pp. 213-233). Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press.

Gavazzi, S., M., Alford, K., A., McKenry, P., C. (1996). Culturally Specific Programs For Foster Care Youth: The Sample Case of an African American Rites of Passage Program, Family Relations, 45, 166-174.

Gleason, Philip. M. & Cain, Glen G. (1997). Earnings of black and white youth and their relation to poverty. Discussion Paper no. 1138-97. Institute for Research on Poverty: Madison, Wisconsin.

Goerge, R., Wulczyn, F. & Fanshel, D. (1994). A foster care research agenda for the '90s. Child Welfare, 73(5), 525-552.

Green, R.G., Braley, M.S. & Kisor, A. (1996). Matching adolescents with foster mothers and fathers: An evaluation of the role of temperament. Journal of Child and Family Studies, 5(3), 267-283.

Hahn, A. (1994). The use of assessment procedures in foster care to evaluate readiness for independent living. Special Issue: Preparing foster youth for adulthood. Child and Youth Services Review, 16(3-4), 171-179.

Hardin, M. (1988). New legal options to prepare adolescents for independent living. Child Welfare, 67(6), 529-545.

Holzer, H.J. (1994). Black employment problems: new evidence, old questions. Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 13, 699-722.

Hulsey, T.C. & White, R. (1989). Family characteristics and measures of behavior in foster and nonfoster children. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 59(4), 502-510.

Iglehart, A.P. (1994). Adolescents in foster care: Predicting readiness for independent living. Special Issue: Preparing foster youth for adulthood. Children and Youth Services Review, 16(3-4), 159-169.

Irvine, J. (1988). Aftercare services. Child Welfare, 67(6), 587-594.

Johnson, R.J. & Herring, C. (1989). Labor market participation among young adults: an event history analysis. Youth & Society, 21, 3-31.

Kazis, R. & Kupp, H. (1997). Both sides now: New directions in promoting work and learning for disadvantaged youth, a report to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (Executive Summary). Jobs for the future: Boston, MA.

Keithly, D.C. & Deseran, F.A. (1995). Households, local labor markets and youth labor force participation. Youth & Society, 26(4), 463-492.

Klaw, E.L. & Rhodes, J.E. (1995). Mentor relationships and the career development of pregnant and parenting African-American teenagers. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 19, 563-581.

Klerman, J.A. & Karoly, L.A. (1994). Young men and the transition to stable employment. Monthly Labor Review, 117, 31-48.

Kroner, M.J. (1988). Living arrangement options for young people preparing for independent living. Child Welfare, 67(6), 547-562.

Kumpher, K.L. (1993). Strengthening America's Families: Promising Parenting Strategies for Delinquency Prevention. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 7-8.

Lammert, & Timberlake. (1986). Termination of foster care for the older adolescent: Issues of emancipation and individuation. Child and Adolescent Social Work, 3(1).

Lefkowitz, B. (1986). Touch change: Growing up on your own in America. New York: Free Press

Lerman, R.I. (1996). Helping disconnected youth by improving linkages between high schools and careers. The Urban Institute: Washington, D.C.

Levendosky, A.A., Okun, A. & Parker, J.G. (1995). Depression and maltreatment as predictors of social competence and social problem-solving skills in school aged children. Child Abuse and Neglect, 19(10), 1183-1195.

Levinson, D., Darrow, C., Klein, E., Levinson, M., & McKee, B. (1978). The seasons of a man's life. New York: Ballantine.

Lichter, D.T., Cornwell, G.T., Eggebeen, D.J. (1993). Harvesting human capital: Family structure and education among rural youth. Rural Sociology, 58(1), 53-75.

Lyman, S.B. & Bird, G.W. (1996). A closer look at self-image in male foster care adolescents. Social Work, 41(1), 85-94.

Mallon, G. (1992). Junior Life Skills: An Innovation for Latency Age Children in Out-of-Home Care. Child Welfare, 71(6), 585-591.

Maluccio, A., N. (1991). The Optimism of Policy Choices in Child Welfare. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 61(4), 606-609.

Maluccio, A. & Sinanoglu, P.A. (1981). The challenge of partnership: Working with parents of children in foster care. Child Welfare League of America: New York.

Mangine, S., J., Royse, D., Wiehe, V., R., Nietzel, M., T. (1990). Homelessness Among Adults Raised as Foster Children: A Survey of Drop-in Center Users. Psychological Reports, 67, 739-745 .

Markey, J.P. (1988). The labor market problems of today's high school dropouts. Monthly Labor Review, 111, 36-43.

McGana, J.E. (1995). Family violence, abuse and related family issues of incarcerated delinquents with alcoholic parents compared to those with nonalcoholic parents. Adolescence, 30 (118), 473-482.

Mech, E.V. (1988). Introduction: Preparing Foster Adolescents for Self-Support: A New Challenge for Child Welfare Services. Child Welfare, 67(6), 487-495.

Mech, E.V. (1994). Foster Youths in Transition: Research Perspectives on Preparation for Independent Living. Child Welfare, 73(5), 603-623.

Mech, E.V. & Leonard, E.L. (1988). Volunteers as resources in preparing foster adolescents for self-sufficiency. Child Welfare, 67(6), 595-607.

Mech, E.V., Ludy-Dobson, C., & Hulseman, F. (1994). Life skills knowledge: A survey of foster adolescents in three placement settings. Special Issue: Preparing foster youth for adulthood. Children and Youth Services Review, 16(3-4), 181-200.

Mech, E.V., Pryde, J., A., Rycraft, J., R. (1995). Mentors for Adolescents in Foster Care. Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 12(4) 317-328.

Mech, E.V. & Rycraft, J.R. (1994). Preparing foster youths for adult living : Proceedings of an invitational research conference. Child Welfare League of America: Washington, DC.

Meier, E. (1965). Current circumstances of former foster children. Child Welfare, 44, 196-206.

Merriam, S. (1983). Mentors and protégés: A critical review of the literature. Adult Education Quarterly, 53, 161-173.

Meston, J. (1988). Preparing young people in Canada for emancipation from child welfare care. Child Welfare, 67(6), 625-633.

Michelson, S. (1972). Inequality: A reassessment of the effect of family and schooling in America. New York: Harper & Row

Mihalic, S.W. & Elliot, D. (1997). Short and long term consequences of adult work. Youth and Society, 28(4), 464-498.

Modrcin, M.J. (1989). Emotionally handicapped youth in transition: Issues and principles for program development. Community Mental Health Journal, 25(3), 219-227.

Mortimer, J.T., Pimentel, E.C., Ryu, S., Nash, K. & Lee, C. (1996). Part-time work and occupational value formation in adolescence. Social Forces, 74(4), 1405-1481.

Mortimer, J.T. & Shanahan, M.J. (1994). Adolescent work experience and family relationships. Work and Occupations, 21, 369-384.

Murray, C. (1984). Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980. New York: Basic Books.

Nixon, R. (1997). Introduction. Child Welfare, 76(5), 571-576.

North, J., Mallabar, M. & Desrochers, R. (1988). Vocational preparation and employability development. Child Welfare, 67(6), 573-585.

Oden, S. (1995). Studying youth programs to assess influences on youth development: New roles for researchers. Special Issue: Creating supportive communities for adolescent development. Journal of Adolescent Research, 10(1), 173-186.

North, J., Mallabar, M. & Desrochers, R. (1988). Vocational preparation and employability development. Child Welfare, 67(6), 573-586.

Pirog-Good, M.A. (1996). The education and labor market outcomes of adolescent fathers. Youth & Society, 28, 236-62.

Powers, D.A. (1994). Transitions into idleness among white, black, and Hispanic youth: Some determinants and policy implications of weak labor force attachment. Sociological Perspectives, 37(2), 183-201.

Prause, J. & Dooley, D. (1997). Effect of underemployment on school leavers' self-esteem. Journal of Adolescence, 20, 243-260.

Prause, J. & Dooley, D. (1995). Effects of unemployment on school leavers' self-esteem. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 68, 177-192.

Risley-Curtiss, Christine. (1996). Child Protective Services: The Health Status and Care of Children in Out-of-Home Care. APSAC Advisor, 9(4), 1-7.

Rhodes, J.E., Contreras, J.M., & Mangelsdorf, S.C. (1994). Natural mentor relationships among Latina adolescent mothers: Psychological adjustment, moderating processes, and the role of early parental acceptance. American Journal of Community Psychology, 22, 211-227.

Roman, N.,P., Wolfe, P.,B. (1997, winter). The Relationship Between Foster Care and Homelessness. Public Welfare, 4-9.

Ruscoe, G., Morgan C., & Peebles, C. (1996). Students who work. Adolescence, 31(123), 625-632.

Rutter, M. (1990). Psychological resilience and protective mechanisms. In J. Rolf, A. S. Masten, D. Chichetti, K. H. Neuchterlein, & S. Weintraub (Eds.), Risk and protective factors in the development of psychopathology (pp. 181-214). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ryan, P., McFadden, E.J., Rice, D. & Warren, B.L. (1988). The role of foster parents in helping young people develop emancipation skills. Child Welfare, 67(6), 563-572.

Sawyer, R.J. & Dubowitz, H. (1994). School behavior of children in kinship care. Child Abuse and Neglect, 18(11), 899-912.

Scannapieco, M., Schagrin, J. & Scannapieco, T. (1995). Independent Living Programs: Do they make a difference? Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 12(5), 381-389.

Sims, A.R. (1988). Independent Living Services for Youths in Foster Care. Social Work, 33, 539-542.

Skinner, C. (1995). Urban labor markets and young black men: a literature review. Journal of Economic Issues, 29, 47-65.

Stone, H.D. (1987). Ready set go: An agency guide to independent living. Child Welfare League of America: Washington, DC.

Sum, A., Fogg, N. & Fogg, N. (1997). Confronting the demographic challenge: Future labor market prospects of out-of-school young adults. In Sum, A. et al (Eds.), A generation of challenge: Pathways to success for urban youth. Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies: Baltimore, M.D.

Swanson, D.P. & Spencer, M.B. (1991). Youth policy, poverty and African-Americans: Implications for resilience. Education and Urban Society, 24(1), 148-61.

Tatara, T., Casey, P., Nazar, K., Richmond, F., Diethorn, R. & Chapmond, T. (1988). Evaluation of independent-living programs. Child Welfare, 67(6), 609-624.

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996. The employment situation: March 1996. News release, April 5.

U.S. Department of Justice (1996). Combating violence and delinquency: The national juvenile justice action plan, Coordinating Council in Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Wagner, M.M. (1995). Outcomes for youths with serious emotional disturbance in secondary school and early adulthood. Critical Issues for Children and Youth, 5(2), 90-112.

Waldinger, G. & Furman, W.M. (1994). Two models of preparing foster youths for emancipation. Special Issue: Preparing foster youth for adulthood. Children and Youth Services Review, 16(3-4), 201-212.

Walker, G. (1997). Out of School and unemployed: Principles for more effective policy and programs. In Sum, A. et al (Eds.), A generation of challenge: Pathways to success for urban youth. Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies: Baltimore, M.D.

Way, W. & Rossmann, M.M. (1996). Lessons from life's first teacher: The role of the family in adolescent and adult readiness for school-to-work transition. National Center for Research in Vocational Education, University of California at Berkeley: Berkeley, California.

Werner, E.E. (1990). Protective Factors in Individual Resilience. In S.J. Meisels & J.P. Shonkoff (eds), Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention. (pp. 97-116). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Wedeven, T., Pecors, P. Hurwitz, M. Howell, R. And Newell, D. (1994). The Boise Division alumni survey: A summary report. Boise, ID: The Casey Family Program.

Werner, E.E. & Smith, S. (1982). Vulnerable but invincible: A study of resilient children. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Westat. (1988). A National Evaluation of Title IV-E Foster Care Independent Living Programs for Youth: Final Report.. Department of Health and Human Services: Washington, DC.

Wolpin, K. I. (1987). Estimating a structural search model: The transition from school to work. Econometrica, 55(4), 801-817.

Williams T.M., & Kornblum, W. (1985). Growing up poor. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Zimmerman, R. (1982). Foster care in retrospect. New Orleans, LA: Tulane University Press.