CGU Theses & Dissertations   CGU Student Scholarship

Fall 2020

Investigating the Social Capital & Help-Seeking Behaviors of High School Latino Foster Youth

Rachel Acosta
Claremont Graduate University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu_etd

 Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Investigating the Social Capital & Help-Seeking Behaviors of High School Latino Foster Youth

Rachel Acosta

Claremont Graduate University

2020

APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Rachel Acosta as fulfilling the scope and quality of requirements for meriting the degree of Doctoral of Philosophy in Education.

Linda Perkins, Chair
Claremont Graduate University
Professor of Education

Thomas Luschei
Claremont Graduate University
Professor of Education

Eligio Martinez
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
Assistant Professor

ABSTRACT

Investigating Social Capital & Help-Seeking Behaviors
of High School Latino Foster Youth

by
Rachel Acosta

Claremont Graduate University: 2020

Foster youth in high school face a barrage of obstacles not faced by their peers, obstacles which make it challenging to finish high school and gain acceptance into four-year universities. But foster youth are resilient in ways that we can only begin to understand, navigating how to code-switch, and speak to social workers, lawyers, foster parents, teachers, and peers to gain the resources they need to be successful. Within the past ten years, there has been a multitude of research on foster youths, which examine mental health, graduation rates, college acceptance, and the importance of mentorship. Missing from the research has been the specific examination of Latino male foster youth in high school, a minority that is often grouped in research with other minorities. This qualitative study gives voice to Latino male foster youth, showcasing how these youths develop social capital and help-seeking behaviors within their high schools and communities. A sample of 12 Latino males between the ages of 14-24 was interviewed about their high school experiences, finding that Latino youth develop social capital and help-seeking behaviors while in foster care and utilize these networks to their advantage.

DEDICATION

To my students, who inspire me every day and who teach me kindness, patience, and empathy. To my foster children, past and present, who have made me a better person and given me the best title I could ever ask for, "mom." To my daughters, Robyn Esperanza Mascolo and Leah Anne Mascolo, who share my love and complete our unconventional family.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Starting a Ph.D. program in Education was exciting and frightful. Driving 50 miles one way wasn't so exciting, especially in bumper to bumper traffic. Six years later, as I write these acknowledgments, I would like to thank the professors at Claremont Graduate University for helping me be a stronger student and preparing me to be a teacher that fights for equity and access for my students of color.

I would also like to thank my committee, Dr. Linda Perkins, Thomas Luschei, and Eligio Martinez. Dr. Perkins for her support, as someone who always responded to my questions and listened attentively to my dissertation plans when I visited her office hours. Dr. Luschei, who was my first and last professor at Claremont, and who taught the class so well by bringing in real speakers who modeled what it was like to be a working mom finishing a Ph.D. program. Lastly, thank you to Dr. Martinez who always had an author or an article to recommend, you have helped me understand the complexities of social capital and the Latino lens.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I never found out why Yarelie was in foster care, she was reluctant to share, and I found it wrong to pry. But the fact was that I knew Yarelie was in foster care, and as an educator, I felt helpless. My teaching credential program prepared me to work with a wide variety of students, but foster youth was an area that was never broached. I found myself working as an advocate for Yarelie, a tenth grader who was shy and reserved, yet had maintained at the root of her being a focus on family and schoolwork. I remained Yarelie's mentor and confidant for her remaining three years in high school, and her current standing as a junior at the University of California Los Angeles Pre-med Program is a testament to her and other foster youths' resiliency. Yarelie positively changed my perspective of foster youth and motivated me to become a foster parent. But the role of a foster parent was very different from the role of an educator, requiring partnerships with birth parents, social workers, therapists, and lawyers all to support the needs of the child. "The system," a colloquial term used to define the world of the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS), is convoluted and complicated, but it is something that foster youth are stuck in for months and often years. My position as a foster parent and as a teacher provides me unique insight into the experiences of these youth and has led me to further my research goals of better understanding foster youth as they progress through secondary education.

While foster youth vary in ages, from birth to 21 years of age, their stories are seldom heard from their voices, making a qualitative inquiry a powerful research tool. While the typical high school teenager may worry about school dances, modern fashion trends, and pending project deadlines, the lives of teenagers in Southern California's foster youth system are much different. Foster youth often do not have the luxury of leaning on family members for support

and face the challenge of growing up rather quickly, learning to be independent to receive the resources available to them. These youths are required to attend family court dates, meet with social workers, and follow scheduled family visitation plans (Geenen & Powers, 2007). Additionally, teenagers are often considered too old to adopt by conventional families and many are placed in group homes containing a multitude of other teenagers (Green & Ellis, 2008). These environments make it difficult for teenagers to become attached and have the tendency to feel like a boardinghouse rather than a home. These homes are also dispersed throughout Los Angeles County, meaning that many teenagers are required to transfer to new schools when placed in foster care. The multitude of burdens that these students face is all added to the pressures of surviving high school.

The objective of this dissertation is to focus on the resources and support systems that foster youth have and utilize while in secondary education. I chose to focus on Latinos, as they compose a large and growing subsection of foster youth who hold unique cultural attributes that distinguish them from other ethnicities (White et al., 2008). Additionally, there are 3,378,344 Latino students in California, which account for 54.24% of the K-12 population (California Department of Education, 2016-2017). An increasing Latino population in California has led to an increase in the number of DCFS cases involving Latino children (Osterling & Han, 2011). Across the United States, there are 93,507 Latino Foster Youth, a total of 21% of the foster youth population (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, 2017). While males and females are almost equally represented in the foster care system, males 52% and females 48% (AFCARS, 2017), there are differences in how they experience foster care based on their gender (Garcia, 2009). Garcia (2009) outlines some of the deeper intricacies of Latino families, including familismo, in which family is at the center of importance for the individual, machismo,

where males are decision-makers and financial providers, and marianismo, where females are caretakers and mothers. Based on the different concepts of gender within the Latino community, I isolated my research to focus on males, whose culture raises them with familismo and machismo. But familismo is complex for foster youth, who do not always have their biological family to rely upon and find themselves placed into homes based on the choosing of DCFS. This lack of individual control raises many questions on how Latino male foster youth, who are at the brink of adulthood in high school, experience their adolescent years.

Past research on foster youth has focused on the various individuals that help foster youth or the social stressors that they face as they come into adulthood (Fram & Altshuler, 2009; Greeson & Bowen, 2008; Lynch, Long, Moorhead, 2018; Thompson & Greeson, 2017).
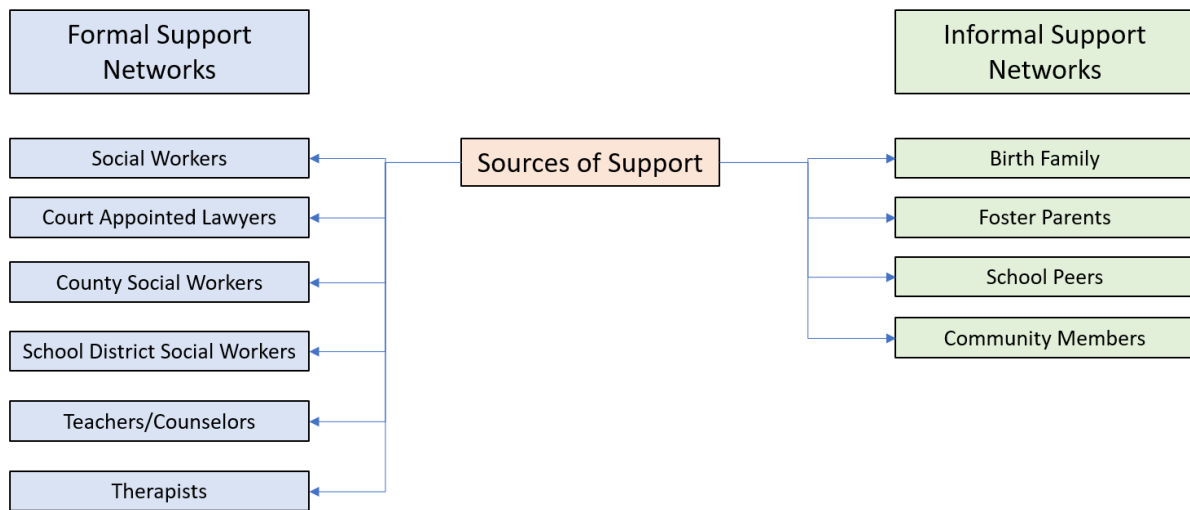

Figure 1: Sources of support that foster youth can draw upon for social capital.

Figure 1 showcases that theoretically, foster youth have a range of support systems available to them, both formal and informal. Yet, while there are a range of adults who foster youth can turn to when they are in crisis, their range of choices compared to whom they ultimately seek guidance from vary.

In terms of foster youth's educational trajectories, research indicates that foster youth are less likely to earn a high school diploma when compared to their peers (Clemens, Lalonde, & Sheesley, 2016; Whitman, 2018). Other studies have examined the concept of "instant adulthood" that foster children face, their lack of preparation for adulthood, and the lack of resources available to them as they move into sudden independence (Geenen & Powers, 2007). When examining resiliency, this is often done by examining foster youth once they have become adults and shown success as college students (Hass, Allen, & Amoah, 2014; Taylor, 2015). These past studies are significant in understanding foster youths' transition to adulthood, but the research leaves one with a limited focus on foster youth as adolescents. A closer examination of foster youth in secondary school is imperative to address their critical developmental years, with the ability to identify social, emotional, or physical needs in their lives.

While a great deal of research has been done on foster youth and some studies have examined the Latino lens (Perez & Romo, 2011; Osterling & Han, 2011; Garcia, Aisenberg, & Harachi, 2012; Church, 2006), a closer examination of Latino foster youth in secondary school has yet to be done. Often, Latino foster youth are clustered with other minority groups, and that makes it difficult to understand their unique needs (Ernestus & Prelow, 2015; Lopez-Gydosh & Hancock, 2009; Barrio & Hughes, 2000). Additionally, a three-year study by UC Berkeley's Center for Social Services Research and at the Institute for Evidence-Based Change found that 75% of foster youth transferred schools their first year in foster care and 49% transferred schools their second year into foster care (Frerer, 2013). School transfer rates were found to correlate with lower California standardized test scores in English and math (Frerer, 2013; Fram & Altshuler, 2009). Secondary education may also be considered a pivotal point in the lives of adolescents, as grades and test scores in these years help qualify students for college entrance.

Thus, a qualitative inquiry into the lives of secondary education Latino foster youth is significant to see where and if students have access to the supports that they need to be successful later in life.

Utilizing qualitative methods to research male Latino foster youth in secondary school allows educators, social workers, and policymakers to better understand the tools foster youth need at the high school level. Often, because of court meetings and paperwork, social workers have limited access to foster children's school lives. This study will explore the "help-seeking behaviors" and social capital applied by male Latino foster youth and if these resources are not being found, what adults in their lives can do to fix this issue. Potentially, school staff along with DCFS county workers can develop partnerships to attempt to address any gaps in these children's lives, whether academic or emotional.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this narrative inquiry qualitative study is to discover help-seeking behaviors and social capital behaviors for Latino adolescent foster youth in Sothern California high schools. In the research, help-seeking behaviors will be generally defined as 1) youths recognizing their problem 2) youths identifying that professionals can help their academic and social needs, and 3) youths getting the help they need (Kessler, et al., 1981). Within the research, youth do not necessarily have to satisfy all three help-seeking behaviors to qualify, so long as the third element of attaining help is satisfied. Social capital behaviors are behaviors in which the youth attain assets from adults, assets which can be either social (i.e. learning how to find jobs, apply to college) or physical (i.e. school supplies or financial assistance). Social capital will be identified either within the adolescent's high school environment or within their larger community as youths develop relationships with adults or peer groups that provide them physical

or social assets (Bourdieu, 1986). The research design helps to challenge previous literature which does not necessarily intend to present Latino foster youth through a deficit narrative, yet, has failed to use qualitative inquiry to examine social capital and help-seeking behavior amongst these youth.

This dissertation is organized so that the reader gathers a strong understanding of Latino foster youth's help-seeking and social capital behaviors and their significance. The study presents the research questions that will guide the literature review and study design, discusses' the significance for theory and policy, and presents the theoretical framework using a constructivist worldview. The research then presents the literature review, presenting background information on the foster care system and current literature on social capital, and help-seeking behaviors that foster youth present. Lastly, this study discusses the methodology that was used for gathering participants and analyzing data.

Research Questions

Latino adolescent foster youth are filled with complexities that are difficult to grasp, thus, the research questions must adequately be attuned so that they do not unnecessarily delve into the reasons they were removed from their biological families. Developing questions that found Latino male's assets and focused on their social capital and help-seeking behaviors was a priority. For this study, the following questions are addressed:

1. In what ways do Latino adolescent foster youth develop help-seeking behaviors and social capital in Southern California high schools?

The following sub-questions are addressed:

1. Who are Latino male foster youth comfortable speaking with?

2. What hinders or encourages Latino male foster youth from seeking help?

3. How do Latino male foster youth develop social capital in their high school settings?

Importance for Theory, Practice, and Policy

Latino foster youth are stigmatized in society by the assumption that something was and is unsafe for them in their home environment, leading them to be removed and placed in foster care (Villegas, Rosenthal, O'Brien, & Pecora, 2014; Garcia, Aisenberg, & Harachi, 2012). Latino males in general are often negatively stigmatized, discriminated against in their classrooms and communities (Venezuela, 1999; Boyle, 2010). The removal of an adolescent from their home into that of a foster family and or group home is traumatic and life-changing. In the eyes of the court, removing the child from their biological family is a necessary evil; however, in the eyes of an adolescent, it is complicated and often shameful (Perez & Romo, 2011). This research intends to highlight the resiliency of these youth and to better understand how they are coping with their life circumstances in high school. The research objective stems from an educational standpoint, not delving into why the adolescents were removed, but rather, how they are developing themselves as individuals with the tools, resources, and mentors that they find in their secondary education environment. This research is significant because, as stated above, Latino foster youth comprise a significant percentage of students in California and this population has unique needs that are currently not being met. With collaboration, DCFS, social workers, and educators can utilize the findings in this research to develop plans to assist Latino foster youth who are missing the help-seeking behaviors they need to succeed in high school.

The theoretical approach taken in this study, including social capital and intersectionality, will advance research and the understanding of Latino foster youth strengths. Understanding social capital, which is the social and physical assets youth gain from relationships, from the

perspective of foster youths is a rare and significant opportunity. Foster youth are often a number on a court document, a case a social worker handles monthly, but to hear a direct interview that shares their story and how they have developed social capital and sought out help is powerful. Additionally, this research will expand theory on intersectionality, as it considers the multiple dimensions of the foster youth, including their culture, gender, language, and school environment rather than observe these as individual components of a person's life. With the lens of intersectionality, the research does not become "a list of group memberships to be combined analytically" but rather highlights "an ongoing struggle to overcome naturalized categories that seem to hold fixed social positions" (Ferree, 2018, p. 127). If we understand the roles that social capital and intersectionality play in the lives of Latino foster youth, then we can begin to organize similar models in other high school environments. The research will advance policy and practice by allowing social workers, educators, and researchers to see how inexpensive and feasible it is to provide foster youth with social capital and help-seeking behaviors. By observing the positive relationships between social capital and help-seeking behaviors and student success in high school, researchers can develop programs to connect youth with caring mentors who can provide these tools.

Theoretical Framework

As a fourth-year Ph.D. student, I have come across various worldviews and theoretical frameworks that all seemed to hold value and merit in educational research. My worldview coincides with that of constructivism, because one of the most valuable elements of research is incorporating the beliefs and perspectives of the participants, which is a narrative not dictated by the researcher, but rather "co-created with participants" (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014, p. 21). Constructivism considers that both the author and research subjects have a past, and this past

influences the learning process and leads to intellectual development (Null, 2004). Most importantly, constructivism often examines issues that include race, class, and gender to give voice to often marginalized groups (Null, 2004). While the worldview of constructivism has remained a firm belief since my early teaching career, finding a theoretical framework that fit my research of Latino male foster youth felt much more challenging. Theoretical frameworks feel like road maps, yet each new theoretical framework felt like a map unexplored which caused doubt in my mind as a researcher. Fresh into the Ph.D. program, I took courses in critical race theory and social capital, which are both fascinating topics connected to Latino foster youth. Yet, as I clung to my research goal, understanding the help-seeking behaviors of Latino foster youth, it seemed essential to find a theoretical framework that encompassed both social justice and the complex lives that foster youth live.

For a few months, I dabbled with the use of Funds of Knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) as a theoretical framework, because it gives credit to individuals for the knowledge they bring to the table rather than knowledge taught to them in more structured climates. Funds of knowledge is a theoretical framework that I used throughout my master's program in Multicultural and Multilingual Education and as an educator guided me in my initial years of teaching. Funds of knowledge mean respecting the parents and communities in which my students come from, knowing that their knowledge goes beyond the textbook, and utilizing their home knowledge in the classroom. Yet, as I considered applying Funds of Knowledge as a theoretical framework to my research on Latino Foster Youth, it didn't quite fit. Latino foster youth do have knowledge and wisdom far beyond what any adult might expect, and this is because they have faced a world with challenges that the average person does not encounter; navigating a multitude of lawyers, judges, social workers, therapy, foster parents, and school.

But as I wrote down the complex systems that foster youth must navigate, I chose not to use Funds of Knowledge because of these constant shifts. Traditionally, funds of knowledge show how the family and community build knowledge, but what happens when the community and family are constantly changing because of the transiency of foster youth? What happens when the youth themselves must be their own family and their advocate because their biological family or community has been taken away from them? The result of my quest for a theoretical framework led me to incorporate both social capital theory and intersectionality as my frameworks. Social capital theory and intersectionality fit into constructivism because they address foster youth from an asset-based perspective yet understand that society has discriminatory practices still in place against people of color. By using these two theories, I am not making negative assumptions because of foster youth circumstances but am constructing knowledge by seeing who foster youth have befriended, sought advice from, and how they have used their language, culture, and gender to do so. By using both frameworks in unison, I felt that I could identify the successful social capital that foster youth have while giving similar importance to their unique positions as foster youths, adolescents, males, and Latinos.

A social capital theoretical framework is one that has been extensively researched and utilized across various fields (i.e. sociology, anthropology, psychology, education) and fits neatly into the research of foster youth because their lives intersect with the fields above. As foster youth are often forced into adulthood because of the lack of parental support in their lives, a social capital approach allows one to see where and how they found resources and support. Popularized by Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, the concept that group association has the potential to bring personal gain has received wide popularity and research (Portes, 1998). Yet, Sabatini (2009) remarked that the definition of "social capital remains elusive and, also due to

the chronic lack of suitable data, there is neither a universal measurement method nor a single underlying indicator commonly accepted by the literature" (p. 429). The objective is not to fill boxes that quantify that a student has met appropriate behaviors and therefore acquired social capital, but rather to deeply understand social capital as a help-seeking behavior that is accessible to foster youth. The definition of social capital used throughout my research is that of Andriani (2016), in which "higher associational activities inside a community can foster a sense of civic engagement where cooperation, reciprocity, and mutual trust are developed and used to solve collective action and asymmetric information problems" (p. 3). Andriani's (2016) perspective on social capital works in the secondary education system, as Latino foster youth either create a community or remain isolated from their school communities.

But it should also be noted that social capital, as a framework, has the potential to have a Eurocentric lens. Society values the mannerisms, styles of dress, methods of expression, relationship building, and financial values that can often be considered Eurocentric. Stanton-Salazar (2001) critiques the use of social capital as applied to Latinos, where we educate our students to believe in social capital, yet many remain excluded. He admits that there are social capital pipelines, but these are pipelines that provide resources and privileges to limited groups in society. Other families, particularly Latinos, who have social networks and religious values that connect them to other Latino families, are limited from the conventional social capital that we often think of when it comes to promotions and economic privileges (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). This research, using a constructivist worldview, must recognize that social capital can be used as a tool for seeking benefits, yet can also be exclusionary. In my analysis of Latino foster youth's narratives, I will have to examine my own biases of social capital. I will attempt to create a narrative that is respectful of participants' experiences and acknowledges that social capital is

11

different and complex for Latinos.

Social capital theory in and of itself does not address the needs of Latino foster youth, who are unique as Latinos, males, adolescents, plus their experiences as foster youth differ widely—I needed to add intersectionality. If only social capital theory were used, then one would understand how foster youth developed relationships and found resources but not why. Race, gender, and even age are major factors in one's life that impact our decision-making process and the label of foster youth complicates these interplays further. Intersectionality originated from the research of Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1989) as a lens to analyze the disparities that black women face as women, as women of color, and as women who often come from financially disadvantaged communities (Crenshaw, 1991). Thus, intersectionality is not just acknowledging that people are like jigsaws with complex identities, but rather that there are societal systems in place which limit one's access to equal resources and opportunities. Intersectionality has evolved since its inception, finding it's way into the Oxford English Dictionary (2015), where systems that compose identity, such as gender, class, and race, are similarly seen as segments that similarly contain discrimination and compound inequalities (Perlman, 2018). This marginalization is also unique to Latino male foster youth because Latino males' face increased scrutiny and punishment from teachers and administrators when compared to their non-Latino peers (Martinez, 2014). Latino males find themselves with fewer enrollment rates in early education, 1-1.5 years behind their Latina peers in reading and writing and are overrepresented in special education programs (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2011). Presently, I have selected to use intersectionality because it addresses the complexities of Latino Male Foster Youth, who have been marginalized in their communities by law enforcement, marginalized in their classrooms by educators, and marginalized in their homes by social workers.

Adding the component of intersectionality addressed the needs of my research and it added the social justice component which I sought, addressing the research more holistically. Intersectionality allows me as the researcher to frame my topic while considering the diverse aspects of my subjects, that cannot be "captured wholly or completely by examining each dimension separately" (Strayhorn, 2017, p. 57). Therefore, Latino foster youth who may not identify as foster children because they consider themselves part of their foster families, will not be excluded from my study. Intersectionality also allows me to acknowledge that Latino and Latino foster youth, while both groups experience inequalities, face diverse challenges. It allows the voices of the marginalized foster youth to be heard, while additionally taking into "account context, structures, power, and a complicated network of identities" (Berger & Guidroz, 2009 as cited by Strayhorn, 2017, p. 59) which are hurdles that these youth face daily. The role of identity and the growth process is especially significant in the lives of foster youth, as they struggle to understand the complex relationships of families, whom to trust in their private and public lives, and balancing school life with home life.

My objective is to utilize social capital theory and intersectionality under the umbrella of a constructivist worldview so that the label of foster youth is understood for its complexities. The constructivist worldview allows me as a researcher to validate my past as a foster parent and a teacher, one who is familiar with the lingo that is used in the Child Welfare system as well as having personal relationships with my foster children and their parents. My past is then utilized to interview high school-aged foster youth so that they may have their voices heard, so that we may construct knowledge together by utilizing their narratives. My frameworks, social capital theory, and intersectionality were both selected because they help support the fact that foster youth have diverse backgrounds yet are resilient. The concept of social capital showcases that

foster youth have learned to be independent, that they find resources for themselves, whether on campus or in the community to help themselves. Intersectionality builds upon the concept of social capital theory because as a Latino, adolescent, male, and as a foster youth who society has traditionally shortchanged, they utilize factors of their background to attain resources. My research will showcase that while the label of foster youth can be considered a deficit, it is a narrative that adolescent foster youth must learn to embrace, and many develop social capital to survive and even thrive.

Conceptual Framework
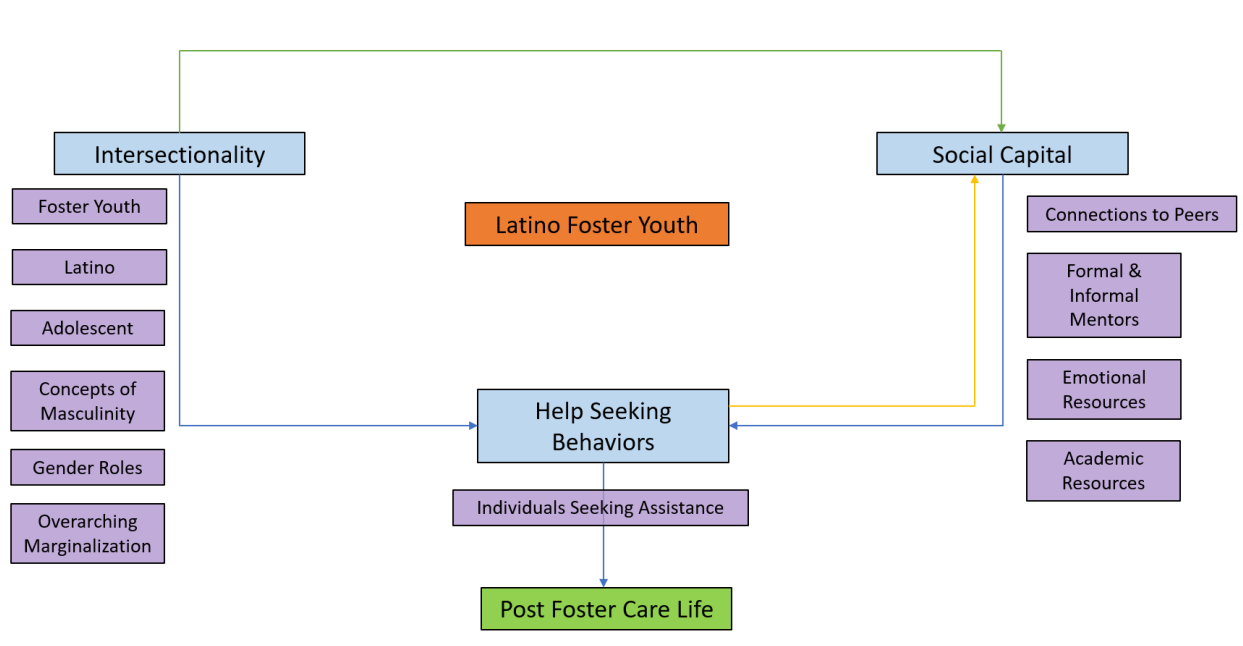
Figure 2: Conceptual Framework displaying the relationship between Latino foster youth, social capital, and intersectionality.

The conceptual framework built for this study includes intersectionality, social capital, and help-seeking behaviors. These three concepts all rely upon one another to tell the complete story of Latino foster youth. By examining Figure 2, one can see that intersectionality is an integral part of the lives of foster youth because they are Latino, adolescents, must grapple with

14

societal constructs of masculinity, gender stereotypes, and lastly the marginalization that comes with each of these identities. The challenges and complexities that Latino foster youth face means that they must apply help-seeking behaviors to overcome the hurdles that life has presented them. Challenges with the foster care system or with problems in school must be counteracted with supportive teachers or mentors. To survive, Latino foster youth must learn help-seeking behaviors or build social capital from those around them to find success in their high school career and post-foster care life. Help-seeking behaviors also lead to social capital, as when one identifies needs and seeks to address these needs, they may utilize peer groups or adults to attain the social capital to address their problem. This conceptual framework will help address my research questions because it seeks to identify how foster youth utilize help-seeking behaviors and social capital within their high school environments. The framework design alludes to the need to interview foster youth themselves, adolescents who are currently completing their secondary education, and who best understand how they advocate for themselves. Sub-questions focus on whom the foster youth choose to get help from, factors that encourage or hinder them from seeking help, and the social capital that is already used by the foster youth.

Definition of Key Terms

The terms below are found throughout the paper and serve to give readers a general understanding of their definitions. The definitions below have been formulated by me, the researcher, and therefore do not include formal citations.

Social Capital: a framework that believes that working with others allows the individual to gain
    skills.

Help-Seeking Behavior: the individual identifies a need in their lives and actively seeks help

from others, including emotional or physical.

Intersectionality: examines various aspects within an individual's life and how these aspects

intersect, such as gender, race, and social class, which must be examined together to

understand the person as a whole.

Foster Child: youth between the ages of birth-18 who was removed from their legal guardians

due to a danger in the home (as judged by DCFS workers).

Foster Family/Parent: A family and or a person certified through either DCFS or a private

foster care agency who cares for foster children.

Group Home: A home certified by DCFS which cares for multiple foster children, the home may

be solely for one age group or have a multitude of ages.

Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS): a government agency that works in each

state to ensure that children's home environment is safe. The goal of DCFS is to ensure

that families are reunified and provided the resources to be able to do so.

Social Worker: an employee who may work for either DCFS, a private foster care/adoption

agency, a hospital, or school who collaborates with parents, children, and foster parents

to encourage family unification and provide resources.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

The term *foster care* may bring a range of images to mind, as the foster care system was

put into place to protect populations between the ages of 0-18 from parents who are unable to

care and historically unable to financially provide for their children (Rymph, 2017). The

traditional foster care system has undergone a range of changes since its inception in the United

States, which records the first foster child in the American Colonies in 1636 (Rymph, 2017). Foster youth removed from homes generally fit into one of the following categories: neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, abandonment, a combination of these elements (McBeth & Meezan, 2008; Cogner & Finkelstein, 2003). Since the 1970s, the population of children in foster care has remained at a steady population of around 500,000 across the United States (Hamilton, 2007). Of the population of children in foster care, children of color are disproportionately represented when compared to their White peers (Villegas, Rosenthal, O'Brien, Pecora, 2014; Schmidt, Dubey, Dalton, Nelson, Lee, Kennedy, Kim-Garvey, Powers, & Geenen, 2015; Fram & Altschuler, 2009; Gypen, Vanderfaeille, Maeyer, Belenger, & Holen, 2017). Latino youth specifically represent 21% of the foster care population in the United States (US Department of Health and Human Services as cited by Villegas, et al., 2014). These youths face a barrage of obstacles in their lives, including attending family court dates, meeting with social workers, and following scheduled family visitation plans. Court-ordered requirements that foster children must follow are added to the mental strains of acclimating to new home environments, attending new schools, and having new teachers, counselors, and peers in their new educational environment (Perry, 2006; Strolin-Golzman, Woodhouse, Suter, & Werrbach, 2016). The multitude of obstacles faced by foster youth often gives rise to mental health issues, yet many of these needs go unmet (McBeth & Meezan, 2008; Fram & Altshuler, 2009; Neal, 2017). Unfortunately, the burdens of the foster care system are most often placed into the hands of the foster children themselves, who must learn to advocate for themselves.

This literature review uses a social capital framework developed by Andriani (2013) to investigate the following questions in my literature review: What, if any, help-seeking behaviors are Latino male adolescents using? Who are Latino male foster youth comfortable speaking

with? What hinders or encourages Latino male foster youth from seeking help? What social capital do Latino male foster youth contain in their high school setting? Throughout the literature review, I adopt the definition of "help-seeking behaviors" by Kessler, et al (1981) in which youths can recognize their problems, identify that professionals may help in assisting with the identified problem, and lastly obtain the help that they need. A theoretical framework of social capital is used, which is "that higher associational activities inside a community can foster a sense of civic engagement where cooperation, reciprocity, and mutual trust are developed and used to solve collective action and asymmetric information problems" (Andriani, 2013, p.4).

The literature review is broken into multiple segments to understand the complexities that Latino foster youth experience. The literature review uses studies that examine students' social capital and specific help-seeking behaviors and their effectiveness in improving foster youth's mental and academic outcomes. Studies that examine the obstacles that foster youth face are discussed first, as this determines the need for help and later help-seeking behaviors. The interplay of race and foster care are then established to best understand that Latino students face different needs when compared to their peers of different racial backgrounds. The literature review then examines the adults in foster youth's lives, including a) professionals (i.e. psychologists, therapists, teachers, and school staff) and b) foster parents, who can contribute or deter foster youth from help-seeking behaviors.

Methods

The literature review examined various databases over fifteen months from September 2017 through February 2018, using the databases ERIC, JSTOR, Academic Search Premier, PsychINFO, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. Keywords and phrases used to begin the research for this paper included "Foster care, Foster youth, foster kids, male foster youth, Latino

foster youth, Department of Child and Family Services" and the "help-seeking behaviors." The initial search was limited to peer-reviewed articles and texts, which brought up slightly over 46.000 journal articles on the topic, dealing with foster care children at all age levels. As the scope of the search was limited to secondary education foster youth, articles were narrowed down to 2,900. In the end, research articles using both qualitative and quantitative methods were examined based on their strength of arguments and their findings. While various pieces of literature reviewed foster youth of all ethnic backgrounds, my research was limited to male Latinos, as this is a growing population in the United States which displays different counseling and help-seeking behaviors (Foster, 2007; Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

The Obstacles Faced by Foster Youth

Forming Attachments

Foster children face a variety of obstacles, which make forming attachments and seeking out positive relationships more challenging—potentially hindering the accrual of social capital. Harden (2004) examined foster care from a developmental standpoint and identified several issues which manifest from being placed in the foster care system, including attachment disorders, in which the foster child may be "overly vigilant or overly compliant…show indiscriminate connection to every adult, or not demonstrate attachment behaviors to any adult" (p. 34). Forming trusting relationships is additionally burdened by the fact that most adolescent foster youth regularly move homes. While the idea is to have permanency, foster parent availability, and or personal conflicts with foster parents leads to high transiency (Unrau, Font, & Murphy, 2011). Johnson & Menna's (2017) qualitative study of six foster youths found that they had on average moved homes 6 times while they were placed foster care. Taylor's (2015) study of 26 foster youth found that 50% of participants had moved foster homes 3 or more times and

one participant had been moved 27 times. Additionally, attachments are difficult to form, as foster care itself is a state of limbo, with stability dependent upon foster parents, social workers, and court-appointed judges. Because of their age, adolescents are statistically less likely to be adopted (Vinnerljung & Hjern, 2011) and spend months in the foster care system, not knowing when their status will change (USDHHS, 2005). In 2003, approximately 250,000 foster children were in foster care for 18 months, which was an improvement from the 1998 record of 24.6 months (USDHHS, 2005). The length of time that youths spend in foster care decreases the chances that adolescents will acquire high social capital, as social capital is dependent upon strong community and family ties (Andriani, 2013). The increased length of time in foster care also means that foster youth have less time to bond with caregivers and form attachments with them and their community.

Additionally, foster youths' main parental figures are their foster parents, yet many of these parents do not feel prepared to help their foster youth. Unrau, Font, and Murphy (2011) sought to understand foster parents' experiences when foster children are placed and removed from their homes. It was concluded that a slight majority at 54% of foster children move to different foster homes rather than returning to their biological families. When foster parents were asked to reflect upon the children's moves, many perceived their foster children to experience negative emotions because of the transition, such as insecurity, fear, mistrust, and self-blame. Also, because 38% of foster children's moves were unplanned in this study, many foster parents reported experiencing emotional hardships. These results reveal that foster children removals are a huge stressor in the lives of foster parents, leaving foster parents, and foster children less receptive to forming close attachments in the future. Patterson, et al. (2018) research examines the lack of training that resource parents receive when it comes to their foster children's needs.

The authors conducted their research in a qualitative format, asking the parents where they felt

limited in their ability to help foster youth. The researchers concluded that foster parents need

training and support in 215 topics, which they categorized into 17 themes. Some of these themes

included understanding trauma, parental adaptation, regulation, self-care, and attachment.

Resource parents understand their lack of training and want help, yet resources to provide these

additional trainings are often limited.

Struggles with Identity as Foster Youth

Additionally, being a teenager in foster care has its specific problems, as teens are in a

state of self-discovery. The period of adolescence contains the formation of self-identity by

pulling away from family structure and striving to define self-identity (Harden, 2004). Kools'

(1997) study, while over 20 years old, remains a strong qualitative study of adolescents in their

identity development as they remained in foster care long term. After interviewing 17

adolescents with an average age of 17.47 years, findings revealed that adolescents in foster care

had low self-esteem, social isolation, stigmatized self-identity, and a lack of future orientation.

Adolescents struggle in the foster care system, as they have a strong need for peer validation, yet

feel limited because of their status as foster children. This stage is additionally burdened by

adolescents' "characteristic egocentricity" which "contributes to the belief that they are under

constant observance and evaluation by those in the social milieu" (Elkind, 1967 as cited by

Kools, 1997, p. 269). Kools' (1997) findings correlate with the difficulties of youth developing

social capital within a secondary education setting, as adolescents hold themselves to the

particular label of foster youth and this can hinder them from developing strong peer

relationships (Thomson, Wojciak, & Cooley, 2016). Foster youth may choose to refrain from

peer relationships because it may mean divulging their status as a foster child, a label that other

adolescents could never understand fully. Divulging that one is a foster youth could also evoke pity from others and in the adolescent stage of egocentricity, these would be unwelcome emotions.

This stage as a youth is additionally paired with the fact that foster youth often have little agency in their own lives. Fylkesnes, Taylor, & Iversen (2018) found that for youth to have agency and participate in the decision-making process, they first had to prove their maturity to agents in power (i.e. teachers, social workers, and foster parents). Otherwise, those in power were comfortable making the decisions for the youth as a matter of custom. Secondly, in Fylkesnes, Taylor, & Iversen (2018) study, the adults also had to address the concerns of the youth, because listening can provide emotional support, but addressing the need was what the foster youth ultimately desired. These results are significant because foster youth agency and participation are valued by social workers yet putting these concepts into practice is often found to be much more difficult.

The Realities of Attaining an Education

Various studies cite the difficulties in attaining a high school degree and beyond when in the foster care system, a reality that exists because these foster children have not had social capital or help-seeking behaviors modeled for them. Foster children have lower high school graduation rates when compared to their peers and Gypen, et al. (2017) report that only 64% of foster youth graduate from high school by age 19. These findings reveal that foster youth are not receiving the necessary assistance to be successful in traditional high school settings. Social capital and help-seeking behaviors are not in place, as these students do not recognize their weaknesses and find themselves unable to ask for help (Kessler, et al., 1981). As foster youth are often transient, moving from different foster homes throughout the years, school credits are often

lost in the process (Barrat & Berliner, 2013 as cited by Neal, 2017). These circumstances make it difficult for foster children to maintain motivated throughout their academic careers, particularly if they fall far behind grade-level expectations (Neal, 2017). Vinnerljung & Hjern (2011) found various parent risk factors such as low socioeconomic status, drug dependency, and low educational attainment, 70% of foster children almost always had more risk factors when compared to their peers. Foster children, when compared to their adopted peers, scored lower on test scores, had lower academic grades, 60% only attended compulsory education, and did not pursue higher degrees (Vinnerljung & Hjern, 2011). The educational gaps faced by foster youth are present in the literature; however, a clear method of addressing these issues is far from clear. The literature that discusses these students' educational gaps (Gypen, et al., 2017) recommends what can be done post-high school to help foster youth transition, but there is an absence of advice to help students in high school. There remains a recommendation for stability to foster stronger networks of support, yet, this is often not a viable option for adolescent foster youth.

The Interplay of Race & Foster Care

The interconnectedness of race and identity formation is significant in the lives of foster youth and impacts their help-seeking behaviors. Latino families, when involved with DCFS, have unique needs and face different hardships when compared to other cultures and races. Garcia, Aisenberg, and Harachi (2012) questioned whether Latinos were receiving culturally relevant services in the child welfare system. They concluded that Latino families, because of cultural conflicts and language barriers between parents and children, lead to poor parent-child interactions. The authors also found that the Latino family's concepts of abuse and neglect differed, meaning that sometimes families did not understand they were breaking the law. Also, Latino families face a lot of challenges getting their children out of child protective services

because of language barriers, access to court-mandated trainings in their home language, and even making court appearances because it means missing work hours. These results are significant because Latino children are a growing population in the DCFS, yet their parents face greater barriers than other families. Osterling & Han (2011) results coincided with Garcia, Aisenberg, and Harachi (2012) in that Mexican immigrant families have higher percentages of language barriers, financial hardships, and find themselves on long waitlists to court mandated services. But Osterling & Han (2011) results also found that when the Latino families have newly immigrated, they get custody of their children at higher rates than non-immigrant families.

However, when Latino families are not newly immigrated, they often find themselves in the DCFS in higher numbers. Church's (2006) longitudinal research study was to determine if Hispanic children in the Utah Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) were placed in foster care at higher percentages and for longer periods than their non-Hispanic peers. The questions were answered by Church (2006) using logistic regression analysis to identify if the race was a determining factor in foster care placement and Cox regression to determine if youth spent greater amounts of time in foster care because of their race. The results found that Hispanic families do have slightly higher percentages of households headed by females, that neglect and physical abuse were primary reasons for child removal, and Hispanic families had higher rates of poverty. But the most significant result of the study was that the variable of ethnicity (Hispanic) meant that foster youth were more likely to be placed in out-of-home placement (Church, 2006). Not surprisingly, Church also found that Hispanic teenagers between the ages of 15-19 also spend the most time in out of home placement, a finding that is consistent with other research on teen foster youth. These findings are significant because Hispanic youth are finding themselves pulled from their families at higher percentages and when they are removed, they are kept in

foster care for longer periods. These findings connect with my intersectionality framework, as social workers are failing to see these families on a wholistic basis which is costing these Latino families the opportunities afforded to other races. The failure to recognize families' intersectionality can be observed as social workers penalize Latino families, placing their children in the child welfare system in greater proportions than their peers, rather than providing them with the resources to maintain their families intact.

Latino Male Identity & Challenges that Come with It

This section of the literature review will explain the necessity for isolating Latino male foster youth experiences, whose narratives are unique not only from other minority foster youths but even the experiences of Latina foster youth of similar age groups. Latino males must first come to terms with the concept and label of the identity of "Latino" as a foster youth, because it's a box that is checked off on medical forms, school forms, and court forms, yet their response to their identity often changes over time (Hilton, Brown, & Elder, 2006). But identity is not something that is isolated to legal forms, identity also develops because of the experiences that shape our early life, how teachers treat students in the classroom, how people treat others because of skin color and facial features. Latino male youth are marginalized from an early age, tracked in school, sometimes isolated because of language barriers, and rarely make it to higher education pathways. Males particularly are treated differently than females, with lower school expectations which culminate with lower college enrollment rates (Sáenz, García-Louis, Drake, Guida, 2018). The examination of the literature below will help create an understanding of the Latino male experience, seeing now only the hardships, but also the empowerment that can come from being Latino.

The Concept of Race

The concept of race is not stagnant, but it changes and is sometimes redefined as youth age. Hilton, Brown, and Elder (2006) used the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, finding that 10% of adolescents had changed their racial categorization over the years. This process of change occurs as "many individuals racial identity never becomes fixed, can change at any point during one's lifetime, and is subject to new experiences around prejudice, significant life events, new relationships and even larger changes within society, such as political movements" (Schmidt, et al., 2005, p. 62). The quantitative study performed by Schmidt et al. (2015) is unique, as it examines the racial categorization of foster youth. After examining 122 youth between the ages of 16.40 to 18.96 years of age, 20% of youth who had initially identified their race as Hispanic changed their ethnicity to non-Hispanic a year later. This brings up many questions, including why foster youth are removing the identification of "Hispanic" from their background. Changing one's identity over time does shape Latino youths' experiences because it can symbolize pride, personal growth, or even awareness of the concept of race and identity. Additionally, Schmidt, et al. (2015) found that there is a high discordance between how foster youth identify their race in the foster care system as compared to school enrollment. Foster youth, because of the lack of home placement options, are often placed with people of a different race than their birth parents, which can make racial identity challenging for these youth. Racial identity is thus being analyzed by these foster youths, as they select which group, they choose to associate with and can thus pull empowerment and social capital from these identifications.

Erbstein (2013) also found that race plays a significant role in the lives of Latino males and is tied into all elements of these male's lives. The concept of being Latino is part of the construct that is positioned within a multitude of other roles, including their immigration history,

legal status, and the legal status of their families, family's financial status, and even gangs in the environment (Erbstein, 2013). As foster youth grapple with this range of personal background identifiers, they may be more inclined to trust adults of the same personal background. Latino males specifically have been found to do better academically, particularly at the college level, when they have mentors who are of the same cultural background (Sáenz et al., 2018). But for younger Latino foster youth, early intervention may be the key, specifically in middle school. Martinez & Castellanos (2017) found that while parents and family members may give well-meaning advice to their Latino youth, teachers, regardless of ethnic background can give concrete advice. This advice is key so that students can do well academically and being to develop career plans for themselves. Unfortunately, not a great deal of research has been conducted on Latino foster youth as a specific research topic because, as in other research fields, Latinos are often grouped with other minorities. This lack of research makes it difficult to identify what specific needs Latino foster youth face when compared to their non-Hispanic peers. Because Latino foster youth are not often singled out in research, the literature review will examine the specific barriers to achievement that Latino male's face, which can then be connected to Latino Foster Youth.

Latino Barriers to Achievement

Segregation is no longer a law, but more than ever we see Latino minorities segregated in lower-income communities (Roca, Ellen, & Steil, 2018). Historically, minority communities have faced "white-flight" in which upper- and middle-class families have escaped communities of color. Wurdock (1981) examines the concept of White flight not as White's escaping, but rather as White's unwillingness to occupy spaces where minorities reside. The research done by Wurdock (1981) showed that when White's believed their neighborhood would continue to be

White in the next 5 years, 43% planned mobility, but if White's believed their neighborhood would be primarily people of color, their planned mobility became 70%. Latinos are in segregated communities because they "lack of economic mobility (jobs without any mobility potential), barriers faced in accumulating intergenerational wealth, and persistently low education levels appear to make it harder for them to move out of ethnic enclaves into the mainstream" (Gándara & Conteras, 2009, p. 73) Most Latino families do not have the economic flexibility which would allow them to research and move to neighborhoods with fewer crime rates and stronger school districts. Communities that are segregated are then forced to send their children to their local community schools, which for Latinos have been underachieving. Latino schools also hold large percentages of English Language Learners, who are driven by monolingual agendas that do not embrace or value the student's multiculturalism (Gándara & Aldana, 2014). Historically, Latinos have been tracked into to take lower-level courses in high school and are not encouraged at the same rate of their peers to attend higher institutions of learning.

Latinos in high school are often not held to the same academic expectations as their peers, which translates into lower expectations for themselves and leads to lower achievement. Convertino & Graboski-Bauer (2018) examine how dangerous a deficit-paradigm can be for high schoolers' achievement. Specifically, Convertino & Graboski-Bauer's (2018) qualitative case study looked at a principal's mindset toward the student population in a school which was 41.6% Latino. Specifically, Bauer (2018) wanted to know if the principal believed that 100% of the students, including the high percentage of Latino students, could attend post-secondary education. In this scenario, the principal did not believe that all students had the potential to enroll in higher education and he eliminated dual enrollment programs on his campus which had

allowed students to attend college while simultaneously enrolled in high school. This action, of eliminating dual enrollment, was upsetting to some staff members, because Latino students had been successful in their college courses. While the principal intended to have more students enroll in Advanced Placement courses, his concept of college preparatory programs was limited. Stearns, Potochnick, Moller, & Southworth (2010) also found that Latino and African American students are not equally represented in college preparatory classes and are thus not able to be competitive when they enter college. Additionally, Latino high school dropout rates remain higher than many of their peers, making higher education and career pathways more challenging. In 2016, 10.7% of high school dropouts were Latino males 16 to 24 years old, 7.3% were Latino females, 8.7% were Black males, and 5.2% were White males (NCES, 2016). Considering that Latino students compose the bulk of California school enrollment, these percentages represent high numbers of Latino students who will then not be able to pursue advanced education.

The push for college completion has become pivotal in the 21st century, yet Latino males are not earning college degrees at the rate of their non-Latino peers (Huerta & Fishman, 2019). Huerta & Fishman (2019) found that Latinos have some of the highest aspirations to attend college, yet they often lack the resources of social capital to find success. Colleges, which are now serving a record number of Latino's, are being challenged by their changing demographics, struggling to ensure that their minority populations remain in school and graduate (Sáenz, 2004). Most Latinos, while aspiring to complete four-year degrees, enroll in community college first (Sáenz et al., 2018). Enrolling in community colleges is done by Latinos for a multitude of reasons, including affordable tuition, diverse scheduling options, proximity to the home, and often because of family obligations (Sáenz et al., 2018). For Latino foster youth, many of whom are exiting the foster care system at 18, the flexibility of community college is appealing. Sáenz

et al. (2018) work on Latino males and how they navigate community college find that familismo and family capital, plays a large role in the success of the student, but as foster youth, they do not always have that family support. To counter the lack of family support, one can turn to mentorships in these educational spheres. Mentorships for these same Latino youth were found to be highly important, as one participant explained, because of "the privilege of not having to explain himself and his struggles to someone who may not understand" (Sáenz et al., 2018, p. 50). For Latino foster youth who are navigating their educational journeys, it is crucial to have adults in their lives who are not only willing to help but who, because of their own 'minority' background, make the student more comfortable.

The Effects of Gender & Masculinity

In addition to the race, gender plays a significant role in the intersectionality of Latino foster youth because of societal and cultural expectations afforded to males. Males are often discouraged from seeking help for themselves and being a foster youth perpetuates the concept that one must be independent. Most young adults feel that asking for help hindered their concepts of "self-reliance and independence," particularly when their involvement in foster care felt like they were on their own (Pryce, Napolitano, & Samuels, 2017, p. 315). Understanding young males' reluctance to seek professional help for mental health problems and what can be done to change negative stigmas that hinder help-seeking drove Lynch, Long, and Moorhead (2018) to conduct their study. The authors focused on young men between the ages of 18-24 because this is a target age where many adults are finding themselves yet face a range of challenges. Lynch, Long, and Moorhead (2018) concluded that young men have seven major barriers that hinder them from help-seeking behaviors, including 1) peer acceptance 2) personal challenges 3) cultural/environmental influences 4) alcohol abuse 5) negative judgments toward

mental health professionals 6) fear of negative responses toward being gay and 7) it goes against traditional concepts of masculinity. To answer their second research topic, the authors found that young men had five ideas to counter negative perceptions of help-seeking, such as advertising help-seeking behaviors in a positive light, including this topic informal education, providing semiformal support services, making mental health care more accessible, and reframing mental health, calling it "mental fitness" (Lynch, Long, and Moorhead, 2018, p. 144). These results are significant because young men between the ages of 18-24 have high suicide rates and deal with various challenges (internal, cultural, and environmental) which hinder them from help-seeking.

As we look at Latino males and the concept of gender, being a male means statistically these students will receive less help in school. Within schools, males are not held to the same expectations and behaviors as their female peers. And the former belief that girls needed more academic supports in the classroom has left males with "gendered stereotypes [which] are woven into the very fabric of our well-intentioned schooling and socialization process" (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009, p. 58). There is the additional stigma of Latinos containing "machismo" which applies social pressures on students to perform poorly in school as a way of being cool " (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009, p. 58). Bausch (2014) found that her research subjects labeled books and classroom material "boys stuff" versus "girls stuff," dividing what they deemed worthy of learning material and what they did not. Males in Bausch's (2014) study were also labeled quickly by educators, as students were deemed troublemakers or having too much energy, and these labels were passed along as teachers discussed students with colleagues. These gender divides in the classroom and school, while seemingly innocent, can quickly escalate as these students then begin to label themselves or refuse to do work because they associate it with the opposite gender.

Sáenz et al. (2015) examined concepts of masculinity for Latino males at the community college level and found that Latino males are often discouraged from seeking higher education and face great deals of peer pressure. Sáenz' et al. (2015) qualitative study interviewed 130 Latino male students to understand the pressures that Latino males faced when pursuing their education. The study found that Latino males were often pressured by peers to leave school to pursue full time employment. Latino males also expressed that concepts of machismo discouraged them from seeking help, identifying help as a female role rather than that of males. One way Latinos circumvented the concept that asking for help was unmanly was the "buddy system" where students found "[the] support that [they] need[ed] to succeed academically without feeling reliant or lesser than [their] peer" (Sáenz et al., 2015, p. 171). This factor of peer to peer support is significant because it allows Latino males to feel comfortable in their academic environment without feeling like they are lesser than for seeking advice.

Social Capital and Help Provided to Foster Youth

While most studies focus on the detrimental aspects that foster youth face and their challenges, it is important to note that the social capital these youths acquire as they develop relationships. Rutman and Hubberstey's (2016) mixed-methods study examined 43 former foster youth and their help-seeking behaviors. Family and friends were reported one of the strongest contributors of support for foster youth, however, a very small number (n=10) reported seeking the help of guidance counselors, social workers, and educators. The positive support of parents and friends in the lives of foster youth assisted them in their ability to cope with difficult situations, including homelessness, crime, and drug addiction (Rutman & Hubberstey, 2016, p. 24). One significant note that Rutman and Hubberstey (2016) make in their conclusions is that while friends and family provide moral support to adolescent foster youth and encourage help-

32

seeking behaviors, these do not make up for assistance and resources that could be provided by educators and social workers. Okpych & Courtney's (2017) study also examined adult relationships with foster youth, how and how these relationships impacted their college enrollment. Adults were categorized as providers of social capital and included foster parents, social workers, teachers, coaches, and other titles that the foster youth mentioned in their questionnaire. They concluded that 80% of the participants wanted to attain a college degree, yet one fifth responded that they were not knowledgeable about the college application process. The foster youth in the study faced various obstacles, such as missing school frequently, changing schools, suffering from depression, or were young parents. Of the youth attending college, 84.8% were enrolled in a community college and only 15.2% a 4-year college. Of significance was that the foster youth who stayed in the foster care system past 18 were more likely to enroll in college. These findings are significant because it confirms that foster youth face a range of obstacles in their lives, but that educators, social workers, and foster parents can provide the social capital to help them transition to college with support.

An important element of help-seeking behavior is developing nonprofessional relationships to solve one's academic problems, an element found in Strolin-Goltzman, Woodhouse, Sutter, & Werrbach (2016) study of foster youth and their peers. As foster youth observed other adolescents strive to maintain high grades and apply to college, they were able to visualize themselves in such places. But Strolin-Golzman et al. (2016) mixed-method approach differed from former research in that it found that adult mentors and teachers did impact foster youth's success within the high school. Foster youth felt cared for when introduced to alternative educational programs or when teachers conducted one-one-one help. Researchers Skobba, Meyers, and Tiller (2018) also found that peer influences in addition to adults were significant in

helping foster youth in their educational pathways. The authors sought to expand our understanding of how foster youth and homeless youth's social capital impact their high school and college educational progression. The authors concluded that the participants and many of their support networks (family, friends, teachers, counselors) valued education and encouraged them to succeed. Most of the youths were successfully able to use social capital by making connections with people on campus to attain financial aid, housing, and academic support while some felt isolated and did not make peer connections with people on campus. These results are significant because if foster youth are not finding peers or adult mentors independently, they are less likely to succeed.

"Natural mentoring relationships" are a newer area of research which provides foster youth with more organic forms of social capital (Zinn, 2017) and fit neatly into help-seeking behaviors as foster youth attain structured and nonstructural help from these individuals. These relationships are not orchestrated purposely by schools or social workers but occur naturally between teacher and foster child or coach and foster child. Zinn (2017) studied 767 foster youth using the Midwest Evaluation of Former Foster Youth. One potentially limiting aspect of the study is that foster youth reflected upon their experiences as teenagers, yet their age during the interviews was 21 to 26 years of age. This reflection process may impede interviewees from recognizing or recalling the exact depth of their natural mentoring relationships. Of the youth interviewed, 79.6% reported having natural mentors, but of this percentage, most of the natural mentorships came from family members and friends. Only 16.6% of natural mentoring relationships came from schools, churches, or social service agencies, which is like the findings of Rutman and Hubberstey (2016) study mentioned earlier. Greeson & Bowen (2008) also looked at natural mentoring relationships using a qualitative approach to interview 7 foster

youth. The data were analyzed using a grounded theory approach in which the authors ultimately found five themes: relationship characteristics that matter, trust, love, and caring, like parent and child, and support I receive. The authors concluded that natural mentors positively help foster youth of color by providing them with emotional support, love and trust, access to resources, and even financial aid when needed. The research is significant because it showcases that natural mentoring relationships have the potential to help Latino foster youth gain self-confidence, gain valuable life skills, and encourages them to stay enrolled in school. As Latino foster youth fit into the category of the youth of color, it would be interesting to understand how being Latino would impact their help-seeking behavior and whom they turn to for support.

Munson, Smalling, Spencer, Scott, & Tracy (2010) wanted to understand the quality of the mentoring relationships and what supportive attributes they brought to the youths' lives. Munson, et al. (2010) used a qualitative approach and analyzed their data using relational-cultural theory as their theoretical framework. After interviewing 189 foster youth who had aged out of the Department of Child and Family Services, the authors analyzed the data by using conducted thematic analysis. Munson, et al. (2010) ended with 16 different themes, reflecting on the benefits that natural mentors brought to the youth. The authors concluded that the former foster youth benefitted from these natural mentoring relationships because the mentors provided empathy, consistency, authenticity, informational support, among other benefits. Their research is important because the obstacles that foster youth face are traumatic, yet mentors provide a network of resources that can help these youths better adjust to living life as independent adults.

Less organic than natural mentoring relationships but just as significant are the programs implemented that pair foster youth with mentors—allowing the foster youth to develop social capital and help-seeking behaviors through these relationships. Tyre's (2012) study based in

Washington State was to observe middle schools using the Educational Success Program (ESP) and to see if the program academically benefitted foster youth. ESP is specifically designed for students in the foster care system or former foster youth, pairing them with a teacher liaison who assesses their needs and then assigns them a college tutor to help with those needs. The specific aims of ESP were to improve oral reading fluency and reading comprehension. Tyre (2012) concluded that all students benefitted from participating in the ESP program, with all students making significant progress in their reading fluency and some improvement in reading comprehension. But in Tyre's (2012) study the tutors played a significant role while helping students with their academic needs they also provided social-behavioral supports for students, which leaves me to question—was it the tutoring that helped improve students or the social supports or both? These results are significant because foster youth continue to have low academic achievement and pairing them with a teacher liaison or tutor who understands their specific educational needs and can provide them with the social capital, they need to be successful.

Regardless of whether mentoring relationships are natural or assigned by DCFS, when foster youth are paired with mentors they benefit and attain social capital. Hass and Graydon (2009) examined two major issues: determining how foster youth succeeded after encountering life hardships and using the information for foster youth success to inform future programs that work with foster youth. The research was conducted by the authors using an 83-question survey that combined the California Healthy Kids Survey and the Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form. The survey was taken by 44 foster youth from the Orangewood Foundation in California. Results found that most of the foster youth had a mentor in their lives that contributed to their success, that the foster youth were appreciative of the positive role models in their lives, that they

were happy with their school, and that most had a positive outlook toward their goals and future.
These results are significant because they showcase the power of mentors in the lives of foster
youth and the ability of foster youth to gain valuable social capital from these adults.

Unfortunately, not all foster youth have the benefit of either assigned mentors or natural
mentors. Thompson and Gresson (2017) wanted to know if there were a correlation between
foster youth who participated in positive prosocial activities and foster youth who had a natural
mentor when they left foster care. The authors did the research using Rhodes' (2002)
developmental model of youth mentoring framework, applying this method to analyze data from
the Multi-Site Evaluation of Foster Youth Programs (MEFYP). It was concluded that 38% of
foster youth do not have a significant adult in their lives whom they can turn to while the
remaining 62% had some form of a mentor. Forty-nine percent of natural mentors were teachers,
caseworkers, coaches, clergy, coordinators, and tutors but these relationships only occurred when
foster youth had a stable and consistent living environment. Foster youth who participated in a
club, church, or other hobby was much more likely to have a natural mentor than youth who did
not participate. Lastly, foster youth in congregate care (group homes containing multiple foster
youths) were more likely to have formal mentors who are assigned to them rather than natural
mentors. These results are significant because foster youth have much higher chances of drug
use, mental health issues, and homelessness (Thompson & Greeson, 2017), and having caring
adults in their lives could serve as a buffer from these negative outcomes.

Conclusion

The preceding literature review examined the help-seeking behaviors of foster youth
within the context of help-seeking behaviors and social capital. Adolescents in foster care were
found to face a range of obstacles that have the potential to hinder confidence, self-esteem, and

trust in other adults. These youth, while having several adults in their lives, i.e. social workers, teachers, parents, and friends, do not always form the attachments and bonds necessary to have a supportive mentorship relationship. Latino foster youth were the specific element of focus, as they represent a large percentage of foster youth, yet little research has been done which specifically analyzes the experience of Latino foster youth. Thus, research of adolescent foster youth which included Latinos as part of its population was examined to see what help-seeking behaviors foster youth exhibited. A common theme among the literature was that social workers and educators are unprepared and poorly trained to best address the needs of foster youth. While this may be the case, informal mentorship relationships were found to be common among foster youth and had the potential to help these youths navigate educational contexts. A gap that may be observed in the literature is the need to train and assist Latino foster youth in purposefully making mentorship relationships with educators, social workers, and their foster families. Research on the subpopulation of Latino foster youth is one specific area that is additionally lacking, as most research tends to group Latinos with other minorities. Yet, Latinos have their independent community and potential help-seeking patterns and behaviors.

The Study's Statement of Objectives

This research will focus on the resources and support systems that foster youth have and utilize while in secondary education. Too often, foster youth research has focused on young adults and college students, but the voices of foster youth in secondary education have yet to be explored. Research on secondary education students will allow educators, social workers, and the Department of Children and Family services to home in on problems that teenagers face before they reach adulthood. By focusing on secondary education youth and identifying successful behaviors, those in positions of influence over foster youth can positively change foster youth

low graduation rates, test scores, and college enrollment rates. The research specifically focuses on Latino foster youth, as this is a growing ethnic population not only in Southern California but in active cases of foster care. In addition to being a large percentage of the foster care population, Latino foster youth have unique cultural needs based on their home language, family relationships, religious values, and constructs of gender.

This qualitative research takes a constructivist approach, with the desire to construct knowledge with foster youth and to understand their lives experience as foster youth, Latinos, and as high school students. This approach is paired with two frameworks, social capital, and intersectionality, as these allow me as a researcher to examine Latinos through an asset-based perspective. In the past, research has examined the resources and or social skills that foster youth lack, yet this perspective leaves researchers unaware of the skills that foster youth already possess. As foster youth, many teenagers are forced to grow up quickly, finding their own resources, mentors, programs, and help (Morton, 2017). Therefore, social capital allows me as a researcher to observe what attributes foster youth already possess that help them in secondary school. The framework of intersectionality is a needed addition because it makes the research more authentic by examining the whole person rather than separating what makes them whole; the fact that the student is a foster youth, a Latino, and a teenager.

Research questions include 1) How do Latino foster youth utilize help-seeking behaviors and social capital in Southern California high schools? Sub questions that will be addressed include: 1) Who are Latino male foster youth comfortable speaking with? 2) What hinders or encourages Latino male foster youth from seeking help? And 3) What social capital do Latino male foster youth have in their high school setting? These questions are significant because they portray foster youth as having social capital resources which they utilize to provide for

39

themselves social, emotional, or academic tools. The questions help further research by focusing on one specific minority, Latinos, who are in research often grouped with other minorities, but this hinders a true understanding of the Latino male identity and how their pathways to attaining social capital develop. Previous research has taught us that foster youth face a variety of challenges, which often deters them from attaining high test scores, reading levels, high school graduation, and contributes to low college enrollment. Additionally, previous research has also shown that foster youth benefit from mentors, whether natural or formally assigned through the DCFS. This research will add to our current understanding of foster youth by showing how adolescents specifically develop social capital and how they utilize help-seeking behavior in their academic and community setting.

Hypotheses that I have formed based on the literature review are complex, as foster youth themselves are complex. While I argue that foster youth possess social capital, past literature shows that not all foster youth like to engage with adults and or their peers. After living a life in which one has had little choices in deciding where they will live, whom they live with, and where they go to school, some foster youth decide to turn away from others. I thus hypothesize that in my research, I will find some foster youth who shut themselves off from social capital and assistance from adults because they have lost trust in others. But as the literature also reveals, many foster youths do find mentors, either natural mentors or mentors assigned through formal programs. These mentors have the potential to model social capital behaviors and aid in finding resources, providing tutoring, and helping with college applications. Additionally, I hypothesize that the emphasis on Latino male's high school males will make a difference, with these youths turning to adults who model their culture, gender, and language. Being a foster youth is a vulnerability, therefore I hypothesize that Latino males will seek comfort in adults and peers who

40

share similar values.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Research Design

      This qualitative study was developed using a multiple case study approach, using participant's narratives to see if social capital and help-seeking behaviors were found in foster youth's high school environments. Interview subjects were selected based on the following criteria: foster youth, aged 14-24, male, of Latino origin, and attending or have attended a public high school in California. While the objective was to attain as many participants who met the qualifications as possible, a goal of 10-15 adolescents was desired for the research. These specific voices were sought because they would help answer the research questions, which sought to understand foster youths' experiences using their narratives. As both a foster parent and an educator who works with foster youth, my objective was to reach out to current youths who have openly shared their position as a foster youth. Utilizing these contacts, interview subjects were selected using chain-referral sampling (Krathwohl, 2009), also known as snowball sampling. Chain-referral sampling allowed current foster youth to invite by word of mouth other foster youth to participate in the research. Chain-referral sampling was implicitly used as foster youth are often very private about their position in school settings—yet are often more willing to share their position with fellow foster youth. As foster youth often network with other foster youth during regular court dates and mandated workshops, a chain-referral sample allowed me to pull from a wide range of foster youth attending various public high schools in Southern California. Potential research subjects were approached by their peers, with an informational flyer describing my desire as a researcher to understand foster youth in a school setting and my

contact information. The recruitment flyer was also posted on social media sights designed for foster youth and foster parents to recruit as many individuals as possible from California. Students who contacted me and expressed their desire to participate in the research study were then screened to see if they fit the parameters of the study, namely Latinos in secondary education attending public schools. Participants were not informed that I was researching social capital and help-seeking behaviors, instead of a blanket statement "to better understand Latino foster youth" was used. This blanket statement was approved by Claremont's Internal Review Board, and was used so that participants do not have a bias and felt that they do not fit the "social capital" and "help-seeking behavior" criteria and are open about their high school experiences.

The youths selected to participate in the study were allowed to select their interview location and date. Participants were additionally given the option of doing their interview via phone. This was significant because foster youth may not have the same safe spaces that are afforded to other high school-aged students. While for some, the home may be the most comfortable location, for others, this may be a space of alienation. Allowing the youths to select their setting additionally provides insight into the youth's life and the spaces that they value. Additionally, allowing the foster youth to have a phone interview option allowed the youths to have a choice and increase participation, as many adolescents have busy schedules that do not accommodate a physical meeting. In the end, 9 of the 12 interviews were conducted over the phone, sometimes in the car, as interviewees got off work or in a courtyard outside of a group home. The interview contained both semi-structured and open-ended questions, using an electronic device to record and later transcribe the interview. Using semi-structured and open-ended questions allowed me to ask specific questions and "ask additional questions to clarify certain points" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). If a foster youth had additional experiences as a leader

or had a negative experience in high school, a semi-structured approach allowed me to ask how they felt about these situations or ask what they feel would have benefitted them. But most importantly, these interviews are a powerful tool that goes beyond the quantitative data, allowing me to see my research participants as people, humanizing the research so that they are more than a statistic with x, y, and z experiences. Post-interview, I took additional notes to record students' postures, tone of voice, and to describe the environment. This form of reflection was a central part of the research and was combined with the coding technique to ensure that I analyzed the data in meaningful ways (Creswell, 2016).

Pilot Interview

A pilot interview of two foster youths using a semi-structured interview design helped me develop the final interview questions for this dissertation. Ten questions in total were developed to garner how foster youth develop their social capital on campus and how their intersectionality comes into play. A mock interview was conducted with a colleague to ensure that words and phrases were appropriate for interviewees. Open-ended questions allowed students to share their opinions about transitioning to new high schools, developing friendships and mentorships on campus, and how they spend their time on campus. The pilot interviews were conducted during school hours in an empty classroom at the students' high school, lasting approximately 15 minutes per interview. The pilot interviews indicated areas where the interview questions lacked depth and where the interview questions needed clarification. The pilot interview revealed that interview questions need to be expanded to 25-30 questions, so that concepts of social capital, help-seeking behaviors, and the race could be isolated. Additionally, the brief duration of the interviews also indicated that the adolescents interviewed may not have felt comfortable speaking on campus, allowing me to reflect and making the decision to allow participants to

choose their venue when interviews would be conducted for the final study.

Demographic Questionnaire

A demographic questionnaire was developed and was designed to gather basic student information about the students' background, including their age, grade level, ethnic origin, courses, grade point average (GPA), the number of homes they have lived in, and whom they live with. These demographic questions additionally provided basic information about students' living environments and their school academics. The questionnaire was designed to take 10 minutes to complete and was given to students alongside the assent/consent forms and was returned the day of their interview.

Data Collection

Data was collected using qualitative research because it allowed the ability to understand foster youth without limiting them to statistics and quantitative data. According to Corbin & Strauss (2015) attaining input from the stakeholders is a significant part of the research and this input should be considered when making major decisions about the needs of participants. Permission was obtained to interview subjects from the Claremont Graduate University's Internal Review Board. Permission to interview the foster youth was also gathered from the foster youth and their foster parents if they are younger than 18 years of age. Foster youth were recruited using a snowball sample, in which I distributed an informational flyer and had conversations with current foster youth contacts.

Purposeful sampling was conducted, as I sought to recruit only Latino adolescents in traditional high school settings or high school graduates between the ages of 14 to 24 who had been in foster care for six or more months. Collecting data from Latino students in their high school setting (aged 14-18) was ideal, as this group was physically in the setting, seeing their

support systems or the lack thereof daily. But the research additionally allowed for foster youth

aged 19-24 to participate for a multitude of reasons, including their ability to reflect on their

experiences and see the bigger picture, what specific resources or individuals helped and

hindered their career or college pathway. Additionally, foster youth aged 19-24 were also

selected because many of them are still utilizing the resources offered to foster youth, and some

in this age group attend continuation or Adult school to receive their high school diplomas.

Reciprocity was additionally considered in this research, and as defined by Creswell (2016),

requires that the researcher give back to participants in some shape or form, acknowledging that

participants have given up their time and personal information to participate. As a researcher, I

will give reciprocity to my participants in the form of a thank you note so that they recognize that

their words and contributions to the study were valued. Each participant was additionally given a

$50 gift card for participating in the research. Types of data that were to be collected included a

demographic questionnaire and student interviews. The protocol ensured that the same

interviewer asked the same interview questions in the same tone and style. Interview questions

were additionally coded and themed consistently.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using three coding strategies to get a deeper understanding of the

interviews. Once the interviews were transcribed, one of the first coding strategies that was

utilized was In Vivo Coding by Saldana (2015). In Vivo Coding allowed me to produce themes

based on participants' actual words or phrases, making themes more authentic. In Vivo was a

powerful coding tool because it meant that I as the author did not change the words of the

participants to fit my theme, but the words of participants themselves become the theme.

Afterward, open coding (Strauis & Corbin, 2014) was used by reading and rereading the

participant interviews to develop themes based on my understanding of the interviews and prior research from my literature review. Lastly, axial coding was used which connects themes and ideas from the multiple interviews (Strauis & Corbin, 2014). Throughout each of the coding strategies, memo tracking was used to note my reflections as I progressed through the research (Garcia, Aisenberg, & Harachi, 2012). Memo tracking allowed me to increase the reliability of my research as I questioned previously created themes. The demographic survey was analyzed using an excel document, which allowed me to chart similarities that students had; including their ages, GPAs, the amount of prior foster homes they have resided in, and their academic course load.

Participants

A total of 12 individuals participated in the semi-structured interviews. The age range of the participants was between 14-24 years of age, with an average age of 17. Most participants identified as Hispanic/Latino (n=11, 91%), followed by one individual who identified as both White and Hispanic/Latino (n=1, .08%). The entirety of the sample was identified as male. Nearly half of the participants (n=6, 50%) were in high school while the other half of participants had graduated from high school. Participants attended either public high schools or continuation high schools in California. The age that students entered foster care varied, from 5-16 years of age, with an average of 11.5 years of age. Participants had spent between 3-10 years in foster care, with an average of 5.75 years in foster care. The youth's average high school grade point average (GPA) varied, ranging from 1.29-3.5, however, two students were unsure of their GPA.

Table 1

Participants Demographics

Participants	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	High School GPA	Age Entered Foster Care	Years in Foster Care	Number of High Schools Attended
1) Elvis	18	Hispanic/Latino	Male	2.5	13	5	2
2) George	17	Hispanic/Latino	Male	2	8	9	1
3) Joel	23	Latino/White	Male	1.29	13	5	3
4) Derek	23	Hispanic/Latino	Male	unknown	12	6	4
5) Hector	15	Hispanic/Latino	Male	2.8	5	10	3
6) Kristian	14	Hispanic/Latino	Male	2	5	9	1
7) Ricky	14	Hispanic/Latino	Male	3.45	12	3	1
8) Roger	19	Hispanic/Latino	Male	3.5	15	4	2
9) Dorian	16	Hispanic/Latino	Male	3.4	12	4	4
10) Emmanuel	19	Hispanic/Latino	Male	3.36	16	6	2
11) Andrew	18	Hispanic/Latino	Male	unknown	13	5	6
12) Damian	18	Hispanic/Latino	Male	3	15	3	1

Instrumentation

A semi-structured interview was used which included 32 questions that were the foundation for the interview. The questions were developed so that each interview question addressed one of the main research questions, including social capital, help-seeking behaviors, and how their race and gender factored into their social capital and help-seeking behaviors. The questions were additionally developed after reviewing the data from the pilot interview and discussions with university mentors.

Limitations

The limitations section of dissertations often explains something that was lacking, questions that were missed, or tend to apologize for a small sample size. While yes, this section will explain conventional limitations, it will also discuss the necessity of this research. Qualitative research tends to be disregarded because it may contain small sample sizes or lack

generalizability, but we must approach qualitative research differently. The qualitative approach

is not intended to have black and white results nor is it intended to explain cause and effect.

Rather, qualitative research "appeals to those who find satisfaction in the discovery of what is

going on" (Wolcott, 2005, p. 155). This discovery is not done without bias, but rather bias is

acknowledged and explained as the researcher co-creates knowledge with participants. The

concept of neutrality is also not feigned, but the researcher instead explains their positionality

and worldview and is in a process of constantly distinguishing between their world and that of

their participant (Morse & Field, 1996). With qualitative research there is also a different end

goal, that of constructing theory rather than a quantitative researcher's goal of testing a theory

(Morse & Field, 1996). In this study, I have interviewed 12 Latino male foster youth, who each

brought a unique perspective to the intersectionality of this population of adolescents and how

they exhibited help-seeking behaviors and social capital. While it cannot be assumed that all

foster youth may have the same resource networks or experiences of my participants, this

research is a beginning to showcase the experiences and resiliency of Latino male foster youth.

This research begins to answer our unanswered questions about Latino male foster youth, a sub-

population of foster youth that is too often combined with other groups or negatively

stigmatized.

       If we disregard the small sample size as a limitation, because I argue that this is rather a

beginning and opportunity for further research, then conventional limitations include:

- Interviewees, because they were in high school or were young adults, may not have
known how to articulate their experiences verbally and or may have limited their
discussion because I was a researcher and a stranger to them.

- High transiency in their foster homes and or high schools may have meant that some

interviewees may not have acquired or developed strong social capital/and or help-

seeking behaviors when compared to other foster youth with higher stability.

- The demographic questionnaire did not ask their foster parents' ethnicity, which impacted

my ability to determine if foster parent ethnicity played a role in mentorships.

Protection of Human Subjects

Foster youth are a vulnerable subject who may not want their label as foster youth

exposed and thus protections were put into place to protect them. Interviewees were provided a

consent form before the interview, which informed them of the purpose of the study and how

their information was to be used. Interviews were recorded on an electronic device and will be

stored for five years on an external hard drive. Names of the interviewees were changed to

protect the subjects' anonymity. While the intent throughout the study was to protect the

subjects, interviewees were informed that they could skip questions if they felt uncomfortable.

Interviewees were additionally reminded that they could rescind their interview and their

information from the study at any time during or after the study.

Positionality/Reflexivity

Each researcher brings a unique background to the subject matter being studied, and this

research is no different. As a certified foster parent with the county of Los Angeles, I have a

unique viewpoint of the foster care system. I recognize immediately when foster children discuss

their court experiences or what visits with their social workers look like. As a teacher, I also have

a different perspective, as my eyes and ears tend to gravitate toward academic points of interest.

Additionally, as a Latina who grew up in Southern California and was raised by first generation

immigrants, I feel that I understand the Latino community, but I also know that this cultural

background cannot be generalized. I struggled with understanding and defining my race as an

adolescent and did not take an ethnic studies course until I reached college. This personal struggle with defining "Latina" made me curious to see how my participants would respond, as my participants were 15 years younger than me, but grew up in similar geographical regions. Thus, being a reflective researcher was pivotal to my research, as I was not an insider to the male Latino foster youth community. I was beyond the age of adolescence and must be open to seeing the world through a different lens, that of the foster child. I was also a young female researcher who was working with Latino males who were of a different gender and social class than my own. Thus, I was reflexive in the words that I choose to use when I conducted the interviews, in the way I dressed, and most importantly in the way that I interpreted the words of my interviewees. I was reflexive by coding and re-coding my research to ensure that key ideas and nuances were not lost. I additionally shared my coding with colleagues so that they served as gatekeepers if my analysis was rigid or if I misinterpreted data. Lastly, I continued to remain reflexive by reviewing the data and field notes as I wrote, so that if something was missed the first time, I caught it and analyzed it later.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

Elvis: Developing relationships is something you learn as a kid but if you've been in the foster system as a kid it's hard. I don't know, it's like for regular kids it's one straight path to developing relationships, learning things and all that. For a foster kid, it's a whole bunch of twists and turns.

Roger: When you're in foster care you have to deal with everything, and there's been times when I was just like, "I can't handle this. Let someone else handle it."

Foster youth must make a range of choices on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis— deciding who they will trust, what resources they will seek, and who they will choose to share their lives with. There are many limitations that foster youth encounter, many circumstances that

are not in their control. This research seeks to share with social workers, foster parents, teachers, and the many others who are involved in foster youth's lives that these youths are holders of social capital and often have taught themselves the help-seeking behavior that makes them successful. The Latino foster youth interviewed were all from Southern California, which as the findings will discuss, adds a complexity to the Latino aspect of this research. Southern California contains a large portion of Latinos, and in Los Angeles alone they compose 48.6% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Living in a community that is predominately Latino and attending predominately Latino populated high schools added a complex layer to this research that was not foreseen and will be discussed later in the chapter. This chapter is organized to display 1) the social ties that Latino male foster youth form and who they are most comfortable speaking with 2) the factors that encourage or hinder foster youth from seeking help 3) how social capital is developed in their high school settings and 4) how the "Latino" lens fit into foster youth's relationships and lastly, 5) the resources that foster youth feel are needed to improve the lives of fellow foster youth.

Social Ties

One of the most challenging concepts of the foster care system is stability because youths are removed from their homes, placed into foster homes or group homes, and there is never a promise of consistency in their lives. As Zoe Blumberg Corwin (2008) explains in her research, it has been debated whether this constant mobility is a predictor of academic success and or struggles because it is difficult to isolate this variable amongst the many other challenges encountered by foster youth. But regardless of isolating home and school mobility as *the* factor that determines success, it is a factor that significantly impacts the lives of foster youth. Table 1 displays that 4 of the 12 participants in this study attended 1 high school while in foster care, but

the majority, 8 of the 12 participants attended 2 or more highs schools. One participant, Andrew, attended as many as 6 high schools, which deeply impacted his ability to form relationships and maintain trust with both adults and peers. Understanding the lack of permanency in foster youth's lives highlights the need for positive social relationships, a need which many of the foster youths in this study sought for themselves with the social capital and help-seeking behaviors that they have developed.

All the foster youth interviewed had existing social ties, but not all these relationships fall under the realm of social capital. Social capital is complex and does not necessarily happen organically, as sometimes counselors will place a student in a course designed to help teach them social capital—such as a College Prep Course. But one key in social capital among foster youth is that social capital attained by adults must be authentic, otherwise relationships are discarded because they relate these relationships to the lack of permanency in their lives. Esposito and Happel (2014) explain, within relationships, there are such things as horizontal ties where individuals are often from a similar area/social level and vertical ties where individuals gain access to people with different backgrounds/social status. The foster youth in this study had a range of relationships that provided them with social capital, some of which fell into the category of horizontal ties and others that were vertical. Table 2 displays the participants in this study, showing who they were most comfortable speaking with, factors that encouraged their help-seeking behavior, and factors that hindered their help-seeking behavior. The details of the chart will be explained as I pull scenarios from individual interviews.

Table 2. *Sources of Social Capital and Help-Seeking Behaviors*

Participants	Who are Latino male foster youth most comfortable speaking with?	Factors that encourage help-seeking behavior	Factors that hinder help-seeking behavior
1) Elvis	Associated Student Body Teacher, History Teacher, Counselors, Foster Parents, Boys, and Girls Club Director	Length of the relationship shared ethnic background, reciprocal advice shared, shared interests/hobbies	Length of the relationship, availability of individuals
2) George	Counselors, School tutors, Foster Parents, Friends, Siblings	Comfort level/feeling cared for, shared ethnic background	Unaware of services/available supports
3) Joel	English Teacher, County Social Worker, Foster Parents, Friends	Adults who understood the foster care system, Independent Living Skills courses, financial resources from foster care education programs	Received emotional support, but not academic support. Diagnosed with dyslexia in later high school years.
4) Derek	Birth mother (No adults in his high school or community)	Concept of self-advocacy, Shared ethnic background	Feeling unwelcome, feelings of judgment from peers, embarrassment because of foster care label, feeling that problems were to be dealt with independently
5) Hector	Film teacher, School tutors, Foster Parents,	Desire to join school clubs, feelings of confidence regardless of "foster youth" label	The concept that asking for help creates "drama"
6) Kristian	Teachers, Friends, Foster Parents, Biological Family, Brother-in-law	Comfort level with the individual/s, length of the relationship	Does not like texting or calling others
7) Ricky	English Teacher, Science Teacher, Counselor, Foster Parents, Foster-siblings, Friends, Social Worker	Comfort level with the individual/s, adults-initiated relationships	Lack of awareness about the specific academic programs after high school
8) Roger	Teachers, Biological Brother, Foster Parents, Peer mentors on campus, Court-appointed lawyer, Friends	Participation in academic programs, awareness of cultures/community diversity because of foster care placement, connections with adults who gave personal & academic advice	Feeling that he was not being heard
9) Dorian	Teachers, Friends, Foster Parents, Therapist, Athletic Coach, Counselors	Participation in extracurricular activities; Basketball and Volleyball,	A lack of friendliness from others
10) Emmanuel	Principal, Teachers, Friends, Biological Mom, and brother	Participation in extracurricular activities; Canine Connection and Soccer, attending a Continuation High School because he felt connected with his peers, the regularity of interactions	Large traditional high school because there is lack of relationships
11) Andrew	Principal, Teachers, Therapist, Girlfriend	Feeling supported, feeling that adults are patient, that teachers have the desire to help rather than an obligation to help, Participation in Foster Care Youth Programs that provide extracurricular activities like Beach field trips	Feeling targeted, judged, and discriminated against in a traditional larger high school by peers. The idea that he did not learn to depend on others as a child, therefore he cannot as a teenager. Fear of Parole Officers and being sent to prison
12) Damian	Foster Parents	Participation in extracurricular activities; Volleyball, the duration of the relationship, Feeling supported about career choices	Self-labeling himself as "shy" and not wanting to talk to strangers

Elvis was one participant who exuded excitement throughout his interview, a senior in high school who was about to graduate, he felt that he had accomplished something great that not all foster youth can achieve—a high school diploma. He spoke with ease throughout his interview, sometimes speaking for many minutes, then pausing to apologize, feeling he had spoken too much or gone off-topic. He explained "The statistics show that not most foster kids graduate from high school. I feel like, me, it's my pass in life so to say, as a steppingstone." But while the accomplishment of a high school diploma was like "a steppingstone" in his eyes, a beginning, it was clear that developing social ties on campus was a challenge. Elvis had only attended two high schools and his current foster parents were portrayed by Elvis as supportive and attentive, but as a senior, in high school, he had not formed any strong relationships with his peers. He referred to his peers as "acquaintances" and explained:

> *I feel like in order to develop meaningful relationships with people you have to know them for a long time. You would have to grow up with them, be from the same area, grow up in the same area and I lack a whole bunch of those things that most people who have meaningful relationships have. Because of that, of my relationships with people doesn't really feel as authentic as somebody else's might be.*

These feelings showcase the challenges that foster youth face when attempting to develop relationships with peers their age, especially when moving to different schools. There is an element of vulnerability in high school, as youths tend to value their peer social groups for stability, emotional support, and recreation. Unfortunately for Elvis, because he did not feel that his new high school was in his desired neighborhood, the neighborhood where he had grown up, he did not feel that he had a sense of community with his peers.

While it was evident that Elvis did not form many relationships with peers his age, he did

develop various connections with adults both on campus and in his former community—a sign of social capital. When Elvis was living in a large urban city, his foster parents enrolled him in an enrichment program specifically designed for foster youths. The program was not something that Elvis was able to select, instead, he reflected that his foster mother told him "you're going" and it was a way for her to "get us [referring to himself and his brother] out of the house." This lack of voice in determining how to spend one's free time can sometimes be a deterrence, but Elvis ultimately found a mentor in the Club Director. Elvis explained the authenticity of the relationship:

> *There was a person who ran the music studio so both of them I still keep in contact to this day mainly because of that relationship I developed with them and basically our relationship is I don't know, I go to know them a lot, I got to hang out with them. We talked about things besides the club and I feel like that's a way to really engage with people. You have to get outside of the place where you meet them at and talk about just life in general.*

This relationship became a source of social capital, with a mentor who provided Elvis social-emotional advice and allowed him to use music studio equipment at the club. Elvis was encouraged by the Club Director to do well in school and the music studio was used as an incentive to maintain his grades, good grades meant additional time in the studio. This relationship felt authentic to Elvis because the adult encouraged academics as well as a pursuit in a musical career. This relationship also had trust, because Elvis discussed his academic progress with the Club Director and sometimes his grades were not to par with the Director's expectations. This discussion of lower grades showcases help-seeking behavior because the relationship allowed Elvis to share when he was struggling academically attaining a much-

needed lecture, withdrawal of music studio privileges, and guidance to do better.

Other participants developed social ties with educators on their high school campuses, as seen with Joel. Joel described his English teachers as containing a "caring aspect" that allowed him to maintain relationships with these adults even after his high school graduation.

I actually became close to a lot of my teachers. In particular, I drew close to my English teachers. I think that's just because I find that ... I guess making a life connection, that English teachers sometimes have more of a caring aspect behind them, at least from my viewpoint. They really were instrumental in that time period to be able to get through and share what I was going through.

These adults not only gave him extensions on homework assignments but also provided an emotional outlet so that he could "share what [he] was going through." These relationships became part of Joel's help-seeking behavior because he was able to share that he was a foster youth and when he was struggling either emotionally or academically. This open communication with his teachers is an example of social capital because these teachers had the power not only to give Joel deadline extensions but also to talk with fellow teachers so that Joel got assistance with his other classes. While Joel himself says that he shared with his teachers that he was in foster care as a "sympathy card to get them to give [him] more time on assignments" this is help-seeking behavior. If teachers understand where the student is coming from, they can give specific help and accommodations. Joel understood that he needed extra time on homework assignments, and he was also able to identify when he needed emotional support. Although he is not able to label this honesty and vulnerability as a necessity of relationship building, he understood that this communication got him benefits.

But not all foster youth in the study made connections with adults on their high school

campus, as was the case with George. When asked about the role of teachers and counselors in

his life, George was unable to articulate anyone who stood out to him. George explained that "I

just focus on studying and doing schoolwork" which in and of itself is not a negative, but it

highlights the fact that he has this attitude that academics must be handled independently.

George had not found an adult on campus, but he did have strong social ties with peers his age

on campus. He described interactions with his friends as a relaxed, yet dependable group:

> I don't know, we make everything fun. If we have something that's boring and we're all
>
> sitting there, we're just like, "Hey, let's go do something." We have to do something
>
> together. Yeah. There's like a group of us guys, and then we have two girls too.

George was displaying horizontal ties, as described by Esposito and Happel's (2014) research,

where he could get information from his peers when he needed support.

Derek similarly struggled with finding adults on campus that he could relate to. He had

attended four different high schools, the last of which he discussed in his interview with me. He

explained that the environment was "unwelcoming" because of his peers on campus and that he

did not become close to any adults on campus. When asked if he had shared that he was a foster

youth with anyone on campus, he chose to hide this because of "embarrassment." He recounted:

> I mean ideally, I mean the ideal would be to live in the same place and go to the same
>
> high school, but I mean I've come to accept life you know, what my life has in store for
>
> me because they helped me learn and grow. It taught me the hard way, but alternatively
>
> the situation helped me to grow and learn.

He admitted that he distanced himself from relationships because "you might have to leave."

Derek did not successfully find vertical social capital and because he struggled with forming

relationships with peers, he also struggled with horizontal social capital. Throughout the

interview, the concept, and statements such as "I just dealt with things on my own" were heard. While no specific person was mentioned as an advocate, as a mentor, like a go-to, he did feel that he knew how to solve problems. His life in foster care, his challenges in moving to different high schools and different foster homes, left him with the sense that his "experience" had taught him how to advocate for himself. Derek stated that he had "enough strength to know my worth…basically, what I want out of life so you know it will be that I can speak for myself." The interview with Derek showcased strength and resiliency, even when he commented "I didn't really see at the age of 18 that I was going to even live past 18" because he did make it.

Derek graduated from high school without the help of adults, his foster parents, his social workers, etc. but surprisingly he did leave with social capital and this concept of self-help. He understood what his situation lacked, supportive social ties, and he ended the interview with the statement that other foster youth should "have faith and ask for help, to let people know how you feel and where you're at." He went on to say that these individuals foster youth could seek out could be "the teacher, your counselor, or friend. Just reach out…" Derek's interview was disheartening at the beginning because he did not have adults who guided him through his struggles, both emotionally and academically. But the lack of an adult mentor in his life did not change that he knew that he was lacking these supports in his life. He had somehow acquired the knowledge of help-seeking behaviors and while he did not use his advice, he has it in his repertoire and this is the knowledge that he can now use as an adult.

Lastly, some of the foster youth also developed strong social ties with their foster parents, with whom they often spent a significant amount of time outside of school. This relationship between foster youth and foster parents is something that I am familiar with, some might even jump to the conclusion of being biased because I have been a foster parent over the past five

years. I share this in the research because it does alter my lens, I am not simply someone who has witnessed the hardships of foster youth, but have shared the same roof, meals, bad days and good days with my foster children. Often, foster parents serve as the middleman between the foster child and agents of power in the Child Welfare System, such as social workers, lawyers, biological parents, therapists, and medical doctors. Appointments are often facilitated by the foster parent and sometimes this role is taxing, exhausting, and for some, strains the relationship between the foster child and foster parent. In the cases of George, Hector, and Kaleb, they had supportive foster parents who provided them with social capital and fostered relationships that encouraged help-seeking behavior. When asked about academic and emotional support, George explained that his foster mom provided these support systems. Social capital could be George's mom helped him open a college savings account and supported him by teaching him how to deposit money. This college account served two functions, first, it showed him the practical skill of opening a bank account, but it also stressed the fact that college was an expectation for him. Hector described his foster mom as providing both emotional support and academic support, someone he could share his day's events with afterschool, and who was willing to help with his math homework. One of the younger participants in this research, Kaleb was reluctant to share a great deal at the beginning of the interview. But when questions came to his foster parents, Kaleb was able to share that his foster parents were very supportive of him, caring for both his emotional wellbeing and his academics. They would have daily dinner were conversations about the future and help him with his homework. Kaleb shared:

> *If I got homework and I don't know how to do it, they'll help me. And if I don't do it and I*
> *get bad grades, they take away my phone.*

This form of parenting shows that they care because they were actively trying to intervene if

59

Kaleb was not doing well, both by helping him complete assignments and by showing him that negative behaviors have consequences. Unfortunately, not all foster youth have foster parents who are formally educated and may not know how to navigate high school coursework and mapping out a plan for higher education. When Kaleb explained his future career options, he shared that he was debating between a "computer engineer, an astronaut, or a doctor." Again, Kaleb was one of my younger participants, but it was clear that a strong mentor would be able to help guide him toward one career and then help him understand the process to get to that career. His foster parents provided social ties and a network of support but looking at Kaleb's GPA and discussion of academic struggles, he still needed more structured support.

Social ties that were rarely discussed by these Latino male foster youth were relationships with their social workers, county child advocates, or lawyers. Joel was one of the few candidates who mentioned that his social worker was someone he could turn to for advice and formed a close bond with, and he explains that this was a unique situation. Most foster youths do not maintain the same social workers throughout the entirety of their time in foster care, as Joel did. He explained that having this consistency in his life was important in maintaining trust and developing a relationship. Social workers' main duties are to coordinate with the foster parents, school, mental health professionals, and doctors to ensure that the foster youth is provided for. Unfortunately, while the social worker's role may seem vital, often they have such a multitude of cases that they visit foster youth once a month and the duration of these visits is often so short that it hinders an authentic social connection.

Factors that Encouraged Help-Seeking Behaviors

As stated previously, one large factor that can encourage or hinder help-seeking behavior is the concept of permanency. Joel mentioned that he did not join any sports because he did not

want to "leave a team halfway through the school year and basically give up all that time and effort that I put into being part of that team." Joel expresses this concept that a lack of completion is almost like failing, a disappointment that he would rather not endure. He acknowledged that had his living situation been different, he would have been more inclined to participate. As a foster youth, Joel did recognize that participation in events was important, and joined a Youth Opportunities Initiative specifically designed for foster youth. Participation in this program showcases Joel's help-seeking behavior because he understood that he needed to prepare himself to eventually live independently and support himself. The program taught Joel how to cook, balance a checkbook, and in his opinion "learn how to really just be an adult." This program was significant in Joel's life because he "got a community within the foster care world" and helped so that he "didn't feel quite as alone." This community that Joel created for himself was powerful because it provided him with peer mentors who were facing the same situation.

Hector was part of a school community in which he felt valued and where the educators made him feel welcome. Hector described his teachers as individuals who "actually care about your grades and achieving your goals in life." What is significant about his comment is that he divides the concept of "academics" with "life goals" because as a youth he doesn't necessarily see that these are connected. All the same, the teachers in his life made him feel valued, and thus, it meant that when they said "Let me help you out in this" he would take that help. He reflected in his interview that he struggled a lot academically, but that this support provided him with the confidence to utilize help-seeking behavior and attend tutoring. Hector additionally had a supportive peer network, one which he developed as part of Percussion Club or with friends on campus who shared his passion for skating. What also encouraged Hector's help-seeking behaviors was the availability of resources, including his foster mom, tutoring available after

61

school, mentors available at his school.

The school environment that Ricky was a part of greatly encouraged his help-seeking behavior when he needed it. When describing his high school environment, he was excited to discuss his community, including his 20+ friends, his role on the basketball team, and his English and Science teacher. What encouraged his help-seeking behavior was the community that he had fostered for himself, where he was able to name multiple peers and adults in his life who he could turn to. Specifically, he explained that "personal one-on-one conversations" allowed time to discuss overall life goals.

> *Well, a lot of the teachers that I became close to were like my sophomore, junior year, that's when I started connecting more with my teachers. Senior year was like the main year that I got more connected with them. So they usually just helped me kind of give me advice on, you know, a personal level. Also like academically and, and political advice as well. It was more like those type of things. There was two teachers that I was very close to, and I'm still close to with all of them to this day.*

His teachers provided him the wisdom to "never give up, to keep working hard, and keep trying." In addition to the supportive school environment that Ricky had, he also had a strong relationship with his foster mom. When I asked Ricky why he was able to turn to his foster mom for advice, he responded: "because she always has the solution for everything." This comment was powerful because it showed Ricky's deep level of trust with his foster mom, especially after he had lived in 6 other foster homes. Even after his biological family was unable to care for him, he still had this very high esteem for his foster mom, who could essentially figure anything out. This deep level of trust encourages help-seeking behavior because this comment shows that he had been able to successfully turn to her in the past and his foster mom was able to problem-

solve with him for solutions.

Factors that Hindered Help-Seeking Behaviors

Factors that hindered help-seeking behavior occurred when foster youth did not feel valued, heard, or supported. In the case of Derek, who was described above because of a lack of social ties on his high school campus, one can see that the way adults responded to him hindered his ability to seek help. Discussing his foster parents, Derek expressed that they were unable to provide him emotional support and that "people in his life put [him] down and made [him] feel worthless or hopeless…there was not support in any area of [his] life." Feeling that others are expressing negative judgment and feeling worthless are not emotions that encourage help-seeking behavior. There was a lack of trust in Derek's life that caused him to turn away from social workers, his foster parents and other adults in his life. When Derek was 17 he ran away from his foster parents to live with his maternal mother.

> *When I was 17 years old I was on my own so I kind of lived in an abandoned house. My*
> *maternal mother, she was an addict, and I ran away and stayed with her. Then I was on*
> *the run so basically I graduated high school on my own in an abandoned house.*

This was Derek's attempt to connect with and find support with an adult who cared about him. Derek lived with his mother in an abandoned house but continued to attend high school. He did not know how to ask for help, he did not trust adults in the foster care system, but he did continue to attend high school and graduated. Completing high school is unfortunately not something that all foster youth can say and is significant for Derek after the many hurdles that hindered Derek from developing close relationships with adults who had the social capital to help him.

Other factors that hindered help-seeking behaviors was a lack of understanding what

academic support was necessary for success in high school and what it looked like. Steenbakkers et al. (2017) systemic review of foster care literature shows that most research focuses on foster youths' social problems rather than their needs. This is also the case in the lives of the foster youth interviewed, as adults in their life were willing to provide social support and advice but understanding how to help the youth academically was not always as clear. Five of the twelve foster youth interviewed had less than a 3.0 overall high school GPA, which shows a gap in their academic support. Kristian shared that if he needed academic help he "could get a tutor" or that his teachers could help him. But at a 2.0, Kristian did not seem to realize that he did need help and this academic intervention should have been provided to him. When asked what Kristian wanted to do when he grew up, he expressed "Go to college for either a computer engineer, an astronaut, or a doctor." Kristian's responses showed that he was clearly invested in being successful as he got older, but he lacked the mentoring that would help him understand how different each of these fields was. These career fields, while not unreasonable, need Kristian to get higher grades and invest in extracurricular activities so that he could apply to competitive colleges as a senior.

George was another participant whose help-seeking behavior was hindered because he did not know how to identify that he needed academic support. George had a 2.0 average high school GPA and was struggling in mathematics. When asked what his academic support looked like at home, he stated:

> *Probably setting up a bank account just in case I go to college, they support me by*
> *putting money into it so I can go to like pay the debt just in case.*

My intention of asking for academic support was to see if his foster parents assisted with homework or if he had extra tutoring support or services. George's response shows that he did

not understand what academic support was and while his parents were clearly supportive in starting a college savings account, George did not definitively state that he was going to college. He mentioned "just in case" as if college was something that he was still unsure of and he seemed only vaguely aware of the concept of college costs and college debt. Foster youth receive help and additional funding for college expenses, yet George was not aware that these resources existed. For help-seeking behavior to be effective, George needed to first be aware of his needs and then understand how to get those needs met.

How Social Capital is Developed

Social Capital was developed by these youths' in their high school settings in part by their circumstances, the adults present in their lives, and the peer networks that they formed. Roger lived in six different foster homes and attended two different high schools, but this lack of stability in his life allowed him to be critical of his living situations and school environments. He discussed his high school as "different" in a positive manner, a place that had many opportunities for him to grow and essentially develop social capital. He was able to develop social capital as he participated in a Mock Trial club on campus, where he learned legal terminology and had access to teachers who challenged him academically. Teachers in Rogers life taught him social capital, showing him how to articulate himself, present arguments, and socialize with people outside of his social circle. This knowledge then led him to join a State Youth Connection program where he became a Young Senator for his community and had to go through an election process. This participation then encouraged him to join his high school's School Site Council, where he was presented with the school's budget, hiring, and policy decisions and was then allowed to vote on these decisions. Each of these opportunities allowed Roger to develop strong social capital where he had access to adults to recommend him to positions, guide him, and help him navigate a world

without permanency because of his position in foster care. Roger explained, "being in the foster care you move a lot, get to visit different, you know, cultures, different cities…it gave me an aspect of how different people see." This explanation was powerful because Roger was articulating foster care, not in a negative light, but as something that provided him opportunities to see the world differently.

Andrew developed social capital toward the end of his high school career as he made strong relationships with adults at his continuation school. Continuation high schools are unique in that they offer students self-paced courses, smaller classroom sizes, and have the potential to build strong relationships with peers and teachers. Andrew's last high school was a continuation school, where he developed strong relationships with his teachers and the principal. He explained that his teachers were highly supportive:

> *When it comes to paperwork most teachers are like no just work on this, but my teachers, they'll actually help us out. It doesn't matter how many times we don't get it. They don't get frustrated, they're patient with us.*

Andrew developed professional relationships with his teachers where he felt comfortable sharing that he didn't understand class assignments. But the teachers responses to Andrew also show how they modeled social capital, for example, by asking for help Andrew is able to see that individuals won't become frustrated but will instead show patience. Andrew then showed resiliency as he continued to ask for help, even after not understanding the first, second, or even third time. These relationships with his teachers were authentic, as seen when he said "they want to help me instead of *needing* to help me." This statement is important because many people who work in the foster care system have paperwork and compliance protocols, but the teachers at Andrew's school made him feel like a valued member of their community. They modeled social

66

capital and positive relationships, which made him feel safe to use these relationships for support. Especially significant to Andrew was his relationship with the principal, who he mentioned throughout the interview as a strong influence in his life. His principal showed an important aspect of social capital, building trust and relationships by checked in with him daily, "she wants to know how I'm doing; she wants to know what I'm thinking about." Andrew mentions that this is the first time anyone had ever done this, take a personal interest in his life and feelings. He also found it remarkable that the principal, who in her position of authority and her busy schedule, found time for him. Andrew developed social capital at this school because adults, who had academic and social-emotional knowledge, were willing to regularly share and develop relationships with him.

Emmanuel, like Andrew, also attended a continuation school where he was able to develop social capital skills by building relationships with adults and participating in special programs offered at the school. When asked to describe his school he mentioned:

> *Well I thought it was not going to be the best because a lot of people would always talk bad about it and people would say bad things…The kids that aren't good kids go there and stuff like that. So that's what I thought about it, but then when I got there it was pretty cool. It was like the teachers were nice, the principals were engaged with each other, talking. They always want to know what was going on with me. So it was really cool.*

Emmanuel became close to his principal, stating that he transitioned from not liking school to realizing that he needed to focus on his academics. His principal "pushed him to do good" and Emmanuel took this to heart, making it a priority. The principal checked in with Emmanuel three times a week and this help builds a relationship of trust, Emmanuel explained that he could "talk

67

to him mostly about anything." Andrew also participated in a Canine Connect program, where dogs were brought on campus, and students were guided as dog trainers. Andrew strongly connected to this program, developing leadership skills as well as practical dog training skills. His first two years he served as a dog trainer and then later as a volunteer to help train other students to become dog trainers. The relationship with the principal and his role as a dog trainer and later mentor helped Andrew build social capital by providing him with model relationships and leadership skills.

The Latino Lens

Because California is a multicultural state with a large Latino population and because foster youth studies often do not isolate Latinos specifically in their research, I found it important in this dissertation to specifically focus on this population. Creenshaw (1991) concept of intersectionality fits neatly into this section because foster youth are not just disadvantaged because they are foster youth, they also face poverty, discrimination, and even racism as Latinos. This part of the research wanted to see how specifically the foster youth identified and how did being "Latino" impacts their social relationships and help-seeking behavior. As we examine the Latino lens, it is important to note that the foster youth interviewed were from California, a geographic region that contains 39.4% Latinos and Southern California, which borders Mexico, contains a slightly higher percentage of 48.6 % Latinos (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). This demographic information cannot be overlooked, because it means that the Latino foster youth in this research have had the opportunity to interact with peers, teachers, and communities who look like them and share cultural values. But this large population of Latinos is also rooted in systemic racism, as Shneider (2008) explain in his research on "White Flight from Los Angeles and Its Schools" that between 1960-1980 there has been an exodus of Whites from Los Angeles who feared forced desegregation and poor public schools. This has essentially left Southern

California greatly segregated, where it is not uncommon to have schools which contain little to no ethnic diversity, with Latinos composing the bulk of student populations. This segregation showcased itself in the research, as participants were often unable to articulate the role that race placed in their lives and often did not feel that race had an impact in their lives because they have been segregated. These concepts of race and segregation will be discussed as we progress through the chapter. The results that discuss the Latino aspect of support are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. *Latino Identifications & Social Capital Impact*

Participants	Identified as Hispanic, Chicano, Latino, or other	Does your identification as a Latino male impact your relationships?	Does your identification as a Latino male impact who you talk to when you have a problem/need advice?
1) Elvis	Hispanic & Latino	Because of the predominance of Latino's in his community, he "felt at home"	Did not feel that his identification impacted his support system
2) George	Hispanic	He did feel that his identification impacted his relationships, relating more to his Hispanic friends	Did not feel that his identification impacted his support system
3) Joel	Latino	Felt that his identification impacted his relationships because he was seen as a minority by adults on his campus	Felt that most of the time his identification did not impact who he turned to for advice
4) Derek	Latino	Did not feel his identification impacted his relationships	He felt hat he could connect with other people of Latino descent because they shared an identity
5) Hector	Latino	Did not feel his identification impacted his relationships	Did not feel that his identification impacted his support system
6) Kristian	Chicano	Did not feel his identification impacted his relationships	Did not feel that his identification impacted his support system
7) Ricky	Latino & African American	Did not feel his identification impacted his relationships	Did not feel that his identification impacted his support system
8) Roger	Mexican American	Did not feel his identification impacted his relationships	Lived in a predominately Latino community, and did not feel that his culture impacted his support system

		Did not feel his identification impacted his relationships	
9) Dorian	Hispanic		Did not feel that his identification impacted his support system
10) Emmanuel	Hispanic	Did not feel his identification impacted his relationships	Friend base was predominately Hispanic
11) Andrew	Latino	Did not feel his identification impacted his relationships but felt that some individuals in society are racist and this might impact relationships.	Did not feel that his identification impacted his support system
12) Damian	Hispanic	Did not feel his identification impacted his relationships, attended a high school with a multitude of races	Did not feel that his identification impacted his support system

Many of the foster youth stated that they identified as either Hispanic or Latino, with one youth identifying as Chicano. The youths, when interviewed, also did not believe that their identity as a Hispanic/Latino impacted their relationships with others. Although many youths did mention that their community was often multicultural and contained many Latinos. Elvis mentioned that because his community contained many "Mexicans, Salvadorians, Hispanic" that it made him "feel pretty much at home." His response may hint at what other participants were feeling because their community looks and sounds like them, their relationships were not negatively affected. Elvis specified:

Well obviously, since there's a whole bunch of my kind so to say, it makes developing relationships a bit easier than if I was to go to a predominately Asian community which I have in the past. You could still develop relationships but there's always going to be that barrier a little bit. Not to sound racist or anything, but you know it's just a known fact. When you're around your own people it's easier

Elvis explained that yes, being in a predominately Latino community felt easier and provided him with feelings of ease. This statement shows a degree of comfort that Elvis felt in his Latino

community because he was able to share a common ancestral background—a background that he is not able to share with his biological family because of his place in foster care. But this closeness that Elvis felt to his community did not have an impact on who he would go to for help-seeking behaviors, as Elvis explained "I could go to anybody I want. It could be White, Latino, Black, anything. Doesn't really impact. My race doesn't really impact who I go to talk to." Elvis was someone who felt confident in advocating for himself and was comfortable talking to adults, regardless of their ethnic background.

Like many of the foster youths in this study, Joel shared that race was not something that he often considered in high school, but as a young adult was able analyze and explore this concept. When asked if he identification as a Latino impacted his relationships with others, he stated:

> I definitely think it did, but I was unaware of it at the time because I think I was so young. How I relate to it now is that, when I was growing up, I wasn't afforded the luxury of being able to worry about my skin color or what I looked like. I had to worry about where I was going to be the next day. If I was going to have to go home and pack up my things and travel across the state to another placement.

This sentiment is very important because as an adult he can reflect that he is Latino and his skin complexion is darker, but this was not a priority for his teenage self. Joel, as a foster youth, craved stability and this meant that his cultural identity was not on the forefront to his mind. But he also shared that, attending a predominantly White high school, he did encounter both racism and micro-aggressions. When called a "jumping bean" because he was Latino, he explained that he "did not know it was a racist comment, at the time." Instances like this he brushed off because he felt he was unaware of any alternatives. Another time, Joel witness peers chanting "build a

wall, build a wall" to another Latino student sitting at a lunch table. Again, Joel mentioned that race and his cultural identity were not his priority, yet he encountered racism in his high school. One can only hypothesize what a mentor of a similar ethnic background could have provided so that when instances of racism occurred, they were not laughed off but instead discussed.

As Table 3 shows, many of the youths did not consider their ethnic background to have an impact on their relationships or to impact whom they turned to for support. During the interview process, it was apparent that as high school students or young adults, many had never been asked specific questions about their race or how they felt about their cultural identity and it impacts their everyday life. When interviewing Kristian, he asked me to define what Latino, Chicano, and Hispanic meant because he did not understand the differences. Hector, when asked if his identity impacted whom he turned to for support, related that "[he] doesn't see colors, [he] only sees people." This comment reverberates often when people haven't had the opportunity to pause and reflect upon the importance of color and identity. Ricky made a similar comment when reflecting upon the role that race places in his life and relationships, explaining "it really doesn't matter what color you are." Both Hector and Ricky's comment signifies their place in life, as optimistic youths who are still in high school and who have not yet had the opportunity to consider the value, history, and future that color will play in their life.

While the bulk of participants expressed that their race did not impact their ability to ask for help, access to and the development of social capital was hindered without their knowledge. Living in segregated communities, the Latino foster youth were isolated and missed the opportunity to interact with different races and individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Massey (2001) has found that individuals in segregated communities often face lower socioeconomic mobility and do not have the same proportion of advanced college degrees.

While the youth may have made comments that race did not bother them or impact their ability to seek guidance, these statements were not tested because they have not necessarily had the opportunity to interact with individuals from different races. These findings circle back to my intersectionality framework, as participants face hardships because these youths live in a community that has been segregated, yet this reality has not been openly discussed with them.

The Youths' Advice to Other Foster Youth

The foster youth who participated displayed different levels of social capital and help-seeking behavior, but they also, either directly or indirectly explained what they needed. The last question of the interview asked the participants, "What advice would you give to another high school foster youth about getting through high school or their future?" and their responses revealed what was successful for themselves or the opportunities they wish they had taken. In both cases, the ability to identify foster youth needs in concrete terms and provide them as advice to future foster youth shows that they understand some of the fundamentals of help-seeking behaviors. Interestingly, while some participants shared throughout the interviews that they were independent and often refused adult assistance, they advised other foster youth to seek assistance from adults. Other participants shared the concept of forgiveness and self-love. The specific advice given by foster youth is provided in the remainder of this section.

Reflecting upon the emotional support he was provided, Joel shared that he received social support in abundance, with teachers, social workers, and therapists at the ready to help him. But something that Joel laments was the support that he did not receive because he felt that his social problems took precedence over his curriculum. He expressed that he wishes that the adults in his life had paid more attention to his academics:

I think that I received support, but not the support I needed. So, I was receiving the outlet

of being able to talk about foster care, being able to talk about my problems, but I think

that took priority of people being able to actually identify that I was having problems

with the curriculum, not just with what was going on in my life.

Joel makes an important distinction here that is not uncommon in those seeking to help foster

youth, the focus on the emotional needs rather than the academic needs. He additionally

explained "my GPA went from a 3.9 to a 1.2 at graduation…I thought it was solely just because I

was bouncing around, but it's also because I have dyslexia." His diagnosis of dyslexia was not

discovered until after high school, but Joel wished that this was caught earlier and blames a

hyper-focus on his emotional support for getting in the way of other help that should have been

provided. His advice to foster youth was to find a balance so that if they were falling behind in

their academics, they recognize how to ask for assistance in this area.

Some foster youth reflected that other youths in their situation should share their label of

"foster youth" and ask for help from teachers and friends. These foster youth understood the

concept of help-seeking behavior and the advantages of taking these actions. Joel stated, "Don't

be afraid to share what you're going through, especially with your teachers, and even

friends…it'll help you not feel alone." This advice is powerful because it shows that Joel himself

faced feelings of isolation yet understood that sharing his emotions with others has the potential

to provide emotional support. By also stating that other youth might be "afraid" to share

highlights his resiliency when he shared throughout his status as a "foster youth" throughout his

high school career. Another thing that Joel shared that highlighted the social capital that he had

acquired was the comment that sharing with others can provide "help for building your future."

Joel understood how powerful connection building could be and the resources that come about

these relationships. Joel himself had maintained relationships with his high school teachers into

college and still found them reliable avenues for wisdom. Derek's advice to other foster youth was similar to Joel's, "let people know how you feel and where you're at. It could be people you live with or it could be the teacher, your counselor, or friend." Derek's response encourages help-seeking behavior for other foster youth and is also showing that he understood that there are a range of adults and resources one can turn to for support—that he and others are not alone. Ricky's response highlighted the importance of peer networks when he said, "make friends, keep them close." This statement was powerful and as the interviewer, you could feel the power and importance that friends had played in his life. Ricky's friends were his support network, the people who helped him with his schoolwork, and provided an emotional outlet.

Both Hector and Elvis had similar opinions, sharing the concept of maintaining one's identity. Hector hinted at the high number of stressors and expectations that foster youth face and suggested "Don't put too much pressure on yourself…just go with the flow…live your life." As a foster youth, adults in their life are required by law to check-in, even if these check-ins are surface level. These adult check-ins from social workers, county officials, and teachers may make the foster youth feel that they are being guided in a certain direction. Hector, in explaining not to put pressure one oneself, is speaking of the concept of forgiveness toward oneself and understanding that life does not always take a direct path. Elvis shared a similar sentiment in his interview, sharing that foster youth should "Stay true to yourself." He went on to explain that foster youth should also "Seek advice from people that you don't know. It might sound weird but YouTube videos help a lot." Help-seeking behavior is observed as Elvis understood what he needed, career advice, yet felt that the people in his life were unable to help him. By watching YouTube videos of motivational speakers, Elvis shared that he learned how to plan for his future and felt that the information he was finding was more genuine that if he had asked someone he

knew personally.

Yet other foster youths' advice and reflections were like the advice that many older students would give to younger students—do well in school. George, whose GPA was a C average, and who sometimes struggled academically stated "Don't slack off in high school." This comment showed that George understood procrastination and wanted other foster youth to take their courses seriously. Kristian's advice to other foster youth was simple and direct, "get good grades." Kristian also had a C average throughout high school and his foster parents had administered consequences when he did not get good grades. Kristian was showing that while he may not have liked getting his phone taken away, he understood that earning good grades is important. Lastly, Andrew, who had attended 6 different high schools and 7 different foster homes, had sound advice to other foster youth in his situation, "try to remind yourself that the only person who can do this, is you." This was a powerful statement because Andrew had struggled in a traditional high school environment but found success in a smaller continuation school. He had faced adults who had negative opinions about himself and his capabilities, but he knew "just worry about you."

CHAPTER 5

Foster youth are often thought of in terms of the things that they do not have, whether it's stability, academic support, emotional support, and so on. These life circumstances have the potential to make onlookers believe that foster youth lack skills, that they may not know how to ask for help or find the resources that they need to be successful. As a high school teacher who has taught Latino male foster youth in her classroom, forming close relationships and mentorships with these individuals, I knew that this was not the case. I was able to observe with a handful of Latino male foster youth characteristics of resiliency, determination, and social

capital. These relationships helped drive me to design this study, which sought to isolate Latino foster youth from other racial backgrounds and to see *if* other Latino male foster youth were developing social capital and help-seeking behaviors in their high school environments. If other foster youths were developing social capital and help-seeking behaviors, I also wanted to know how this was occurring and who, if anyone, was helping them.

This study examined the lives of 12 Latino Foster Youths who attended public high schools across California. These students all identified at Latino and had been in foster care for a minimum of 3 years.

This chapter contains an overview of the study, which includes the methods and significant findings. Additionally, this section will weave the experiences of the 12-foster youth and their examples of social capital and help-seeking behavior with existing literature. I will also discuss the implications for social workers and K-12 educators so that they may use these findings to benefit them as they work with foster youth daily. Lastly, I address the implications for future research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this multiple case study approach was to understand the unique experiences of Latino foster youth in their high school environment. While I hypothesized that they contained social capital and help-seeking behaviors, this study sought to identify if this was indeed the case and how it was acquired. Today, there is a vast amount of literature on foster youth, yet these studies often do not isolate the Latino experience, focus on their post-high school experiences, or they examine foster youth through a deficit lens (Unrau et al., 2011). There is a great deal of research on foster youth high school drop out rates (NCES, 2016), foster youth homelessness (Trejos-Castillo & Trevino-Schafer, 2018), and a lack of college access

(Gross, 2019)—but a focus on high school foster youth and their success stories are rare. Because of this gap in the literature, this study sought to take a qualitative approach, to have Latino high school foster youth share their stories in a semi-structured interview format. The questions were designed to have foster youth share their experiences so that I as the researcher could pull out experiences of resiliency, examples of social capital, and examples where the foster youth exhibited help-seeking behaviors. With this information, educators, social workers, and policymakers, who have a great deal of control in the lives of foster youth can identify where foster youth need the most help.

Specifically, this research had a conceptual framework that included intersectionality, social capital, and help-seeking behaviors. Intersectionality helped guide the study, as Latino foster youth were considered in terms of their multiple identities and the marginalization that these identities face. The Latino identity is complex, as Latinos, in present-day, still face oppression, discrimination, community segregation, racism, lower college attendance rates, and Latino males face higher incarceration rates and police brutality. As one considers the identity of foster youth, one must consider why the youth was placed in foster care, their experience with trauma, loss, and a lack of permanency. Additionally, one must consider the identity of the adolescent, as high school-aged students are experiencing biological bodily changes, a lack of control as they are not yet adults, and the social relationships that do or do not exist with peer groups. Social capital played a fundamental role in the development of this research, as my intention when researching foster youths was to maintain an asset-based approach to my research. A great deal of research focuses on deficits, that it was important to me to examine what foster youth do have and how they acquired it. Lastly, help-seeking behaviors were included because successful people know-how and who to ask for help and I wanted to see who

foster youth turned to for guidance. Thus, the conceptual framework led me to design the following research questions:

1. In what ways do Latino adolescent foster youth develop help-seeking behaviors and social capital in Southern California high schools?

2. Who are Latino male foster youth comfortable speaking with?

3. What hinders or encourages Latino male foster youth from seeking help?

4. How do Latino male foster youth develop social capital in their high school settings?

The qualitative data from the interviews allowed me to observe how Latino high school foster youth develop support networks, find mentors whom they trust, apply help-seeking behaviors, and build social capital.

Participants were gathered using a snowball sampling technique and using social media. As a foster parent, I had contacts with foster youth who were able to distribute flyers to friends and I was able to post recruitment flyers around foster care resource centers. I additionally joined foster parent social media groups, who were able to connect me with foster youth who were willing to participate in the study. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and completed a consent or ascent form. A demographic survey administered to participants before the interviews allowed me to access if the candidates fit the interview parameters, as well as help, develop a snapshot of important characteristics of the participants' lives. The demographic survey included questions about ethnicity, grade level, high school GPA, the length of time in foster care, how many high schools they had attended, and the number of adults/minors living in the home. The interviews themselves lasted between 30-60 minutes, taking place in a location of the foster youth's choice, some of which were conducted at the park or over the phone. Once the interviews were completed, they were transcribed and coded for themes. Three coding

techniques were used to ensure that the interviews were analyzed and provided authentic results 1) In Vivo Coding (Saldana, 2015), 2) open coding (Strauis & Corbin, 2014), and 3) axial coding (Strauis & Corbin, 2014). In Vivo Coding allowed me to use participant's own words and phrases to help develop themes. Open Coding allowed me to create themes based on my understanding of the participant's words and use knowledge of other research and literature reviews to guide my understanding. And lastly, axial coding allowed me to connect different themes across interviews to develop analyses and create this research.

Discussion of Findings

This study was designed to uncover social capital and help-seeking behaviors that Latino foster youth developed and exhibited in their high schools and communities. I wanted to determine who Latino adolescent foster youth were comfortable speaking with, whether it was a teacher, a counselor, an after-school coordinator, foster parents, or even social workers. These relationships would help understand how social capital is developed by these youths and how help-seeking behavior is modeled or sought out. Additionally, I wanted to examine what hindered or encouraged Latino male foster youth from seeking help, if it was a consistent presence in their life, daily check-ins, the welcoming feel of their high school environment, or something else. Lastly, I wanted to understand the Latino influence in the Latino foster youth's lives, and if this Latino lens impacted their social capital and help-seeking behaviors. After completing the 12 interviews with Latino foster youth about their high school experiences, I found that all of the foster youth had developed social capital, most had developed help-seeking behaviors, and that many did not feel that their Latino background impacted their relationships with adults or peers.

Findings from the interviews confirmed the research of Greeson & Bowen (2008)

Munson et al., (2010) and Thomson & Greeson (2017) that foster youth often can find adults whom they can trust and form positive mentorships with. In this study, these relationships were often found on their high school campuses and included: The Principal, English teachers, History teachers, Science teachers, Counselors, Band Club Directors, and Athletic Coaches. Outside of campus, the foster youth were also able to find mentors in their communities, including Foster Parents, Social Workers, Court Appointed Lawyers, and their biological families. This study also found comparable results to Rutman & Hubbertsey's (2016) study, who found that most foster youths were able to form close social ties and supports from family and friends. Eleven of the 12 participants in this study mentioning support systems with their foster parents, friends, and their biological parents. Something that differed from Rutman & Hubbertsey's (2016) study was that the youths in this interview found equal mentors outside of friends and family, utilizing formal support networks with adults on their high school campus.

This study also found that help-seeking behaviors were encouraged when the youth knew mentors for long periods and their check-ins were consistent. When the youth felt that adults genuinely cared for their well being rather than helping because it was their "job" they formed a trusting relationship where they were willing to ask for help. This desire for authentic and caring relationships was consistent with Fylkesnes et al., (2018) study which found that foster youth wanted to make important decisions in their lives and have agency, but they often needed guidance. In this study, all of the youth interviewed were adolescents or young adults, and agency in their lives was very important. The youth who had strong relationships with adults and peers were found to be more comfortable asking for help and admitting when they had made mistakes. Examples were seen when foster youth admitted to foster parents that their grades were low, even when they knew they would face consequences.

Factors that discouraged help-seeking behaviors in this study included feeling unwelcome in their community, feeling negative judgment, feelings of embarrassment because of their foster youth status, and a lack of awareness about assistance available. While there was only 1 participant who struggled to form relationships at his high school and felt uncomfortable asking for help from others, this struggle was commonly found in other studies. Thompson & Gresson (2017) conducted a study analyzing the presence of mentors in the lives of foster youth and their impact. Their study found that 38% of foster youth did not have a significant adult presence in their lives. This percentage of youth's who were unable to find a mentor matched the case of Derek, who throughout his interview presented the idea that problems should be handled independently. The support systems built into foster care, including foster parents, social workers, and court-appointed lawyers had failed to make an authentic connection with Derek. This left him turning toward the only adult whom he felt comfortable with, his mother, who struggled with drug addiction. This lack of a significant adult who could model help-seeking behaviors something that he was unable to have, however after the interview, he advised other foster youths to seek guidance and ask for help. I mention this because even though Derek himself did not master help-seeking behaviors, he understood their role and the benefits of asking for help from others.

The findings in this research also concluded that Latino male foster youth do develop social capital while in their high school environments. Social capital, which can be characterized as forming relationships with others who provide support in the form of information, advancement, or connection with others who can aid (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). The youths in this study provided multiple examples of how they were utilizing social capital in their lives, whether it was through an after school club that allowed them to discuss career options, utilize music

equipment, and weight the pros and cons of college. Other youths found social capital in their school principals, who imparted daily wisdom and social-emotional support. These results matched that of Zinn (2017) who studied natural mentor relationships developed by foster youth and the positive benefits of such relationships. This matched my findings, as the foster youth in this study did not purposely seek mentors nor did they find mentors that were "hired" to work with them. The mentors that many of the youth found were in their schools, in their daily community.

Findings that did not match my initial hypothesis were responses to interview questions 22-24, which had participants reflect on their Latino identity and how it impacted their relationships and ability to ask others for help. I had hypothesized that individuals would feel closer to their Latino peers and or mentors and develop a closer bond because of this shared identity. Erbstein (2013) had found that as a Latino, individuals grapple with a multitude of factors, such as their immigration history, their legal status, their family member's legal status, socioeconomic status, and even community gangs. But, when my participants shared their responses that were directly tied to concepts of race, only 2 of the 12 participants shared that they had encountered or felt racial tensions in their lives. Most of the participants also felt that being Latino did not impact their relationships or ability to ask for help. This finding may be because Latinos' in Southern California have found themselves segregated, "Groups experiencing recent rapid in-migration and slow socioeconomic mobility tend to display relatively high levels of segregation" (Massey, 2001, p. 391). This segregation means that they do not encounter individuals of different racial backgrounds, religions, or socioeconomic status than their community. But Roca, Ellen, & Steil (2018) research shows that segregated communities does matter for native born Latinos' and leads to lower economic mobility, educational pathways, and

career pathways. This leads up back to the concept of intersectionality, as these youths face the struggle of isolation because of their race. Segregation is complex because often, when living in that community and not knowing anything else, the youth may be unaware of racial issues in a more formal context. They may have never been asked how being Latino impacts their relationships with others. It may be that they are sheltered in their communities, that being in a predominately Latino community shelters them from experiencing direct feelings of isolation and or discrimination by other groups. It may be that they have not had opportunities to take ethnic studies courses in which they question and examine policies and institutional practices that have harmed their communities.

Something similar was Hilton, Brown, and Elder's (2006) study, that found that 10% of adolescents change how they categorize their racial identity. I observed that many of the youth when asked how they identified, whether it was Hispanic, Chicano, Latino, etc. were not always sure how to respond. When some of the youth asked me to define these terms and explain the differences, it was clear that this was new terminology for them. It makes sense why adolescents would later change how they categorize their racial identity, as they become more familiar and comfortable with these forms of expression.

The findings in this study are significant because they isolate the narratives of adolescents and have them reflect upon their support systems within their high school environment and community. Their interviews helped highlight the bravery that these foster youth have, as they transitioned from different foster homes and different high schools. These youths formed positive relationships with adults and peers and along the way formed social capital and developed help-seeking behaviors. The study also highlights factors that made youth unwilling to develop mentorships and unwilling to seek guidance outside of their limited

expertise. This indicates a need for adults to ensure that foster youth have someone they can depend on and do regular check-ins so that authentic relationships can form.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice and Policy

Foster youth face a range of struggles in their K-12 education, with increased rates of school mobility, lower test scores when compared to their non-foster peers, and lower graduation rates (Foster Youth Education Toolkit, 2016). Specifically, only 58% of foster youth graduate from high school, which is a significantly lower percentage than the national average of 84% (Foster Youth Education Toolkit, 2016). Currently, in the state of California, Educational Rights for Foster Youth are often held by foster youth's biological parents, unless these rights are terminated by the courts. Educational rights allow for the development and updates to Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), early intervention services, and if the child may enroll in mental health services, and more. Having foster youth live with foster families yet have educational rights in the hands of their biological parents, can lead to problems in terms of ensuring that everyone is on the same page with the goals and needs of the youth. California Department of Education (2014) has implemented various laws and programs to benefit foster youth, including policies in AB 490 to help with educational outcomes for foster youth. AB 490 is designed to maintain school stability and encourages foster care placement within the proximity of student's current high schools, providing educational liaisons who ensure school enrollment and help maintain the youth's academic records when school transfers occur. The department of education has also mandated that foster youth be enrolled in their new schools within 2 days of placement, regardless of "limited academic records, medical records, proof of immunization, proof of residency, or school uniforms" (Foster Youth Education Toolkit, 2016). These policies were put into place to protect foster youth and to help increase graduation rates.

Unfortunately, laws such as AB 490, which are a start in helping foster youth attain higher graduation rates, need to be furthered. As this research has shown, foster youth continue to have high levels of transfers, to different foster homes and different high schools. This may be because the need for foster homes in California has increased, yet the number of foster families has decreased (The Foster Care Housing Crisis, 2018). This decrease in the availability of foster homes leads to many youths being placed at significant distances from their biological families and home schools. In Los Angeles County specifically, it is not uncommon for foster youth to have to travel an hour or more to see their birth families because of a lack of licensed foster homes. This distance makes it challenging to maintain social ties created at home schools and with peer networks. A solution to foster youths' high school transfers would be to provide funding for youth transportation so that they can continue to go to the same high school if they choose. Additionally, the state should increase licensed foster homes, educating the public so that foster homes are incentivized with tax breaks, and increased funding for housing and mentoring foster youth. With increased foster homes, foster youth would have the opportunity to remain in their home schools and home communities. Foster parents also need additional training and support, so that an argument with an adolescent foster youth does not cause the foster parent to give up and request a transfer of the youth.

Lastly, practice and policy changes should look to the local control funding formula (LCFF) which was enacted in California in 2013-14. The LCFF allows school districts to have greater budget flexibility so that they can address high need students, specifically students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, English language learners, and foster youth (Wolf & Sands, 2016). But this flexibility can be daunting for many administrators, as they see the need to increase funding for foster youth, but the question of how to spend it is complex. The Local

Control Funding Formula Research Collaborative (2019) found that principals received guidance on how to delegate LCFF for English learners and low-income students, but direction and guidelines for how to support foster youth was not provided. The Local Control Funding Formula Research Collaborative (2019) also found that 90% of principals were using the funds to provide professional development to their teachers. While professional development is a good start, the use of funding needs a more clear directive and would be more beneficial if professional development became applied practice. School districts would benefit from using LCFF funding to hire trained mentors for foster youth, so that they can serve inside of the classroom as teachers assistants and outside of the classroom as life coaches. This greater presence of adults on campus specifically hired to fit their academic and socioemotional needs would lead to mentor relationships. These mentor relationships would then reinforce the results of the dissertation by encouraging the development of social capital and help-seeking behaviors in Latino foster youth.

Implications for K-12 Educators

While there are social workers and school district liaisons to ensure that foster youth academic credits and records are transferred to their new school promptly, there are still tasks that can be done to help foster youth in their school environments. High school liaisons could ensure that not only credits are transferred over, but also schoolwork and projects that were completed at their previous school. If foster youths' classwork were transferred over, their grade would and work habits would then reflect their current progress, rather than starting from a grade zero. When high school students transfer mid-semester, schools should also make it a priority that students maintain the same courses. If a student transfers to a school that does not have the same course, for example, "digital imaging" or even "AP Biology," then the student should have

the opportunity to enroll in an online course for the class that is not offered at that high school. By taking an online course to substitute for the class that is not physically offered at their new high school, foster youth will not have wasted the weeks of work that they began at their home school.

Additionally, to ensure that foster youth are forming social capital and gaining valuable life skills, these youth should be encouraged to take Life Skills, College & Career, Advanced Placement, and Ethnic studies courses at their high school. Counselors should meet with the foster youth on their campus regularly and at minimum once a year present these courses as an option and explain the opportunities that they would gain by enrolling. By taking the time to differentiate the benefits that each class had, Latino foster youth would be able to see what classes best meet their needs and gain valuable social capital after completing these courses.

Latino foster youth should also have access to a foster youth liaison on their campus, where check-ins are frequent and help form authentic relationships. Caseloads of district liaisons should be limited so that they can meet with the Latino foster youth a minimum of once a week and form a trusting, authentic relationship. The foster youth liaison should also have the job requires not just to check-in, but to have career conversations with the youth, be able to set-up internships in the youth's desired career field, have the opportunity to meet with the youth's foster parents to ensure that everyone understands the youth's academic and socioemotional needs.

To encourage help-seeking behavior, teachers and counselors should be made aware of students who are in foster care so that they can regularly check-in and model how to ask for help. Just as students with special needs are provided Individual Education Plans (IEPs) which are given to the teachers to accommodate learning needs and modalities, so too should foster youth

have a plan. These plans should include an additional class offering for students who have fallen behind on credits, enrichment opportunities, and information to teachers so that they know the student may not have stability or may have missed foundational knowledge because of school transfers. Having the knowledge that a student is a foster youth will also encourage teachers to check-in more regularly with foster youth students and allow extended time on assignments if need be.

Lastly, students in this study who participated in enrichment activities had strong peer relationships. School districts should sponsor foster youth who want to participate in afterschool programs, so that football gear, soccer gear, band uniforms, etc. are free to foster youth. Often these activities are expensive and may seem unattainable to someone who is in foster care. If the school district were to finance these activities, it would encourage peer relationships, a sense of community on campus, and ultimately can lead to self -confidence and higher academic achievement.

Implications for Future Research

As the number of foster youths across the United States continues to increase, research on this population has followed suit. Researchers have shown that foster youth do not have the same educational opportunities or outcomes as their peers; they have lower test scores, graduation rates, college enrollment, and college graduation rates. But more research needs to separate their studies on foster youth according to their state and even school district, as each state has its laws, policies, and data collection on foster youth. There is also a need for more research on Latino foster youth specifically, as they compose the majority population in California and are a growing population across the United States.

Future research should include more qualitative based studies, that ask Latino foster

youth about their educational needs in high school. This study found that many Latino foster youths can ask for help and display help-seeking behaviors from teachers, counselors, and their school administration. But additional qualitative interviews could do classroom observations to see class dynamics with adults and peers in the classroom. Interview questions could ask about Latino foster youth's preferred learning styles, their comfort level with class assignments, presentations, and group projects to better understand the influence that peers have upon foster youth's development of horizontal social capital. Additionally, by conducting classroom observations, the researcher can observe direct teacher interactions, phrases of praise, how discipline is approached, and even where the youth positions him/herself in the classroom.

This study also attempted to understand how the foster youth's identity as "male Latinos" impacted their relationships with peers and adults and their ability to ask for help. The preliminary findings in this study found that the "Latino" aspect did not influence most youth, with the foster youth responding that their racial make-up did not impact who they turned to for advice or guidance. These results may have been because the foster youth went to predominately Latino schools and as stated earlier, this segregation impacts their exposure to people of different races. Future research on Latino foster youth should pull demographic information about the school, including the school population's racial make-up, the community's racial make-up, and also the foster parent's racial make-up. By pulling these statistics, research would be able to better understand how youth identifies fit into their community. For example, a Latino foster student attending a predominately Latino community might lead the youth to negate his race as an impact upon social relationships. However, a Latino foster youth pulled from his community and placed in a predominately White or Asian community might have an impact on how he sees himself and his racial identity.

90

While this study attempted to gather as many participants as possible, it was in the end limited to 12 Latino foster youth. Because of the small number of participants, this study serves as a starting point to understand Latino foster youth but is not generalizable to all Latino foster youth's high school experiences.

Conclusion

Research has informed educators that adolescent foster youth don't have the same opportunities as their peers yet seeing these youth from a deficit perspective also gives them a disadvantage. This research sought to shed light not only on the hardships that Latino foster youth encounter in their high school settings but more importantly to show their resilience. By taking a qualitative approach, this study was able to take the youth's own words and experiences and show their development and use of help-seeking behaviors. The youth's relationships with adults on their high school campus and community also displayed the use of social capital.

This study showed that Latino adolescent foster youth may encounter high transiency rates, yet they have formulated close relationships and help-seeking behaviors. We as adults can be more conscious of our relationship building with Latino foster youths so that it is guaranteed that they receive the supports that they need. While most of the foster youth in this study felt that they had social/emotional support, it was clear that academic support needed some intervention. More regular check-ins by adults on campus can help to address this academic issue so that the youth are targeted for intervention services.

As a teacher, as a foster parent, and as a researcher this research has had a profound impact on me. As a teacher, I now want to connect the dots in foster youth's lives, so that I am not satisfied with asking how the student is doing, but I want to check-in with their other teachers to make sure they are doing well in all of their classes. As a teacher, I want to call their foster

parents and social worker to make sure that they have the support systems, especially the

academic support they need. As a foster parent, I understand the required court dates and medical

exams and will afford leniency when an assignment deadline needs to be extended. As a

researcher, I have had the opportunity to hear the voices of Latino foster youth from multiple

high schools and understand the policy changes that need to be put into place to help more foster

youth reach academic success. The goal with this research was a steppingstone, but we must all

continue in our goals to form communities with the youth that need them the most.

Works Cited

The AFCARS report. [Washington, D.C.]: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,

      Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and

      Families, Children's Bureau.

Alliance for children's rights. (2016) Foster youth educational toolkit. Retrieved from

      https://kids-alliance.org/wp-

      content/uploads/2016/09/FosterYouthEducationToolkit_v3.pdf.

Andriani, L., & Christoforou, A. (2016). Social capital: A roadmap of theoretical and empirical

      contributions and limitations. *Journal of Economic Issues, 50*(1), 4-22.

      doi:10.1080/00213624.2016.1147296

Barrio, C., & Hughes, M. (2000). Kinship care: A cultural resource of African American and

      Latino families coping with parental substance abuse. Journal of Family Social Work,

      4(4), 15-31.

Bausch, L. (2014). Boys will be boys?: Bridging the great gendered literacy divide. Rotterdam:

      Sense. doi:10.1007/978-94-6209-539-7

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J.G. Richardson (Ed.), Handbook of Theory and

      Research for the Sociology of Education (pp. 241-258). New York: Greenwood Press.

Boyle, G. (2010). Tattoos on the heart: The power of boundless compassion (1st Free Press

      hardcover ed.). New York, NY: Free Press.

California Department of Education (2014). California Foster Care Education Law Fact Sheet.

      Retrieved from https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/BTB_23_5O_11.pdf

California Department of Education (2016-2017). Fingertip facts on education in California.

      Retrieved from https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/ceffingertipfacts.asp

Carastathis, A. (2016). Intersectionality: Origins, contestations, horizons (Expanding frontiers,

    interdisciplinary approaches to studies of women, gender, and sexuality). Lincoln:

    University of Nebraska Press. (2016).

Children in foster care by race/ethnicity (2015). Retrieved from

    http://kidsdata.org/topic/22/fostercare-race/table

Church, W. (2006). From start to finish: The duration of Hispanic children in out-of-home

    placements. Children and Youth Services Review, 28(9), 1007-1023.

    doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2005.10.005

Clemens, E. V., Lalonde, T. L., & Sheesley, A. P. (2016). The Relationship between School

    Mobility and Students in Foster Care Earning a High School Credential. Grantee

    Submission, 193–201. Retrieved from

    http://search.ebscohost.com.ccl.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db

    =eric&AN=ED593238&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Conger, D., & Finkelstein, M. (2003). Foster care and school mobility. Journal of Negro

    Education, 72(1), 97-103.

Corlett, S., & Mavin, S. (2014). Intersectionality, identity and identity work. Gender in

    Management, 29(5), 258-276. Retrieved from

    http://ccl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search-proquest-

    com.ccl.idm.oclc.org/docview/1650557197?accountid=10141

Convertino, C., & Graboski-Bauer, A. (2018). College readiness versus college worthiness:

    Examining the role of principal beliefs on college readiness initiatives in an urban u.s.

    high school. The Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education, 50(1), 45-68.

doi:10.1007/s11256-017-0429-6

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence

against women of color. Stanford Law Review, 43(6), 1241-1299.

Creswell, J. (2016). 30 essential skills for the qualitative researcher. Thousand Oaks, California:

SAGE Publications.

Erbstein, N. (2013) Engaging underrepresented youth populations in community youth

development: Tapping social capital as a critical resource. In Wiley Periodicals Inc.

Youth programs as builders of social capital (pp.109-124). Belmont, MA.

Ernestus, S., & Prelow, H. (2015). Patterns of risk and resilience in African American and Latino

youth. Journal of Community Psychology, 43(8), 954-972. doi:10.1002/jcop.21725

Esposito, J., & Happel, A. (2015). "you have to hold your own": investigating the social

networks of a diverse group of disenfranchised urban male youth. The Urban Review:

Issues and Ideas in Public Education, 47(3), 541–562. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-

014-0318-1

Fallon, B., & Bowles, T. (1999). Adolescent help-seeking for major and minor

problems. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 51*(1), 12-18.

doi:10.1080/00049539908255329

Ferree, M. M. (2018). Intersectionality as Theory and Practice. Contemporary Sociology, 47(2),

127–132. https://doi.org/10.1177/0094306118755390

Foster, E., & Kalil, A. (2007). Living arrangements and children's development in low-income

white, black, and Latino families. Child Development, 78(6), 1657-1674.

doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2007.01091.x

Fram, M. S., & Altshuler, S. J. (2009). Social Capital Theory: Another Lens for School Social

Workers to Use to Support Students Living in Foster Care. School Social Work Journal,

33(2), 1-25.

Frerer, K. (2013). Foster youth stability: A study of California foster youths' school and

residential changes in relation to educational outcomes. *Center for Social Service*

Research, 1-50.

Fylkesnes, M. M., Taylor, J. j., & Iversen, A. A. (2018). Precarious participation: Exploring

ethnic minority youth's narratives about out-of-home placement in Norway. Children &

Youth Services Review, 88341-347.

Gándara, P. C., & Aldana, U. S. (2014). Who's Segregated Now? Latinos, Language, and the

Future of Integrated Schools. Educational Administration Quarterly, 50(5), 735–748.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X14549957

Garcia, A., Aisenberg, E., & Harachi, T. (2012). Pathways to service inequalities among Latinos

in the child welfare system. Children and Youth Services Review, 34(5), 1060-1071.

doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.02.011

Geenen, S., & Powers, L. (2007). "Tomorrow is another problem": The experiences of youth in

foster care during their transition into adulthood. *Children and Youth Services*

Review, 29(8), 1085-1101. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2007.04.008

González, N., Moll, L., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2009). Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices

in households, communities, and classrooms. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum

Associates. (2009).

Green, R., & Ellis, P. (2008). Foster youth evaluate the performance of group home services in

California. *Evaluation and Program Planning, 31*(2), 174-180.

doi:10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2008.02.004

Greeson, J., & Bowen, N. (2008). "She holds my hand" the experiences of foster youth with their

natural mentors. Children and Youth Services Review, 30(10), 1178-1188.

doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2008.03.003

Gross, J. P. (2019). Former foster youth in postsecondary education : reaching higher (Ser.

Palgrave pivot). Palgrave Macmillan. https://link-springer-

com.ccl.idm.oclc.org/book/10.1007%2F978-3-319-99459-8

Gypen, L., Vanderfaeillie, J., De Maeyer, S., Belenger, L., & Van Holen, F. (2017). Outcomes of

children who grew up in foster care: Systematic-review. Children and Youth Services

Review, 76(12), 74-83. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.02.035

Harden, B. (2004). Safety and stability for foster children: A developmental perspective. *Future

of Children, 14*(1).

Hass, M., Allen, Q., & Amoah, M. (2014). Turning points and resilience of academically

successful foster youth. *Children and Youth Services Review, 44*(1), 387-392.

doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2014.07.008

Hass, M., & Graydon, K. (2009). Sources of resiliency among successful foster youth. *Children

and Youth Services Review, 31*(4), 457-463. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2008.10.001

Hill Collins, P., & Bilge, S. (2016). Intersectionality (Key Concepts). Cambridge, UK: Polity

Press.

Huerta, A. H., Fishman, S. M., & Brug, Peary. Marginality in the urban center : the costs and

challenges of continued whiteness in the Americas and beyond. In Marginalizing what

matters: revisiting Latino male students in the educational pipeline (pp. 133–157). essay,

Cham : Springer International Publishing : Palgrave Macmillan.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-96466-9_7

Huerta, A., McDonough, P., & Allen, W. (2018). "you can go to college": Employing a

developmental perspective to examine how young men of color construct a college-going

identity. The Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education, 50(5), 713-734.

doi:10.1007/s11256-018-0466-9

Huerta, A., & Rios-Aguilar, C. (2018). Treat a cop like they are god: Exploring the relevance and

utility of funds of gang knowledge among Latino male students. Urban Education,

004208591879476, 004208591879476-004208591879476.

doi:10.1177/0042085918794766

Johnson, E., & Menna, R. (2017). Help seeking among adolescents in foster care: A qualitative

study. *Children and Youth Services Review, 76*, 92-99.

doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.03.002

Jones, S.R., Torres, V., & Arminio, J. (2014). Negotiating the complexities of qualitative

research in higher education: Fundamental elements and issues (2nd Edition). New York:

Routledge.

Kessler, R., Brown, R., & Broman, C. (1981). Sex differences in psychiatric help-Seeking:

Evidence from four large-scale surveys. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 22(1),

49-64.

Kools, S. (1997). Adolescent identity development in foster care. Family Relations, 46(3), 263-

71.

Krathwohl, D. (2009). Methods of educational and social science research: The logic of methods

    (3rd ed.). Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

Kuhl, J., Jarkon-Horlick, L., & Morrissey, R. F. (1997). Measuring barriers to help-seeking

    behavior in adolescents. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 26(6), 637-650. Retrieved

    from http://ccl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search-proquest-

    com.ccl.idm.oclc.org/docview/204534909?accountid=10141

Local Control Funding Formula Research Collaborative. (2019). Principals' Perceptions:

Implementing The Local Control Funding Formula (Report). Policy Analysis for California

    Education. https://www.edpolicyinca.org/publications/principals-speak

López-Gydosh, D., & Hancock, J. (2009). American men and identity: Contemporary African-

    American and Latino style. The Journal of American Culture, 32(1), 16-28.

    doi:10.1111/j.1542-734X.2009.00690.x

Lutz, H., Herrera Vivar, M., & Supik, L. (2016). Framing intersectionality: Debates on a multi-

    faceted concept in gender studies (Feminist imagination, Europe and beyond). London:

    Routledge. (2016). Retrieved September 11, 2019, from Taylor & Francis Group.

Lynch, L., Long, M., & Moorhead, A. (2018). Young men, help-seeking, and mental health

    services: Exploring barriers and solutions. American Journal of Men's Health, 12(1), 138-

    149. doi:10.1177/1557988315619469

Martinez, E., (2014). When boys become men : Chicano/Latino middle school students and their

    identities (dissertation). University of Washington Libraries.

Martinez, E., & Castellanos, M. (2018). Catching them early: an examination of chicano/latino

    middle school boys' early career aspirations. The Urban Review : Issues and Ideas in

    Public Education, 50(3), 378–401. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-017-0438-5

Massey, D.S. (2001) Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Conditions in U.S. Metropolitan

    Areas. In Neil J.S., William J.W., & Faith M. (Eds.), American becoming: Racial trends

    and their consequences (pp.391-434). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

    https://doi.org/10.17226/9599.

McBeath, B., & Meezan, W. (2008). Market-Based disparities in foster care service

    provision. *Research on Social Work Practice, 18*(1), 27-41.

Morse J.M., Field P.A. (1996) The purpose of qualitative research. In: Nursing Research.

    Springer, Boston, MA. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-4471-9_1

Morton, B. M. (2017). Growing up fast: implications for foster youth when independence and

    early adulthood collide. Children and Youth Services Review, 82, 156–161.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.09.028

Munson, M., Smalling, S., Spencer, R., Scott, L., & Tracy, E. (2010). A steady presence in the

    midst of change: Non-kin natural mentors in the lives of older youth exiting foster care.

    Children and Youth Services Review, 32(4), 527-535.

    doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2009.11.005

National Center for Education Statistics (2018). *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion*

    Rates in the United States, 2016, Table 3.5. Available from

    https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019117.pdf

Neal, D. (2017). Academic resilience and caring adults: The experiences of former foster youth.

    Children and Youth Services Review, 79, 242-248. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.06.005

Null, J. (2004). Is constructivism traditional? historical and practical perspectives on a popular

    advocacy. The Educational Forum, 68(2), 180-188.

Okpych, N., & Courtney, M. (2017). Who goes to college? social capital and other predictors of

college enrollment for foster-care youth. Journal of the Society for Social Work and

Research, 8(4), 563-593. doi:10.1086/694897

Osterling, K., & Han, M. (2011). Reunification outcomes among Mexican immigrant families in

the child welfare system. *Children and Youth Services Review, 33*(9), 1658-1666.

doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.04.020

Patterson, D., Day, A., Vanderwill, L., Willis, T., Resko, S., Henneman, K., & Cohick, S. (2018).

Identifying the essential competencies for resource parents to promote permanency and

well-being of adolescents in care. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 88457-466.

Perez, B., & Romo, H. (2011). "Couch surfing" of Latino foster care alumni: Reliance on peers

as social capital. *Journal of Adolescence, 34*(2), 239-48.

doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2010.05.007

Perlman, M. (2018, October 23). The origin of the term 'intersectionality.' Retrieved from

https://www.cjr.org/language_corner/intersectionality.php

Perry, B. (2006). Understanding social network disruption: The case of youth in foster care.

Social Problems, 53(3), 371-391.

Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its original and applications in modern sociology. New Jersey:

Annual Rev. Sociology, 24: 1-24.

Pryce, J., Napolitano, L., & Samuels, G. (2017). Transition to adulthood of former foster youth:

Multilevel challenges to the help-seeking process. Emerging Adulthood, (2017).

doi:10.1177/2167696816685231

Roca, J. D. la, Ellen, I. G., & Steil, J. (2018). Does segregation matter for Latinos? Journal of

Housing Economics, 40, 129–141. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhe.2017.10.003

Rutman, D., & Hubberstey, C. (2016). Is anybody there? informal supports accessed and sought

by youth from foster care. Children and Youth Services Review, 63(2), 21-27.

doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.02.007

Rymph, C. (2017). Into the family life of strangers: The origins of foster family care. In Raising

Government Children: A History of Foster Care and the American Welfare State (pp. 17-

42). Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. Retrieved from

http://www.jstor.org.ccl.idm.oclc.org/stable/10.5149/9781469635651_rymph.6Copy

Sabatini, F. (2009). Social capital as social networks: A new framework for measurement and an

empirical analysis of its determinants and consequences. *Journal of Socio-*

Economics, 38(3), 429-442. doi:10.1016/j.socec.2008.06.001

Sáenz, V. (2004). Resources and information for serving minority populations. New Directions

for Community Colleges, 2004(127), 97-106. doi:10.1002/cc.167

Sáenz, V., García-Louis, C., Drake, A., & Guida, T. (2018). Leveraging their family capital:

How Latino males successfully navigate the community college. Community College

Review, 46(1), 40-61.

Sáenz V., Mayo, J. R., Miller, R. A., & Rodriguez, S. L. (2015). (Re)defining masculinity

through peer interactions: Latino men in texas community colleges. Journal of Student

Affairs Research and Practice, 52(2), 164–175.

Sáenz, V., & Ponjuan, L. (2009). The vanishing Latino male in higher education. Journal of

Hispanic Higher Education, 8(1), 54-89.

Sáenz, V. B., Ponjuan, L., & Institute for Higher Education Policy. (2011). Men of color :

ensuring the academic success of Latino males in higher education. IHEP.

http://www.ihep.org/sites/default/files/uploads/docs/pubs/brief_men_of_color_latinos.pdf

.

Sáenz, V., Ponjuan, L., Segovia, J., & Del Real Viramontes, J. (2015). Developing a Latino

mentoring program: Project males (mentoring to achieve Latino educational success).

New Directions for Higher Education, 2015(171), 75-85. doi:10.1002/he.20144

Schmidt, J., Dubey, S., Dalton, L., Nelson, M., Lee, J., Oberweiser Kennedy, M., . . . Geenen, S.

(2015). Who am I? who do you think I am? stability of racial/ethnic self-identification

among youth in foster care and concordance with agency categorization. *Children and

Youth Services Review, 56*(9), 61-67. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2015.06.011

Schneider, J. (2008). Escape from Los Angeles: White flight from los angeles and its schools,

1960-1980. Journal of Urban History, 34(6), 995–1012.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144208317600

Skobba, K., Meyers, D., & Tiller, L. (2018). Getting by and getting ahead: Social capital and

transition to college among homeless and foster youth. Children and Youth Services

Review, 94, 198-206. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.10.003

Stanton-Salazar, R. (2001). Manufacturing hope and despair: The school and kin support

networks of U.S.-Mexican youth (Sociology of education series). New York: Teachers

College Press.

Stearns, E., Potochnick, S., Moller, Southworth, S. (2010) High school course-taking and post-

secondary institutional selectivity. Research in Higher Education: Journal of the

Association of Institutional Research,51: 366. https://doi-

org.ccl.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s11162-009-9161-8

Steenbakkers, A., van der Steen, S., & Grietens, H. (2018). The needs of foster children and how

to satisfy them: a systematic review of the literature. Clinical Child and Family

Psychology Review, 21(1), 1–12.

Strayhorn, T. (2017). Using intersectionality in student affairs research. *New Directions for Student Services, 157*(157), 57-67.

Strolin-Goltzman, J., Kollar, S., & Trinkle, J. (2010). Listening to the voices of children in foster care: Youths speak out about child welfare workforce turnover and selection. Social Work, 48(1), 47-47.

Strolin-Goltzman, J., Woodhouse, V., Suter, J., & Werrbach, M. (2016). A mixed method study on educational well-being and resilience among youth in foster care. Children and Youth Services Review, 70(2), 30-36. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.08.014

Taylor, L. (2015) Fostering success: How youth formerly in foster care find their way to college campuses (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest (Accession No. 3717976).

The Foster Care Housing Crisis. (2018). The foster care housing crisis. Retrieved from the Chronicle of Social Change, 1-52.

Thompson, A., & Greeson, J. (2017). Prosocial activities and natural mentoring among youth at risk of aging out of foster care. Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research, 8(3), 421-440. doi:10.1086/693119

Thompson, H., Wojciak, A., & Cooley, M. (2016). Self-esteem: A mediator between peer relationships and behaviors of adolescents in foster care. Children and Youth Services Review, 66(2), 109-116. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.05.003

Trejos-Castillo, E., & Trevino-Schafer, N. (Eds.). (2018). Handbook of foster youth. Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9781351168243

Tyre, A.D. (2012). Educational Supports for Middle School Youths Involved in the Foster Care System. Children & Schools, 34(4), 231-238.

Unrau, Y., Font, S., & Murphy, S. (2011). Placement moves of foster children as perceived by foster parents residing in urban and semi-urban communities. Journal of Public Child Welfare, 5(4), 390-407. doi:10.1080/15548732.2011.599757

U.S. Census Bureau (2019). California population estimates. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/CA.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2005). A report to Congress on adoption and other permanency outcomes for children in foster care: Focus on older children. Washington, DC: Children's Bureau.

Villegas, S., Rosenthal, J., O'Brien, K., & Pecora, P. (2014). Educational outcomes for adults formerly in foster care: The role of ethnicity. *Children and Youth Services Review, 36*(31), 42-52. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.11.005

Vinnerljung, B., & Hjern, A. (2011). Cognitive, educational and self-support outcomes of long-term foster care versus adoption. A Swedish national cohort study. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 33 (10), 1902-1910.

Valenzuela, A. (1999). Subtractive schooling: U.s.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring (Suny series, the social context of education). Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press. (1999).

Wolcott, H. F. (2005). The art of fieldwork (2nd ed.). Altamira Press.

White, C., O'Brien, K., Jackson, L., Havalchak, A., Phillips, C., Thomas, P., & Cabrera, J. (2008). Ethnic identity development among adolescents in foster care. Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 25(6), 497-515.

Whitman, K. (2018). Personal perspectives on providing services to foster youth. New Directions for Community Colleges, 2018(181), 81-90. doi:10.1002/cc.20294

Wolf, R., & Sands, J. (2016). A Preliminary Analysis of California's New Local Control

      Funding Formula. Education Policy Analysis Archives, 24 (34/35), 1–36. https://doi-

      org.ccl.idm.oclc.org/10.14507/epaa.v24.2194

Wurdock, C. J. (1981). Neighborhood Racial Transition: A Study of the Role of White Flight.

      Urban Affairs Quarterly, 17(1), 75–89. https://doi.org/10.1177/004208168101700105

Zinn, A. (2017). Predictors of natural mentoring relationships among former foster youth.

      Children and Youth Services Review, 79, 564-575. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.07.004

Appendix A

Study: Latino Secondary Education Foster Youth

Demographic Survey Questions

1. Ethnic origin. Please specify:
    a. White
    b. Hispanic or Latino or Chicano
    c. Black or African American
    d. Native American or American Indian
    e. Asian/Pacific Islander
    f. Other

2. What grade are you in?

3. What courses are you currently enrolled in?

Period	Course Title

4. What is your current GPA?

5. How many years have you been in foster care?

6. At what age did you enter the foster care system?

7. How many foster homes have you lived in?

8. How many high schools have you attended?

9. How many adults are currently living in your household?

10. How many minors are living in your household? [not including yourself]

11. What is your name?

12. What is your age?

Appendix B

**PARENTAL CONSENT FORM
AGREEMENT TO ALLOW PARTICIPATION IN
LATINO SECONDARY EDUCATION FOSTER YOUTH STUDY**

STUDY LEADERSHIP. I am Rachel Acosta, an Education student at Claremont Graduate University. I am asking that your child take part in my research project. Professor Linda Perkins is supervising this study.

PURPOSE. The purpose of this study is to understand Latino male foster youth in their high school settings.

ELIGIBILITY. To take part, your child must be a male foster youth, of Latino background, 14-18 years old, and attend a public high school or continuation school in Southern California.

PARTICIPATION. During this study, your child will take part in face to face interviews. Interview questions will ask them about school. Your child will be asked about their goals, people they are close to on campus, and some questions about their age and ethnicity. Interview locations will be based on a location of their choice. Interviews may last between 30-60 minutes. Interviews will be audio-recorded so that the interviewer can take notes and review the content discussed.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION. The risks your child runs by taking part in this study are low. Some questions may bring up uncomfortable topics. Your child is free to skip any question that makes them uncomfortable. Your child may stop the interview at any time.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION. This study may not benefit you or your child. This study will help me complete my research project. My goal is to make suggestions to improve programs that work with foster youth.

COMPENSATION. For taking part, your child will be given a $50 gift card as a thank you.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION. Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your child may stop or remove themselves from the study at any time. Your child may also refuse to answer any question without being penalized. Your child's decision to participate will have no effect on their grades or future connection with Claremont Graduate University.

CONFIDENTIALITY. No personal information [such as your child's name, school name, address] will be shared. While interviews will be recorded, these recorded files will be placed in a safe electronic location. Files will be kept for 3 years, then erased. Your child's real name will be changed in my report to maintain their privacy.

FURTHER INFORMATION. If you have any questions , please contact Rachel Acosta at rachelacosta1@yahoo.com or (661) 575-7979. You may also contact my advisor, Linda Perkins, at linda.perkins@cgu.edu or (909) 621-8000. The university ethics board (also known as IRB) has approved this project. You may contact the IRB by calling (909-607-9406 or emailing irb@cgu.edu. The website is www.cgu.edu/irb. You may keep a copy of this form for your

records.

CONSENT. Your signature below means that you understand this form. Someone has answered any and all questions you have about the study. By signing below you voluntarily agree to allow your child to participate.

☐ I agree to allow my child to be *audio recorded* during the interview, with the agreement that no identifying information [such as your child's name, school name, address] will be shared.

☐ I do not agree to allow my child to be *audio recorded*.

Name of Participating Child _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian_____   Date_____

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian _____

The undersigned researcher has reviewed the information in this assent form with the participant and answered any of his or her questions about the study.

Signature of Researcher _____   Date_____

Printed Name of Researcher_____

Appendix C

MINOR ASSENT FORM
AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN
LATINO SECONDARY EDUCATION FOSTER YOUTH STUDY

STUDY LEADERSHIP. I am Rachel Acosta, an Education student at Claremont Graduate University. I am asking you to take part in my research project. Professor Linda Perkins is supervising this study.

PURPOSE. The purpose of this study is to understand Latino male foster youth in their high school settings.

ELIGIBILITY. To take part, you must be a male foster youth, of Latino background, 14-18 years old, and attend a public high school or continuation school in Southern California.

PARTICIPATION. During this study, you will take part in face to face interviews. Interview questions will ask you about school. You will be asked about your goals, people you are close to on campus, and some questions about your age and ethnicity. Interview locations will be based on a location of your choice. Interviews may last between 30-60 minutes. Interviews will be audio recorded so that the interviewer can take notes and review the content discussed.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION. The risks you run by taking part in this study are low. Some questions may bring up uncomfortable topics. You are free to skip any question that makes you uncomfortable. You may stop the interview at any time.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION. This study may not benefit you. This study will help me complete my research project. My goal is to make suggestions to improve programs that work with foster youth.

COMPENSATION. For taking part, you will be given a $50 gift card as a thank you.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop or remove yourself from the study at any time. You may also refuse to answer any question without being penalized. Your decision to participate will have no effect on your grades or future connection with Claremont Graduate University.

CONFIDENTIALITY. No personal information [such as your name, school name, address] will be shared. While interviews will be recorded, these recorded files will be placed in a safe electronic location. Files will be kept for 3 years, then erased. Your real name will be changed in my report to maintain your privacy.

FURTHER INFORMATION. If you have any questions , please contact Rachel Acosta at rachelacosta1@yahoo.com or (661) 575-7979. You may also contact my advisor, Linda Perkins, at linda.perkins@cgu.edu or (909) 621-8000. The university ethics board (also known as IRB) has approved this project. You may contact the IRB by calling (909-607-9406 or emailing irb@cgu.edu. The website is www.cgu.edu/irb. You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

ASSENT. Your signature below means that you understand this form. Someone has answered any and all questions you have about the study. By signing below you voluntarily agree to participate.

☐   I agree to be *audio recorded* during the interview, with the agreement that no identifying information [such as your name, school name, address] will be shared.

☐   I do not agree to be *audio recorded*.

Signature of Participant _____   Date_____

Printed Name of Participant_____

The undersigned researcher has reviewed the information in this form with the participant and answered any of his or her questions.

Signature of Researcher _____   Date_____

Printed Name of Researcher_____

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

<u>Understanding Latino Foster Youths High School Experiences</u>

<u>Basic Information About the Interview</u>

Time of interview:	
Date:	
Place	
Interviewer:	*Rachel Acosta*
Interviewee:	
Position of interviewee:	*Graduate School Student seeking to understand the experiences of High School Foster Youth*
Recording/storing information about interview:	*Information will be recorded and transcribed. Pseudonyms will be used to protect foster youth privacy.*

<u>Introduction</u>

□ Introduce yourself
□ Discuss the purpose of your study
□ Discuss the fact that is <u>a pilot interview</u>
□ Get informed consent signature
□ Provide structure of interview (audio recording, taking notes)
□ Ask if interviewee has questions
□ Define any terms necessary

__Interview Questions__

1. Ice Breaker: How did you spend your day today?

2. Did you attend any other high schools prior to your current school?

3. Is your current high school a public, private, charter, or continuation school?

4. Did you have an active role in choosing your current high school?

   Probe: How did you feel about this role?

5. What were your first impressions about your new school?

6. How would you describe your high school environment?

7. Do you participate in any extracurricular activities on campus, including athletic or academic?

   Probe: Is there a reason you selected those activities or chose not to participate in activities?

8. Do you participate in any extracurricular activities off campus, including athletic or academic?
   Probe: Is there a reason you selected those activities or chose not to participate in activities?

9. Do you feel that your participation in activities, either on or off campus, has been impacted because you are a foster youth?

10. Are there any peers whom you have become close to on campus?
    Probes: What is this relationship like? Does this relationship continue during non-school hours?

11. Are there any adults whom you have become close to on campus?

    Probes: What is this relationship like? Does this relationship continue during non-school hours?

12. Have you shared with anyone on campus or in the community that you are a foster youth?

    Probe: How did you come to the decision to either share or not share this label?

13. Is there any place on campus or in the community that you visit often?

    Probe: What makes this location a place that you like to visit regularly?

14. When you have a problem, who do you talk to or ask for advice?
    Probe: How do you decide when to ask for advice?

15. Has being in foster care impacted your ability to maintain relationships and friendships with others?

16. Do you feel that you have emotional support on campus or in the community? In other words, do you have people whom you can talk about your day to or vent. Explain.

17. Do you feel that you have academic support on campus or in the community? Explain.

18.   Whom do you live with at home?

19.   Do you feel that your foster parents/family provide emotional support? In other words, can you talk about your day to or vent. Explain.

20.   Do you feel that your foster parents/family provide academic support to help you finish high school?

21.   Have you ever discussed career or college options with your foster parents/family?
        Probe: What led you to these conversations? If the conversations are not taking place, why don't you think this topic comes up?

22.   How do you identify, as a Hispanic, Chicano, Latino or other?
        Probe: Why do you relate with that identification?

23.   Do you feel that your identification a Latino [or their identification] male impacts your relationships with others either on campus or in the community? Explain.

24.   Do you feel that your identification at a Latino [or their identification] male impacts who you talk to when you have a problem or who you go to when you need advice?

25.   Do you feel that you advocate for yourself when you have a problem or who you go to when you need advice? Explain.

26.   In your life, has anyone specifically taught you how to solve problems or ask for advice? Explain.
        Probe: If no one has taught you, do you feel adequately prepared to ask for advice or help if you need it?

27.   What are your future goals that you would like to accomplish in high school?
        Probe: What led you to develop these goals for yourself?

28.   What are your future goals that you would like to accomplish after high school?
        Probe: What led you to develop these goals for yourself?

29.   Are you interested in going to college?
        Probe: If the student answers yes, what do they want to study in college? Why do they want to study this?

30.   Has anyone ever discussed college options with you?
        Probe: If yes, please explain who.

31.   Do you feel prepared to apply to college if you wanted to? Do you feel that you understand the college application process?

32.   What advice would you give to another high school foster youth about getting through high school or the future?

Closing Instructions

□ Thank the individual for participating
□ Assure individual of confidentiality
□ If needed, request further interviews
□ If asked, comment on how interviewee will receive results of study

SEEKING VOLUNTEERS FOR A RESEARCH STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to examine Latino male foster youth ages 14-24.

To participate in this research, you must:
- Be a foster youth
- Between the ages of 14-24
- Of Latino descent

Participation in this study involves:
- A time commitment of up to an hour interview
- A $50 gift card for your participation

To find out more information about this study,

please contact Rachel Acosta at:

- Phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX
- Email:

Study Title: Foster Youth in Secondary Education
Principal Investigator: Rachel Acosta

Research Study: Latino Male Foster Youth in Secondary Ed. **Contact:** Rachel Acosta **Phone:**	**Research Study:** Latino Male Foster Youth in Secondary Ed. **Contact:** Rachel Acosta	**Research Study:** Latino Male Foster Youth in Secondary Ed. **Contact:** Rachel Acosta	**Research Study:** Latino Male Foster Youth in Secondary Ed. **Contact:** Rachel Acosta	**Research Study:** Latino Male Foster Youth in Secondary Ed. **Contact:** Rachel Acosta **Phone:**	**Research Study:** Latino Male Foster Youth in Secondary Ed. **Contact:** Rachel Acosta	**Research Study:** Latino Male Foster Youth in Secondary Ed. **Contact:** Rachel Acosta	**Research Study:** Latino Male Foster Youth in Secondary Ed. **Contact:** Rachel Acosta