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

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

Abstract

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

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

1. Background and Significance

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

1.1 Defining Social Functioning as a Measure of Well-being

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

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

1.2 Placement Instability and Social Functioning

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

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

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

1.4 Biological and Non-Biological Permanency and Social Functioning

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

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

2. Social Network Orientation and Social Functioning

Social network orientation(SNO) refers to individual beliefs and attitudes about seeking and accepting help from others (Cecil et al., 1995; Forbes & Roger, 1999; Lawrence, Gardner, & Callan, 2007; Tata & Leong, 1994; Tolsdorf, 1976; Vaux, 1985). SNO has been found to be a critical element for at-risk populations, because it effects help-seeking behavior, from both informal social networks and professional providers (Barone et al., 1998; Keller et al., 2007; Tata & Leong, 1994; Yoo, Goh, & Yoon, 2005). Clapp and Beck (2009) found that social network orientation acted as a moderating agent between adults with posttraumatic stress disorder who been victimized as children and levels of social support accessed during an adult trauma.
Higher scores of PTSD were positively related to more negative social network orientation which led to less perceived social supports (Clapp & Beck, 2009). The social network’s size, density, complexity, reciprocity, closeness, presence of family in network, and satisfaction with support received can all affect the perception of support (Burda, Vaux, and Schill, 1984; Vaux & Harrison, 1985). Perry (2006) identified three important networks for foster care youth: biological family, foster families, and peers. Placement instability weakened network connections, especially those with adults, as opposed to peers (Perry, 2006).

3. **Current Study**

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

4. **Methodology**

4.1 **Sample**

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

4.2 **Measures**

Two instruments composed the survey that was administered to participants. The first instrument collected basic demographic information (i.e., race, gender, age, education level, and foster care status including length of time in care, number of placements experienced and final permanency disposition). Social support functioning was measured using the Network Orientation Scale (NOS), one of very few standardized instruments measuring attitudes towards the efficacy of social support (Vaux, Burda, & Stewart, 1986). The NOS is a 20-question instrument designed to measure negative network orientation, that is the perspective “that it is inadvisable, impossible, useless” or risky to seek help from others (Tolsdorf, 1976, p. 412). Respondents used a 4-point rating scale that ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). A higher score on the Network Orientation Scale indicates a more negative attitude about the efficacy of seeking help and support. Ten scale questions are worded positively such as, “In the past, friends have really helped me out when I’ve had a problem “and ten negatively, such as, “Other people never understand my problems” (Vaux et al., 1986). The NOS measures unwillingness to maintain, nurtures, or utilize those supports that one has (Tolsdorf, 1976). The instrument has been used with multiple populations in the United States, including college students (Vaux et al., 1986; Vaux, 1985), community adults (Vaux et al., 1986), mothers, and children over ten years old (Belle et al., 1991), psychiatric patients diagnosed with schizophrenia and major affective disorders (Cecil et al., 1995), sexually abused women (Gibson & Hartshorne, 1996), Chinese-American university students (Tata & Leong, 1994), Australian nurses (Lawrence et al., 2007), and black, South-African university students (Pretorius, 1993).
The average scores for several studies of general populations were around 42 (Belle et al., 1991; Lawrence et al., 2007; Pretorius, 1993; Tata & Leong, 1994). The survey took study participants about 25 minutes to complete. Higher scores on the NOS are interpreted to mean that respondents were more unwilling to maintain, nurture or utilize the social supports that are available to them.

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

4.2.1 Independent variables

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

4.2.2 Dependent variables

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

4.3 Procedures

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

4.4 Data Analyses

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

5. Results

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic (N=66)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>68.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 years and under</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 years and over</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanency Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Permanency</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>71.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanency</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No College</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Relationships (N=63)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced intimate partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>90.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOS Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>6.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Range</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>29-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of years in care</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>4.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of placements</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* Other—American Indian, Asian, or Hispanic  
*b* No Permanency—Aged Out, Independent Living, AWOLP  
*c* Permanency—Reunified, Adopted, Kinship Guardianship

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

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

Table 2: Linear Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>43.29</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>[39.56, 47.02]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Stay</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Placements</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-1.13</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanency Status</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p< .05
6. Discussion

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

7. Implications for Policy, Practice, and Future Research

Negative social network orientation can be mitigated through purposeful efforts to build and maintain permanent and stable relationships in the lives of older foster youth. Policy changes that promote building supportive relationships include ensuring that the first placement is the best fit when out-of-home placements are necessary. Formalized efforts should be employed to increase permanent connections to both biologically and non-biologically related caring adults. Federal child welfare legislation has moved to address many of these concerns. For example, the Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA) (1997), the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) (1999), and the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (FCSIA) (2008) offer increased incentives to support transition planning, independent living, and permanency. ASFA contains provisions that require states to initiate court proceedings to free a child for adoption, once that child had been waiting in foster care for at least 15 of the most recent 22 months, and provides incentives to states to increase the number of adoptions being made (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2014). Specifically, FCIA provides funding for states to promote interactions with mentors and other dedicated adults who provide personal and emotional support for foster youth (FCIA, 1999). Most recently, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act was enacted (2008). This law provides incentives and support for placements with relatives and extends transitional services and child welfare case management support to youth to age 21. It also requires states to make reasonable efforts to place siblings together in foster care, adoption, or guardianship placement. Furthermore, the legislation addresses school mobility in efforts to maintain relationships with teachers, peers, and other school personnel in a child’s original community (FCSIA, 2008). States should be encouraged to implement these laws to the fullest in order to find permanent homes for foster care youth as they transition from care. There is also a need to put in place incentives for states to create and operate mentoring programs specifically for foster care youth. Building natural mentoring relationships during out-of-home placements and involving mentors in the transition process may facilitate the development of a positive network orientation. In short, there is a need to reorient the system in a way that emphasizes establishing social and community connections as a cornerstone of transitioning out of child welfare systems, especially for high-risk youth and young adults who have no remaining links to any biological family, siblings, or a strong non-parental adult network (Beam, 2002; Courtney & Barth, 1996).
From a practice perspective, more emphasis is needed on building professional development around the relationship of social network orientation to social functioning for foster care workers, foster parents and others who work with this population.

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

8. Limitations

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

9. Conclusion

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

10. References


