Building a Pathway to Resilience:

How the Philanthropic Sector Can Include Social Capital Development Efforts for Transition Age Youth

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Executive Summary

This research study examined how several organizations in the philanthropic sector in California support foster youth who are transitioning out of the child welfare system in California in accessing and building social capital (e.g., in education, employment, social connections, relationships, and access to transitional housing). The purpose of this project was to gain a deeper understanding of what models, programs, and policies foundations are using to support the success of foster youth. Interviews were conducted with two young people who had experienced the child-welfare system, and with staff of four foundations that fund policy efforts, direct services, advocacy or research to aid transition-age youth. The study showed that foundations are a vital component for foster youth to obtain opportunities that contribute to social capital as they transition out of care.

Based on information collected in interviews, several policy recommendations follow:

(1) There is a need for more philanthropies to join the movement and collaborate so that more foster youth can benefit from the funds the philanthropic sector can allocate to transition-age youth. For example, more foundations should get involved with the Youth Funders Transition Group. This would help them learn about opportunities to work with youth and build connections and findings to scale up results.

(2) Foundations should also broaden their areas of focus—for example, to address well-being of transition-age youth.

(3) Foundations should include services for older youth (beyond age 21 or 25).

(4) Foundations should work to make sure that transition-aged youth are aware of the opportunities that are available to them.

(5) More policies and procedures should be in place in the child-welfare system to make sure that staff are doing their jobs.

Keywords: aging, permanency, philanthropy, social capital, systems based approach, transition aged-youth.

Dedication

This research project is dedicated to my youngest sister and every young person experiencing the foster-care system who continues to be resilient in the midst of adversity and challenges. I want every child and young person to know that they are not forgotten and that their story and life matters.

Acknowledgements

I often think of the African proverb that says, "It takes a village to raise a child" because I am reminded of the team of people who helped me get to the finish line. In honoring them, I would like to first thank my high school teacher Mr. Downing for always believing in me when I did not have the capacity to believe in myself. From my first encounter during my senior year when you caught me drawing graffiti on the walls, to you supporting me in every milestone and becoming my life-long supporter. I want you to know that you mean the world to me and I have become the person I am today because of your support.

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Introduction

Most young people look forward to the day they will turn 18. It is a time of exploration, growth, and new beginnings. But for young people who grow up in the U.S. foster -care system, turning 18 can often be a troubling and startling experience. Imagine that on your 18th birthday, your social worker calls to inform you that the foster home you were living in for three years no longer wants you there because the government stopped paying for your bed. She explains that you need to leave the home within the week, but by the time you reach the doorstep to retrieve your belongings, they are already packed into garbage bags and waiting for you on the porch. Your transition into adulthood has abruptly begun. This was my experience. From the several traumas experienced prior to aging out to lack of planning for my future, I quickly had to sketch out my path of survival. Thousands of young people who exit out of the system each year often find themselves traveling down this similar path. Thankfully, social supports like my high school principal and high school teacher were critical to my transition to adulthood and have been lifelong supports that have contributed to my success. Often this is not the case for other foster youth.

Youth transitioning out of the foster-care system are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged youth in the United States. While many teenagers are celebrating their 18 th birthdays or high school graduations, many young people in the foster care system have just learned that they may have to move out of their foster homes and begin adulthood immediately. On average, youth in the United States are not expected to reach self-sufficiency until age 26, whereas youth exiting the foster-care system are expected to achieve a level of independence at ages 18 or 21 (Shirk, Stangler & Carter, 2004). Most youth raised by birth families have supportive connections and life-long supports, such as parents, extended family and friends, to

aid in their success (Schoeni & Ross, 2003). Approximately half of the country's youth ages 18-24 remain at home, and nearly two thirds of youth in their early 20's receive economic support from their parents (Furstenberg, Kennedy, Mcloyd, Rumbaut, & Settersten, 2004).

Unique Challenges for Foster Youth

Foster youth have a unique set of challenges, where they do not typically have the same safety nets and support networks as others their age. As a result, they are at risk of losing access to services, including access to their social worker or caseworker, financial assistance, and/or housing. Most youth do not receive adequate preparation or support for their transition out of care, and often have little room to make mistakes (Settersteen, Furstenberg & Rumbaut, 2008).

Although a number of states, including California and New York, have increased the age limit for independence from 18 to 21, studies show that youth are still not ready to be on their own and need supportive connections beyond 21 to help them achieve success. Researchers at Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago conducted a study (Courtney, Charles, Okpych, Napolitano, & Halsted, 2014) on findings from the 2014 California Youth Transitions study to understand whether extending foster care past the age of 18 influenced youth outcomes (i.e., education, employment, health, housing, parenting, and general well-being) during the transition to adulthood. Courtney et al. (2014) found that young people felt the least prepared in areas focused on basic survival, such as housing, employment, and financial literacy. Compared to peers from intact families, young people aging out of foster care are at higher risk of dropping out of school, becoming homeless, being unemployed, entering the criminal justice system, and becoming a teen parent (Howard & Berzin, 2011). A Los Angeles study also reported increased homelessness and teen parenting among youth in care (Courtney, Dworsky, & Napolitano, 2013). Courtney, Dworsky, Lee, and Raap (2010) found that former foster youth were:

> …three times as likely as youth not in foster care to not have a high school diploma or GED and one-fifth as likely to have a college degree. Fewer than half of youth were employed, but often did not make living wages, almost one quarter of youth experienced homelessness, and over 40 percent reported contact with the criminal justice system. In addition, compared to same-age peers, many foster youth experience physical, developmental, behavioral and mental-health challenges that often lead to more frequent struggles with substance abuse and in turn to emotional instability; these challenges are difficult for foster youth to deal with.

Current and former foster youth experience depression, social phobias, panic disorders, and anxiety disorders at two to four times the rate of the general population (Pecora et al., 2005). Further, 25 percent of foster youth who leave care are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder: a rate twice that of U.S. war veterans (Pecora et al., 2005).

On top of these challenges, due to displacement from their biological families and due to multiple foster care placements, youth in foster care often lack social connections and supportive networks of peers, schools, and communities (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2012b). Experiences of trauma and loss also make it difficult for these youth to connect and maintain supportive networks and establish resources that help them access and build social capital (Annie E Casey Foundation, 2012). A study conducted in three Midwestern states (Courtney et al., 2010) revealed that most youth who exited care struggled in areas of employment and education, and lacked committed relationships with reliable adults, but when supports were provided, young people did reasonably well. Despite adverse experiences, these youth are able to adjust to their experiences, and demonstrate academic achievement and leadership (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiatives, 2009).

Building Social Capital

Studies reflect the importance of close relationships with caring adults, such that young people have opportunities to acquire social capital and achieve health and holistic wellness. (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012). Social networks serve a number of important functions as youth prepare for adulthood and begin to live independently. Social connections provide young adults with "emotional support; guidance on employment, education, and relationships issues; and provides assistance in times of emergencies" (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013, p. 5). Foster youth who develop those strong social networks and long-established committed relationships with supportive and caring adults have the capacity to do better when they exit care. Benefits can include better mental and physical health outcomes, increased self-reliance, and a reduction of criminal activity (Hook & Courtney, 2011).

Social-Capital Framework

The social capital framework establishes the groundwork for examining the importance of the way social connectedness and networks relate to foster youth transitioning out of care. The concept of social capital has become increasingly popular across social science disciplines and can be understood as the goodwill that emerges from social interactions and relationships; these are critical assets for success (Clairidge, 2004). Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, anthropologist, and philosopher, was one of the earlier scholars to use the term in in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972), but clarified the term many years later in his writing on cultural, economic, and symbolic capital. He believed that in order for social capital to work effectively, it must lead to economic power (Carpiano, 2006). However, James S. Coleman (1998) believed that social capital led to the creation of human capital.

Coleman defines social capital as “resources that an individual or group may obtain from relationships with others or through participation in social networks that enable them to accomplish their goals or empower themselves in a meaningful way” (Coleman, 1988; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Social capital also embodies networks, norms, trust, reputation, and goodwill.

Three important aspects are associated with the formation of social capital: reciprocity, mutuality and resource-generating capacity (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). According to Coleman (1988), there are certain expectations and obligations for every individual engaged in a social network. For example, trust must be established and both people must want to engage in the relationship together. The benefits of engaging in that network are dependent on the level of trust that is established. Simply having access to a social network is not enough (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). The second aspect, mutuality, refers to the “reciprocal investments” or give-and-take of the relationship (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Lastly, the resource-generating capacity refers to the flow of resources between individuals once they are engaged in a trusting relationship where their mutual expectations are being met (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). This can translate into lasting connections that impact social capital.

Without these three key components, you have meaningless networks that do not provide real benefits. It is also important to note that if a young person has a social worker they do not trust, the young person will not trust or engage with even though he is connected to a resource, and therefore their social capital does not increase because there is no real benefit from the social connection. Furthermore, neither the young person nor the social worker are contributing to the three elements that are needed.

Human relationships, social networks, and connections are interrelated and important requirements for a young person seeking to attain social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002). For the

purpose of this research study, I am defining the use of social capital as the ability to have supportive, consistent, and mutual social networks that help in gaining access to opportunities (such as supportive relationships, employment, housing, educational training) which further a young person's financial and human capital. I will also address why housing, employment, education, and supportive relationships are essential in helping a young person develop social capital, because those are some areas that youth tend to struggle with when exiting care.

Organizations That Build Social Capital

Connecting young people to educational services, housing, and employment are examples of social capital. The Annie E. Casey Foundation has received considerable interest in its model program to help young people build and sustain social capital through the Annie E. Casey Opportunity Passport program. The Jim Casey Opportunities Initiative (2012a, b) also works in states and in local communities to help increase opportunities for young people transitioning out of care. Much of its evidence-based programming helps connect young people to social capital by helping them build personal and financial assets as they engage in self-advocacy and leadership opportunities which are useful for them in the long-term. Jim Casey offers a unique matching savings program. The Opportunity Passport program helps provide young people with educational tools on financial capability to help them understand their finances. The program has three components:

> …a personal debit account for expenses that are short term, a matched savings account that can be used to save for specific assets such as a vehicle, tuition, or a housing down payment/deposit, and Door Openers, special local programs that provide young people with opportunities such as pre-approval for community college courses, or expedited access to job training or adult education courses. (Oldmixen, 2007, p. 5)

Because young people transition across different systems (child-welfare, education, criminal justice), it is imperative that they have access to financial resources. Jim Casey develops practice, policy, and evaluation tools to help young people develop opportunities and assets. The program also works to help advance child welfare's understanding of neuroscience and brain research to encourage implementation of more effective policies and programs (American Educational Children's Fund, 2017).

Purpose of Research and Research Question

Young people experiencing the child welfare system often transition out of care without guidance, stability or social support. Even though California extends foster care to 21, many young people still leave care without adequate resources to enter adulthood. Because transition-age youth are an overlooked population, more attention and resources should be dedicated to this group. In helping young people establish social capital (e.g., transitional housing, educational supports, and supportive relationships), it takes a village to help raise this group. The philanthropic sector is in a position to fund innovative programming, advocate for systems and policy shifts, and model developments that contribute to societal well-being.

The analysis below explores: (a) whether foundations fund social-capital developments and programming and (b) whether those funded programs are evidence-based. The study asks:

- To what extent does the philanthropic sector implement the evidence-based practice of using social capital for transition-aged youth?
- How is social capital incorporated in program funding?
- How is social capital experienced by young people?

Literature Review

To understand why it is necessary for foster youth to have access to social capital, a comprehensive literature review was conducted on the challenges and outcomes that foster youth experience when exiting care. The literature review also discusses how the philanthropic sector can help transition-aged youth. Further, legislative research was conducted to highlight current federal and state policies that are specific to transition-age youth.

History and Overview of Transition-Age Youth

In the next section, I discuss some of the ways a young person enters the foster care system, some of the challenges they experience, and how their aging out experience often shapes their trajectories depending on what services and supports are in place for them. The terms *aged out* and *transition* refer to:

> …children within a state's foster-care system who are still in the system upon reaching the age of majority or when they have graduated from high school. These children have not found permanency with an adoptive family, becoming adopted, or reunified with their birth families — they have not been able to return to their biological parents (Craft, 2017, para. 4).

When young people are removed from families due to neglect or abuse, they are introduced to the child welfare system and placed in foster care for the purposes of keeping them free from abuse and neglect. The goal is for the young person to remain in care for as brief a time as possible. If reunification with their family of origin is not possible, the goal changes in favor of adoption (preferably with relatives) or finding another safe and permanent place for the child to live as soon as possible.

The federal government requires that the local child welfare authority create and maintain a permanency plan for every young person coming into the child-welfare system. Permanency refers to the child-welfare system's finding a young person a permanent living arrangement that is nurturing and stable. Permanency also includes, "maintaining or establishing meaningful connections with other caring adults in the child's life with family, friends, and connections to the community" (Child Welfare Information Gateway, n.d., para. 1).

While most young people are reunited with their biological families or placed into guardianship care or adopted, this is not always the case for older youth (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004). Approximately 19 percent of all young people in care are age 16 or older (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004). Thousands of young people who do not achieve permanency spend years in care moving around among family home placements and/or group homes. Pecora et al. (2005) found that more than 30 percent of youth experienced eight or more placements with foster families or group homes, and 65 percent experienced seven or more school changes from elementary through high school. As a result of these disruptions, foster youth are often disconnected from family and social networks (Casey Family Programs, 2011).

According to Children's Rights (n.d.), there were approximately 428,000 children in the U.S. foster- care system in 2015. Of these, more than 20,000 foster youth aged out of the foster-care system without reuniting with their families or finding permanent homes. In California alone, approximately 5,500 young people aged out of the foster-care system in 2014.

To help readers better understand the importance of social supports and connective relationships for young people as they transition out of foster care, I highlight two young people who transitioned out of California's child welfare system. Ashanti is a current law student: an

aspiring public defender who will graduate with her Juris Doctorate degree this May from the University of San Francisco. She attended the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) for her undergraduate studies, and prior to that she attended community college.

At 18, Ashanti would have said that "she had no plans" even though she aspired to go to college (Ashanti, personal communication, April 17, 2017). She stated, "Sometimes I feel like an anomaly, I don't think I was not designed to make it." What most people do not know is that Ashanti grew up in the foster-care system. She entered the system at birth, and a few years later was placed with a relative, also known as kinship care. During her junior year of high school Ashanti became homeless; she slept in cars and garages; couch-surfed; and groomed herself in grocery-store bathrooms right before school.

When young people are typically applying to colleges during their senior year, Ashanti remained homeless. She lost contact with the social worker who was responsible for checking in with her, informing her of services that she was entitled to, and helping her create a transition plan so that she could exit the system well. Ashanti said that the social worker did not help her and never followed- up with promised resources. With no parental involvement, as her guardian had a middle-school education and could not read or write, Ashanti said, "I was doing everything on my own, I was pretty much my own parent." She was not aware of her rights as a foster youth, nor of the resources available to her, such as transitional housing, financial aid, or job training. She thought her only option was to join the military.

Thankfully, Ashanti's high school teacher noticed her potential, he mentored her and advocated for her by helping her fill out college applications. She credits him with her determination to attend community college and her success today, and considers him a lifelong support. Other supports include the Bruin Guardian Scholars program at UCLA, a program

designed to assist former foster youth that focuses on support services, including financial support for undergraduate and graduate students. The John Burton Advocates, an organization that supports foster youth in care, provided her with clothing. Her community college counselor informed her of resources and followed up, as did her church community, and she looked for additional supports on the internet.

When asked about her perspective on the importance of social capital, Ashanti said, "The thing about social capital is that you can't use it if you don't know it exists….Social capital was not available to me until someone told me about it." Taken together, she said she wished she had, had more mentors, and that housing was a form of social capital that she desperately needed (Ashanti, personal communication, April 17, 2017).

Patricia entered the foster-care system at the age of 3 and spent 12 years in and out of care (Patricia, personal communication, March 17, 2017). When she aged out in 2008, there was no extended foster care beyond the age of 18. However, because she was still completing high school, she was able to remain in care and lived in congregate care. She was able to move into housing for aged out foster youth after her group home and received transitional services from non-profits until she found her own housing at age 25. Through her participation in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Opportunity Youth Passport program, Patricia learned to manage her money and received matching contributions to her own saving contributions. In addition to these housing and financial supports, she received housing supplies which came in handy when she moved into her first apartment.

However, when asked about social connections and supports received during her transition, she mentioned that she lacked social, emotional, and personal connections. This was extremely hard, as she was going through difficult times, dealing with depression, and needed

people to talk to. “The people in my life were just people in my life to help me survive and although it’s good to survive, I wished that I had emotional support” (Patricia, personal communication, March 17, 2017). Her only support was a mentor and a caseworker, who both provided only short-term support.

Prior to aging out, Patricia met with her caseworker to discuss her transition plan and her original goal of attending a four-year college. However, once she decided that she no longer wanted to do that, she felt like all her supports dropped. She says she could have benefited from having someone to walk her through employment and career opportunities, but felt like her case manager only focused on college readiness. She did not know that she could not get a job that paid well without a degree. Luckily, she knew about a variety of programs, so she scheduled appointments to learn about different opportunities that would help her. When she later enrolled in community college, she learned that she had access to educational grants for foster youth. Asked if social capital was necessary for foster youth, Patricia agreed and felt that she could have benefited from having better access to social capital (Patricia, personal communication, March 17, 2017).

Background of Policies and Legislation to Support Transitioning Youth

Since the 1980’s, the federal government has attempted to address the needs of young people leaving care. Several child welfare laws were passed, and program funding allocated to states was designed to help prepare young people adequately to transition out of the system.

Foster Care Independence Act 1999. For decades, young people across the U.S. aged out of the foster-care system at 18 with few supportive connections and little direction to transition into adulthood. Little research was done as to where young people were going after

aging out, and little assistance provided to those who were aging out. Many young people were becoming homeless, unemployed, or incarcerated (see Tyler & Melander, 2010).

The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (also known as the John H. Chafee Foster Care independence program) (Civic Impulse, 2017) was the first legislation aimed at addressing transition-age youth and was created to provide states with funding to address housing, employment, education, and support services that would enable young people to transition from the system to living on their own. The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 was introduced to Congress on November 18, 1999 with the goal of reforming and expanding the independent-living program for transition-age youth. The Act was sponsored by Representative Nancy Johnson of Connecticut and enacted into federal law in December 1999.

The program is authorized under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act and was designed to help young people in foster care prepare to become independent once they transition out of care at 18. The federal allotment for Title IV-E independent living programs has doubled from $70 million per year to $140 million, although currently only $105 million per year is appropriated. Title I: Improved Independent Living Program-Subtitle A: Improved Independent program amends Title IV part E (Foster Care and Adoption Assistance) of the Social Security Act (SSA) to revise the program of grants to states for independent-living programs. A key provision is that states are responsible for creating a plan and providing services for young people that prepare them for adulthood. For example, transition-aged youth receive the education, training and services necessary to obtain employment; to prepare for post-secondary education; and to be mentored (H.R. 3443). Additionally, the public and private sectors must be involved in the plan to assist these youth in achieving independence.

Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (FCA). The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (FCA; Child Welfare Information Gateway, n.d.) was signed into federal law on October 7, 2008. This law gives the option to extend foster care as a measure to help improve outcomes for young people as they transition out of care. The law includes support for kinship relatives, foster care, and adoption services for tribal youth, and improves incentives for adoption and other purposes. FCA amended parts B and E of Title IV-E of the Social Security Act and was passed in both the U.S. House and Senate as it received unanimous bipartisan support. This law is considered landmark legislation for foster care as it has provided essential support and benefits for thousands of foster youth in care.

One major benefit is that the legislation works to improve outcomes for young people to extend foster care beyond 18 until 21. States that choose to support young people beyond 18 are provided a financial incentive. Currently, 25 states, including California, have opted in to extend foster care. FCA requires that states place a stronger emphasis on education and transition-planning, and that young people have access to health care (see McDermott, 2016).

AB 12: California's Fostering Connections Act. A growing body of knowledge became available about the unique challenges faced by young people aging out of the foster-care system in California, so California lawmakers and advocates designed a bill to extend foster care beyond the age of 18 to 21 to eligible youth. Eligible foster youth are defined by those who are non-minor dependents. The legislation also recognized the importance of family and permanency for youth by extending payment benefits and transitional supports for the Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) and the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment (Kin-GAP) Program (California Department of Social Services, n.d.).

Assembly Bill 12 The California Fostering Connections to Success Act (AB 12; see California Department of Social Services, 2011) was passed by the state legislature with bipartisan support and was signed into law by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger on September 30, 2010. The goals and benefits of the bill are to help maintain a safety net of support for non-minor independents living in a supervised environment, and to offer educational and training opportunities that prepare them to transition into adulthood and self-sufficiency.

The program is voluntary, but if the young person wants to remain in care beyond 18, there are stipulations. To receive transitional support services, the young person must meet with a social worker or probation officer six months prior to turning 18 to make sure youth will participate in services. Additional stipulations include:

> (1) Working toward completion of high school or equivalent program (e.g., GED); OR (2) Enrolled in college, community college or a vocational education program; OR (3) Employed at least 80 hours a month; OR (4) Participating in a program designed to assist in gaining employment; OR (5) Unable to do one of the above requirements because of a medical condition (California Department of Social Services, 2011, p. 4).

Research studies (see Opportunity Youth Network, 2017) reflect the costly impact to taxpayers when there is lack of investment in young people. Disconnected youth are defined as youth aged 16 to 24 who are not employed. They often rely on public benefits that have high costs for the community. According to Opportunity Youth Network (2017), the direct costs to taxpayers for not re-engaging disconnected youth is an estimated $13,980 per year or $235,000 over a lifetime. However, a recent study showed an estimated 500% return on investment to the community when foster youth are successfully employed (Opportunity Youth Network, 2017).

Recently, the Trump Administration announced that it is planning to eliminate 62 agencies and domestic programs in the upcoming budget (Korte, 2017). The proposed budget cuts could endanger vulnerable families and youth across the nation. While it is not likely that all of the administration's proposals will be implemented, the impact of those proposals could be devastating for low-income families (Korte, 2017).

Although the government is responsible for the well-being of foster youth, it is equally important to recognize the role that philanthropic communities play. Many foundations invest resources in organizations, which then use the money to fund innovative approaches that help communities, solve social problems, and improve well-being. With the potential of federal resources being cut, it may be necessary for the philanthropic sector to collaborate with and scale their resources to aid the most vulnerable communities that will be the most affected.

Why Should the Philanthropic Sector Invest in Transition-Aged Youth?

Philanthropy originated from the Greek word *philantropia*, which means "love of mankind." Today, modern philanthropy is defined as the practice of "organized and systematic giving to improve the quality of life through the promotion of welfare and social change" (History Associates, n.d., p. 1). The United States has a deep connection to charitable giving, primarily stemming from religious traditions and cultural practices. The public sector is also known for working with state and local governments in order to leverage dollars to increase efforts in creating sustainable solutions; therefore, collaborating is key.

Philanthropy ought to consider giving California's youth special attention, since the state has the largest population of youth in foster care. According to the Public Policy Institute of California (2010), more than 62,000 young people currently reside in California's foster-care system, with about 35,000 living in L.A. County. Society has a responsibility to these young

people, and philanthropies have an opportunity to use their resources for heightened impact that could benefit youth as they transition into adulthood.

The Anthony and Jeanne Pritzker Foundation, The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, The Stuart Foundation, and The Walter S. Johnson Foundation are some examples of foundations that are funding programs, initiatives, and policies which aim to improve access to social capital among young people who are transitioning out of care. The Stuart Foundation and The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation promote systems-change approaches where they support policy changes, research, and advocacy. In contrast, The Pritzker Foundation and The Walter S. Johnson Foundation fund more direct services and programming.

The analysis below evaluates how foundations define social capital for transition-aged youth and what supports are in place as youth navigate adulthood. Young people in foster care have experienced several losses due to separation and disruption of relationships. Therefore, it is very important that they be able to develop and sustain diverse social networks comprised of quality relationships with their families, schools, neighborhoods, and communities, and peers (Jim Casey Opportunities, 2012b). According to young people, child-welfare and research professionals, social capital is critical for older youth as they transition out of care (Jim Casey Opportunities, 2012b, p. 1). My research further explores how housing, employment, educational services, social supports and relationships are major contributors to helping young people increase their social capital.

Methodology Overview

This study's qualitative research aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of how the philanthropic sector can contribute to the success of transition-age youth by helping them access opportunities to build or increase their social-capital networks. This section will describe the

research methods, participants, interview protocols, data-collection procedure, ethical considerations, and data sources.

Participants

From the literature review and discussions with staff in the field, four philanthropic organizations that support California youth were identified. Philanthropic individuals from these foundations who agreed to be interviewed were: Jeannine Balfour, Program Officer of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation; Winnie Wechsler, Executive Director of the Pritzker Foster Care Initiative with The Anthony and Jeanne Pritzker Foundation; Alexia Everett, Program Officer with the Stuart Foundation; and Yali Lincroft, Program Officer with The Walter S. Johnson Foundation. Table 1 shows that all of these foundations are concerned with transition-age youth and three organizations also focus on disinvested youth. Three foundations also focus on systems-based policy issues and two each on direct-service programs, advocacy and/or research.

Table 1, Foundation Attributes

Name	Targeted Group	Funding Priorities	Staff interviewed
The Antony and Jeanne Pritzker Foundation/Pritzker Foster Care Initiative	• Transition-age foster youth	• Direct-service programs	Winnie Wechsler (Executive Director)
The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation	• Transition-age foster youth • Disinvested youth	• Systems-based policy • Advocacy • Research	Jeannine Balfour (Program Officer)
The Stuart Foundation	• Transition-age foster youth • Disinvested youth	• Systems-based policy • Advocacy • Research	Alexia Everett (Program Officer)
The Walter S. Johnson Foundation	• Transition-age foster youth • Disinvested youth	• Direct-service programs • Systems-based policy	Yali Lincroft (Program Officer)

In addition, two female alumna who had experienced and exited California's foster-care system were identified and interviewed. Programs should not be designed without the perspectives of the people using the services, and program alumni could share such perspectives.

Instrumentation

Semi-structured interviews were conducted. These permitted the interviewer to ask the same questions of each group of participants while also asking for clarification or added information from each individual. Philanthropic organizations were asked what types of programs and models they are funding whereas alumni were asked what resources were available to them as they transitioned out.

Philanthropic interviews (Appendix A) consisted of eight open-ended questions, such as:

- *To what extent do programs that you fund incorporate implicitly or explicitly social capital developments in your strategy?*
- *What approaches or underlying theories of change does your funding represent in transitioning youth out of care?*
- *Are there good examples of evidence-based programs that you are funding that promote and build social capital for foster youth?*
- *How do you evaluate the funding you give to grantees to ensure that the approaches you are using are making an impact?*

Interviews with alumni consisted of 21 questions: five general/background questions, 10 open-ended questions, and six Likert-scale questions asking if specific services were beneficial (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). (Please see Appendix B for a full list of questions).

To better understand the transitioning-out experience and whether supportive connections and opportunities played a role in obtaining social capital, questions like the following were asked

- *Can you describe your transitioning-out experience?*
- *What supports were available to you when you transitioned out?*
- *Did you meet with a social worker/case worker prior to aging out?*
- *Are there specific people in your life who helped you on your journey to where you are today?*

Data Collection

Participants were contacted by email or by text message to schedule an interview. Interviews of 16 to 30 minutes were conducted in person or on the telephone with the four philanthropic organizations and two alumni from February to April 2017. Ashanti was interviewed in person, and Patricia was interviewed over the phone. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and summarized into notes.

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting interviews with the two alumni who experienced the foster care system, I explained the purpose of the research and the questions being asked, and informed them of their right to end the interview at any point or not answer any questions they did not feel comfortable answering. To protect their confidentiality, I also changed their names and did not indicate last names. Both alumni participants gave me permission to record the conversation and use any of the material for the purpose of the study. Informed consent was also obtained to record the one face-to-face interview with Winnie Wechsler of the Pritzker Foundation.

Data Sources

This research project derived its data from: the Baruch College Library database, other colleges and universities, journal articles, issue briefs on child welfare agency sites, infographics, and data in literature reviews. Data were also collected from philanthropic interviews, foster-care alumni interviews, and grantee organizations.

Results and Policy Recommendations

The results of interviews with philanthropic staff are provided in two sections: a discussion of services each philanthropy provides to help transition-age youth build social capital, and then a discussion of themes across these interviews. These interviews help address the following research questions:

- To what extent does the philanthropic sector implement the evidence-based practice of using social capital for transition-aged youth?
- How is social capital incorporated in program funding?

The results of the interviews with two foster care alumni are presented afterwards. These address the research question:

- How is social capital experienced by young people?

A discussion of findings and policy recommendations follows.

Foundation Interviews: Description of Each Foundation's Services

Anthony and Jeanne Pritzker Foundation. The Anthony and Jeanne Pritzker Foundation is a family foundation located in Los Angeles, California. It invests in the LA County community and has been serving that region for over a decade. The foundation's mission is to enrich the LA community so that it is sustainable for future generations. The foundation has a particular focus on medicine, higher education, the environment, and the arts.

However, in 2014, the foundation saw that there was an immediate need to focus on young people transitioning out of care and has since launched the Pritzker Foster Care Initiative. Their mission is to ensure that transition-age youth obtain the education and skills necessary to achieve emotional well-being and financial independence. Part of the focus is funding technological innovations to improve outcomes for former and current foster youth. The initiative receives about 30 percent of overall foundation funding and from that uses about 60 to 70 percent of the budget to support foster-youth programming as they transition out of care.

According to Winnie Wechsler, Executive Director, 50 to 60 percent of Pritzker programming supports social capital programming. When asked why the Pritzker's focused on foster youth, Wechsler shared that Jeanne Pritzker had six children of their own, and as their children were growing older, they had friends who did not have a place to go. They felt a responsibility to these youth, but it also felt natural for them to care for them. Jeanne understood how difficult it was for transition-age youth to secure housing, apply to colleges, and support themselves financially, so she felt that it was her responsibility to help young people as best as she could.

In discussing social capital, Wechsler said:

> Social capital is central to the initiative's mission and grant-making strategy as it pertains to the young person…. the idea of social capital is happening as the youth are aging out of care and that is where they see the investment. (W. Wechsler, personal communication, April 5, 2017)

She went on to explain that the foundation's goal is to partner with grantees to provide not only financial support but a range of services aimed at helping organizations achieve their objectives and fulfill their missions. Currently, the Pritzker's fund programs targeted at youth

employment, college readiness, workforce development, and technology. Some partners include: L.A. Opportunity Youth Collaborative, Year Up, Right Way Foundation, Foster Youth in Action, National Foster Youth Institute and Think of Us.

One priority area is preparing young people for college and workforce development, so as to create pathways to employment. Some investments include:

- **L.A. Opportunity Youth Collaborative:** This centralized database lists resources, services and programs for youth transitioning out of the foster-care system in the central Los Angeles area.
- **Year Up:** This job-training program located in L.A. is not necessarily targeted to foster youth but is funded with the expectation that Year Up will create seven spots for foster youth. This year the first cohort class of about 20 students was launched, but no foster youth enrolled. Year Up has not achieved its goals yet but ideally, it will. Year Up also encourages youth to work with the Opportunity Youth Collaborative so they get to engage with different employment initiatives in L.A. that target foster youth.
- **The Right Way Foundation:** This job-training program is targeted for foster youth.

Stuart Foundation. The Stuart Foundation, located in San Francisco, California, is an educational foundation that works to ensure that educational systems in California and Washington State provide opportunities for students to learn, achieve, and thrive (Stuart Foundation, n.d.). The foundation's guiding principle is an education system that values the "whole child" by strengthening relationships among students, educators, families and communities. The foundation uses a system-change approach as a model for funding to help break down systemic barriers. It also uses advocacy to aid in foundation work and funds specific organizations in those areas. Foundation strategy broadly focuses on investing in practitioners in

the field, educators, college-campus services, Guardian Scholars campuses, and working with people in the field to support building healthy relationships with each other through networks and communities of practice—for example, by convening conferences. The foundation looks to practitioners to come together to share and refine best practices.

The Stuart Foundation also has a couple of decades of experience funding campus-based programs specifically for transition-age youth. The campus-based programs work to develop meaningful relationships with youth in the system by helping them build skills, navigate the education system, and have their needs and resources met. For example, one non-profit organization the foundation works with—Treehouse for Kids, in Washington—works with school districts and has volunteers on-site to check in daily with students who are in foster care to ensure their overall well-being, make sure they are doing well academically, and provide any resources necessary. These organizations have long-standing investment from the Stuart Foundation.

The foundation also supports two youth-led advocacy and organizing organizations: the California Youth Connection (CYC) and The Mockingbird Society, located in Washington. The foundation was one of the first funders to support both agencies, becoming 501(c3) organizations. In order for young people to successfully navigate through adulthood, CYC and Mockingbird Society help young people develop important 21st-century learning skill sets that they will need to transition well: critical thinking, effective communication, and collaboration.

The Stuart Foundation also works with organizations like The National Center for Youth Law (NYCL) and Public Counsel, which work as intermediary policy advocates for foster youth. Their role is to advance educational rights; help staff develop and understand the population; and identify foster youth in the school district to figure out how effectively to serve their needs. Both

organizations also provide direct services. Public Advocates works with transition-age youth whereas NCYL works with youth in care of all ages.

The foundation documents its work through reports and sends out research. One example is a report on looking at college pathways to see youth trends through college. Alexia Everett stated:

> We hope the research gets fed back to practitioners in the field doing the research because it informs policy makers, and through those things we anticipate to see better outcomes for our young people transitioning out of care: more completed degrees, certificates, more livable wages. (A. Everett, personal communication, April 14, 2017)

Walter S. Johnson Foundation. Based in San Francisco, California, The Walter S Johnson Foundation assists transition-aged foster youth and other vulnerable youth aged 16 to 24 in Northern California and Washoe County, Nevada. It helps them to "become successful adults by promoting positive change to the policies and systems that serve them by supporting high impact and promising practices in the following areas: provision of supportive services, and promotion of success in college and career" (Walter S Johnson Foundation, n.d., para. 1).

I spoke with Yali Lincroft, Program Officer at the Walter S Johnson Foundation, and she explained some approaches that the foundation uses to promote social capital for foster youth (Y. Lincroft, personal communication, April 17, 2017). In our interview, she discussed some of the grants the foundation funds to support foster youth. Lincroft stated that social capital is ingrained into the foundation's work and theory of change: specifically, "Foster youth are no different than any other group. They do as well as anybody else, they just need the extra support because they are lacking the infrastructure that most people get with a family."

Though the foundation does not work exclusively with the foster-care population, it ensures that grantees who are working with other populations track which youth are involved with the foster-care system or at risk of entering it. Lincroft believes that programs unique to foster youth, like CYC, are helpful, but broadening programs and ensuring that staff are knowledgeable about the needs of foster youth is also important. Often, larger programs have the most resources and connections that foster youth can access since they are often in transition. Lincroft added that in order for foster youth to access services, they need to be able to trust that the person assisting them is able to help them navigate "this difficult world of trying to become a successful adult."

Lincroft also believes there should be additional supports, other than the government, because there is little room for a young person to make mistakes.

> There are things that most of us assume because we are in strong relationships where we are in safe environments to learn those things (navigating employment, college, etc.), whereas the problem with foster youth is that because the government raises the young person, they do not often have safe places to learn and make mistakes. That is why it is so important that they get non-institutionalized support. (Y. Lincroft, personal communication, April 17, 2017)

Examples of some evidence-based programs with a social capital component that the foundation supports include:

- **Civiccorps**: This is an alternative high school and employment program that targets high school students aged 17-24 in Oakland, California; 20 percent of the youth are former or current foster youth. The program helps these youth get a high-school diploma and job.

- **College Pathways:** This agency provides work-related programs and peer-to-peer support within 2- and 4-year schools.
- **IFoster:** This job-training program in the grocery industry provides good union jobs for foster youth whether youth have a high school diploma or graduate degrees that let them work in the marketing division.
- **Ed Coaches:** Meeting weekly with high school foster youth in Nevada, third-year medical students become quasi-mentors and help youth improve their grades. The foundation loves this model because it relieves the burden from social workers who may have extra caseloads. According to Lincroft, youth also want mentors who are younger, not too professional, and can just talk to them.
- **Ed Champions:** Retired former school officials working on system-level change, Ed Champions understand that some problems are systemic, so they help change practices. For example, if a young person has an individualized education plan (IEP) and is not receiving adequate services, Ed Champions advocate on behalf of the youth by talking directly with school districts.

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. According to Jeannine Balfour, Program Officer, the foundation's mission is to help improve the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable populations throughout the world using a systems-change approach. (J. Balfour, personal communication, April 17, 2017). The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation specifically funds work in New York and Los Angeles, as the two largest metropolitan cities in the country, with lots of opportunities to see systematic changes. There is also a large network of funders in those two states, so the foundation partners with them to leverage dollars for the joint work they are doing.

While the foundation focuses on broad populations, foster youth are a priority area. A key aspect of this work involves transition youth ages 16 to 24, with much of this funding going into career readiness and helping young people gain access to college. The foundation's theory of change is based on a systems-change approach, with the idea that if one funds programs through the lens of policy, advocacy, research, and evaluation, that helps influence systems change by informing policy, which in turn informs practice and program change. Balfour says the foundation looks at systems and advocacy under one bucket, research in another bucket, and programs in another bucket, but sees these all interacting to produce change.

Here are some evidence-based programs that the foundation funds to help young people establish social capital:

- **United Friends of the Children:** This organization connects middle-school students to tutoring services, follows them through high school, and helps them prepare for college. The unique aspect of this program is that mentors work with young people no matter if the young person moves from a different foster home. The program has positive outcomes in helping young people graduate from high school and remain in college.
- **City University of New York (CUNY) Start:** This intensive college-preparation program works with young people who have already been accepted to CUNY but have significant learning needs. For example, they have not passed one or more of the CUNY assessment tests or remedial classes and need to attend these to enter school. Young people also receive access to transportation and other needed supports.
- **The CUNY Start-ASAP Foster Care Initiative Program:** This program works with young people in the New York foster-care system who are pursuing an associate's degree; it provides wraparound services so that students graduate in a timely manner.

The program aims to connect young people to a CUNY start program upon completion of the Associate's Degree.

A study conducted by the education- and social-policy-research organization Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (2014) found that the program's graduation and retention rates are high and that this was one of the best college programs for youth.

To summarize, these foundations recognize philanthropy's role in creating better outcomes for vulnerable youth. They are also funding programs and projects in diverse ways.

Foundation Interviews: Themes Regarding Social Capital

The findings from this research project are informed by foundation staff, who shared their experience of working with grantees and the foundation, and young people, who shared their personal experience with the child-welfare system and philanthropies. The section below addresses the research questions: To what extent does the philanthropic sector implement the evidence-based practice of using social capital for transition-aged youth? How is social capital incorporated in program funding? How is social capital experienced by young people?

In this study, social capital was foundational to understanding how foundations supported these developments for young people, and how the alumni experienced it. During the interviews, each foundation expressed how important it was for foster youth to have the ability to access and obtain social capital so that they can transition into adulthood well. Alexia Everett from the Stuart Foundation stated, "Social capital makes all of the difference because relationships are foundational to everything and you can do anything as long as you have quality relationships to support you" (A. Everett, personal communication, April 14, 2017). Winnie Wechsler from the Pritzker Foundation also felt that it was particularly important for foundations to invest in transition-age youth beyond 21 because even after young people age out, they still need support

(W. Wechsler, personal communication, April 5, 2017). While the foundations represented invest in foster youth beyond age 25, many youth-focused foundations do not.

In looking at how the foundations approach social capital whether explicitly or not, each foundation addressed it differently. The Pritzker Foundation and Walter S. Johnson Foundation fund direct services and programming, whereas The Stuart Foundation, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, and Walter S. Johnson Foundation focus on systems-change—supporting policy changes and advocacy.

Many foundations, including the Walter S. Johnson and Stuart Foundation, worked on passing the AB-12 bill to extend foster care in California. Yali Lincroft of the Walter S. Johnson Foundation said, "There is always a strong policy component to every grant we make with the government because we think about the bigger systems involved" (Y. Lincroft, personal communication, April 17, 2017). The foundation credits its policy emphasis for some of its biggest victories passing bills like the Transitional Housing Program for foster youth, and for helping to extend health care for foster youth from 21 to 26 through the Affordable Care Act.

Even though the foundations approach funding for transition-age youth differently, they collaborate with one another to make sure they are making the most impact through different programs, policies, or initiatives. For example, in 2005, The Stuart Foundation and The Walter S. Johnson Foundation worked together on creating the California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I). The initiative awarded six million dollars over six years to help eight child-welfare agencies provide better services and housing for foster youth (Courtney et al., 2013).

In addition, both the Hilton and Pritzker foundations are funding IFoster, a job training program for young people in the foster-care system. IFoster recently announced an employer tax bill for foster youth, *Improved Employment Outcomes For Foster Youth Act of 2016*, which will

amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to include transition-age foster youth as categorically eligible for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit. Employers may be eligible to receive a credit of up to $2,400 annually for each foster youth hired (McDermott, 2016).

In the interviews, some funders mentioned that, while there is a focus on preparing young people for college, there also needs to be more emphasis on foster youth well-being. The Walter S. Johnson Foundation also felt that there were not enough funders working on employment opportunities for young people who do not want to attend college.

When asked how the foundations conduct formal evaluations of the organizations they fund to ensure that their grants are making an impact, each of the organizations conduct evaluations differently because grantees are invited to apply for grants. Usually, the organizations they fund are reputable and have been working in the community or on the foundation's priorities for a long time. Jeannine Balfour and Winnie Wechsler stated that they have personal relationships with their grantees, so they are very involved with the work they are doing. They do complete site visits with the grantees to get a firsthand perspective, ask for progress reports, and offer grantees additional support as needed.

The Walter S. Johnson Foundation funds by invitation only. Grantees are selected based on the county or peers referring them, or based on whether they won state or national awards. When selecting grantees, the foundation looks at scale to ensure agency programs are robust and enduring. All of the program examples Lincroft mentioned above have won awards and have served 100 students or more.

The Stuart Foundation does conduct formal evaluations, and works in partnership with grantees to see what they are learning and achieving. It then thinks about the data sources to draw on to get a better understanding of the progress made. Alexia Everett says that staff are

less interested in knowing what meetings grantees have had, and more interested in learning what success looks like and how they measure the achievements and goals they set for themselves. The foundation also shares evaluation results to help inform the field, so that policy makers and practitioners know how to implement changes. Everett also stated that because the foundation takes a systems-based approach, it tends to focus broadly on evaluating policies and programs. For example, it partnered with other funders to support the five-million-dollar evaluation of the AB12-Extension of Foster Care through the Chapin Hall Study.

When asked if programs they fund are evidence-based, Lincroft from the Walter S. Johnson Foundation talked about evaluating training curricula for the job training programs listed above (Y. Lincroft, personal communication, April 17, 2017). She looks at the curricula, and from that learns why these programs are successful. Broadly, they address the need for social capital and convey that programs understand that emergencies will come up for young people and are there to support them.

Lincroft also said the easiest measure of success is students' graduating or getting a job. Civic Core has 78 percent of youth graduating and 80 percent still working a year after they finish the program. She says that their benchmarks are better than those of state and federal governments. "It's important to use benchmarks that are realistic, comparing to the government metrics that make sense." Grantees are asked how their metrics compare to results from the county, government, or peers doing similar work. Most grantees are doing better because they have greater flexibility. For example, Ifoster can take longer than the state to train young people before youth start their program. IFoster does six weeks of training before they place young people at a job compared to the county, which trains for six hours for six days. As a result of Ifoster's approach, youth feel much more prepared.

Stuart Foundation Alexia Everett (personal communication, April 14, 2017) also stated that Treehouse used an evidence-based model called "Check and Connect" and that the model seemed to be doing well in supporting student achievement. She added:

> Evidence-based programs can be a really good thing, but it is important to recognize that just because something is evidence-based does not mean that it will have the same impact if implemented somewhere else. You can show something as being evidence-based in a particular region but recognize that the model may not work or be successful somewhere else. People are different, contexts are different...there is no cookie-cutter way. (A. Everett, personal communication, April 14, 2017)

She added that CYC and The Mockingbird Society may not be evidence-based, but have data to show that young people who are engaged with them tend to be more engaged in school and have better outcomes. She said the same thing about The Guardian Scholars programs and other campus-based programs that connect youth to very strong and supportive relationships.

> At the end of the day the biggest thing is: Does a young person have someone who cares about them, have a strong connection with? Once you have the connection, you can deal with any remedial issues or needs, you can deal with skill deficits, all of the stuff is easy to do as long as a young person is connected to someone who has their skills and is able to maintain a connection with that young person. (A. Everett, personal communication, April 14, 2017)

Interviews with Child-Welfare-System Alumna

Getting firsthand perspectives from alumni who had experienced the foster-care system also helped provide insight into the importance of obtaining social capital. Ashanti and Patricia both aged out of California's foster-care system in 2008, prior to passage of the Federal

Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (AB 12) so they were not eligible to extend foster care. Patricia was still in high school and remained in care until she was 19, but once she graduated she was eligible for congregate care and was able to live in alumni housing. Ashanti became homeless while she was in care and did not have access to any services because she was not aware of what was available to her.

When asked what services and supports helped them during their transitions, they both identified programs and people beyond the child welfare system. Patricia and Ashanti were both recipients of programs and services that were funded by some of the foundations I interviewed. Ashanti was a part of UCLA's Bruins Guardian Scholars program, actively funded by the Stuart Foundation and The Anthony and Jeanne Pritzker foundation. Ashanti also received a clothing voucher from the John Burton Advocates for Youth, a statewide non-profit organization based in San Francisco which works to improve the quality of life for California's foster, former foster, and homeless youth; this organization is funded by The Walter S. Johnson Foundation. Patricia also talked about the importance of employment opportunities and was a recipient of The Jim Casey Opportunity Passport program.

When asked about relationships, Patricia talked about how a mentor and caseworker, not affiliated with the child-welfare system, helped her access services. Ashanti's high-school teacher was a main support during her transition; he also informed her about college and housing. Even though they both identified at least one support, they both wanted more supports so they could access social capital. Ashanti says, "Social capital was not available to me until someone told me about it" and she also said that if her teacher had not seen potential in her, she would be a completely "different story." Both Patricia and Ashanti also credit their success to

seeking out opportunities and navigating the system. Ashanti knew to look online for support and Patricia openly accessed the services that were offered to her.

The results from this study showed how the philanthropic sector supports social-capital development for foster youth as they transition out of care. The study also looked at what specific evidence-based models were in place for young people in California. In library research and interviews, I learned that the philanthropic sector has dedicated a considerable amount of funding to help change social policy that is relevant to transition-age youth and to improve services and housing options for transition-aged foster youth in California. It should also be noted that foundations understood the necessity of helping young people build social capital, but each foundation understood the definition of social capital differently. Because the definition is so broad, they had an idea of what social capital meant, but some could not explicitly state what it was and just used examples of how they defined it in their work.

Policy Recommendations

Based on this study, I make several policy recommendations.

(1) There is a need for more philanthropies to join the movement and collaborate so that more foster youth can benefit from the funds resources and expertise which the philanthropic sector can allocate to transition-age youth. For instance, funders were able to provide supports and services to both Patricia and Ashanti as they transitioned out of care where the government did not. The two women credit those financial and educational supports as stepping stones to their success today. It is also important that funders understand the impact their programs have on young lives.

All of the foundations interviewed mentioned working in collaboration with each other when funding different projects for foster youth. Partnering helps them scale the work for

greater impact. These foundations are members of the Youth Transition Funders Group, which is a national network of funders that work together to support the well-being and economic success of transition-age youth between the ages of 14-25. At their spring meeting in Los Angeles, on April 4-6, which I attended at the invite of Matt Cervantes from The Sierra Health Foundation, I observed how foundations around the table discussed their policy priorities, heard about the work some grantees are doing in the field, and discussed how to get other funders involved. More foundations should get involved with the Youth Funders Transition Group. This would help them learn about opportunities to work with youth and build connections and findings to scale up results.

(2) Foundations should broaden their areas of focus. In the interviews, some funders mentioned that while there is a focus on preparing young people for college, there also needs to be more emphasis on foster youth's well-being (see Pecora, 2010). The Walter S. Johnson Foundation also felt that there were not enough funders working on employment opportunities for young people who do not want to attend college.

Furthermore, foundations thought they should broaden their work to the general population and disadvantaged populations, since foster youth are a part of different systems they work with, such as criminal justice and education. For instance, The Stuart Foundation funds alternative schools in California that foster youth attend. Yali Lincroft from the Walter S. Johnson Foundation also believed that foster youth would benefit more if their care were integrated into other youth programs that are larger and get more funding. (Y. Lincroft, personal communication, April 17, 2017). While I understand those sentiments, foster youth also have special needs that organizations can best meet if they are working with these youth.

(3) Foundations should include services for older youth. While foundations emphasized the importance of young people forming life-long relationships, their scope of work with young people ended between 24 and 25. Patricia and Ashanti talked about how lifelong relationships were needed during their transition and until now. Foundations should invest in more programs for young people beyond the age of 25. These programs should focus on well-being and relationships since most adults still need someone in their lives. For example, Journey House, Inc. is a California program located in Pasadena that works with foster youth beyond foster care and has no age limits.

(4) Foundations should work to make sure that transition-aged youth are aware of the opportunities that are available to them. The interviews with child welfare alumna showed that these youth were initially not aware of services and resources to help with a smooth transition.

(5) More policies and procedures should be in place in the child welfare system to make sure that staff are doing their jobs. Ashanti and Patricia both discussed how the child welfare system failed them. Ashanti should not have been homeless at the age of 17 when she was still a ward of the state. Her social worker should have been present and checked-in periodically. There should have been more accountability to ensure that Ashanti and her family were stable. Even though the bill extending foster care had not yet been passed, other laws and policies were supposed to assist young people exiting care. However, Ashanti and Patricia showed remarkable resiliency and self-determination despite the challenges they experienced. Although they missed supportive relationships to some extent, they did not let that deter them from achieves success in other areas.

Limitations and Directions for Research

Looking at social capital as a framework for foster youth success is a fairly new concept within child welfare so there was limited research on the topic. For future research, it may be helpful for child-welfare experts to use a narrower definition to explain social capital. Another limitation is that public agencies do not always track young people after they transition out of care, so it was difficult to find information on long-term outcomes and well-being.

With regard to this study, the sample size of foundation staff and alumni are small. For future studies, it would be helpful to look beyond California and interview more alumni for a greater variety of perspectives. Because the two alumni aged out before extension of foster care (AB 12), there were no perspectives on how AB 12 has affected foster care. Further, the alumni were not randomly selected, and the information provided was self-reported and therefore could not be independently verified. Self-reported data may be biased or incongruent with other data sources which were provided in this research.

Furthermore, I did not have the ability to do a comprehensive longitudinal study because of lack of time. For future research, it would be better to do a longitudinal study to get an in-depth understanding of social capital as it relates to foster youth in California. Lastly, because I had personally experienced the foster care system, I may have been biased in my research. However, I tried to ask objective questions and did not mention my personal experience.

Looking Forward

Entering adulthood presents many questions and unknowns. In particular, transitioning foster youth face more barriers than other young people, such as homelessness, incarceration, unemployment, mental-health challenges, and issues in gaining access to relationships, housing, employment, and education. Opportunities that lead to social capital are critical for youth

success, and the philanthropic sector plays a vital role in helping young people in California transition well.

However, despite the many challenges, some youth who have experienced the foster care system are resilient, especially if they learn how to obtain opportunities that lead to social capital. Often, the way people find out about opportunities is through a relationship. Youth themselves may be a gateway to helping other youth find their way.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for Philanthropic Organizations

Research Question: To what extent is the evidence-based practice of using social capital for transition-age youth implemented; how is it incorporated in funding of programs; and how is this experienced by youth?

1. In your work in youth development, please describe your work directly or indirectly around transition-age youth.
2. To what extent do programs that you fund incorporate implicitly or explicitly social capital developments in your strategy?
3. What approaches or underlying theories of change does your funding represent in transitioning youth out of care?
4. Are there good examples of evidence-based programs that you are funding that promote and build social capital for foster youth?
5. How do you evaluate the funding you give to grantees to ensure that the approaches you are using are making an impact?
6. Do you conduct formal evaluations on the grants that you all give?
7. Follow up question: To what extent do you share the results of that evaluation?
8. Any other questions or comments you would like to add?

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Alumni of Foster-Care System

These research questions are designed to get a better understanding of what you're transitioning-out experience was like. I am writing this thesis for a research project for school so this will not be widely published. In keeping with confidentiality; I will also change your names to protect your identity. You are free to stop this interview at any point. Do you have any questions?

I am doing a research project on evidence-based practice, social connections (social capital) and support in foster care transitions so I am going to ask you some questions about your experience and I want your opinion on how well you think these best practices have been incorporated based on your experience. When describing social capital, I think about resources that young people need most and are able to access such as education, housing, employment, social and emotional support, like mentors and coaches. Social capital is defined as a sociological concept made up of intangible resources that emerge from social interactions and relationships, and are critical assets for success. Social capital also embodies networks, norms, trust, reputation, and goodwill. Does this definition resonate with how you define social capital?

Is this how you understand it?

- What age did you enter into care?
    - How long were you in care?
    - Did you age out, reunite with family (or other), or become adopted?
    - What state did you age out in?
    - Did your state have extended foster care? If so, did you age out at 18 or stay signed in until 21?

1. Can you tell me about your transition out of foster care?
2. What supports were available to you when you transitioned out?
3. What additional supports do you think would have been beneficial?"
4. Did you meet with a social worker/case worker prior to aging out?
    a) If so, when did they begin talking to you about a transition plan,
    or did they help you create a plan?
5. To the best of your knowledge, to what extent were issues related to social capital explicitly incorporated into your transition plan? (e.g., housing, jobs, social supports)
6. What supports/networks/resources did you have in place when you aged out?
7. Are there specific people in your life who helped you on your journey?
8. Do you think social capital is necessary for foster youth when they transition out?
9. To what extent were the connections that were made for you in your transition plan (housing, employment, educational services) critical to your success?
10. Were there any government programs that you were a part of that incorporates social capital explicitly or implicitly?

Did you find the following to be beneficial? Please rate as follows: 5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree

Transition Plan	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Access to Housing	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Access to Employment	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Access to Educational Services	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Access to Social Worker post-transition	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Access to Mental Health Services	1	2	3	4	5	N/A