AN EXPLORATORY STUDY: FOSTER CARE STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF COLLEGE CAMPUS SUPPORT PROGRAMS

by

NATHANIEL O. BROWN

(Under the Direction of Rosemary Phelps)

ABSTRACT

This exploratory and quantitative study examined foster care students' knowledge of college campus support programs tailored to their specific needs. Using snowball sampling to recruit participants, the Foster Students College and University Survey measured foster students' knowledge of campus support programs. The study used survey research that provided open-ended questions for additional feedback. One-way ANOVAS, independent t-tests, and p-value were used to analyze the data quantitatively. Gender identity and institution type attended in the past was related to campus connectedness. Academic self-efficacy is not related to college student expectations. Student classification was related to career self-efficacy. Descriptive statistics help to create a picture of a population that has been hard to access in the midst of transitioning from foster care to postsecondary institutions.

INDEX WORDS: Foster care, Student affairs, Counselors, School Counselors, Social Workers, Transition, Emancipation, Age Out, Foster Care Youth, Quantitative with qualitative elements, postsecondary education

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by

NATHANIEL O. BROWN

B.S., Lander University, 2002

M.S.W., Clark Atlanta University, 2005

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by

NATHANIEL O. BROWN

Major Professor: Rosemary Phelps

Committee: Pamela Paisley
Deryl Bailey

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
December 2017

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to all of the young adults transitioning from foster care to independence seeking a better life through P–16 educational opportunities and employment.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In reflecting on my transition from foster care to undergraduate postsecondary education, I remember the challenges of and barriers to balancing meeting my basic needs and pursuing a college degree. It was difficult to navigate both with little to no support after foster care. As a researcher, I believe in engaging in the process of reflection. I consider my own personal journey of living in the foster care system a milestone worthy of reflection in connecting the reader to my population. In doing so, I recognize that this dissertation is more than a research activity meeting a requirement in my doctoral program. It is a personal journey that serves as a reminder of accomplishment and perseverance. More importantly, it furthers needed research to improve the postsecondary education attainment of foster students.

According to Djuraskovic and Arthur (2010), a reflection provides a personal encounter and an attempt to discover the nature and meaning of a phenomenon through internal self-search, exploration, and discovery. Even though this study is not intended to be conducted in the first person to reflect the researcher's personal experience in its entirety, the *Aging Out* (Weisberg, 2004) docudrama and research tradition have inextricably influenced me to link research with personal experience. My transition from foster care to college began at the end of my high school senior year. I resided in a foster group home in rural South Carolina, where school and social services officials encouraged me to pursue postsecondary education. At the time, I felt pressure, uncertainty, and confusion and lacked the necessary tools to support me in my transition to

college. My mind was consumed by my lack of financial resources and a feeling of stigma and marginalization.

Despite the encouragement to attend college, I received little insight into or information on how to manage the transition from foster care to college successfully. I often wondered how I could complete my undergraduate experience successfully without needed resources and support. I knew in my head and heart that not all foster care stories end well. When the docudrama *Aging Out* (Weisberg, 2004) was catapulted to the center of the homicide investigation and death penalty trial of Juan Jose Chavez, no one could imagine the spotlight that would illuminate the experiences of teenagers who "aged out" of the foster care system in America. The docudrama was dedicated to the memory of Risa Bejarano, an 18-year-old Latina from Los Angeles, California, who spent approximately 10 years in foster care and served as an advocate for teenagers leaving the foster care system (Weisberg & Roth, 2011). Ms. Bejarano was brutally murdered and unable to fulfill her dream of completing postsecondary education (Austin, 2014). On October 31, 2007, Mr. Chavez was sentenced to death for her murder (Weisberg & Roth, 2011).

A year earlier, Risa Bejarano had participated in the docudrama about her experience in foster care (Austin, 2014). At first, Ms. Bejarano appeared to be one of thousands of homicide victims about whom very little would be known. Then authorities discovered the documentary describing her transition from the foster care system (Weisberg & Roth, 2011). The *Aging Out* docudrama (Weisberg, 2004) was designed to chronicle the daunting obstacles that three young people in foster care encountered as they aged out of the system and were suddenly on their own for the first time. More importantly, it served as a voice and reference for helping young people

make a safer and more successful transition from foster care to independent living and adulthood (Weisberg & Roth, 2011).

In the docudrama, Risa Bejarano said, “Not a lot of foster kids go to college. We don’t have as much support as other kids who do have parents. I’m lost” (Weisberg, 2004). She also stated, “My goal was to get to school, but now that I am in school, it’s hard for me to deal with it because I never saw myself there” (Weisberg, 2004). Many systems and people were in and out of her life, including a child welfare agency, P–12 principals and educators, college professors and peers, foster parents, child welfare case workers, police, doctors, courts, judges, and school counselors (Weisberg et al, 2011). They all shared responsibility for protecting and helping foster students navigate the transition from foster care to college. Unfortunately, they did not uphold their responsibilities, and many foster students seemed to wander in darkness without a flashlight or compass to guide them on the path towards a successful transition.

It is the role and responsibility of each practitioner, supervisor, administrator, and educator to utilize the Advocacy Competencies of the American Counseling Association (ACA) (Toporek et al., 2009) and the ACA’s mission statement (ACA, 2017) as guides in advocating for underrepresented, underserved, marginalized, and oppressed populations. More importantly, our role and responsibility serve as a call to action that requires movement from and beyond advocacy to activism. Toporek, Lewis, and Crethar (2009) reminded members of the profession that counselors have always been change agents and advocates who have recognized that clients (and students) often need more than what face-to-face counseling can provide. Toporek et al. (2009) further acknowledged that career and employment counselors fight against racism and sexism in the workplace, family counselors bring hidden violence and abuse into the open, school counselors seek to eliminate school-based barriers to learning, and community counselors

participate in social action on behalf of their clients. Despite not receiving long-overdue credit for the profession's advocacy efforts, counselors have been counselor-advocates since its inception of the profession (Ratts et al., 2010). While progress has been made over the years, the counseling profession has a great deal of work that still needs to be done. More progress is greatly needed to accomplish the task of advocating at individual and systemic levels. Both levels should be integrated rather than separated.

One particular group that would benefit from advocacy at individual and systemic levels is foster students. In addressing the social justice concerns of foster students matriculating at postsecondary institutions, professional counselors should use the ACA competencies (Ratts et al., 2010) in developing interventions appropriate for college students. The advocacy domains that may help focus interventions to support this population include the following:

- client/student advocacy focused on helping individuals negotiate contextual barriers that constrain development and well-being through identifying allies and securing resources
- client/student empowerment focused on working with individuals in counseling to help them understand the social, political, economic, and cultural factors that affect them
- systems advocacy focused on altering micro-level systems that constrain healthy development and well-being (Ratts et al., 2010)

Interventions grounded in theory and guided by ACA competencies will ensure that counselors and student personnel services professionals address and meet the needs of college-bound foster students historically marginalized and overlooked in educational systems.

Statement of the Problem

Changes in the United States economy have made postsecondary education more important than ever for youth in foster care (Day, Dworsky, & Feng, 2013). When considering

postsecondary education for these students, counselors and student personnel services professionals need to consider access, enrollment, transition, and completion. While access to postsecondary education has benefitted students who have experienced foster care, such access may not be enough to help these students persist to graduation. Moreover, the disparity in graduation rates illustrates the need for colleges and universities to provide students who have been in foster care with both tangible and intangible supports, not only when they first enroll in college but also until they graduate successfully (Day et al., 2013). Tangible supports include financial aid, childcare, housing, and work/study opportunities (Day et al., 2013).

Intangible supports refer to relationships with faculty and staff as well as opportunities to interact with fellow students who have experienced the foster care system (Day et al., 2013). Students with histories of abuse and neglect are further affected by a lack of role models, financial constraints, limited life skills, and inexperience dealing with the conundrums of higher education (Daly, 2011). Foster youth are essentially thrust into "independence" at age 18 without the supports that are available to their contemporaries in the general population (Daly, 2011). Although youth in foster care report high educational aspirations, as few as four percent obtain four-year college degrees (Kirk, Lewis-Moss, Nilsen, & Colvin, 2011). These are but a few of the challenges foster students confront. As statistical figures continue to shift and not in favor of this population, more work needs to be done by counselors and student affairs professionals to help these individuals persist to graduation and become more independent in building lives they choose (Kirk et al., 2011).

Kirk and Day (2011) reported that many foster youth transition out of foster care with few, if any, financial resources. These youth are limited in education, training, and employment options with no safe place to live or support from family, friends, and the community (Kirk &

Day, 2011). Foster youth experience a range of cognitive and emotional challenges as they traverse the road from foster care to emancipation (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). As a result, foster care youth are particularly vulnerable to negative social outcomes such as jail, homelessness, unemployment, and teen pregnancy and parenthood (Kirk & Day, 2011). Unrau, Font, and Rawls (2011) affirmed that youth aging out of foster care struggle more than other young adults across a number of lifespan developmental domains, including academics and education, finances and employment, housing, physical and mental health, social relationships and community connections, personal and cultural identity development, and general acquisition of life skills.

Often, ill-prepared students experience multiple school changes in their secondary educational experiences and do not have the opportunity to make significant connections or develop mentoring relationships that promote stable academic matriculation (Kirk & Day, 2011). For example, at age 19, only 18% of foster youth are pursuing four-year degrees, compared to 62% of their peers (Kirk & Day, 2011). Moreover, Unrau et al. (2011) and Courtney, Dworsky, Lee, and Raap (2010) found the need to be in full-time employment, parenting responsibilities, and a lack of transportation to be the main barriers to higher education access among foster youth lacking financial resources. These individual and systemic obstacles provide insight into why foster youth are less likely to access, remain at, and persist in college.

Pascarella and Terenzini (1983) reported that student withdrawal from postsecondary institutions in general is a serious phenomenon that has a number of important implications for students as well as institutions. Tinto (1975) developed a theoretical model, descriptive in nature, that specifies the conditions under which varying types of departure occur. In doing so, Tinto’s theory explains departure from institutions of higher education but may not be exhaustive

enough to include special populations without the same familial structure and support as the general population.

Students enter a particular institution with a range of background traits (e.g., race, secondary school experiences, academic aptitude, and family background) (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1983). Therefore, the commitment of the institution to students is paramount for providing access to needed services, retention, and persistence to graduation. Historically, foster students may not have been highlighted in college counseling and student personnel services literature as having needs requiring additional support on campus. As campus support programs develop to address the attrition and retention challenges of this population, these students should have opportunities to contribute feedback regarding programs claiming to meet their specific needs. The call to action for counselors and student personnel services professionals is to acknowledge and represent populations historically underrepresented, underserved, marginalized, and oppressed in higher education settings in the same manner that the profession has been expected to advocate for those who are not pursuing postsecondary education.

Purpose of the Study

Adams et al. (2013) reiterated that the goal of social justice is full and equal participation of all groups in a society mutually shaped to meet their needs. The purpose of this exploratory study is to determine the knowledge of foster students participating in college campus support programs and how their interactions and connections with program staff may aid in improving postsecondary retention, persistence, and college completion. The study may reveal how foster students become aware of programs tailored specifically to their unique needs, raise important questions about the aspects or success factors of campus support programs that encourage them to remain in college and persist to graduation, and help these students overcome personal

adversity, limited educational opportunities, and challenging socioeconomic circumstances to excel academically. As a result, college administrators, student personnel services staff, faculty, and counselors may gain a deeper understanding of how to design, develop, and execute programs leading towards improved college completion rates.

Significance of the Study

Gaps in higher education achievement and barriers to persistence were significant reasons for conducting this study. Foster youth experience very low rates of college attendance (Courtney, 2009). Fewer than 10% of foster youth attend college (Courtney et al., 2010). One study that tracked enrollment of foster care youth in postsecondary education found that only 26% completed a degree or certificate, 16% completed a vocational/technical degree, and only 2.7% completed a four-year degree (Pecora et al., 2006). Many who do enroll do not persist to degree completion (Day, 2011).

Using data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Davis (2006) found that only 26% of "college-qualified" foster youth earn a degree or certificate within six years of enrollment, compared with 56% of their peers who had not been in foster care. Researchers have only recently begun to investigate college enrollment and retention among youth who have aged out of the foster care system with high school diplomas (Day, 2011). However, no study has been conducted to determine the knowledge of foster students participating in campus support programs. Young people with a history of foster care are not only less likely to graduate high school but are also less likely to be prepared for, attend, and complete college compared to the general population of students who are graduating from high school (Day, 2011). Therefore, the findings from this study are expected to contribute to improvements in postsecondary institutional policy and practice that will improve graduation rates for foster students.

Research Questions

The questions and hypotheses examined in this study were as follows:

RQ1. How does campus connectedness of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students (as measured by the Campus Connectedness Scale) correlate with engagement in a campus support program to meet their needs (as indicated by the Guardian/Renaissance Scholars Student Survey)?

Hypotheses

1. Currently enrolled female foster care undergraduate students will have higher levels of campus connectedness and engagement in a specifically-developed campus support program than currently enrolled male foster care undergraduate students.
2. Currently enrolled White foster care undergraduate students will have higher campus connectedness and engagement in a specifically-developed campus support program than currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students of color.
3. Sexual orientation of currently enrolled foster care undergraduates will be related to campus connectedness and engagement in a specifically-developed campus support program.
4. Grade point average is related to campus connectedness and engagement in a specifically-developed campus support program for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.
5. For currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students, institution type attended in the past will be related to campus connectedness and engagement in a specifically-developed campus support program.

RQ2. What is the relationship between the academic self-efficacy (as measured by the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale) and expectations (as measured by the College Student Expectations Questionnaire) of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students participating in a campus support program to meet their needs?

Hypotheses

1. Currently enrolled female foster care undergraduate students will have higher academic self-efficacy than currently enrolled male foster care undergraduate students participating in a specifically-developed campus support program.
2. Highest level of education expected to complete will be related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.
3. Gender will be related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.
4. Number of courses taken will be related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations.
5. Race or ethnicity of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students will be related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations.
6. Grade point average will be related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.
7. Institution type attended in the past will be related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.

RQ3. How do college student experiences (as measured by the College Student Experiences Survey) of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students participating in a

campus support program correlate with career self-efficacy (as measured by the Career Search Self-Efficacy Scale)?

Hypotheses

1. Gender will be related to college student experiences and career self-efficacy for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.
2. Student classification will be related to college student experiences and career self-efficacy for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.
3. Sexual orientation of currently enrolled foster care undergraduates will be related to college student experiences and career self-efficacy for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.
4. Grade point average of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students will be related to college student experiences and career self-efficacy.
5. Race or ethnicity of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students will be related to college student experiences and career self-efficacy.

Delimitations

The study was not intended to generalize feedback to all students who have experienced foster care nor impose a snapshot of their understanding of campus support programs onto the general population. Its purpose was to provide insight, information, and understanding from students who have actually participated in campus support programs in an effort to understand foster students' knowledge of campus support programs. The researcher does not assume that these experiences are linear in scope. The study aimed to provide a voice to a population historically silenced. The study further aimed to provide a forum and space for members of this population to share their experiences of how they became aware of and have utilized campus

support programs to persist to college completion. This study provided counselors, college administrators, and student personnel services professionals with knowledge to design, develop, execute, and improve college campus support programs for foster students.

Definition of Terms

This section provides definitions of key terms used in this study:

1. *Child welfare services* are public social services directed towards protecting and promoting the welfare of children (California Department of Social Services, 2009; California Codes, 2009a; Daly, 2011).
2. *Emancipated youth* are former foster youth who have left foster care because they have reached at least 18 years of age and up to the day prior to their 21st birthday, or who have been emancipated prior to age 18 by court order (Daly, 2011).
3. *Foster care* is a broad term that refers to the court system's removing youth from their homes and placing them into the care of a state agency charged with providing for their basic needs and well-being. Foster care is intended to provide a temporary home away from home while the agency works with the child's family to eliminate or minimize the safety issues that caused agency involvement. Foster care involves the provision of 24-hour care and supervision to a child who has been placed by a child placing agency, including county child welfare services and probation departments, in one of the following types of foster homes: an approved foster family home; a family home certified by a licensed foster family agency for its exclusive use; a home, pursuant to a court order or voluntary placement agreement; a licensed foster family home; a licensed group home for children; or a licensed small family home (Kirk et al, 2011).

4. *Aging out of foster care.* Youth are aged out of foster care upon their 18th birthdays; at this time, they are discharged from the system of care (Hedenstrom, 2014).
5. *Successful aging out of foster care.* Youth are viewed as having successfully aged out of foster care when they perceive their transition into adulthood as successful, avoid incarceration, and are not currently homeless. Other indicators of success include employment or the completion of high school or general equivalency development (GED). Ultimately, success is perceived through the eyes of those who personally experience aging out of foster care (Hendenstrom, 2014).
6. *Unsuccessful aging out of foster care.* Unsuccessful aging out of foster care is evident when youth are fully dependent upon others for their basic needs (e.g., food and housing) after 21 years of age, unless they are enrolled in a technical college, military service, or a two- or four-year college. Other indicators include the lack of a high school diploma or GED, incarceration, and homelessness (Hendenstrom, 2014).
7. *Other Educational Opportunities Programs* are a variety of educational opportunity programs developed at the state, federal, and community level to increase student college access, assist with the transition to higher education, and support college persistence, academic achievement, and successful completion of higher education. These college Access and Success Programs primarily provide support to students from lower-income, first-generation, and other student groups underrepresented in higher education. Additionally, schools, colleges, foundations, corporations, and non-profit and other organizations fund scholarship, pre-college preparation, and college support and success programs (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2015).

8. *EMBARK Georgia* (2015) is a collaborative statewide network that utilizes designated points of contact to help postsecondary professionals and institutions ensure connectivity, share best practices, and exchange information among youth, community-based stakeholders, and K–12 educators in support of youth who have experienced foster care and homelessness. Designated points of contact provide a specific contact person for students who identify as having experienced homelessness or foster care.

CHAPTER 2

SELECTED REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the selected literature that supports the need to explore the knowledge of foster students participating in campus support programs. The aim of this chapter is to provide a general overview of foster care, describe the value and benefits of higher education, highlight challenges of postsecondary retention and completion, and review developing campus support programs that help foster students in postsecondary attainment. The chapter also focuses on EMBARK Georgia and the partnership formed between the University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia. The goal is to provide a snapshot of the work occurring to increase the postsecondary attainment of foster students. Integrated elements provide a working knowledge of developed programs necessitating an exploratory study to fill a critical gap in the existing literature.

What is Foster Care?

Foster care is a broad term referring to the court system's removing youth from their homes and placing them into the care of a state agency charged with providing for their basic needs and well-being (Hedenstrom, 2014; Kirk et al., 2011). The Texas Education Agency (2013) further emphasized that foster care is utilized when children are unable to live safely at home and an appropriate non-custodial parent, relative, or close family friend is currently unable or unwilling to care for them. The court grants temporary legal possession to child protective services, and the agency temporarily places children into safe environments (Texas Education Agency, 2013). Foster care settings may include kinship caregiver homes, foster family homes,

foster family group homes, residential group care facilities, and facilities overseen by another state agency (Texas Education Agency, 2013). Youth in foster care may be placed in foster homes (46% nationally) or with relatives (23% nationally) (Kirk et al., 2011). The typical goal of foster care, according to Kirk et al. (2011), is reunification, which occurs in just over half of the cases (55% nationally). Other options include adoption by a nonrelative or allowing the child to age out of the system (Hedenstrom, 2014; Kirk et al., 2011).

Foster care is meant to be temporary until a permanent living arrangement is found and child protective services no longer has custody of the child (Texas Education Agency, 2013). However, for some children, it can become permanent (Texas Education Agency, 2013). A child typically enters the foster care system when there is a reason to believe allegations of abuse and/or neglect (Texas Education Agency, 2013). Types of abuse and neglect may include emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, abandonment, physical neglect, medical neglect, neglectful supervision, or refusal to assume parental responsibility (Texas Education Agency, 2013). Therefore, the rite of passage of leaving foster care may be frightening to many youth. Mulkerns and Owen (2008) described this process as a developmental watershed event known as "emancipation." Sadly, there is nothing freeing about leaving the foster care system.

In reality, this transition may be clouded by uncertainty, fear, and crisis for youth who experienced childhood trauma and neglect. Emancipated teens, many of them youth of color, may find it difficult to form positive self-concepts that integrate personal history and social identity (Mulkerns & Owen, 2008). In 2009, there were over 423,000 youth living in foster-care placements on any given day in the United States (Texas Education Agency, 2013; Unrau et al., 2011). As of September 2009, approximately 58,000 foster youth, or 14% of the total U.S. foster care population, had a permanency goal of emancipation or long-term foster care (U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). The statistics suggest that a number of foster youth do not return home permanently and may be at risk of not leaving foster care with support to help them become self-sufficient, especially in postsecondary educational attainment.

It is not acceptable for youth to leave the foster care system unprepared for the real world. Mulkerns and Owen (2008) distinguished between the irony of emancipation and actual preparation. Although termination of state custody often constitutes a much-desired rite of passage, the social and economic reality seems tremendously challenging when education is minimal and life skills preparation is limited or nonexistent. Fear, anxiety, and personal crises may also contribute to instability when social ties and connections are limited. Unfortunately, there seems to be a societal expectation for youth in foster care to automatically become fully independent at age 18 because they have reached a chronological age traditionally associated with adulthood. Mulkerns and Owen (2008) posited that public policies premised on legal emancipation at age 18 assume financial and psychological independence that may be developmentally inappropriate for most youth of this age, whether in custody of the state or their own families. Foster care youth seem to be at a disadvantage in securing stable lives because of uncontrollable disruptive childhood experiences, limited-to-nonexistent life skills preparation, and no postsecondary education.

Youth entering foster care are frequently too young to speak up for themselves, yet adult narratives reflecting upon emancipation may significantly inform future policy design in federal and state independent living programs (Mulkerns & Owen, 2008). Additionally, these narratives can also inform the development of future campus support programs at postsecondary institutions. In providing their own narratives, foster students may be able to share their unique

experiences and potentially influence how program directors or coordinators develop and improve future programming.

According to Kirk and Day (2011), on average, youth move to new foster care placements up to three times per year, with each move resulting in a change of school. Kirk and Day (2011) further noted that youth lose four to six months of educational progress each time they change schools due to poor coordination among child welfare and school personnel, compounded by difficulties transferring school records and course credits from prior schools, often resulting in the repetition of courses and grade levels. Therefore, many youth fall behind their peers, give up, and drop out of school.

Higher Education Values and Benefits

Higher education has been associated with substantial adult life benefits, including higher income and improved quality of life (Salazar, 2013). Research studies continue to explore the impact of higher education on the lives of people seeking stable employment and security. Salazar (2011) noted that higher education has been found to be beneficial in a variety of individual adult circumstances, both economic and non-economic. In terms of economic benefits, higher education is found to be related to higher income not only overall but for each racial/ethnic group and each gender as well (Baum & Ma, 2007). Furthermore, as education level increases, unemployment rates drop for all racial groups, most dramatically for African Americans (Baum & Ma, 2007). An individual with a bachelor's degree earns, on average, 73% more over a lifetime than an individual with only a high school diploma (Baum & Ma, 2007). Even having some college without earning a degree leads to a 17% increase in lifetime earnings (Baum & Ma, 2007). Additionally, higher education has been linked to increased savings (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1998), increased job security during economic downturns

(Porter, 2002), and much lower rates of reliance on public welfare programs (Baum & Ma, 2007; Perna, 2005). Studies have further illustrated that the costs of going to college, including tuition and years of not earning full wages, are outweighed by higher earning power in only 15 years for the average person (Baum & Ma, 2007). Non-economic benefits related to higher education include increased professional mobility, improved quality of life (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1998), lower smoking and incarceration rates, higher self-reports of health quality, increased volunteerism and voting (Baum & Ma, 2007; Salazar, 2013), and increased participation in leisure activities (Perna, 2005). Furthermore, children of college graduates were found to have increased school readiness compared to the children of non-graduates (Baum & Ma, 2007).

Not only is higher education an admirable commodity associated with a variety of benefits, it is increasingly necessary to have higher education in order to secure a satisfactory level of stability, which includes a well-paying job with adequate benefits and an appreciable level of job security (Baum & Ma, 2007). More specifically, research has shown that low-income students who graduate from a four-year college or university, including those who have experienced out-of-home placements, enjoy a wage premium (Behrman, Constantine, Kletzer, McPherson, & Schapiro, 1996; Dale & Krueger, 2002). In 2008, young adults with bachelor's degrees earned 53% more than high school graduates and 96% more than those without high school diplomas (Aud et al., 2010). Increasing the number of students with four-year degrees may also have intergenerational income mobility (Brock, 2010; Griffith, 2008). Moreover, because of the strong relationship between poverty and child maltreatment (Berger, 2004; Coulton, Korbin, Su, & Chow, 1995; Korbin, Coulton, Chard, Platt-Houston, & Su, 1998; Molnar, Buka, Brenna, Holton, & Earls, 2003; Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996), increasing the

number of former foster youth with four-year degrees could also significantly reduce the future occurrence of child abuse and neglect (Tomison, 1998).

The Casey National Alumni Study (Pecora et al., 2003) and the Midwest Study (Courtney et al., 2010) found substantial differences between the individual incomes of foster care alumni and similarly aged members of the general population. The National Alumni Study found that the median individual income for alumni ages 25 to 34 was $17,500, compared with a reported general population median of $25,558. The Midwest Study found the median income for alumni ages 23 to 24 was $8,000, compared with the national sample median of $18,300. Salazar (2013) further noted that employment rates for similarly aged groups have also been found to be consistently lower for foster care alumni, especially during earlier adulthood. The Midwest Study (Courtney et al., 2010) found 48% of alumni ages 23 to 24 to be employed, compared with 76% of general population young adults. The Casey Northwest Alumni Study found 80% of alumni ages 20 to 33 to be employed compared with 95% of a comparably aged national sample, whereas the Casey National Alumni Study found the numbers to be 88% and 96%, respectively (Pecora et al., 2003). Such comparisons provide numeric values for the persisting gaps in employment earnings and stability between foster care alumni and the general population.

Although more studies are focusing on the challenges that foster care alumni face as they transition out of the foster care system, it may be easy to forget about those who are successful. Of course, success is defined in various ways and may not be the same for everyone. In order to create more encouraging images of foster students and support them in seeing the value of higher education, researchers must highlight success stories in programs yielding positive results. Moreover, college counselors and student personnel services professionals need to contribute to

research based on their work with foster care alumni in college settings. Special populations like foster care alumni need campus support programs to help them graduate successfully.

A national factsheet (Legal Center for Foster Care & Education, 2014) on the educational outcomes of foster care alumni in the U.S. explained why education matters by stressing that education provides opportunities for improving well-being in physical, intellectual, and social domains during critical developmental periods and supports economic success in adults. Moreover, programs and interventions may represent innovative efforts to address a wide range of factors influencing the disparities in educational outcomes (Legal Center for Foster Care & Education, 2014). The goals seem clear: build on what is being learned about campus support programs, bring about socially just change, and promote success through retention and persistence efforts for foster students. However, a few research studies examined the relationship between postsecondary educational attainment and race/ethnicity among young people who lived in foster care, and the findings have been mixed (Lovitt & Emerson, 2008). Studies have also found that financial difficulties, the need to work, and concerns about housing are among the barriers that prevent former foster youth from pursuing postsecondary education (Legal Center for Foster Care & Education, 2014). With 70% of foster care alumni reporting a strong desire to go to college, policymakers and practitioners alike need to better understand and address the barriers to college access and success these students face (Lovitt & Emerson, 2008).

Campus support programs have the potential to increase postsecondary educational attainment among foster care alumni because they provide an array of financial, academic, social/emotional, and logistical (e.g., housing, food, and transportation) supports to help them remain in school and graduate (Legal Center for Foster Care & Education, 2014). Lovitt and Emerson (2008) shared one of 15 themes consistent among eight foster care alumni who

participated in a Casey Family Program that provided support and allowed them to graduate from college. One student noted the importance of campus support programs by stating, "I used support services in college and wished there were more." These young people took advantage of a fair number of support services offered by their colleges, including financial aid, residence and academic advising, health services, student counseling, learning centers, computer labs, and sports and recreational opportunities (Lovitt & Emerson, 2008). Other services that may have been helpful if made available include housing during holiday or vacation breaks, opportunities to connect with other foster care alumni college students, and interactions with foster care alumni college graduates who could serve as mentors and academic support coaches (Lovitt & Emerson, 2008). Although additional research is needed to evaluate the impact of campus support programs on postsecondary education outcomes, the number of such programs has grown rapidly in recent years, especially in California and Michigan (Legal Center for Foster Care & Education, 2014).

Challenges to Retention, Persistence, and Postsecondary Completion

Many foster students experience multiple barriers affecting their ability to remain in college and complete postsecondary education. A number of studies (Day, Dworsky, Fogarty, & Damashek, 2011; Rios & Rocco, 2014; Unrau, Hamilton, Putney, & Seita Scholars Program, 2010) have found that foster youth are less likely to attend college than their peers who were not in foster care. The research further suggests that even when foster youth do attend college, they are less likely than their non-foster-care counterparts to earn degrees (Day et al., 2011). Little research has focused on the perceptions of young adults who grew up in foster care regarding their educational progress and attainment (Rios & Rocco, 2014). Researchers (Day et al., 2011) have only recently begun to explore why so few former foster youth who attend college graduate.

Day et al. (2011) highlighted one of the first studies to address this question and found that the college education of students who aged out of foster care was marked by interruptions. One in five had previously withdrawn from college, and 16% were considering withdrawing (Day et al., 2011). According to Rios and Rocco (2014), barriers that serve as primary obstacles to academic progress include non-empathetic teachers and administrators and lack of academic rigor. Day et al. (2011) further noted that most student services personnel at most postsecondary institutions are not familiar with or prepared to address the unique needs of this population. Fortunately, in the past few decades, federal policies have been passed in an attempt to increase college access for students who have been in foster care (Day et al., 2011; Salazar, 2013).

Day et al. (2011) reported that Congress created the Title IV-E Independent Living Initiative in 1986 to help states prepare foster youth for self-sufficiency and with the transition to adulthood. The John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program followed in 1999 and was established by the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, which provided increased funding to states for independent living preparation and allowed them greater flexibility in the use of those funds (Day et al., 2011). Former and current foster youth are eligible for Chafee-funded services, including education and vocational training, until they are 21 years old (Day et al., 2011). Additionally, Congress added the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program to the Foster Care Independence Act as part of the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Amendment of 2001 (Day et al., 2011). This is the first federal program specifically created to address the postsecondary educational needs of current and former foster care youth (Day et al., 2011). States may use their ETV funds to provide current and former foster youth with up to $5,000 per year for postsecondary training and education (Day et al., 2011). Youth or students who are

participating in the program on their 21st birthdays remain eligible until age 23 as long as they are making satisfactory progress towards completion of their programs (Day et al., 2011).

The most recent pieces of federal legislation involving foster care youth are the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 and the College Cost Reduction Act of 2009, which allow students who were in foster care at age 13 or older to claim independent status when applying for federal financial aid (Day et al., 2011). It is very interesting that "fostering connections" was included in this legislation, since past public policies were premised on legal emancipation at age 18, through which individuals in care assume financial and psychological independence (Mulkerns & Owen, 2008). Mulkerns and Owen (2008) argued that this approach may be developmentally inappropriate for most youth of this age, whether in the custody of the state or their own families. According to Mulkerns and Owen (2008), self-differentiation theory and relational-cultural theory present ways of thinking about how an individual's identity emerges in the context of the social environment. Comstock et al. (2008) defined relational-cultural theory as viewing the creation and participation in growth-fostering relationships as essential dimensions of human development and psychological well-being.

Like Erik Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development stages, past legislation for foster care youth emphasized individuation, separation, and autonomy as markers of emotional maturity and psychological health. Jean Baker Miller (1986) suggested that a lack of understanding of the contextual relational experiences of women, people of color, and marginalized men led many mental health professionals to pathologize these individuals by misunderstanding and devaluing how these important factors contribute to the psychological well-being of all people. This understanding must be applied to foster students. Clearly, student

personnel services professionals at postsecondary institutions are not well-versed in the needs of this population nor have they been prepared to address their unique needs. Policy developments notwithstanding, counselors, higher education administrators, and student personnel services professionals need to learn about foster students, lobby for national and state legislation that supports them, and address significant gaps in college retention and graduation.

Why do these gaps exist? According to Day et al. (2011), one potential explanation for why students who have been in foster care have higher odds of dropping out is that they arrive on campus without strong connections to caring adults who they can turn to for support in dealing with the stressors of college-level coursework and college life. Thus, one possible way to increase college retention and graduation rates is to provide foster students with mentors or other formal sources of social support like campus support programs that can assist in monitoring progress and help these students progress each year. This may compensate for their lack of access to informal networks. Hausmann, Schofield, and Woods (2007) argued that having access to positive social support on campus, including faculty and community mentors, seems to increase the likelihood that college students will persist to graduation.

The development of campus programs to support foster students is a positive sign that higher education administrators are beginning to recognize a population historically overlooked in the retention literature. In a study aimed at exploring and describing college programs in the U.S. that focused on targeted services provided to former or current foster care alumni, Hernandez and Naccarato (2010) reported that success in higher education has been correlated with greater earning potential, improved self-worth, and increased confidence. The study examined 12 scholarship or supportive programs nationwide. Hernandez and Naccarato (2010) shared major themes of supportive services, which included academic supports, assistance in

finding housing, scholarships, emergency financial assistance, and services such as access to health and mental health providers to address youth's personal challenges. The 12 programs in the study included Alaska Tuition Waiver, Kansas Tuition Waiver, Washington Passport to College, New York Educational Training Voucher, Casey Family Scholars – Orphan Foundation of America, Washington State Governor's Scholarship, California State Fullerton Guardian Scholars Program, New Yorkers for Children Guardian Scholars Program, Colorado Guardian Scholars Program, New York Independence Bound Erie Community College, City College Guardian Scholars Program, and Connect, Motivate, Educate San Jose State University (Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010). Each program may provide different services, but they are all attempting to provide a variety of academic supports to help foster care alumni complete college.

Conversely, Hernandez and Naccarato (2010) identified the stigma of foster care, an inability to problem solve, and the decision not to confide in adults until a situation worsens as significant barriers affecting the college completion rates of foster care alumni. The transition to college and pressure to remain in college may cause anxiety related to identity, uncertainty, class mobility, self-efficacy, self-actualization, and the right to goal attainment. Thus, another way to increase college retention and graduation rates among this population is for the federal government or the states to fund the implementation and evaluation of campus support initiatives for alumni in foster care (Day et al., 2011). Counseling and student personnel services professionals are challenged to retain and graduate students as state budgets tighten in a stifled economy. Of course, students of the 21st century represent diverse backgrounds and experiences requiring intentional supportive services to enhance learning and prepare them for a global workforce.

Foster care alumni are considered at risk and set apart because of their unique needs, which have historically been overlooked or ignored by instructors and counselors in P–16 settings. Presson and Bottoms (1992) noted that dropouts do not leave all at once. They trickle out like water from a leaky faucet, and in the case of difficult students, their leaving is often a relief to educators (Presson & Bottoms, 1992). Bracey (1994) determined what motivates dropouts by conducting interviews with actual dropouts. Disinterest in school, academic failure, academic pressure, the need to find a job, pregnancy, and drugs and alcohol were cited as the main reasons students left school (Bracey, 1994). Once counselors and student personnel services professionals identify the cause of discouragement or lack of motivation, then interventions can be developed to help foster care alumni complete college, enter the workforce, and feel a sense of satisfaction in achieving the goal of postsecondary completion.

If counselors and student personnel services professionals recognize and identify at-risk characteristics of foster care alumni, then they will have more information to help develop appropriate interventions and plans of action to support this population. Therefore, it is crucial to move beyond indecisiveness and an inability to approach foster care alumni. Their self-esteem and ideas of the world of work are warped when direction and support are unavailable within the educational setting of matriculation. Counselors and student personnel services professionals need to adopt or design more fluid and socially just programs that will enable students to see growth opportunities beyond the credits they complete in the classroom.

Developing Campus Support Programs

Programs provide a laboratory of opportunities and experiences that help inform and enhance learning received in classrooms. Moreover, students are able to practice what they learn prior to seeking full-time employment and ultimately their careers. The unique and special needs

of specific student populations necessitate increased campus support programs tailored to their needs to improve retention, persistence, and graduation rates nationwide. As campus support programs continue to develop and thrive, their existence and efforts are spotlighted in news media yet in very few counseling and student personnel or student affairs empirical journals. In April 2007, Western Michigan University (WMU) created the Foster Youth and Higher Education Initiative with the overall goals of increasing opportunities for foster youth to pursue higher education and providing supports that promote success and well-being throughout the undergraduate experience (Unrau et al., 2010). The Seita Scholars program was developed as part of the initiative and has served over 74 students. The school designed the program using materials published by Casey Family Programs and by studying other university programs that support foster youth, such as the Guardian Scholars program at California State University at Fullerton (Unrau et al., 2010).

Another initiative supporting foster care alumni college students is The Foster Care and Higher Education Transition to Independence Program (TIP). It was founded in the fall of 2012 at Wayne State University and is one of nine programs in the state of Michigan that provides comprehensive services to improve retention and graduation rates for transitioning foster care alumni (Children's Bureau Express, 2013). The program provides mentoring, coaching, and other support services to students who were in foster care on or after their 14th birthdays and not adopted before their 16th birthdays (Day, 2013). It was modeled after Michigan State University's FAME Program (Children's Bureau Express, 2013). In the fall of 2012, Wayne State University enrolled 482 students who identified as being "ward[s] of the court" as identified by the Federal Application for Federal Student Aid; of those students, 110 identified as being in out-of-home care on or after their 13th birthdays (Children's Bureau Express, 2013).

Dr. Angelique Day, TIP Director and Assistant Professor of Social Work at Wayne State University, said, "TIP is unique because the core service team consists of professionals with personal histories in foster care (Children's Bureau Express, 2013). TIP also uses an empowerment model that emphasizes leadership and coaching to assist students to see their foster care status as an asset rather than a deficit in obtaining their career goals" (Children's Bureau Express, 2013). Although the TIP program has been in existence for a short period, a review of administrative data of students suggests that the program has successfully retained 84% of foster students at the university (Children's Bureau Express, 2013). TIP's ultimate goal is to improve educational outcomes for foster care alumni college students. In addition, the Associated Press (2009) reported that the Virginia Community College System through the Great Expectations program uses grants and donations to provide money for tuition, transportation, and living expenses. The program has also connected more than 120 students to mentors, career counselors, and other help at seven of the state's two-year schools (Associated Press, 2009).

In California, higher education officials have developed a support network for former foster care youth in the state's 110 community colleges (Associated Press, 2009). Four-year college systems offer similar help for housing, financial aid, academic advising, and other needs (Associated Press, 2009). The needs of foster care alumni can often mirror those of first-generation college students. Kevin Krueger, Associate Executive Director of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, stated, "The percentage of foster care youth who enroll in college is quite low. For those who do so, completion rates are also low" (University Business Staff, 2010). He further noted, "'Supporting Success: Improving Higher Education Outcomes for Students from Foster Care,' a 2008 study published by Casey Family Programs, found that only 7% to 13% of students from foster care enroll in higher education and

about 2% obtain bachelor's degrees, in contrast to 24% of adults, generally" (University Business Staff, 2010).

San Diego State University's Guardian Scholars program guides foster care alumni through every step from application to graduation (University Business Staff, 2010). Reginald Blaylock, former Director of Educational Opportunity Programs at San Diego State University, said, "It is absolutely critical that [foster care alumni] develop connections to people at the campus" (University Business Staff, 2010). Approximately 7–13% of emancipating foster youth who age out of the foster care system enroll in higher education, but fewer than four percent go on to earn college certificates or degrees (Fried, 2008). California State University, Fresno has a program that supports former foster youth, guarantees them a place to stay (even during the holidays), and understands the value of providing safety nets to support foster care youth (Fontana, 2010). The program has become competitive and includes staff who have experienced foster care and progressed successfully through college (Fontana, 2010). Seattle Central Community College in Washington also aimed to build a program emphasizing community outreach and collaboration, case management, program evaluation, and academic/career assessment and planning (Fried, 2008).

In February 2007, the California Community College System's Foster Youth Success Initiative promoted success through student orientations, advising, mentoring, workshops, and drop-in services targeted to the unique needs of foster care alumni (Fried, 2008). More than 85 colleges sent Foster Youth Success Initiative liaisons to Sacramento for a three-day training session to expose them to an overlooked population (Fried, 2008). During a time when a college degree or postsecondary training certificate is an option for ending the cycle of poverty and broadening life choices, it is discouraging to see an entire population of disadvantaged students

left behind (Klefeker, 2009). Services tailored to the needs of foster care alumni boost student retention and completion by increasing student engagement, strengthening students' academic skills, focusing on success in the first year of college, and building a strong commitment across academic affairs, student services, and other campus departments (Fried, 2008). Therefore, a growing number of campus support programs are needed to provide financial, academic, social/emotional, and logistical (e.g. housing) supports to help former foster care youth stay in school and graduate (Dworsky & Pérez, 2010).

Jessica Archuleta prepared for her future by enrolling at the University of Texas at El Paso and took advantage of Texas Senate Bill 1652, which waives tuition and fees at state-supported vocational schools, colleges, and universities for students who age out of the foster care system in Texas (Acosta, 2011). Youth who are adopted from foster care or who are eligible for adoption at age 14 or older may also be eligible for the waiver (Acosta, 2011). Moreover, the Foster Homeless Adoption Resources program at the University of Texas at El Paso provides students who have been homeless, have been adopted, or lack a family support system with services typically available in the local community, including housing, health care, and financial aid (Acosta, 2011). The program was created at the university to connect foster care alumni, adoptees, and homeless individuals with the necessary resources to obtain a university education (Acosta, 2011).

Implicit in recent calls for the replication of campus support programs on a much broader scale and with government funding is the assumption that campus support programs lead to higher college retention and graduation rates (Dworsky & Pérez, 2010). A 2006 publication by Pontecorvo et al. examined five "college success" programs by reviewing written reports and by interviewing program staff, program participants, and community stakeholders (Dworsky &

Pérez, 2010). The report indicated that program participants experienced higher rates of college retention and graduation than either of two comparison groups: former foster youth who did not participate or "disadvantaged" students who had not been in foster care (Dworsky & Pérez, 2010). However, Pontecorvo et al did not present data to support this claim. In fact, they cited a lack of program data on which to base an evaluation as a major problem (Dworsky & Pérez, 2010). Researchers also failed to control for differences between program participants and the comparison group members that might account for the observed differences in outcomes (Dworsky & Pérez, 2010). Therefore, a more comprehensive and methodologically sound impact evaluation is clearly needed if a compelling case is to be made that these programs effectively lead to better educational outcomes and thus represent a good investment of public funds (Dworsky & Pérez, 2010).

Despite available financial support for postsecondary education through the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, Unrau (2011) noted that only 20% of college-qualified youth attend college and less than five percent complete degrees. These rates are far lower than those of the general population, with 60% enrollment and 24% degree completion rates (Unrau, 2011). As a result, colleges and universities are beginning to recognize foster care alumni as an underserved student population. WMU developed the Seita Scholars program, designed to provide more than undergraduate education by offering individual and system change strategies to help former foster youth transition into adulthood through the experience of higher education, using the *Supporting Success* guide published by Casey Family Programs in 2010 (Unrau, 2011). Colleges and universities need to continue collaborating with child welfare agencies to support foster care alumni in completing higher education. Offering campus support programs or services is a strategy to level the playing field so that foster youth can have a fair chance at obtaining

internships, scholarships, and other career-advancing opportunities common in the college environment (Unrau, 2011).

EMBARK Georgia Statewide Network

In the state of Georgia, EMBARK was developed with support from the College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) in 2012. The CACG is based at the University System of Georgia office and focuses on increasing college access for underrepresented populations in Georgia (EMBARK, 2015). The mission of EMBARK Georgia is to increase college access and retention for youth who have experienced foster care or homelessness. By creating a network of support on campus and across the state, EMBARK Georgia aims to improve the chances for every student to complete a degree or certificate program at one of the over 50 University System of Georgia or Technical College System Georgia institutions in Georgia.

In the first year of support, David Meyers and Lori Tiller in the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development at the University of Georgia (UGA) were charged with developing an inventory of campus-based support programs in Georgia (EMBARK, 2015). They conducted site visits to learn about several existing programs, including the Seita Scholars program at WMU, UW Champions at the University of Washington, and Alabama REACH at the University of Alabama (EMBARK, 2015). Following the first CACG contract year, the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development designed a toolkit with information and tips for developing campus support programs as a professional reference for student personnel services providers and child welfare agencies (EMBARK, 2015). In the second year of support from the CACG, direct support efforts began at UGA, and the statewide network was developed and launched to benefit everyone supporting foster care alumni in college completion (EMBARK, 2015).

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) in the state of Georgia is responsible for ensuring that children are safe from abuse and neglect (Division of Family and Children Services, 2015). When DFCS determines it is not safe for a child to remain in the home

of his or her caregiver, the child is placed in foster care (Division of Family and Children Services, 2015). Foster care in Georgia is intended to be a temporary home away from home while the agency works with the child's family to eliminate or minimize the safety issues that caused agency involvement (Division of Family and Children Services, 2015). Between FY 2005 and FY 2014, the number of children in foster care in Georgia decreased from 13,965 to 9,005 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, 2015). As of July 2014, there were 8,807 children in foster care in Georgia. DFCS prefers to provide a permanency plan that includes the following options in the order of preference: 1) reunification, 2) adoption, and 3) permanent guardianship (Division of Family and Children Services, 2015). Therefore, a conscious and intentional decision was made by partners in the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development at The University of Georgia and community allies to develop a program for students who experienced homelessness and foster care because many of the issues these students faced were similar (EMBARK, 2015).

While all youth in foster care receive therapeutic services, foster youth who are between the ages of 14 and 25 are provided services, funding, and support through the Independent Living Program (ILP) to help them transition from foster care (Division of Family and Children Services, 2015). An understanding of state child welfare agencies is beneficial to professionals in colleges and universities considering the development of campus support programs. For example, the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development, a public service and outreach unit of the University of Georgia, is leading the statewide effort to support students who have experienced homelessness and foster care through a nationwide initiative developed by Casey Family Programs and the Stuart Foundation (EMBARK, 2015). EMBARK Georgia serves postsecondary professionals and institutions to ensure connectivity, share best practices, and

provide an information exchange among youth, community-based stakeholders, and K–12 educators in support of youth who have experienced foster care and homelessness (EMBARK, 2015). The overall purpose of EMBARK Georgia is to increase college access for youth who have experienced foster care or homelessness. The vision of EMBARK Georgia is to make sure that any person who has experienced foster care and/or homelessness will have ample academic, financial, social, and emotional supports to access, navigate, and complete postsecondary education (EMBARK, 2015). EMBARK Georgia utilizes designated points of contacts for developing programs or services or non-developed programs to provide a specific person of contact for students who identify as having experienced homelessness or foster care. Additionally, the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development developed EMBARK UGA, a campus support program designed to increase opportunities for students at UGA who have experienced foster care or homelessness by providing referrals and linkages to campus supports that promote success and well-being while students are at the university (EMBARK, 2015).

Theoretical Foundation

Hansen (2006) noted that theoretical understanding is an essential part of effective counseling practice in all counseling settings. Theories help counselors organize clinical data, make complex processes coherent, and provide conceptual guidance for interventions at the micro, meso, and macro level. In order to fully move towards social justice, the counseling profession requires counselors and student personnel services professionals to consider environmental factors that may contribute to individuals' mental health issues or personal challenges, with particular emphasis placed on the transition from a child welfare environment to a postsecondary educational environment. Connections also seem to be important to remaining in

postsecondary environments successfully. Tolentino (2010) highlighted factors that build counselors' personal style, which include (a) professional interest and ideas evolved from acquisition of professional experience, (b) clarification of preferred orientation in developing counseling skills, (c) emphasis in graduate training, (d) modeling professors, (e) treatment systems advocated by internship sites or institutions of employment, (f) type of clients, and (g) the counselor's personality and worldviews.

Cottone (2013) articulated that postmodernism is a movement that is more about relationships than individuals and is best represented in the social constructivism paradigm of counseling and psychotherapy. Social constructivism implies that there is no psychology of the individual, and all behavior is viewed as a relationship; it further recognizes culture in human problems, which has not always been the case with earlier paradigms (Cottone, 2013). As a movement in counseling, social constructivism has emerged as a framework that addresses the limits of the prior paradigms (Cottone, 2013). According to Ratts (2009), when a paradigm shifts within a discipline, its theoretical underpinnings also shift. Therefore, how practitioners practice with diverse populations also shifts. Nevertheless, before a paradigm shift occurs, an epistemological shift has to occur with counselor practitioners to understand the profession's way of knowing in how humans are to be and what constitutes pathology or challenges for them (Ratts, 2009). More specifically, addressing how foster students are to be and what constitutes challenges for this population is important as they pursue postsecondary education.

Modernism, on the other hand, presumes that the singular essences of objects in the material universe can be either accurately or inaccurately represented by immaterial human minds, a simple truth in discovery (Hansen, 2010). Basically, modernism, an essentialist epistemology, posits that true knowledge of phenomena can be discovered through objective

observation and presumes objects have essences that can be discovered (Hansen, 2006). Hansen (2010) shared an example:

> From a modernist perspective, birds may be inaccurately portrayed in the minds of certain people as gods. Scientists, however, who use the scientific method in an attempt to discover the essence of birds, mentally represent them accurately as flying biological organisms. The scientific method is idealized by Enlightenment thought as a route to discovering true essences. (p. 102)

It may not always be easy for counselors to entirely separate themselves from their observations. However, some theories exist under modernism. In contrast, postmodernism, a nonessentialist epistemology, maintains that reality is never objectively discovered but is always, at least to some extent, created by perceivers (Hansen, 2006). Hansen (2010) also shared and reaffirmed an alternative example:

> As an illustration of antiessentialism (again using birds as the object of knowing), birds might be perceived as biological entities, pets, gods to be worshipped, national symbols, nuisances, food, collections of atoms, or artistic objects. Out of all these possibilities, which one represents the correct, singular essence of birds? The postmodernist response is that there is no correct essence. Each of these perceptions of birds may be justifiable, depending on the needs of a particular community of perceivers. Postmodernism permits the coexistence of multiple perspectives, without concern for adjudicating which one is supposedly correct because there is no singular truth. The idea that one culture is closer to the truth than another is incoherent. Various cultures are to be appreciated, not judged. Therefore, the value of diversity, and the multicultural movement that follows from it, is

> dependent on an overarching postmodernist framework that allows for the coexistence of multiple realities. (p.102)

When counselors provide themselves with an opportunity to move towards postmodernism, they allow themselves to experience variation in practice with clients and do not simply rely on one absolute truth of knowing and understanding (Hansen, 2006). Assuming counseling theories represent accurate, discovered realities about clients (i.e. essentialism) implies a particular role for theories in the counseling process (Hansen, 2006). Alternatively, if theories are not presumed to contain singular truths (i.e. anti-essentialism), this epistemic assumption has radically different implications for theory utilization (Hansen, 2006).

The rationale behind selecting a college or university setting for exploring social justice issues and addressing them directly stems from the ever-changing landscape of higher education and the populations being served, particularly when compared to the historic beginnings of colleges and universities in the United States. Diemer and Duffy (2010) highlighted that college and university settings align with yet are also distinct from counseling centers' traditional emphases on campus outreach and psychoeducational programming. One assumption embedded in outreach and psychoeducation is that by remediating barriers to well-being and facilitating positive development, college and university counseling centers might prevent the onset of some mental health concerns and thereby reduce the need for traditional face-to-face counseling services (Diemer & Duffy, 2010). Furthermore, Ratts (2009) reminded counselors that the counseling profession is in the midst of transformation and acknowledged the growing movement within the profession that calls counselors to return to their roots by infusing a social justice perspective into counseling theories, paradigms, and practices. Kottler (2013) shared,

> It's not that individual counseling or group and family modalities have become obsolete; they are just necessarily limited by the settings and context in which they take place. In most places of the world—and for that matter, within many communities in North America, traditional counseling just doesn't fit the cultural context of people's experiences. (p. 10)

The resurgence of a social justice perspective led by Ratts, D'Andrea, and Arredondo (2004) liberated and encouraged counselors and student personnel services professionals to rethink and expand their counselor identities. Based on this perspective, social justice counseling follows the psychodynamic, cognitive behavioral, existential-humanistic, and multicultural counseling forces that exist in the profession (Ratts, 2009). In the wake of tight budgets in the area of mental health on college campuses, there seems to be more of a need to connect students to resources through campus support programs or in the local community so that they may continue to progress academically with minimal disruption. Foster care alumni balance multiple roles in their everyday lives, which seems to make it difficult to reconcile their identities as a former foster care youth and current college student without the support of professional counselors and student personnel services professionals who understand the environment from a social justice perspective. Unfortunately, outreach and psychoeducation generally pay little attention to inequitable social structures, discriminatory practices, and environmental barriers (Diemer & Duffy, 2010).

Odegard and Vereen (2010) summarized a definition of social justice by Crethar, Rivera, and Nash (2008) as a process of acknowledging systemic societal inequities and oppression while acting responsibly to eliminate systemic oppression in the forms of racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and other biases in clinical practice on both individual and distributive

levels. Crethar et al. (2008) emphasized Rawls's (1971) definition of social justice as a unique and multifaceted approach to mental health care in which counselors strive to promote human development and the common good by addressing issues related to both individual and distributive justice. Therefore, social justice counseling represents a multifaceted approach to counseling in which practitioners strive to simultaneously promote human development and the common good by addressing challenges individually and collectively. Social justice counseling includes empowerment of the individual as well as active confrontation of injustice and inequality in society because they affect clientele as well as those in their systemic contexts (Crethar et al., 2008). Counselors who are committed to social justice in their clinical practices acknowledge unearned power, privilege, and oppression and how they can negatively affect the mental health and well-being of clients (Odegard & Vereen, 2010). Ratts (2009) has promoted the need to make social justice a clearer presence in the field of counseling primarily fueled by forces such as continued marginalization of those who live on the fringes of society, a growing awareness that well-intentioned counselors (and student personnel services professionals) are not adequately drawing the connection between oppression and mental health issues, and the increasing realization that counseling paradigms, which focus solely on the individual without regard for environmental factors, may be limiting.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The limited knowledge of foster students participating in campus support programs and the absence of studies exploring their knowledge regarding their participation heightens the need for exploratory research in this area. This chapter presents the research design, participants, instruments, procedures, and data analysis used in this study. The first section describes the research design. The second section describes the participant pool identified for this study. The third section describes the instrument used to answer the research questions. The fourth section describes the procedures. Finally, the fifth section describes the data analysis.

The Foster Students College and University Survey is an integrated instrument that was developed from seven instruments that obtained descriptive statistics of participants, a comparative analysis of demographics, and elicited participant knowledge about participating in a campus support program. The instrument further solicited feedback on future program improvements that will help students remain in college and persist towards postsecondary completion. The final section of this chapter explained the procedures and data analysis employed in this study. The study sought to obtain exploratory data from foster care alumni who were college students participating in a four-year college campus support program. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

RQ1. How does the campus connectedness of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students (as measured by the Campus Connectedness Scale) correlate with

engagement in a campus support program to meet their needs (as indicated by the Guardian/Renaissance Scholars Student Survey)?

RQ2. What is the relationship between the academic self-efficacy (as measured by the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale) and expectations (as measured by the College Student Expectations Questionnaire) of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students participating in a campus support program to meet their needs?

RQ3. How do college student experiences (as measured by the College Student Experiences Survey) of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students participating in a campus support program correlate with career self-efficacy (as measured by the Career Search Self-Efficacy Scale)?

Integrated Instrument Development

The seven instruments utilized with permission to develop the Foster Students College and University Survey are as follows:

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, 2016)

The Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University's School of Education historically administers the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in partnership with the Indiana University Center for Survey Research. The NSSE (2016) documents dimensions of quality in undergraduate education and provides information and assistance to colleges, universities, and other organizations to improve student learning. Its primary activity is annually surveying college students to assess the extent to which they engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development (NSSE, 2016). The survey is usually completed in about 15 minutes; the online survey represents a census or a random sample of first-year and senior students. However, for the purpose of this study, only the demographics

section of this survey was utilized. The NSSE is continuously and extensively tested to ensure validity and reliability. A Psychometric Portfolio available on the NSSE website provides more information about NSSE data quality.

Guardian/Renaissance Scholars Student Survey (2010)

The Guardian/Renaissance Scholars Student Survey was developed by Dr. Amy Dworsky at Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. It is a web-based survey of college students in California and Washington State who participated in one of several programs designed to help former foster youth succeed in school (Dworsky & Pérez, 2010). The group of programs included Guardian or Renaissance Scholars, College Success, CME Society, Fostering Scholars, and Governor's Scholarship. The purpose of the survey is to learn more about students' experiences with and perceptions of these programs. It was part of a larger project paid for by the W.S. Johnson and Stuart Foundations (Dworsky & Pérez, 2010). The survey usually takes approximately 20–25 minutes to complete. For the purpose of this study, the demographics, campus support program knowledge, and campus support program satisfaction sections were utilized. Since there has been almost no research on campus support programs, Dr. Amy Dworsky developed the survey questions. In terms of analysis, the survey results were descriptive in nature because the original sample size was small. However, frequency distributions and cross tabulations were used primarily for statistical calculation.

Social Connectedness Scale (SCS) – College Campus (2000, 2002, 2005)

The social connectedness scale (college campus) developed by Dr. Richard Lee et al. (2000, 2002) and Summers et al (2005) measures a student's psychological sense of belonging on campus. The 14-item self-report scale is rated using a 6-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). With an internal reliability estimate of .92, the scale has

been correlated with psychological sense of community, self-esteem, and psychological stress (Lee et al. 2000, 2002) and Summers et al (2005). Dr. Lee recommended that this researcher utilize the positive and negative items; he further recommended the use of the translation and back-translation method with independent translators if the scale needed to be translated. Reverse scoring was used with the sum of all 14 items were used for score calculation. The negatively worded items were reverse scored and summed together with the positively worded items to create a scale score.

Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (1998)

The academic self-efficacy scale, also known as the college self-efficacy scale, was developed by Dr. V. S. Solberg et al. (1998). The scale (Solberg, O'Brien, Villareal, Kennel, & Davis, 1993) is a self-efficacy measure conceptualized from college self-help manuals that discussed and addressed college-related issues. Six independent judges were used to extract important and relevant themes. From the themes selected by the individual judges, 20 items were found to have high consensus among the judges (Solberg et al., 1993) and were then made into one scale that measured overall college self-efficacy with three self-efficacy subscales: course efficacy, roommate efficacy, and social efficacy.

The inventory consists of 20 questions that begin with "How confident are you that you could successfully complete the following tasks…" These responses were measured on a Likert-type 11-point scale ranging from 0, "not at all confident," to 10, "extremely confident." The instrument is scored by summing the total of the 20 items. From the total score, one can infer the level of college self-efficacy. The higher the total score, the more college self-efficacy a student exhibits. Solberg et al. (1993) established reliability through internal consistency by using Cronbach's alpha. Coefficient α for the College Self Efficacy Inventory was established at .93.

The course efficacy, roommate efficacy, and social efficacy subscales were found to have .88 alpha coefficients (Solberg et al., 1993). In order to establish convergent and discriminant validity for this study, Solberg et al. (1993) submitted a correlation matrix consisting of the instruments in the study. Finally, Solberg et al. (1993) "submitted to a principal components analysis with varimax rotation" (p. 89). Solberg et al. (1993) also tested the CSEI to discern if there were differences in efficacy for acculturation, gender, and/or class. They used a MANOVA and univariate ANOVAs and found no significant differences in levels of self-efficacy. The study was found to have acceptable convergent and discriminant validity as well as internal consistency reliability. The instrument was chosen in particular for this study as it was found to be useful for college students who had experienced foster care.

College Student Expectations Questionnaire (1998)

In 1998, the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) Research Program introduced the College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ) (Gonyea, Kish, Kuh, Muthiah, & Thomas, 2003; Kuh & Pace, 1998). The CSXQ assesses the goals of the new students and their motivations regarding the same activities and environment items on the CSEQ (Gonyea et al., 2003). New students hold important expectations about how and with whom they will spend their time in college (Gonyea et al., 2003). These expectations provide clues about how they will interact with peers and faculty members, behaviors that directly affect achievement in and satisfaction with college (Gonyea et al., 2003). Furthermore, colleges and universities also have expectations for student performance (Gonyea et al., 2003). When paired with the CSEQ, which can be administered as a posttest measure toward the end of the school year, the CSXQ can assess the degree to which student and institutional expectations are met (Gonyea et al., 2003). Information about new student expectations can help faculty and

administrators enhance policies and programs for first-year students (Gonyea et al., 2003). The CSXQ shares 87 items in common with the CSEQ, not including background information. These include questions about college activities and several items that allow students to indicate beliefs about the campus environment. Items within each scale range along quality-of-effort dimension where students indicate the frequency with which they engage in various activities; the score is the average of all responses in each set (Kuh & Pace, 1998; Gonyea et al., 2003).

Career Self-Efficacy Scale (1994)

The career self-efficacy scale (CSES) is an instrument developed to assess the career search self-efficacy of individuals who are interested in finding new careers or jobs, changing careers or jobs, or reentering the job market (Solberg et al., 1994). The scale was designed to assess the degree of confidence a person has in performing a variety of career search tasks; the researchers originally identified the items for the instrument by surveying various career self-help books (Solberg et al., 1994). Personal exploration refers to career tasks involving examination of values, skills, and goals (Solberg et al., 1994). Career exploration involves conducting information interviews and other tasks that generate information about a given career, while job exploration refers to the formal aspects of finding employment, such as preparing for interviews and identifying potential employers (Solberg et al., 1994). Response to each question indicated whether an individual possessed a high level of self-efficacy when conducting a career search. The overall scale allowed a maximum score of 315 and a minimum score of 35. Higher scores on the 35 questions inventory indicated a higher level of self-efficacy. Reliability of the CSES was estimated at a .97 Cronbach's alpha, with ranging subscales between .87 and .95, indicating very good internal consistency (Solberg et al., 1994).

College Student Experiences Questionnaire (1998)

The college student experiences questionnaire (CSEQ) was developed as one of a few national assessment instruments that inventory both the processes of learning (e.g., interactions with faculty, collaboration with peers, and writing experiences) and progress toward desired outcomes of college (e.g., intellectual skills, interpersonal competence, and personal values) (Gonyea et al., 2003; Kuh & Pace, 1998). With over 150 items, the CSEQ provides colleges and universities with a comprehensive inventory of the student experience (Gonyea et al., 2003). The survey collects information about the student's background and asks questions about the student's experience with the institution in three areas: (a) college activities, (b) the college environment, and (c) estimate of gains (Gonyea et al., 2003; Kuh & Pace, 1998). The CSEQ is based on a simple but powerful premise related to student learning: The more effort students expend in using the resources and the more opportunities an institution provides for their learning and development, the more they benefit (Gonyea et al., 2003). Items within each scale range along quality-of-effort dimension where students indicate the frequency with which they engage in various activities; the score is the average of all responses in each set (Kuh & Pace, 1998; Gonyea et al., 2003).

Most student affairs professionals agree that student expectations about the outcomes of a college education are changing (Janosik & Stimpson, 2009). There are progressively increasing demands for accountability in the assessment of those outcomes by students, families, accrediting agencies, trustees, and public officials (Keeling, 2004). No one in higher education is exempt from meeting rigorous standards of research that support the development and sustainability of student services programs. Stimpson and Stimpson (2008) suggested that the lack of substantive scholarship must be addressed, especially since the "higher education

community is growing committed to creating learning-centered environments in which faculty and staff work actively to help students learn, and the assessment of student learning is essential to gauging the success of these efforts." Research, knowledge creation, and dissemination of knowledge are central to understanding human phenomenon by counseling and student personnel services professionals in postsecondary education.

When foster youth are able to pursue postsecondary education, they are less likely than individuals from the general population to persist to the completion of a degree (Dworsky & Pérez, 2009). Students who experience foster care may aspire to complete postsecondary education, but barriers in the college environment may prevent them from remaining in college (Dworsky & Pérez, 2009). Not much is known about the impact of the ETV program or state-specific programs on enrollment in postsecondary educational or vocational training programs (Dworsky & Pérez, 2009). Additionally, not much is known about the supports provided, the students being served, or the impact on educational outcomes by these programs. Therefore, the researcher proposed a survey research design that incorporates and adapts seven surveys to capture the comprehensive data needed to address the research questions.

Research Design

Babbie (1990) explained that survey research designs are implemented to describe, explain, or explore phenomena. Survey research is conducted to make descriptive assertions about a particular population (Babbie, 1990). Survey designs are also implemented to explain behaviors, attitudes, or relationships among populations (Creswell, 2014). Finally, survey methods can be used as "search devices" to explore particular topics (Babbie, 1990). Survey methods may include cross-sectional and longitudinal studies using questionnaires or structured

interviews for data collection, with the intent of generalizing from a sample to a population (Creswell, 2014).

This study utilized a cross-sectional survey design. Cross-sectional or descriptive survey designs result in a description, "portrait," or "snapshot" of a group at a particular point in time. (Fink, 2003; Steinberg, 2004). Cross-sectional survey designs also allow researchers to make general inferences about a population (Steinberg, 2004). The purpose of this study was to generate a description of students' knowledge of campus support programs intended to support college retention and persistence towards postsecondary completion. The study further sought to recognize the need for program participant feedback while encouraging future program evaluation of campus support programs tailored to meet the needs of foster students. Based on the research tradition, the researcher proposed the Foster Students College and University Survey instrument developed and adapted from the National Survey of Student Engagement (2016), Campus Connectedness (Lee et al, 2000, 2002), Guardian/Renaissance Scholars Student Survey (Dworsky & Pérez, 2009), Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Solberg et al., 1998), College Student Expectations Questionnaire (Kuh & Pace, 1998), College Student Experiences Questionnaire (Kuh & Pace, 1998), and Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (Solberg et al., 1994).

Participants

Foster care students are individuals who are currently in or have aged out of the foster care system. These students were enrolled at a four-year college or university in the United States of America. The researcher utilized snowball sampling of EMBARK Georgia designated points of contact, social media, and outreach to foster care agencies/organizations that provide support to this population to secure campus support program participants. A recruitment letter was drafted and sent to participants through their EMBARK Georgia designated points of

contact, foster care agencies/organizations, and social media. The letter detailed the purpose of the research study. The letter was emailed to designated points of contact and provided to potential participants via their college student or personal emails or during a group activity. In order to secure a minimum of 30 participants, the researcher utilized the EMBARK Georgia designated points of contact to further advertise the study, connect with potential students who are currently enrolled in a University System of Georgia college or university, and assist in making contact with other U.S. states that provide support to this population in colleges or universities. Participants included college students who resided in foster care between the ages of 14 and 25 years old, which is the age range of eligibility for Georgia's Independent Living Program (Division of Family and Children Services, 2015). Students were also required to have participated in a campus support program tailored to their unique foster care experiences.

Instruments

A selected review of the literature based on the target population studied did not result in the discovery of multiple reliable or valid surveys that would capture or explore the phenomenon in question. The researcher developed a 70-question web-based survey entitled Foster Students College and University Survey. The survey was adapted from the National Survey of Student Engagement (2016), Campus Connectedness (Lee et al, 2000, 2002, Guardian/Renaissance Scholars Student Survey (Dworsky & Pérez, 2009), Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Solberg et al., 1998), College Student Expectations Questionnaire (Kuh & Pace, 1998), College Student Experiences Questionnaire (Kuh & Pace, 1998), and Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy (Solberg et al., 1994). The survey captured students' knowledge of campus support programs. The results of the survey provided insight into the knowledge of foster care alumni who may have participated in college campus support programs. Moreover, the results of the study may

allow higher education leaders and program or service administrators to address the unique needs of this population while making program improvements to increase student retention and postsecondary completion rates. Foster care alumni voices can be used to determine how their knowledge of college campus support if they are included in the conversation through survey research.

Guardian/Renaissance Scholars Student Survey

The web-based survey developed by Dworsky and Pérez (2010) served as a model and guide for the development of the Foster Students College and University Survey, which solicited knowledge and perceptions of foster care alumni who have participated in campus support programs. The Dworsky and Pérez (2009) survey inquires about foster care alumni's experiences with and perceptions of campus support programs designed to help this population succeed in college. The questions were primarily closed-ended questions, but some questions allowed respondents to answer using their own words. Frequency distributions and cross tabulations were computed.

More information is needed on whether participation in any campus support program is mandatory. It may be helpful to understand how programs operate to determine whether supports are provided directly from a uniquely designed program or by another program to which students were referred. A comparative analysis of campus support programs and supports provided was needed to fully address the research questions. The research inventory was part of a quantitative method design developed through Qualtrics at the University of Georgia administered through a link sent via email and posted to Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google.

Reliability. The Guardian/Renaissance Scholars Student Survey (Dworsky & Pérez, 2009) did not include any scales from the survey items.

Validity. The Guardian/Renaissance Scholars Student Survey (Dworsky & Pérez, 2009) did not include any scales from the survey items.

Procedures

Participants were identified through snowball sampling from the EMBARK Georgia designated points of contact. Mr. David Meyers from the J.W. Fanning Institute at the University of Georgia distributed a letter developed by the researcher to the designated points of contact via the EMBARK Georgia Listserv. The researcher administered the Foster Students Survey via Qualtrics, an online survey system to collect data. The researcher obtained informed consent from the participants prior to administering the survey and advised them on confidentiality and their ability to stop the survey at any time. A recruitment letter described the research study, benefits, liabilities, and overall purpose that would be provided to participants.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2014) noted that researchers present information about the steps involved in analyzing data by presenting the following:

Step 1. The researcher will report information about the number of members of the sample who did and did not complete the scale and inventory. The researcher will also utilize a table with numbers and percentages describing participants and non-participants.

Step 2. The researcher will discuss the method by which response bias will be determined and include the procedures used to check for response bias.

Step 3. The researcher will discuss a plan to provide a descriptive analysis of data for all independent and dependent variables (i.e. the means, standard deviations, and range of scores for the variables described).

Step 4. The researcher will identify statistical procedures used for developing, using, or combining items into scales. Reliability will also be included to check for internal consistency of the scales (i.e. Cronbach's alpha statistic).

Step 5. The researcher will identify the statistics and statistical computer program used for testing the major inferential research questions or hypotheses in the proposed study (e.g. SPSS).

Step 6. The researcher will present the results in tables or figures and interpret the results from the statistical test.

The results of the study were presented in tables after being analyzed from statistical tests selected. Interpretation in quantitative research involves drawing conclusions from the results of the research questions, the hypotheses, and the larger meaning of the results. Tests considered included chi-square (an association between two variables measured on an interval or ratio scale), Pearson product-moment correlation (indicates the magnitude and direction of association between two variables measured on an interval or ratio scale), and multiple regression (provides information about the relationship between several predictor or independent variables and one outcome variable and provides the relative prediction of one variable among many in terms of the outcome).

Position of the Researcher

The researcher's position was based on post-positivist assumptions. Creswell (2014) expressed that post-positivism represents the thinking after positivism, challenging the traditional notion of the absolute truth of knowledge and recognizing that we cannot be positive about our claims of knowledge when studying the behavior and actions of humans. Creswell (2014) further explained that post-positivists hold a deterministic philosophy in which causes (probably)

determine effects or outcomes. Surveying the knowledge of students who participated in a campus support program may help the researcher and program directors or coordinators understand the behavior, actions, and needs of foster students pursuing postsecondary education.

Theoretical Framework

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1994) argued that in order to understand human development, one must consider the entire ecological system in which growth occurs. This system is composed of five socially organized subsystems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem) that help support and guide human growth. Bronfenbrenner's ecological paradigm, first introduced in the 1970s (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, 1976, 1977, 1979), represented a reaction to the restricted scope of most research then being conducted by developmental psychologists. The nature of both the restriction and the reaction is conveyed by this oft-quoted description of the state of developmental science at that time: "It can be said that much of developmental psychology is the science of the strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1994). By 1986, Bronfenbrenner (1994) was able to write studies of children and adults in real-life settings, with real-life implications. Such studies are now commonplace in the research literature on human development in both the United States and Europe. According to Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1994), understanding human development demands going beyond the direct observation of behavior on the part of one or two persons in the same place; it requires examination of multi-person systems of interaction not limited to a single setting and must take into account aspects of the environment beyond the immediate situation containing the subject.

Bronfenbrenner (1977) defined the ecology of human development as the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation throughout the lifespan between a growing human

organism and the changing immediate environments in which it lives, as this process is affected by relationships occurring within and between these immediate settings, as well as the larger social contexts, both formal and informal, in which the settings are embedded. In the context of foster care alumni, the researcher posits that the relationships built between members of this population and service providers of campus support programs are based on environmental interactions. These interactions can be good or bad and may depend on the nature of the relationship and the environmental conditions in which both reside. Moreover, interactions may not occur if connections are not made. Service providers and/or program directors may be required to engage at a high level to develop trust, which requires connection and consistency in order for interactions to continue to occur. To further develop understanding of this model, Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1994) described the ecological environment topologically as a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next:

1. **Microsystem** is the complex of relations between the developing person and the environment in an immediate setting containing that person (e.g. home, school, workplace); it is a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interactions with and activity in the immediate environment.
2. **Mesosystem** (a system of microsystems) comprises the interrelations among major settings containing the developing person at a particular point in his or her life; it comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings

containing the developing person (e.g., the relations between the home and school, school and workplace).

3. **Exosystem** is an extension of the mesosystem embracing other specific social structures, both formal and informal, that do not themselves contain the developing person but impinge upon or encompass the immediate settings in which that person is found and thereby influence, delimit, or even determine what goes on there. The exosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives.
4. **Macrosystem** refers to the overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture, such as the economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems, of which micro, meso, and exo systems are the concrete manifestations. Macrosystems are conceived and examined not only in structural terms but as carriers of information and ideology that, both explicitly and implicitly, endow meaning and motivation to particular agencies, social networks, roles, activities, and their interrelations. References to belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, lifestyles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems are of particular interest and importance.
5. **Chronosystem** is the final systems parameter extending the environment into a third dimension. A chronosystem encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also in the environment in which that person lives (e.g. changes over the life course in family structure, socioeconomic status,

employment, place of residence, or the degree of hecticness and ability in everyday life).

Additionally, exploring the topic of personal experience quantitatively, relational cultural theory (RCT) is further used as the conceptual framework. Comstock et al. (2008) expressed that RCT was conceived of after the publication of Jean Baker Miller's (1986) *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, a groundbreaking book that has been translated into more than 20 languages. The ideas of this theory emerged from Miller's clinical practice with women in which she noted that the centrality of relationships in her clients' lives was inconsistent with the traditional theories of counseling and human development she had been taught in medical school. According to Miller and other feminist theorists of the time, these traditional theoretical models emphasize individuation, separation, and autonomy as markers of emotional maturity and psychological health (Comstock et al., 2008). Miller (1986), like other multicultural and feminist theorists, suggested that a lack of understanding of the contextual and relational experiences of women, people of color, and marginalized men led many mental health professionals to pathologize these individuals by misunderstanding and devaluing how these important factors contribute to the psychological well-being of all people.

One of the core tenets of RCT, as denoted by Comstock et al. (2008), is the central relational paradox (CRP). The CRP assumes that we all have a natural drive toward relationships, and in these relationships, we long for acceptance. However, we come to believe that aspects of ourselves are unacceptable or unlovable. Thus, we choose to hide these aspects; we keep them out of our relationships. In the end, the connections we make with others are not as fulfilling and validating as they otherwise might have been. One primary goal of RCT is to create and maintain mutually growth-fostering relationships, relationships in which both parties feel

that they matter. In these healthy relationships, all of the involved parties experience what is known as the Five Good Things: 1) a desire to move into more relationships because of how a good relational experience feels, 2) a sense of zest or energy, 3) increased knowledge of oneself and the other person in the relationship, 4) a desire to take action both in the growth-fostering relationship and outside of it, and 5) an overall increased sense of worth.

Comstock et al. (2008) reiterated that RCT involves working with clients to identify and strive towards relationships that present opportunities for them to experience mutually growth-fostering relationships. In fact, a strong, connected therapeutic relationship should be a model for these kinds of relationships. While there are a number of specific challenges presented in the therapeutic relationship, RCT practitioners believe that their relationships with their clients can have a reasonably high degree of mutuality. Clinical experiences of mutuality include the client's movement toward the awareness that she/he matters to the therapist; the therapist's belief that she/he, too, matters to the client; an integrative awareness both have of what it means to feel like one matters; and the worth involved in offering this feeling to another person through the process of connection. This same concept can be applied to students and student services personnel in the context of higher education retention and achievement through graduation.

Hansen (2006) posited that theoretical understanding is an essential part of effective counseling practice in all counseling settings. Theories help counselors organize clinical data, make complex processes coherent, and provide conceptual guidance for interventions at the micro, meso, and macro level. In fact, moving towards social justice in counseling requires student and novice counselors to consider the environmental factors that may contribute to individuals' mental health issues or personal challenges. Personal counseling theories provide vision, clarity, and focus that often guide practice. Tolentino (2010) emphasized additional

factors that build counselors' personal styles, including professional interests and ideas that evolve from acquisition of professional experience, clarification of preferred orientation as they develop counseling skills, emphasis in graduate training, modeling professors, treatment systems advocated by internship sites or institutions where they were first employed, type of clients they deal with, and their personalities and worldviews.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore foster care students' knowledge of campus support programs. The research questions used to provide the framework for this study were as follows:

RQ1: How does the campus connectedness of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students (as measured by the Campus Connectedness Scale) correlate with engagement in a campus support program to meet their needs (as indicated by the Guardian/Renaissance Scholars Student Survey)?

RQ2: What is the relationship between the academic self-efficacy (as measured by the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale) and expectations (as measured by the College Student Expectations Questionnaire) of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students participating in a campus support program to meet their needs?

RQ3: How do college student experiences (as measured by the College Student Experiences Survey) of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students participating in a campus support program correlate with career self-efficacy (as measured by the Career Search Self-Efficacy Scale)?

Data Collection

The findings of the data analyses are outlined in this chapter. From the initial sample of 199 participants, 195 participants fully completed the Qualtrics survey via a Qualtrics link on social media or by email, representing a 98% response rate. Of the 195 submitted responses,

however, five did not confirm having been in foster care, and one of the 195 participants did not confirm enrollment in an undergraduate institution. Nevertheless, the five participants were not excluded from the data set because they completed the rest of the survey and the information they provided is very important in conceptualizing this population, as it has historically been challenging to capture a snapshot of who this population represents. The information is valuable and meaningful for future research. The researcher chose, as part of the informed consent, to allow participants to answer the questions contained in the survey as they felt comfortable. Participants were not forced to answer any survey questions and were allowed to quit the survey at any time.

The multiple-choice format and comments section of the survey yielded high participation results overall considering the small sample size. Despite the length of the survey (70 questions), participants completed the survey. Survey questions 54–57 served as a comments section at the end of the overall survey. While this study does not represent qualitative or mixed-methods research, the comments section does provide direct feedback from participants. These comments provide insight into and information regarding the biggest challenges participants faced when transitioning from foster care to college or university, campus support programs and how they help participants cope with challenges during their transitions and integration into a college or university, and the best parts about participating in foster student campus support programs. These findings will be presented as “Additional Findings” in this chapter and illustrated as a figure, along with direct quotes presented in Appendix E. A description of the sample population and the associated findings related to each research question are presented below.

The quantitative survey data corresponding to research questions one through three were downloaded from Qualtrics and stored in a Microsoft Excel file. The downloaded data were then screened for missing data before they were transferred and analyzed using R Statistical Software (R Core Team, 2013). A variety of statistical tests were utilized in this study to analyze the quantitative data including t-tests of independent means and analyses of variance (ANOVAs). Significance for all statistical tests was indicated at the alpha level of 0.05 or less.

The comments section of the quantitative survey contained open-ended questions that allowed participants to respond in their own words (questions 54–57) and was also downloaded from Qualtrics and stored in Microsoft Excel. The data were analyzed by the researcher using the phenomenological research method as a guide in interpreting relevant themes, not for the purpose of conducting a qualitative study. This inductive, analysis-guided format involved coding, categorizing, and thematizing significant statements participants made in their responses to the comments section of the survey. The researcher developed "meaning units" from this analysis into what Moustakas (1994) called an "essence" of the construct studied. The purpose for constructing "meaning units" was to extract meaning from the brief comments provided in the quantitative survey and attempt to make a connection with the quantitative responses. The themes of the comments section of the survey are illustrated in a figure under "Additional Findings" with direct quotes provided in Appendix E. Results of the data obtained in this study are presented in two sections: (a) descriptive statistics and (b) detailed information on data analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, frequencies, percentages) were computed to evaluate the demographic information of the participants and illustrate whether or

not there was a statistical difference between the independent and dependent variables. Statistical data analysis is only meaningful if the levels of particular variables are somewhat evenly represented. The researcher explored the distribution of categorical and numeric variables within the dataset to identify those variables that should be part of the study. As a result, the researcher combined the levels of some variables to create categories with more evenly distributed samples.

First, the researcher tested the number of samples for each level of each of the categories. Some levels may not be represented sufficiently in the data. Tables 4.1 through 4.15 present demographic responses to the Foster Care College and Student Survey. The survey included 195 participants. Table 4.1 indicates that the participants identified as 63 men (32.3%), 129 women (66.1%), and 3 other (1.5%). Table 4.2 shows that 32 (16.4%) participants identified as international students while 163 (83.5%) identified as non-international students or from the U.S. Table 4.3 describes the races of the participants: 6 American Indian or Alaska native (3.07%), 13 Asian (6.6%), 37 Black or African American (18.9%), 23 Hispanic or Latino (11.7%), 7 Multiracial (3.5%), 2 Other (1.0%), and 107 White (54.8%).

Table 4.4 provides the number of participants who indicated that they lived in foster care. There were 190 (97.4%) who stated yes, while 5 (2.5%) did not respond. Moreover, Table 4.5 illustrates that 70 (35.8%) participants grew up in foster care in the state of Georgia while 125 (64.1%) grew up in foster care in other states. Table 4.6 shows that 194 (99.4%) participants were currently enrolled as students in college or university while only 1(0.51%) identified as a participant who was not enrolled in college or university. Table 4.7 provides the class status for participants enrolled in college or university. There were 24 (12.3%) freshmen, 34 (17.4%) sophomores, 36 (18.4%) juniors, 32 (16.4%) seniors, and 69 graduate students (35.3%). Table 4.8 illustrates the total number of registered classes for participants currently enrolled in college

or university. There were 47 participants registered for 4 classes (full-time study), while 56 participants were only registered for one class online. Table 4.9 describes the educational attainment of participants. Educational goal attainment goals of participants include 84 (43.0%) bachelors, 48 (24.6%) masters, 27 (13.8%) doctoral or professional, and 36 (18.4%) some college, but less than a bachelor's degree. Table 4.10 highlights institutions participants previously attended: 95 (48.7%) attended a 4-year college, 64 (32.8%) a community or junior college, 21 (10.7%) a vocational or technical college, and 15 (7.6%) no institution.

Table 4.11 provides information about foster parents who completed higher education. The most meaningful number is that 55 foster mothers and foster fathers completed their bachelor's degrees. In Table 4.12, 55 (28.2%) participants identified as being athletes in college or university; 140 (71.7%) did not. Moreover, 59 (30.2%) participants identified as being Greek-affiliated, while 136 (69.7%) did not. In Table 4.13, 61 (31.2%) participants identified as having a disability, while 134 (68.7%) participants did not. Eighty-six (44.1%) participants indicated that they were in remedial classes, while 109 (55.8%) were not in remedial classes.

Table 4.14 provides information on the sexual orientation of participants. The number of participants who identified as heterosexual was 158 (81.0%), bisexual was 16 (8.2%), gay was 7 (3.5%), lesbian was 5 (2.5%), queer was 5 (2.5%), questioning was 2 (1.0%), and transgender was 2 (1.0%). Table 4.15 provides participants' responses on whether or not they knew about the campus support program during their first year of college. Ninety-four (48.2%) participants indicated they knew about the program, while 101 (51.7%) participants did not know. Sixty-one (31.2%) participants participated in a college campus support program, while 134 (68.7%) participants did not. As shown in Table 4.16, a campus support participation score was developed to determine the frequency of those who knew about the program and participated,

those who did not participate because they did not know, and those who knew about the program and did not participate. Ninety-four (48.2%) participants did not know about the campus support program. Forty (20.5%) participants knew about the program but did not participate. Sixty-one (31.2%) participants participated in a campus support program.

Table 4.1. Gender Identity

Gender	**FQ**	**Percentage**
Man	63	32.3%
Other	3	66.1%
Woman	129	1.5%

Table 4.2. International Status

Yes/No	**FQ**	**Percentage**
Yes	32	16.4%
No	163	83.5%

Table 4.3. Race

Race	**FQ**	**Percentage**
American Indian or Alaska Native	6	3.07%
Asian	13	6.6%
Black or African American	37	18.9%
Hispanic or Latino	23	11.7%
Multiracial	7	3.5%
Other	2	1.0%
White	107	54.8%

Table 4.4. Foster Care Experience

Yes/No	FQ	Percentage
Yes	190	97.4%
“No Response”	5	2.5%

Table 4.5. Georgia Foster Care Experience

Yes/No	FQ	Percentage
Yes	70	35.8%
No	125	64.1%

Table 4.6. Enrollment

Yes/No	FQ	Percentage
Yes	194	99.4%
No	1	0.51%

Table 4.7. Class

Class	FQ	Percentage
Freshman	24	12.3%
Sophomore	34	17.4%
Junior	36	18.4%
Senior	32	16.4%
Graduate	69	35.3%

Table 4.8. Number of Registered Classes

Number of Classes	Online	Total
0	46	2
1	56	13
2	44	36
3	24	43
4	10	47
5	5	17
6	5	10
7 or more	5	27

Table 4.9. Educational Attainment Goal

Degree	FQ	Percentage
Bachelors	84	43.0%
Masters	48	24.6%
Doctoral or Professional	27	13.8%
Some College but Less Than a Bachelor's Degree	36	18.4%

Table 4.10. Institution Type Previously Attended

Institution Type	FQ	Percentage
4-year College or University	95	48.7%
Community or Junior College	64	32.8%
Vocational or Technical College	21	10.7%
None	15	7.6%

Table 4.11. Foster Parent Education

Education Level	Foster Mother	Foster Father
Associate's Degree	33	23
Attended College but Did Not Complete	26	25
Bachelor's Degree	55	55
Did Not Finish High School	5	13
Doctoral or Professional Degree	4	6
High School Diploma/GED	31	30
Master's Degree	26	18
Not Sure	14	25
Missing Response	1	0

Table 4.12. Athletics/Greek Life

Y/N	Athlete	Percentage	Greek	Percentage
Yes	55	28.2%	59	30.2%
No	140	71.7%	136	69.7%

Table 4.13. Disability/Remedial Courses

Y/N	Disability	Percentage	Remedial	Percentage
Yes	61	31.2%	86	44.1%
No	134	68.7%	109	55.8%

Table 4.14. Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation	FQ	Percentage
Bisexual	16	8.2%
Gay	7	3.5%
Heterosexual	158	81.0%
Lesbian	5	2.5%
Queer	5	2.5%
Questioning	2	1.0%
Transgender	2	1.0%

Table 4.15. Foster Care Campus Support

Y/N	Knowledge of Foster Care Campus Support Program (1st Year)	Percentage	Participation in Foster Care Campus Support Program	Percentage
Yes	94	48.2%	61	31.2%
No	101	51.7%	134	68.7%

Table 4.16. Campus Support Participation Score

Did Not Know about the Program (0)	Percentage	Did Know about the Program but Did Not Participate (1)	Percentage	Did Participate (2)	Percentage
94	48.2%	40	20.5%	61	31.2%

Quantitative Findings

The first research question, "How does the campus connectedness of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students correlate with engagement in a campus support program to

meet their needs?" was analyzed by comparing the means of participants' scores on the Foster Students College and University Survey when grouped by the independent or categorical variables. If the categorical variables allowed for two groups, a t-test for independent means was conducted. Demographic variables encompassing more than two categories were investigated using a one-way ANOVA. When significance at the 0.05 level is found using the ANOVA, typically additional post-hoc testing is completed with a Tukey test to determine where the differences between the groups lie. However, for the purpose of this study, a Tukey test was not completed to determine where the difference lies between the groups since the focus of the research questions was determining a statistically significant relationship between independent and dependent variables related to the research question. The research will need to be expanded further to determine where the differences lie. The hypotheses for research question one are listed below.

Hypotheses:

1. Currently enrolled female foster care undergraduate students will have higher levels of campus connectedness and engagement in a specifically developed campus support program than currently enrolled male foster care undergraduate students.

    Gender identity is related to campus connectedness, according to a t-test. There was a statistically significant difference between gender identity and campus connectedness with a p-value of 0.0003 ($p<=0.05$). Therefore, the researcher concluded that females had higher levels of campus connectedness than male participants. There were 129 participants who identified as female, 63 participants who identified as male, and only 3 participants who identified as other. Figure 1 provides an illustration of the mean scores, along with the p-value.

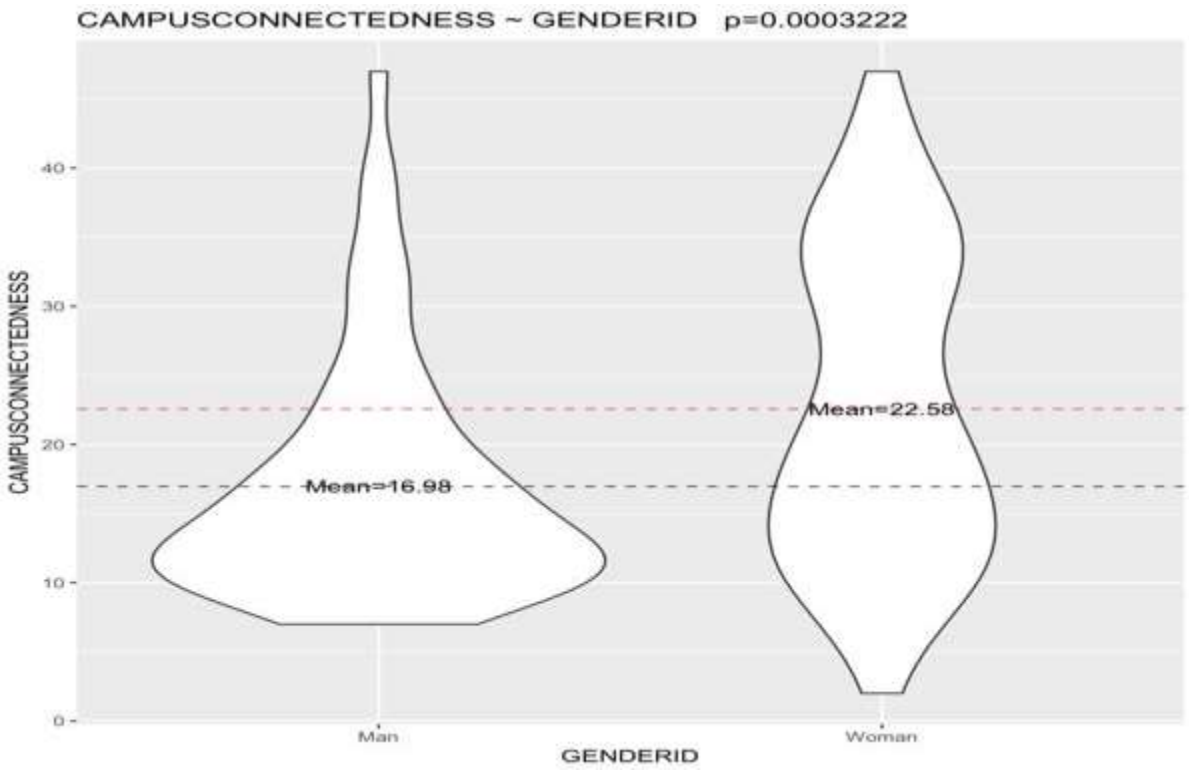

Figure 1. Hypothesis 1 – Campus Connectedness and Gender Identity

2. Currently enrolled White foster care undergraduate students will have higher campus connectedness and engagement in a specifically developed campus support program than currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students of color.

Binary race (White versus Non-White) and race in general are not related to campus connectedness. There was no statistically significant difference between binary race and race in general and campus connectedness with a p-value of 0.3473 ($p<=0.05$) for race and p-value of 0.3522 ($p<=0.05$) for binary race. An ANOVA was used for race and a t-test was used for binary race. Figures 2 and 3 provides an illustration of the mean scores, along with the p-value.

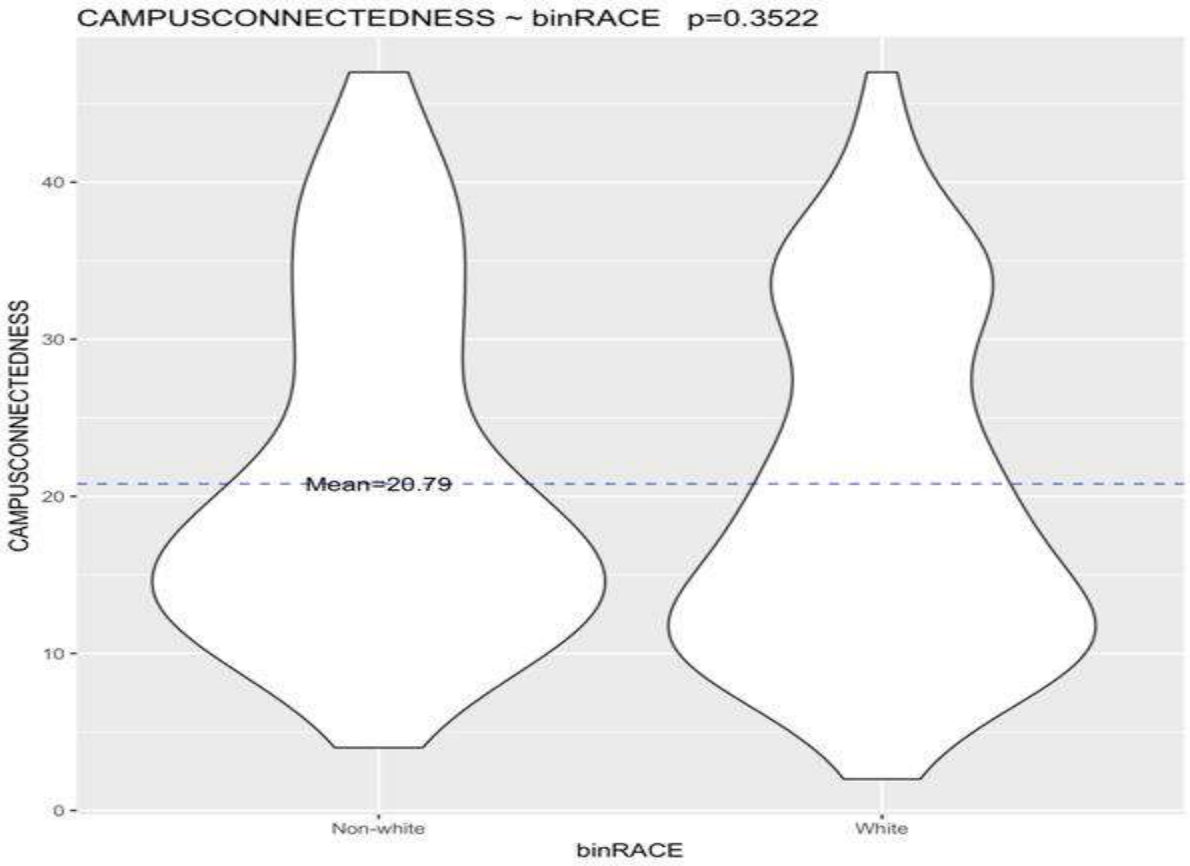

Figure 2. Hypothesis 2 – Campus Connectedness and Binary Race

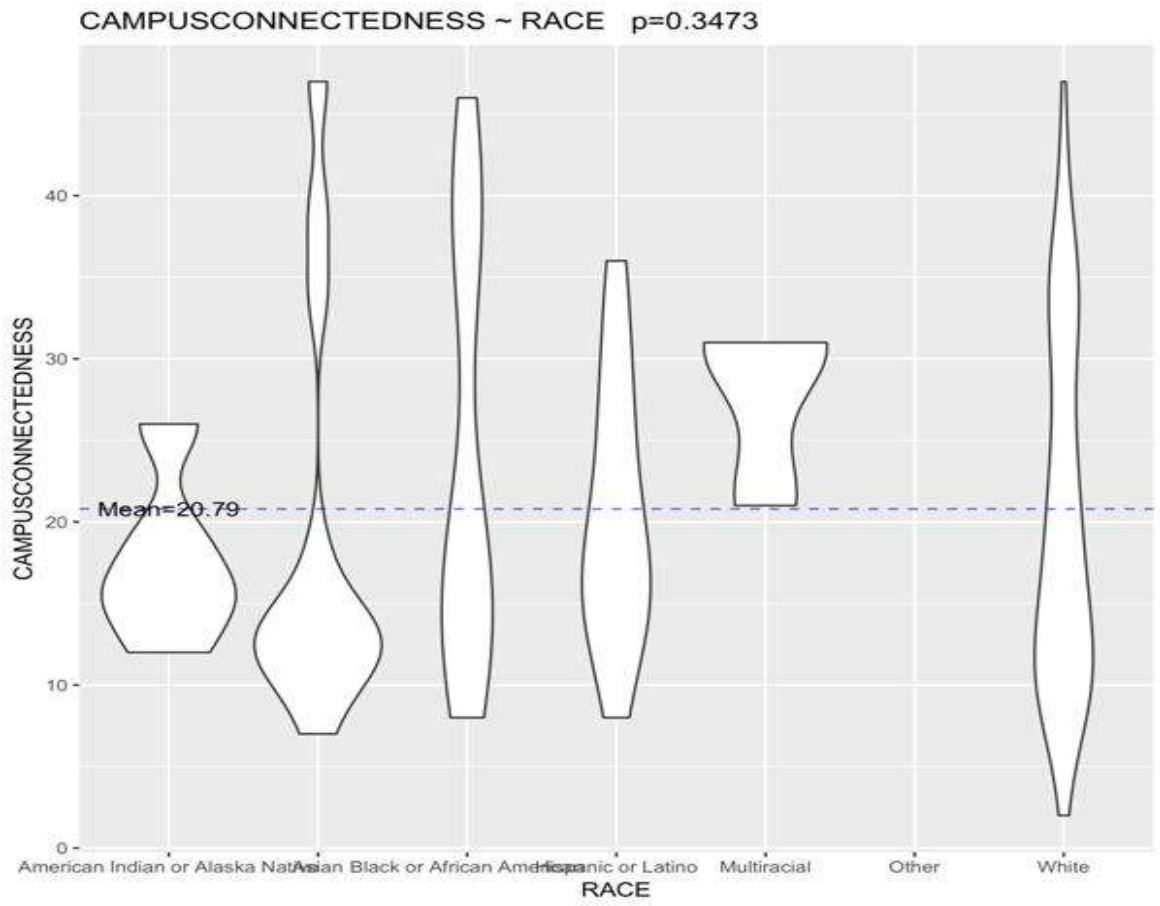

Figure 3. Hypothesis 3 – Campus Connectedness and Race

3. The sexual orientation of currently enrolled foster care undergraduates will be related to campus connectedness and engagement in a specifically developed campus support program.

Sexual orientation is not related to campus connectedness. There was no statistically significant difference between sexual orientation and campus connectedness with a p-value of 0.3596 ($p<=0.05$). An ANOVA test was used. Figure 4 provides an illustration of the mean scores, along with the p-value.

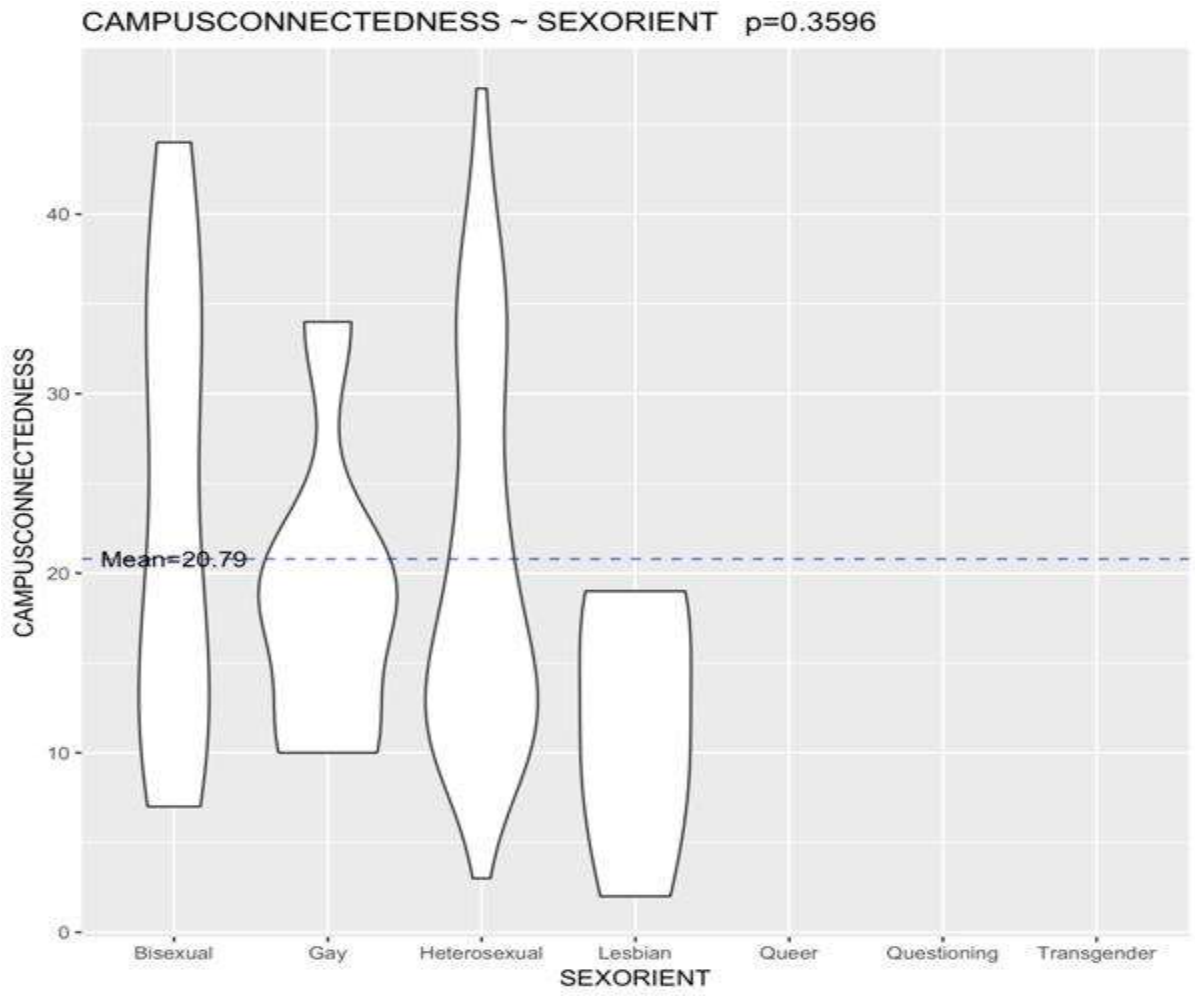

Figure 4. Hypothesis 4 – Campus Connectedness and Sexual Orientation

4. Grade point average is related to campus connectedness and engagement in a specifically developed campus support program for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.

    Grade point average is not related to campus connectedness. There was no statistically significant difference between grade point average and campus connectedness with a p-value of 0.1350 ($p<=0.05$). An ANOVA test was used. Figure 5 provides an illustration of the mean scores, along with the p-value.

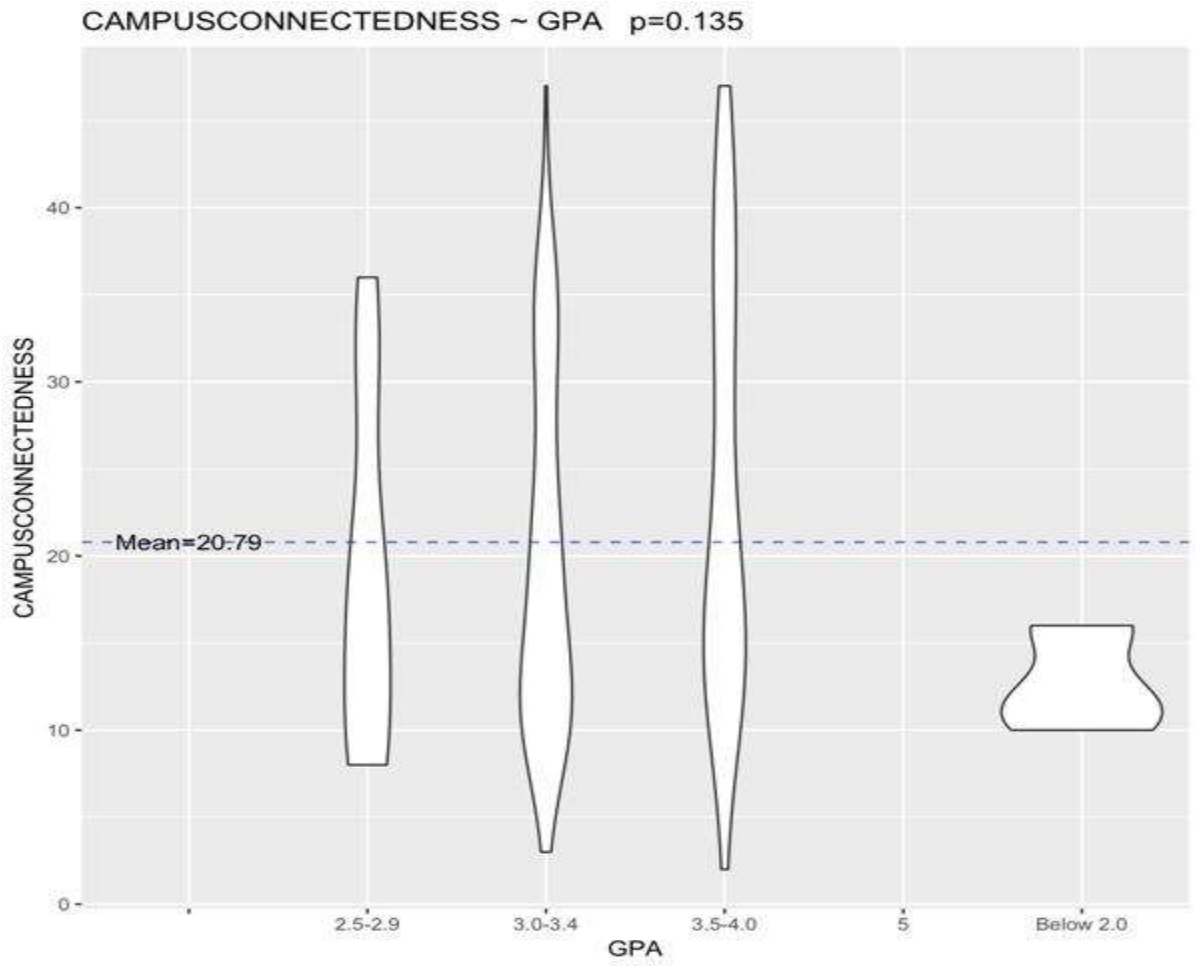

Figure 5. Hypothesis 5 – Campus Connectedness and Grade Point Average

5. For currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students, institution type attended in the past will be related to campus connectedness and engagement in a specifically developed campus support program.

    Institution type attended in the past is related to campus connectedness. There was a statistically significant difference between institution type attended in the past and campus connectedness with a p-value of 0.0382 ($p<=0.05$). An ANOVA test was used. Figure 6 provides an illustration of the means, along with the p-value.

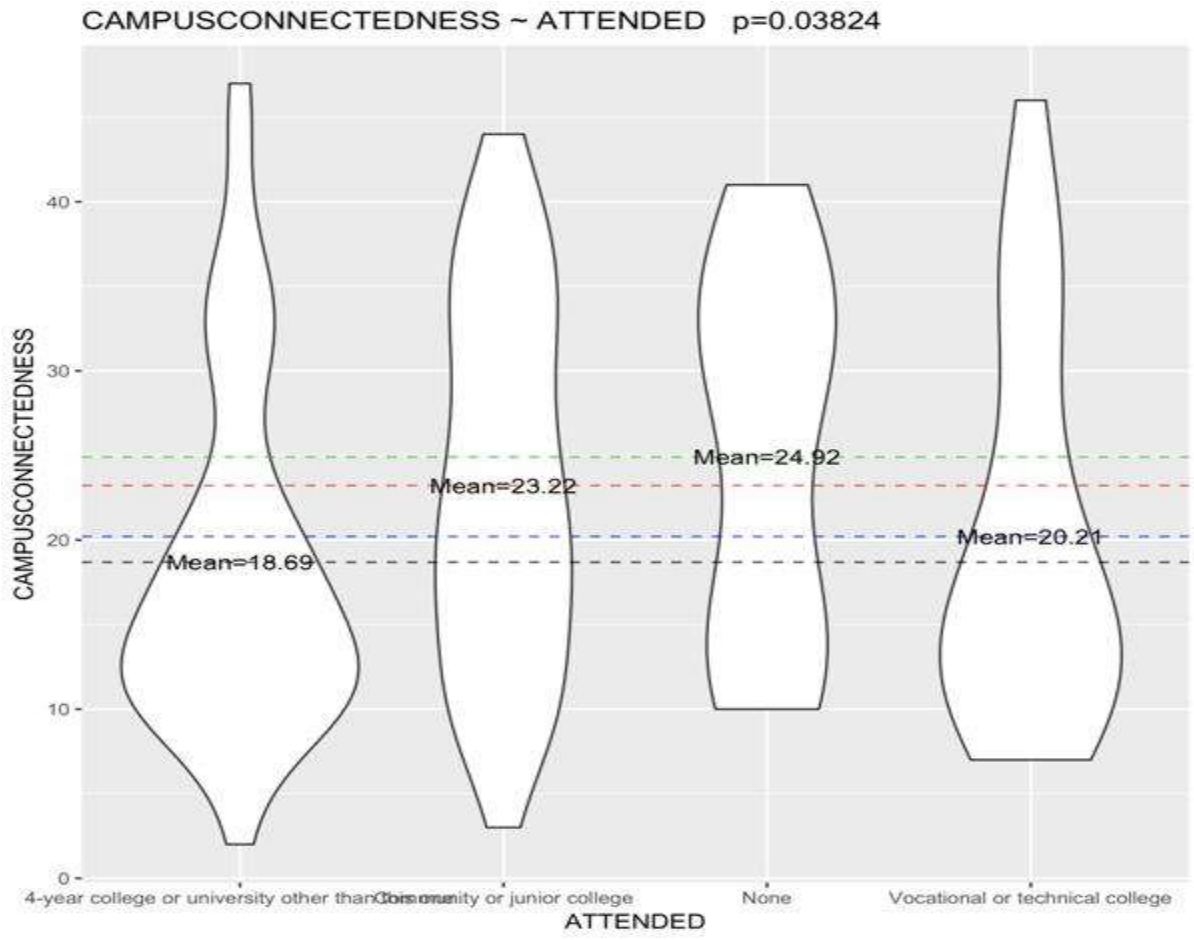

Figure 6. Hypothesis 6 – Campus Connectedness and Institutions Attended in the Past

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between the academic self-efficacy and expectations of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students participating in a campus support program to meet their needs?

Hypotheses:

1. Currently enrolled female foster care undergraduate students will have higher academic self-efficacy than currently enrolled male foster care undergraduate students participating in a specifically developed campus support program.

Gender identity is not related to academic self-efficacy. There is no statistically significant difference between gender identity and academic self-efficacy with a p-value of 0.9030 ($p<=0.05$). A t-test was used. The researcher deduces that female participants did not have higher academic self-efficacy than male participants. There were 129 participants who identified as female, 63 participants who identified as male, and only 3 participants identified as other. Figure 7 provides an illustration of the mean scores, along with the p-value.

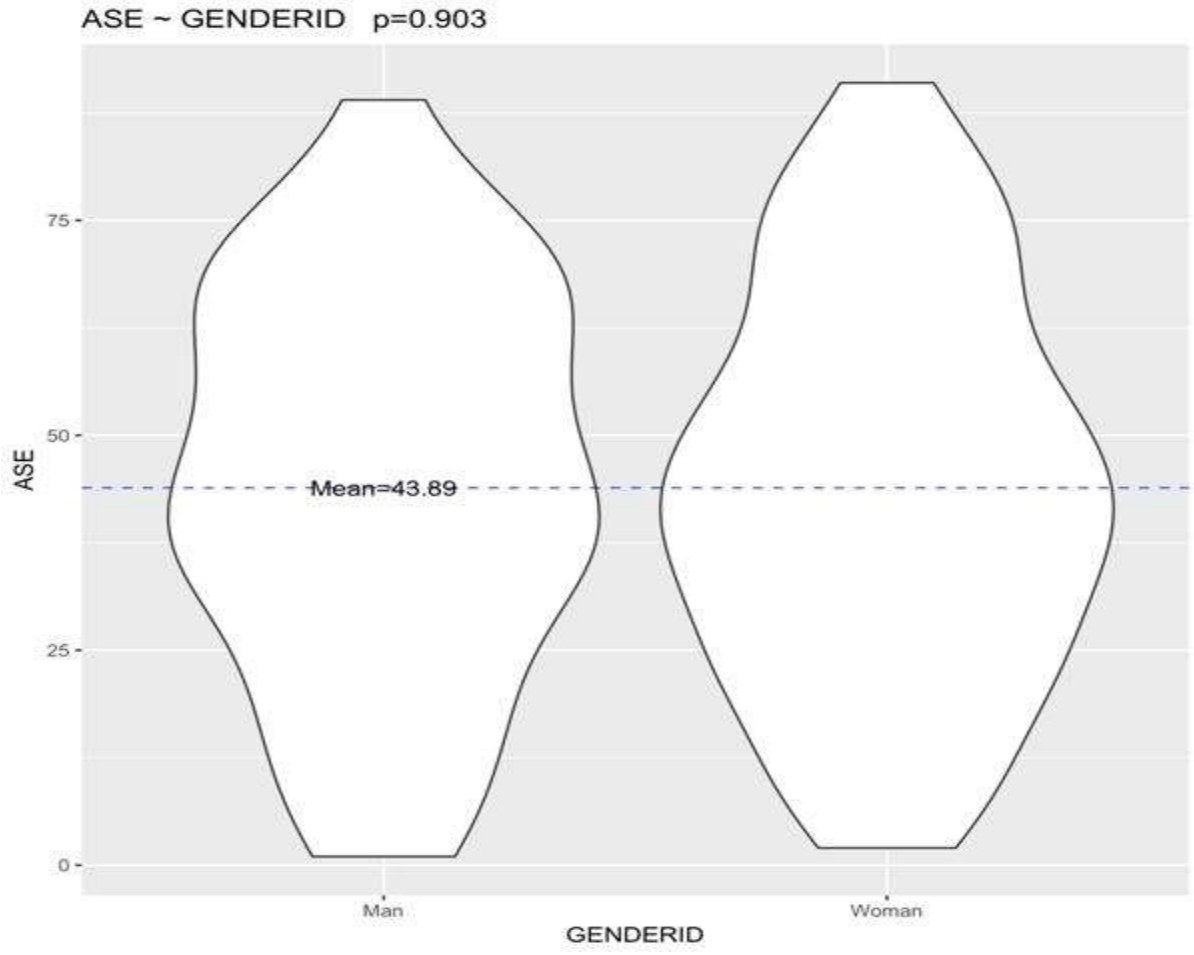

Figure 7. Hypothesis 1 – Academic Self-Efficacy and Gender Identity

2. The highest level of education expected to complete will be related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.

The highest level of education expected to complete is not related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations. There was no statistically significant difference between the highest level of education expected and academic self-efficacy and student expectations with a p-value of 0.3156 (p<=0.05) for academic self-efficacy and a p-value of 0.2154 (p<=0.05) for college student expectations. An ANOVA was used. Figures 8 and 9 provide an illustration of mean scores, along with p-values.

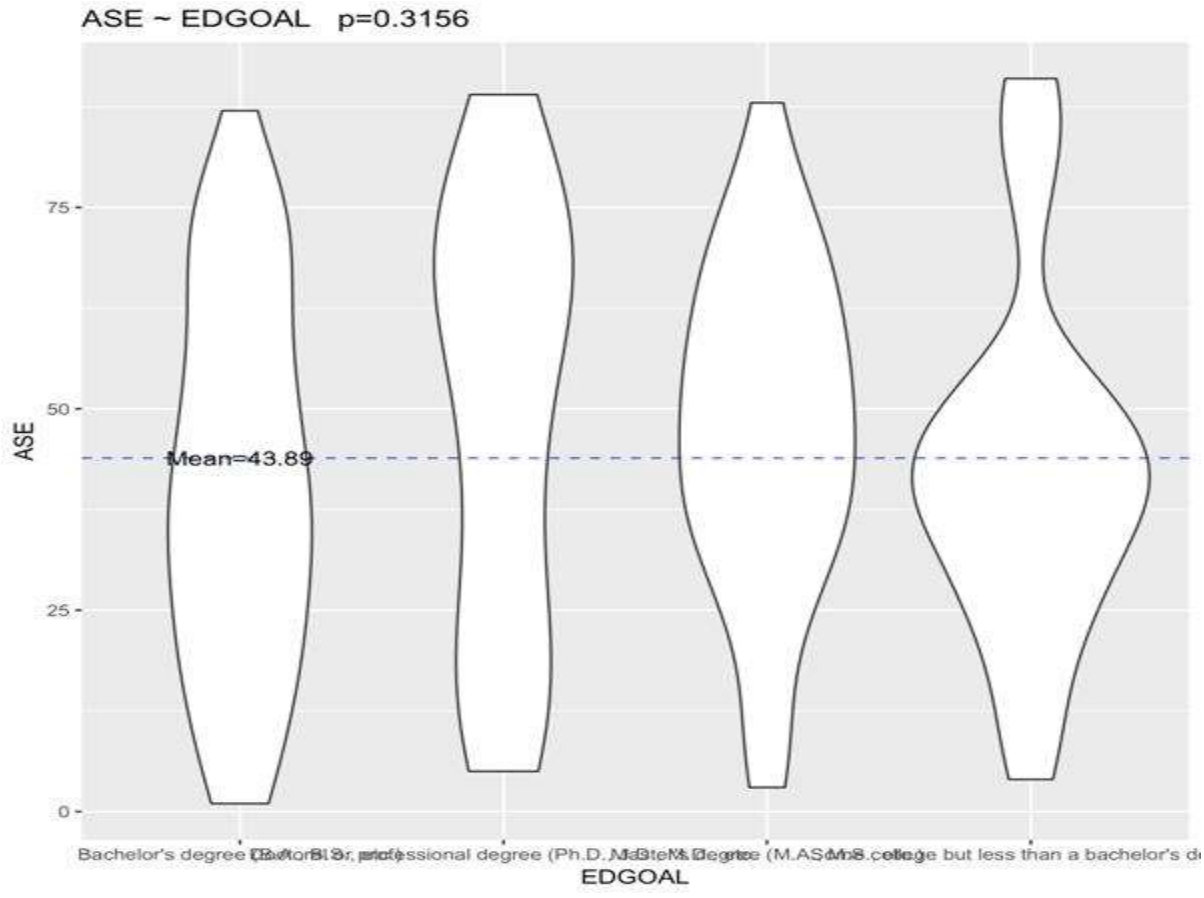

Figure 8. Hypothesis 2 – Academic Self-Efficacy and Educational Goal Expected to Attain

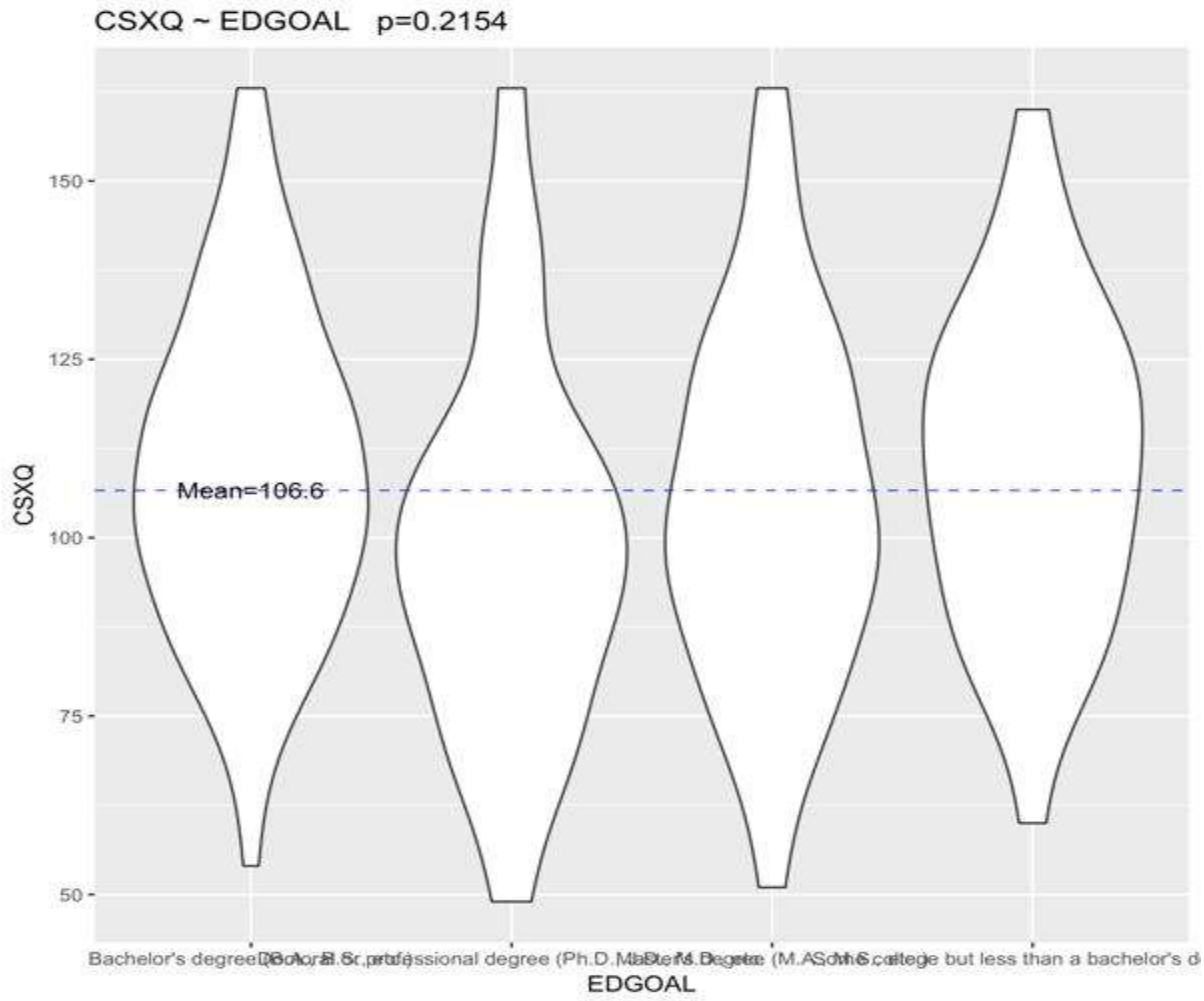

Figure 9. Hypothesis 2 – College Student Expectations and Educational Goal Expected to Attain

3. Gender will be related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.

    Gender is not related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations. There is no statistically significant difference between gender and academic self-efficacy and college student expectations with a p-value of 0.9030 (p<=0.05) for academic self-efficacy and 0.1025 (p<=0.05) for college student expectations. A t-test was used. Figures 10 and 11 provide an illustration of the mean scores, along with the p-value.

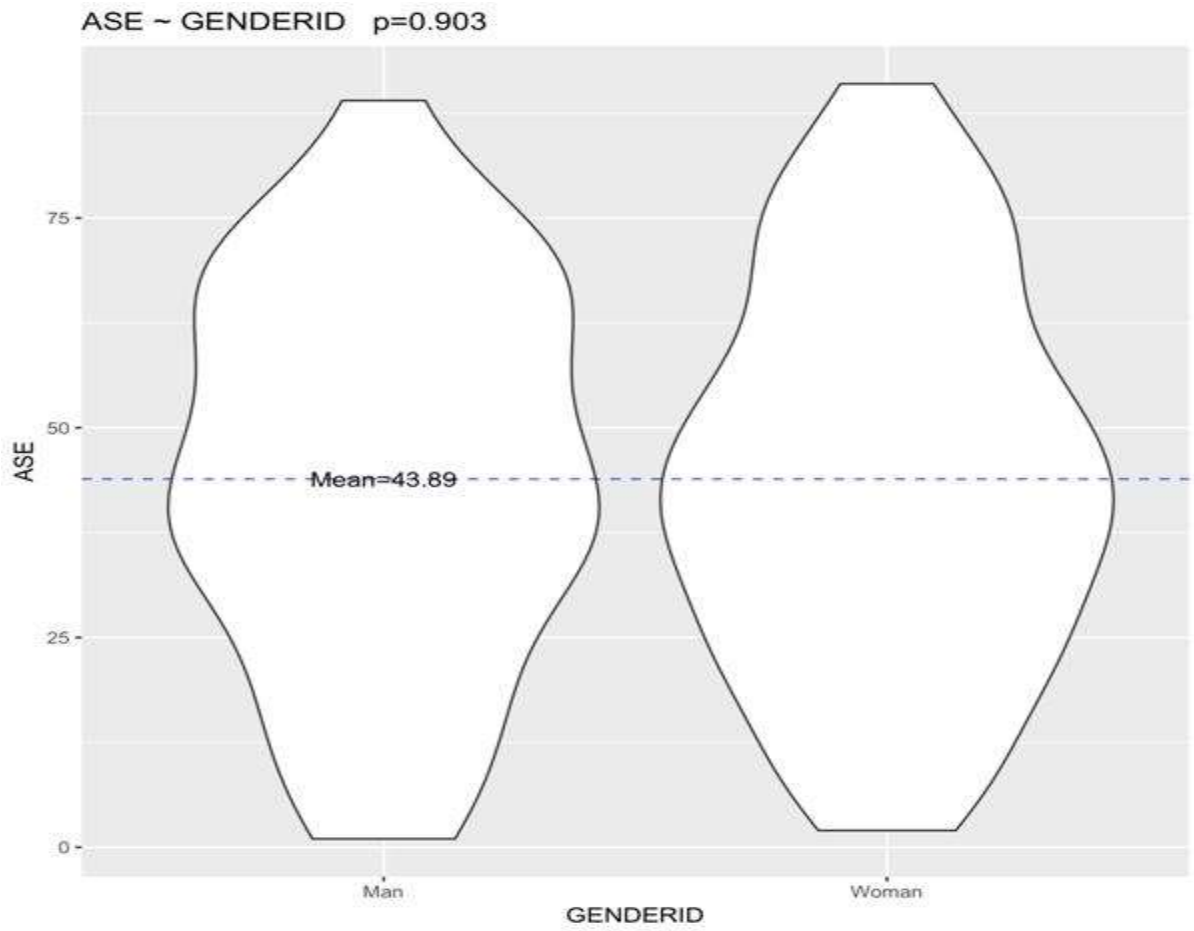

Figure 10. Hypothesis 3 – Academic Self-Efficacy and Gender Identity

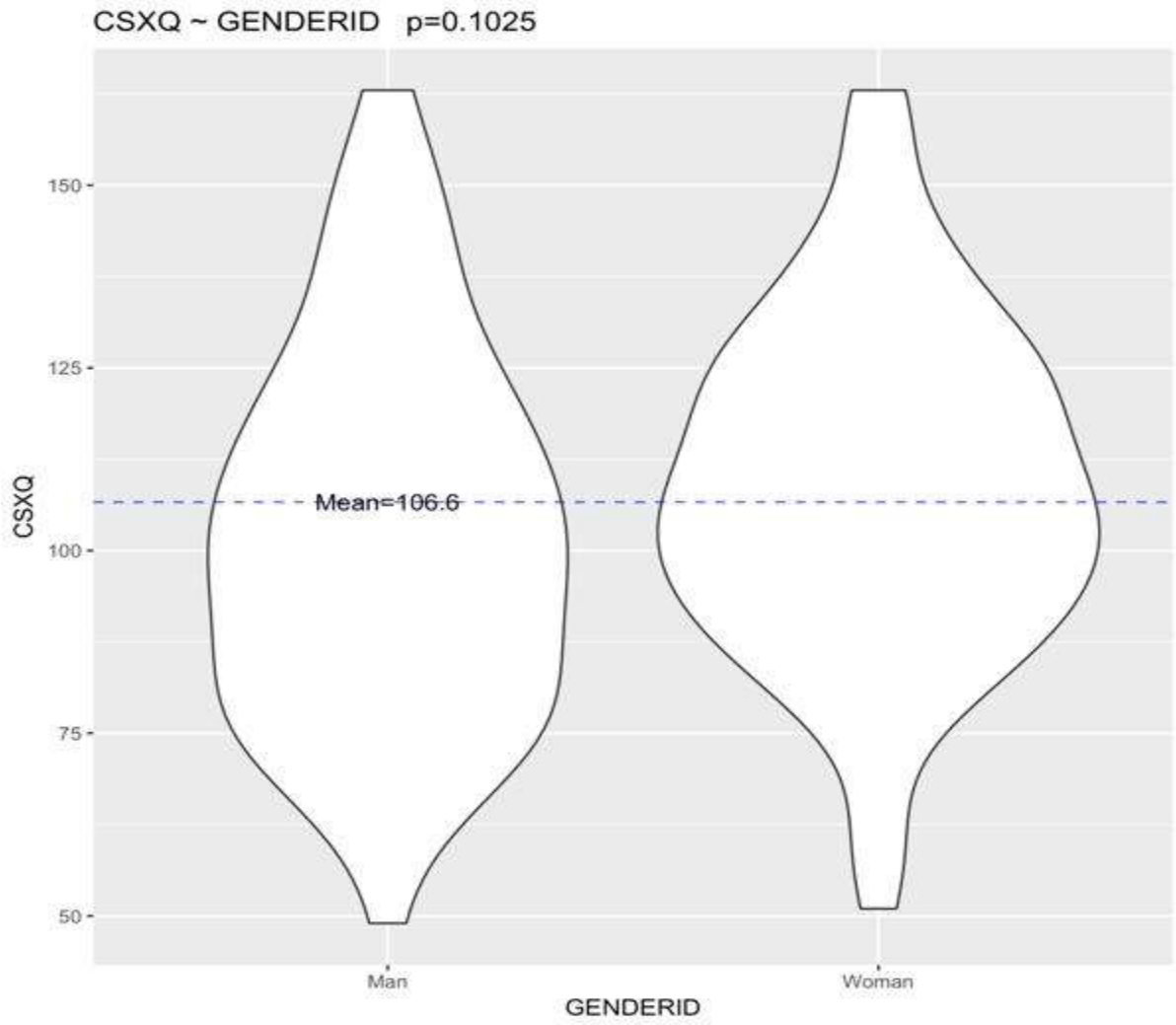

Figure 11. Hypothesis 3 – College Student Expectations and Gender Identity

4. The number of courses taken will be related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations.

The number of courses taken is not related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations. There is no statistically significant difference between the number of courses taken and academic self-efficacy and college student expectations, with a p-value of 0.7710 ($p<=0.05$) for academic self-efficacy and 0.8147 ($p<=0.05$) for college

student expectations. An ANOVA was used. Figures 12 and 13 provide an illustration of mean scores, along with p-values.

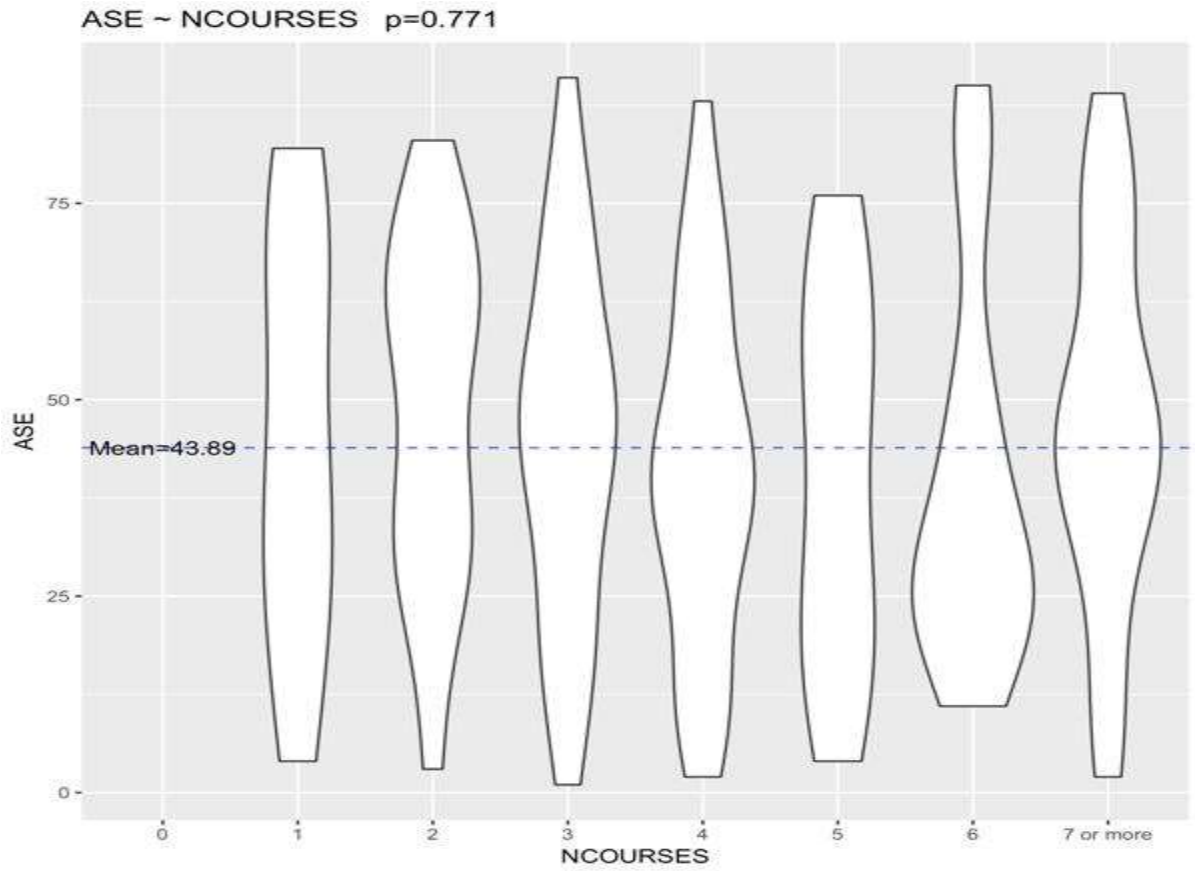

Figure 12. Hypothesis 4 – Academic Self-Efficacy and Number of Courses Currently Completing

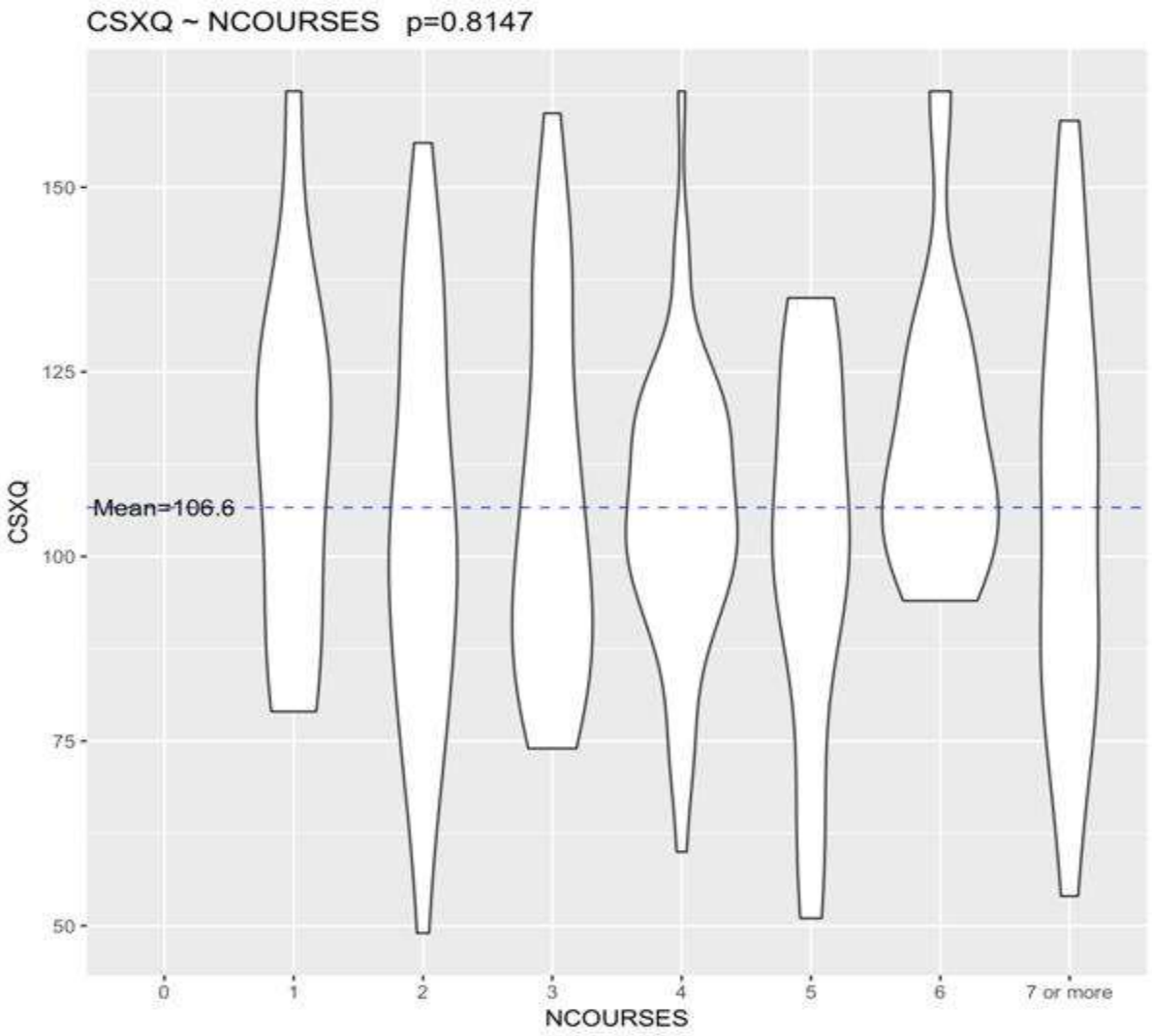

Figure 13. Hypothesis 4 – College Student Expectations and Number of Courses Currently Completing

5. The race or ethnicity of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students will be related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations.

Race or ethnicity is not related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations. There is no statistically significant difference between race or ethnicity and academic self-efficacy and college student expectations, with a p-value of 0.8296

(p<=0.05) for academic self-efficacy and 0.1060 (p<=0.05) for college student expectations. An ANOVA was used. Figures 14 and 15 provide an illustration of the mean scores, along with the p-values.

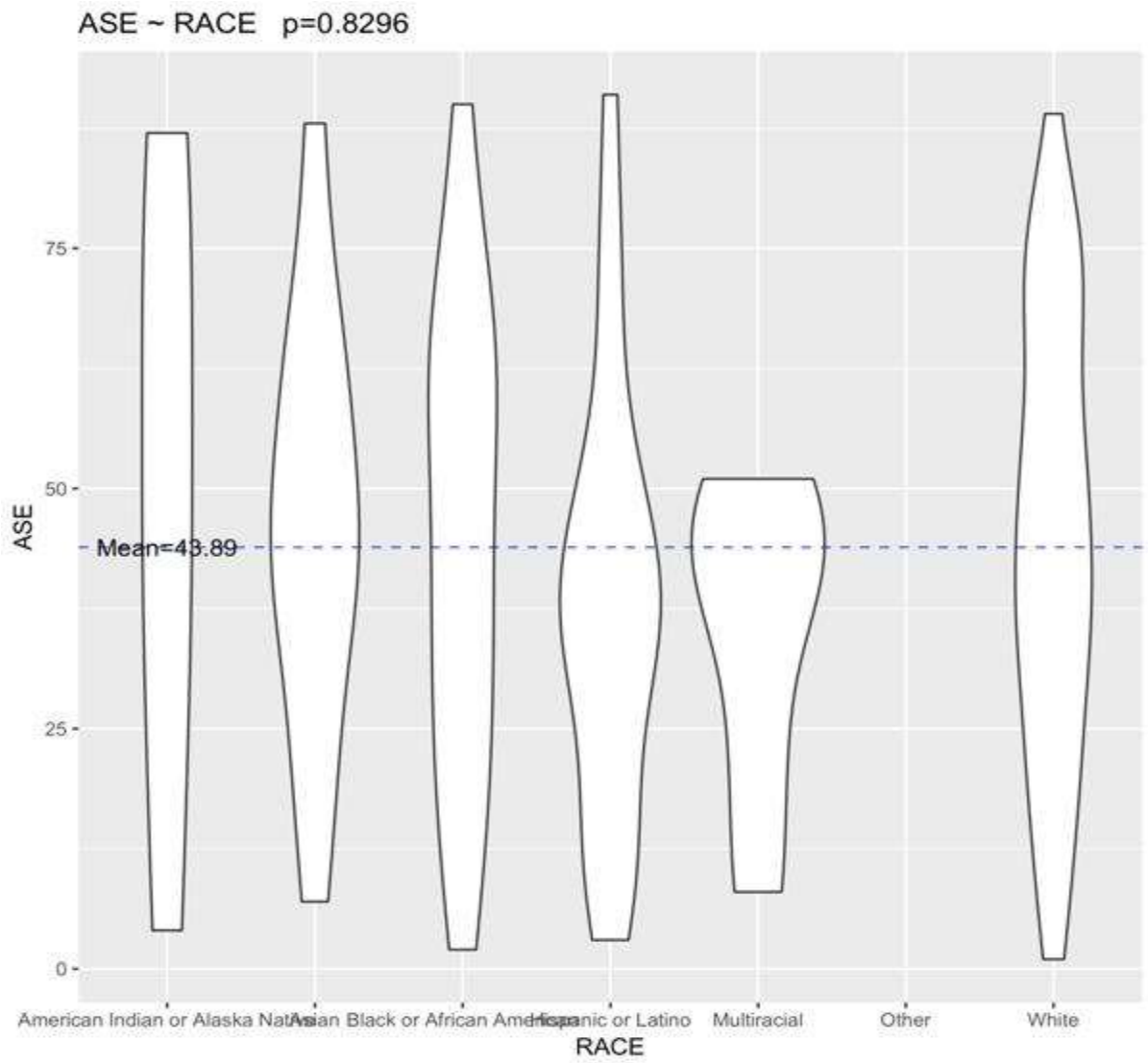

Figure 14. Hypothesis 5 – Academic Self-Efficacy and Race

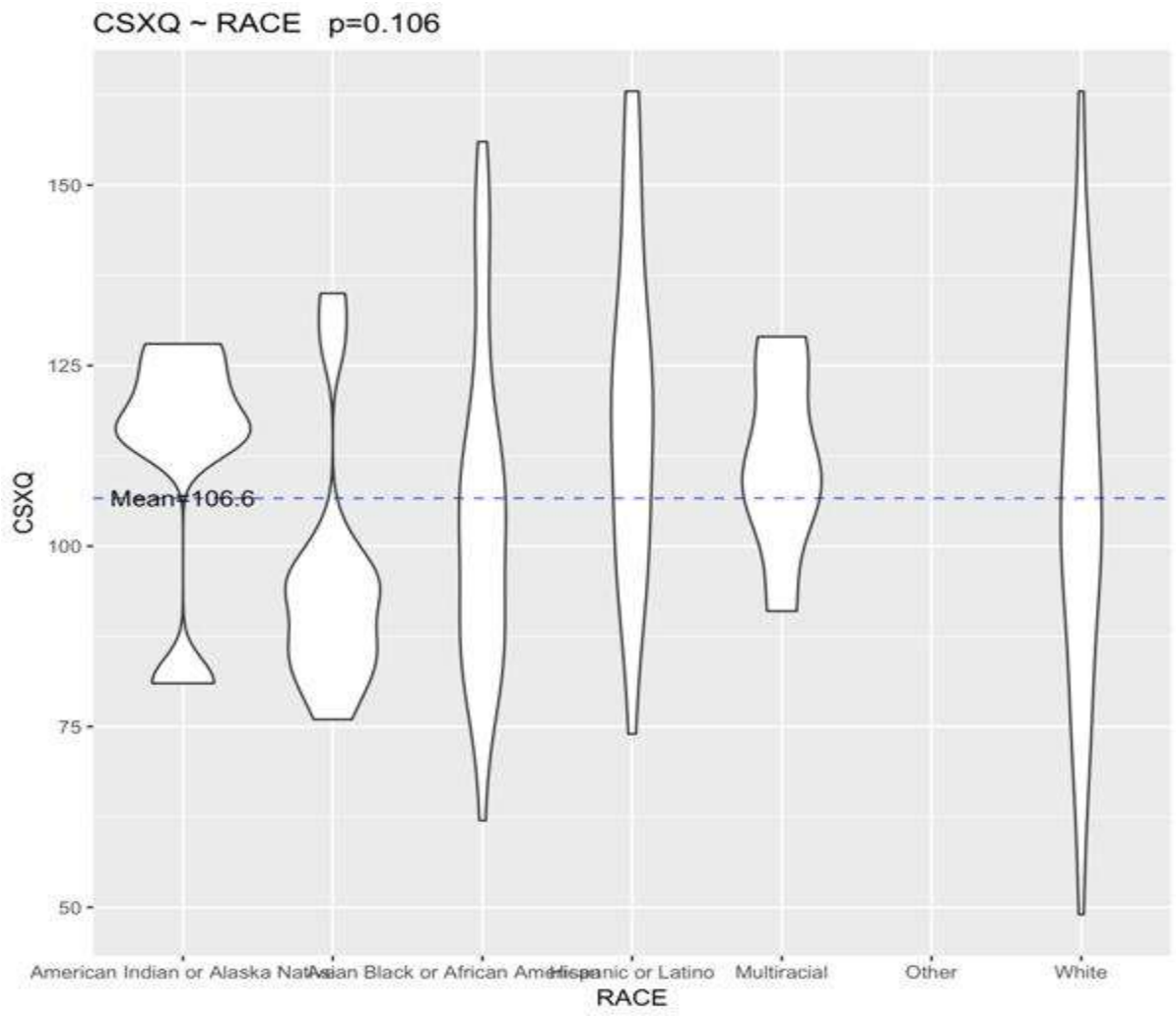

Figure 15. Hypothesis 5 – College Student Expectations and Race

6. Grade point average will be related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.

    Grade point average is not related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations. There is no statistically significant difference between grade point average and academic self-efficacy and college student expectations, with a p-value of 0.9588 ($p<=0.05$) for academic self-efficacy and 0.2002 ($p<=0.05$) for college student

expectations. An ANOVA was used. Figures 16 and 17 provide an illustration of the mean scores, along with the p-values.

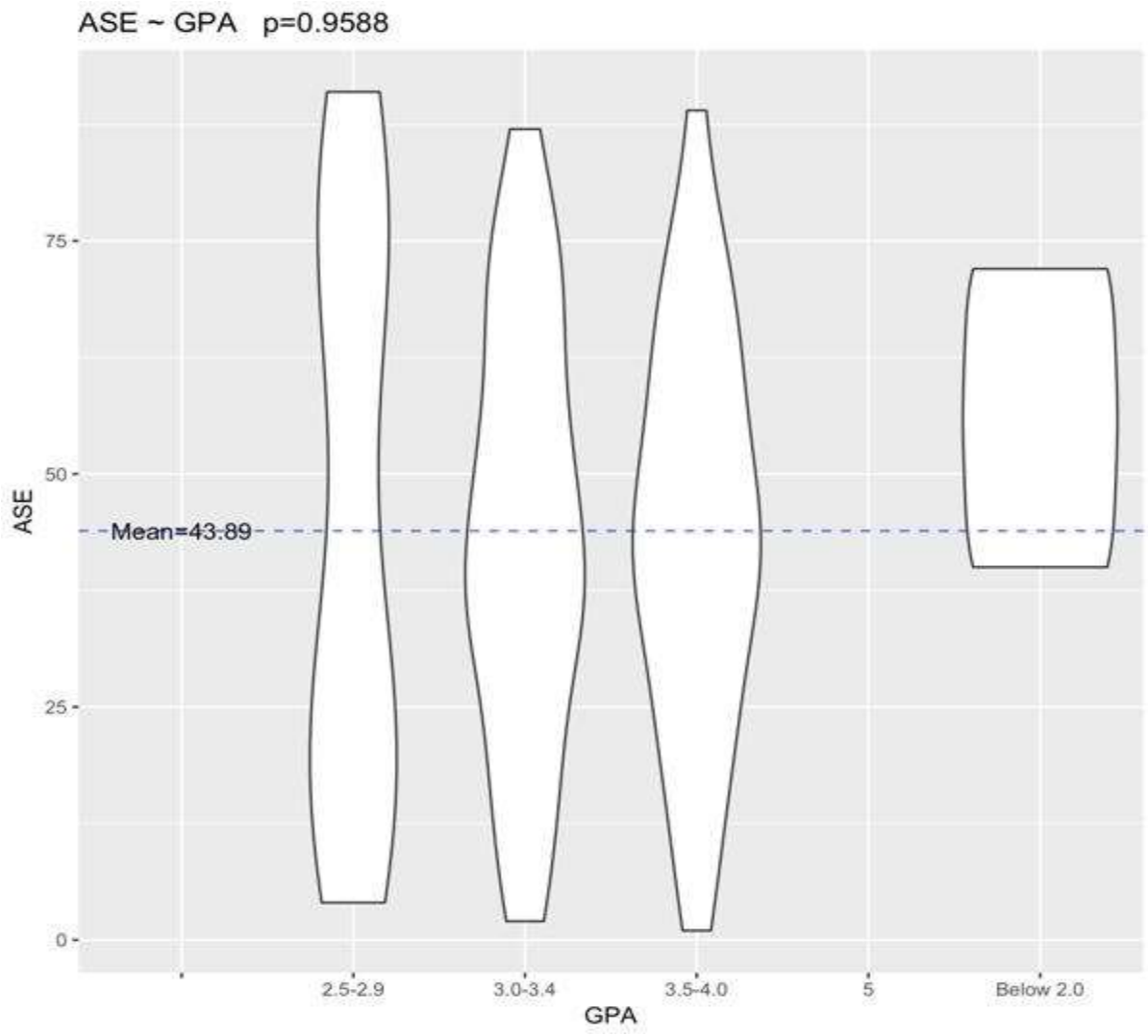

Figure 16. Hypothesis 6 – Academic Self-Efficacy and Grade Point Average

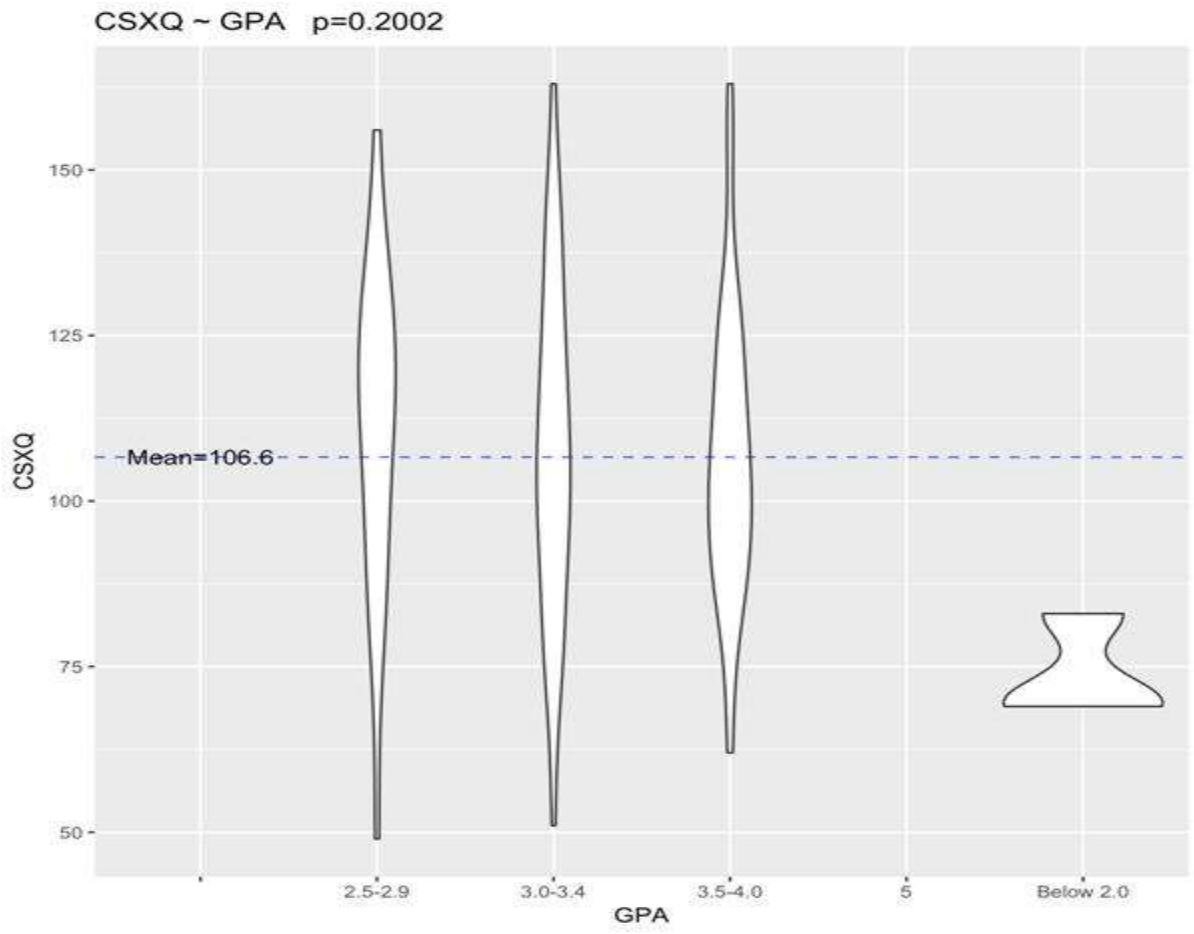

Figure 17. Hypothesis 6 – College Student Expectations and Grade Point Average

7. Institution type attended in the past will be related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.

    Institution type attended in the past is not related to academic self-efficacy and college student expectations. There is no statistically significant difference between institution type attended in the past and academic self-efficacy and college student expectations, with a p-value of 0.8027 ($p<=0.05$) for academic self-efficacy and 0.3594 ($p<=0.05$) for college student expectations. An ANOVA was used. Figures 18 and 19 provide an illustration of mean scores, along with the p-values.

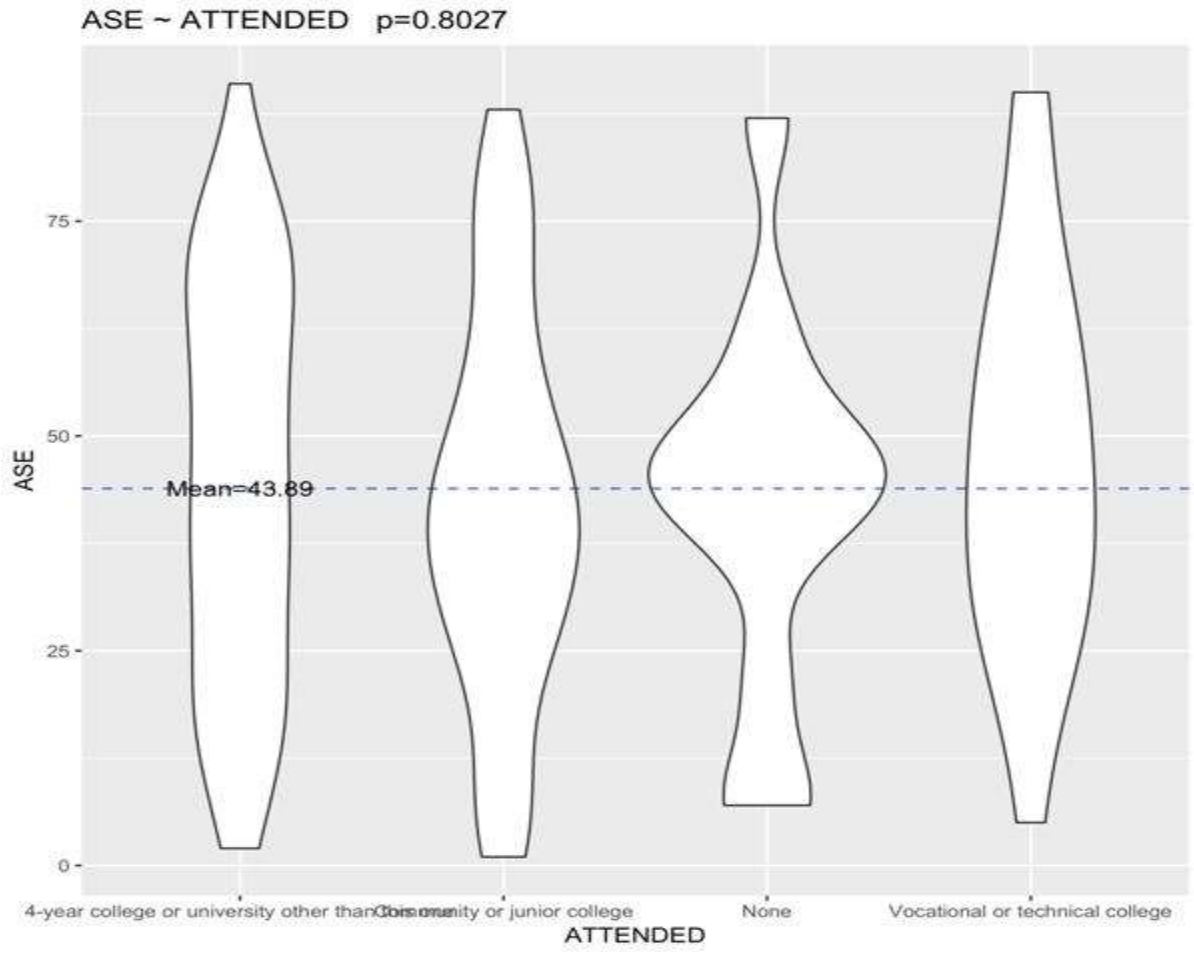

Figure 18. Hypothesis 7 – Academic Self-Efficacy and Institutions Attended in the Past

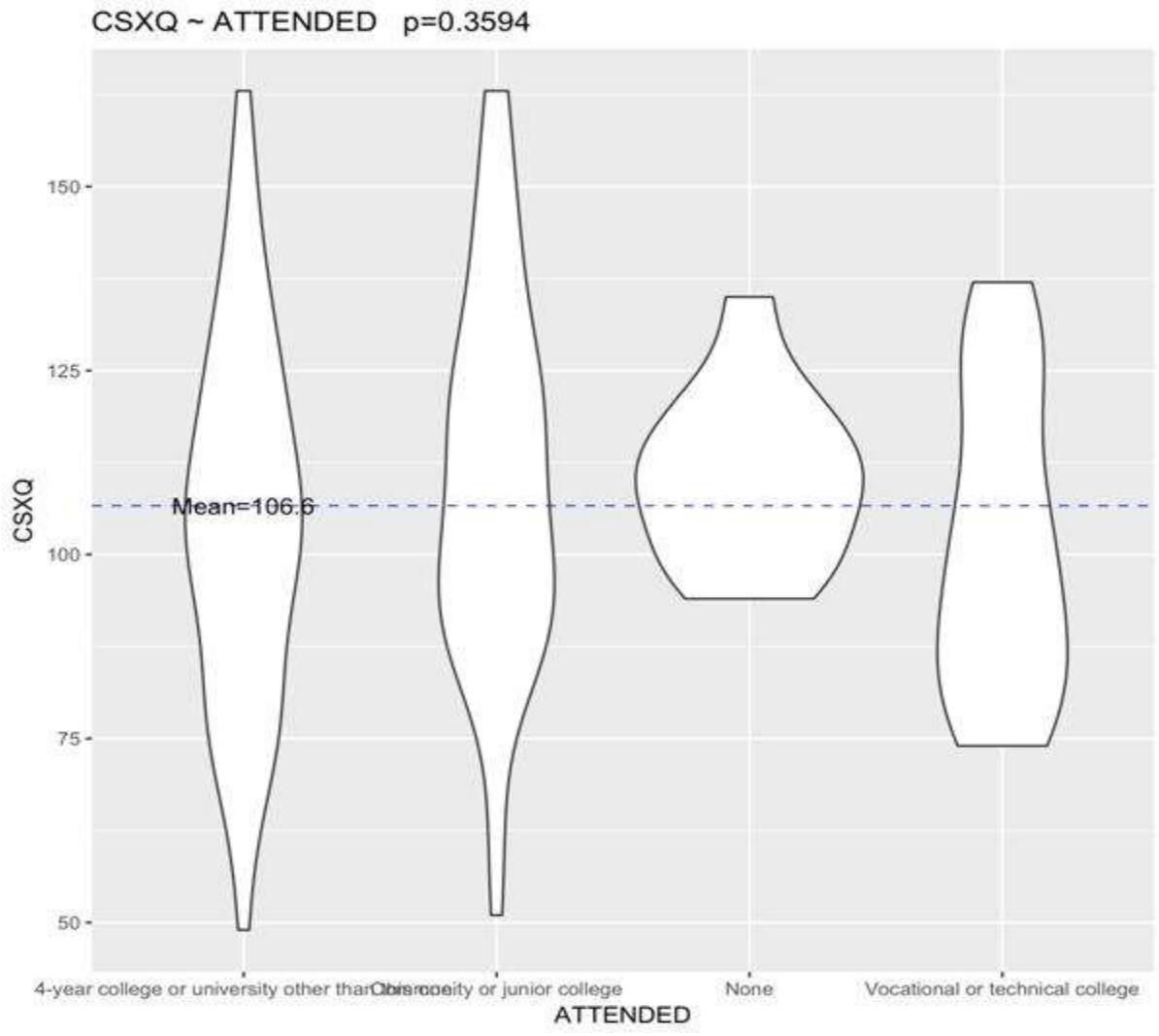

Figure 19. Hypothesis 7 – College Student Expectations and Institutions Attended in the Past

Research Question 3: How do college student experiences of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students participating in a campus support program correlate with career self-efficacy?

Hypotheses:

1. Gender will be related to college student experiences and career self-efficacy for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.

Gender is not related to college student experiences and career self-efficacy. There is no statistically significant difference between gender and college student experiences and career self-efficacy, with a p-value of 0.1107 (p<=0.05) for college student experiences and 0.4145 (p<=0.05) for career self-efficacy. A t-test was used. Figures 20 and 21 illustrate mean scores, along with p-values.

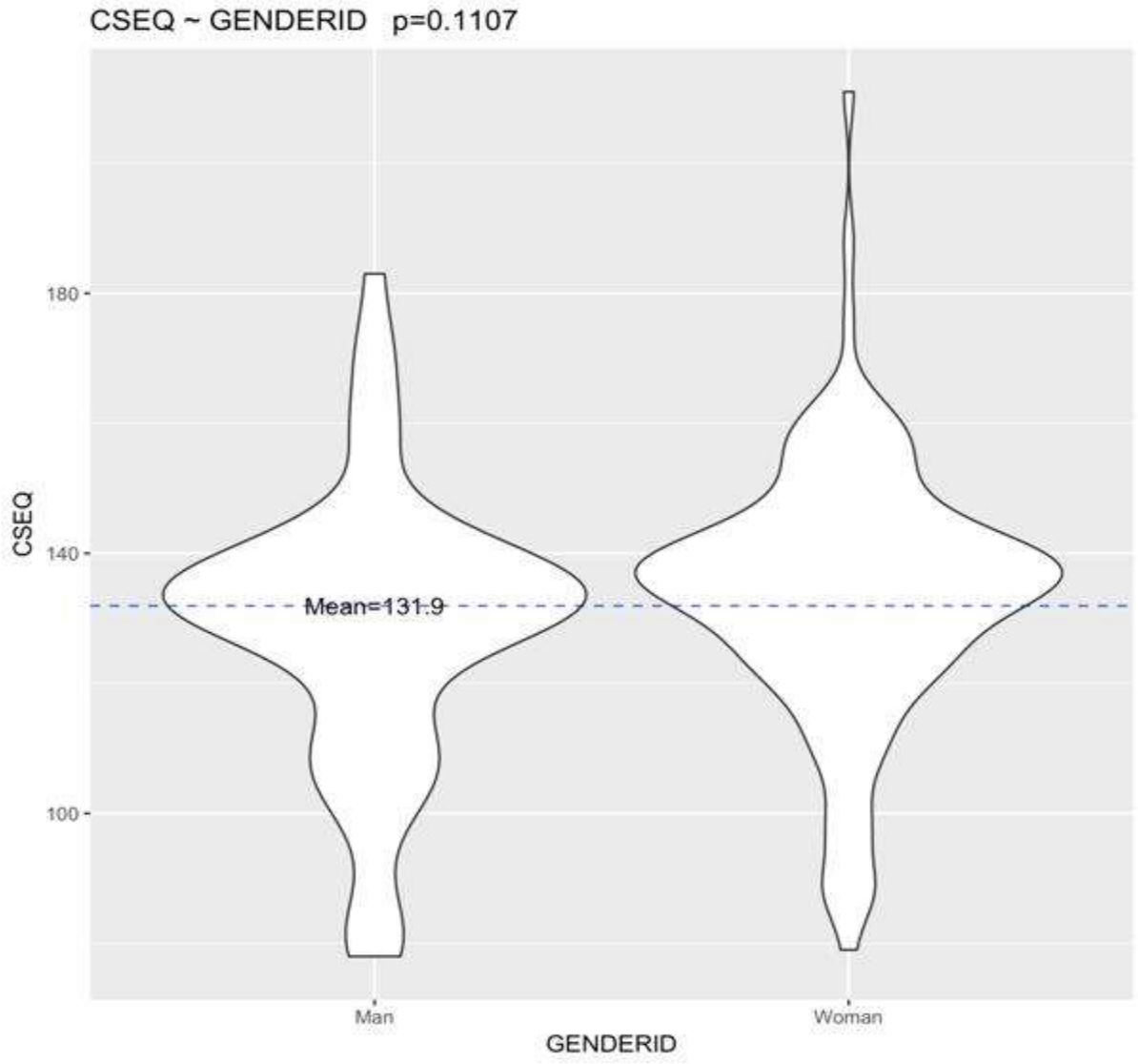

Figure 20. Hypothesis 1 – College Student Experiences and Gender Identity

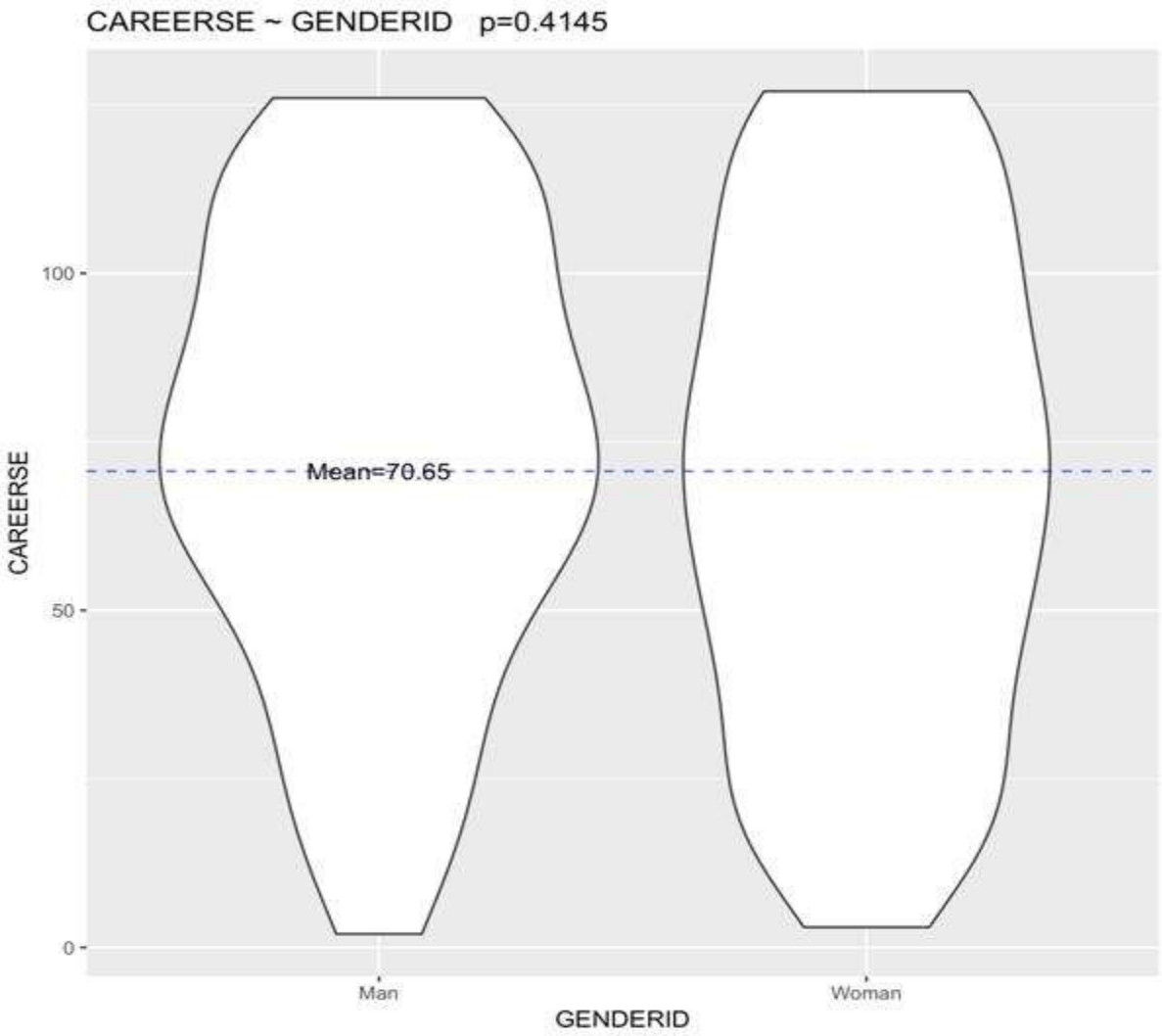

Figure 21. Hypothesis 1 – Career Self-Efficacy and Gender Identity

2. Student classification will be related to college student experiences and career self-efficacy for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.

Student classification is not related to college student experiences, but student classification is related to career self-efficacy. There was no statistically significant difference with a p-value of 0.5501 ($p<=0.05$) for college student experiences, but there was a statistically significant difference for career self-efficacy with a p-value of 0.0401

($p<=0.05$). An ANOVA was used. Figures 22 and 23 provide an illustration of mean scores, along with the p-values.

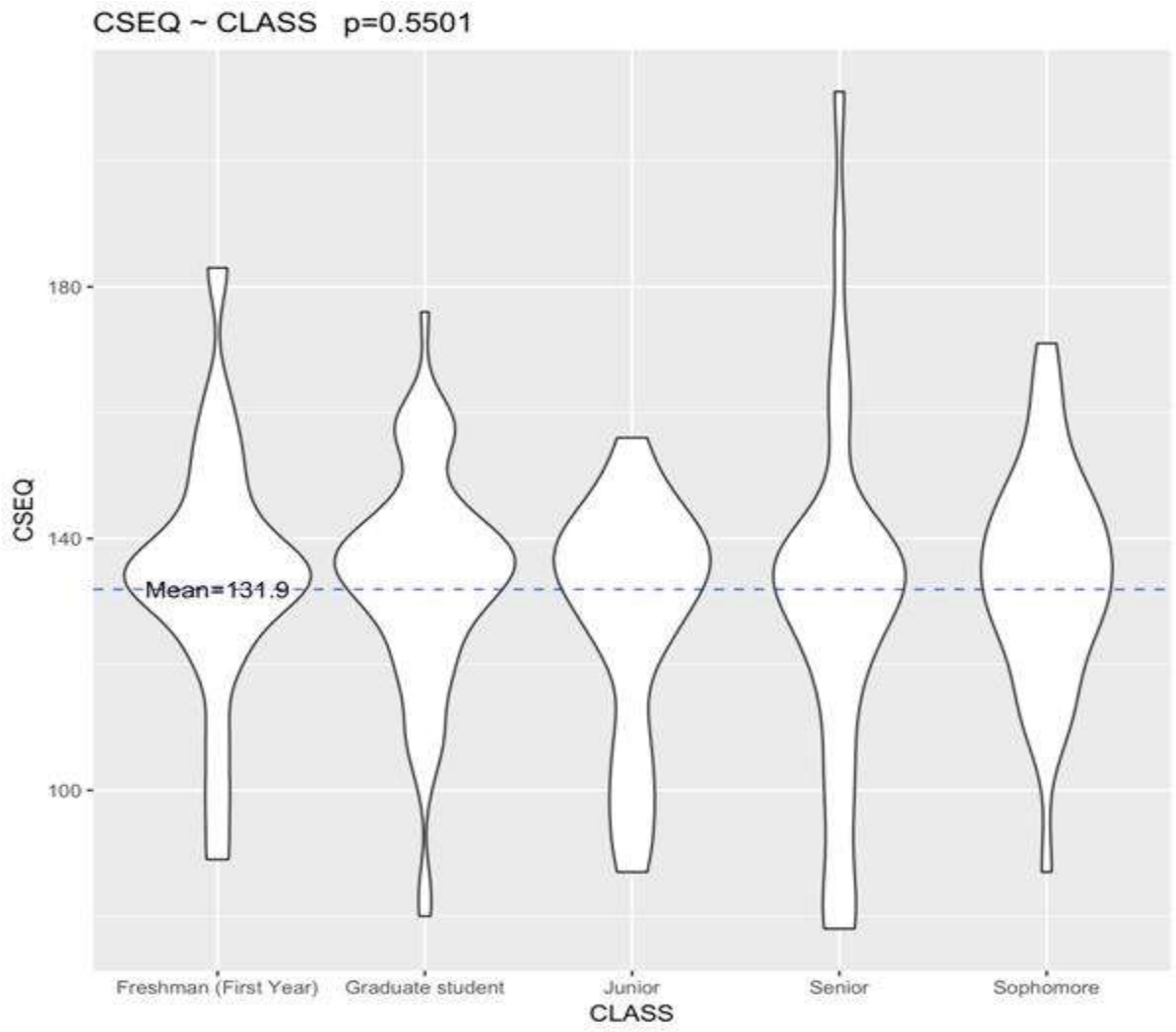

Figure 22. Hypothesis 2 – College Student Experiences and Student Classification

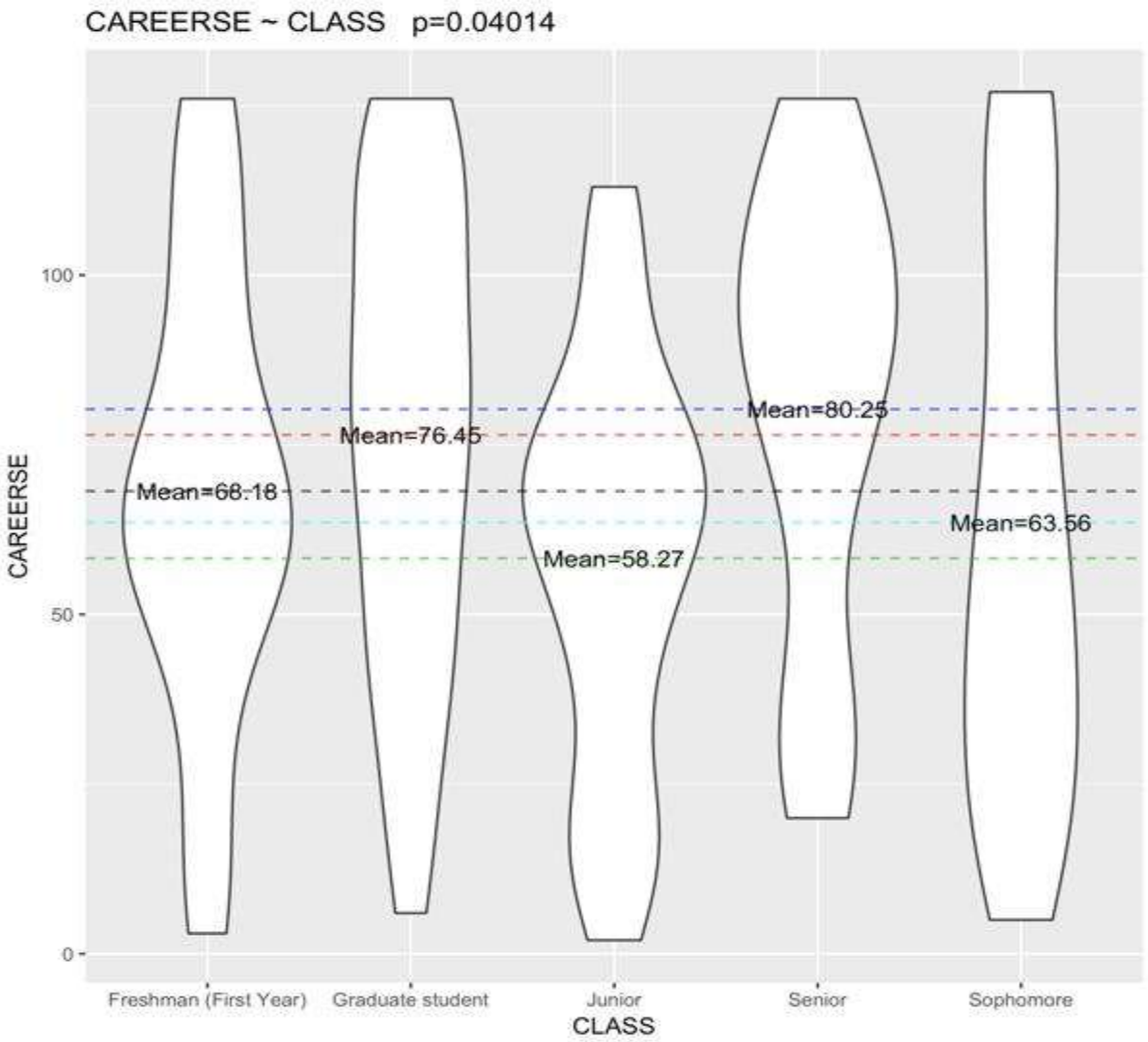

Figure 23. Hypothesis 2 – Career Self-Efficacy and Student Classification

3. Sexual orientation of currently enrolled foster care undergraduates will be related to college student experiences and career self-efficacy for currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students.

    Sexual orientation is not related to college student experiences and career self-efficacy. There is no statistically significant difference between sexual orientation and college student experiences and career self-efficacy, with a p-value of 0.9248 ($p<=0.05$)

for college student experiences and 0.2206 (p<=0.05) for career self-efficacy. An ANOVA was used. Figures 23 and 24 provide an illustration of mean scores, along with the p-values.

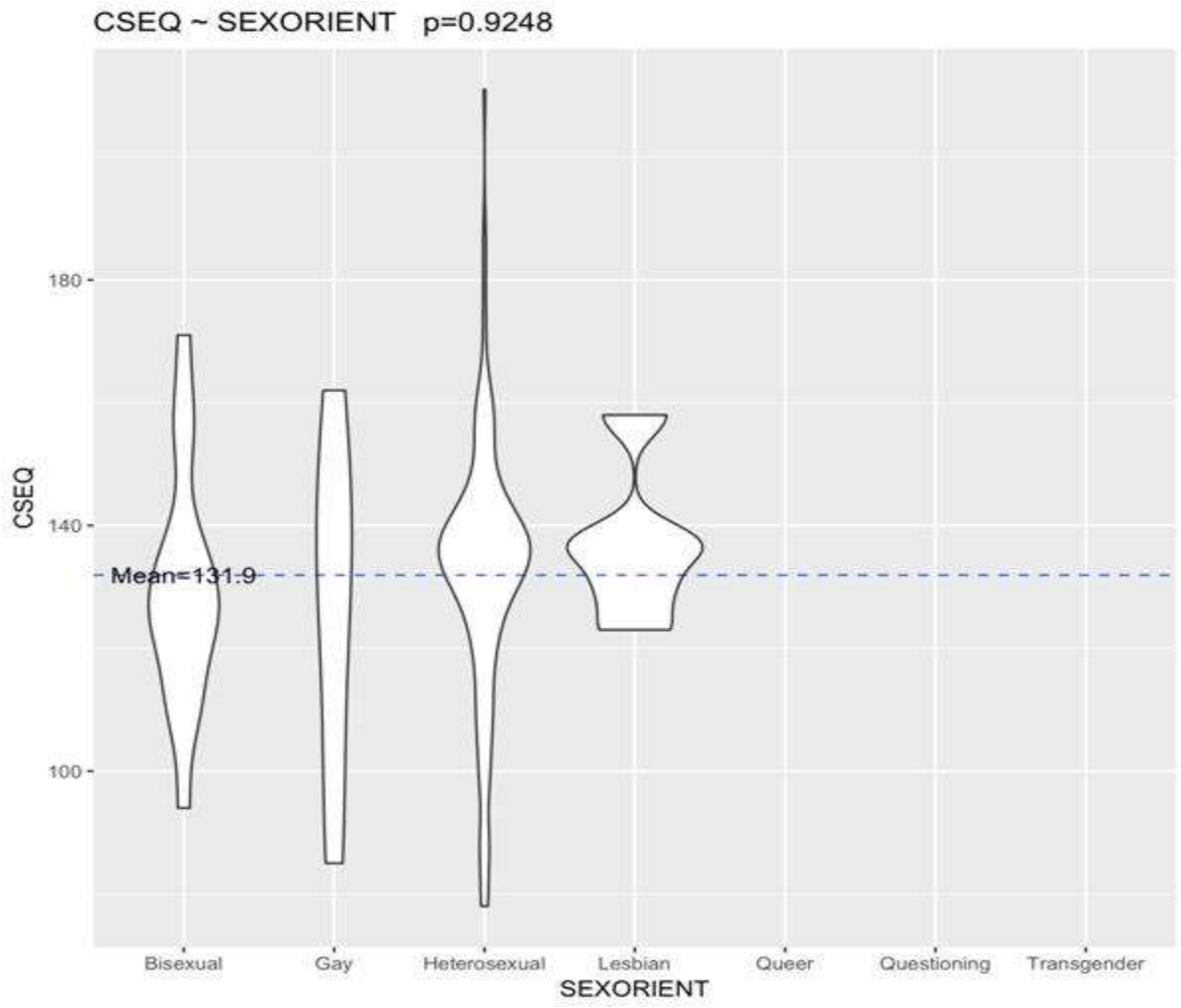

Figure 24. Hypothesis 3 – College Student Experiences and Sexual Orientation

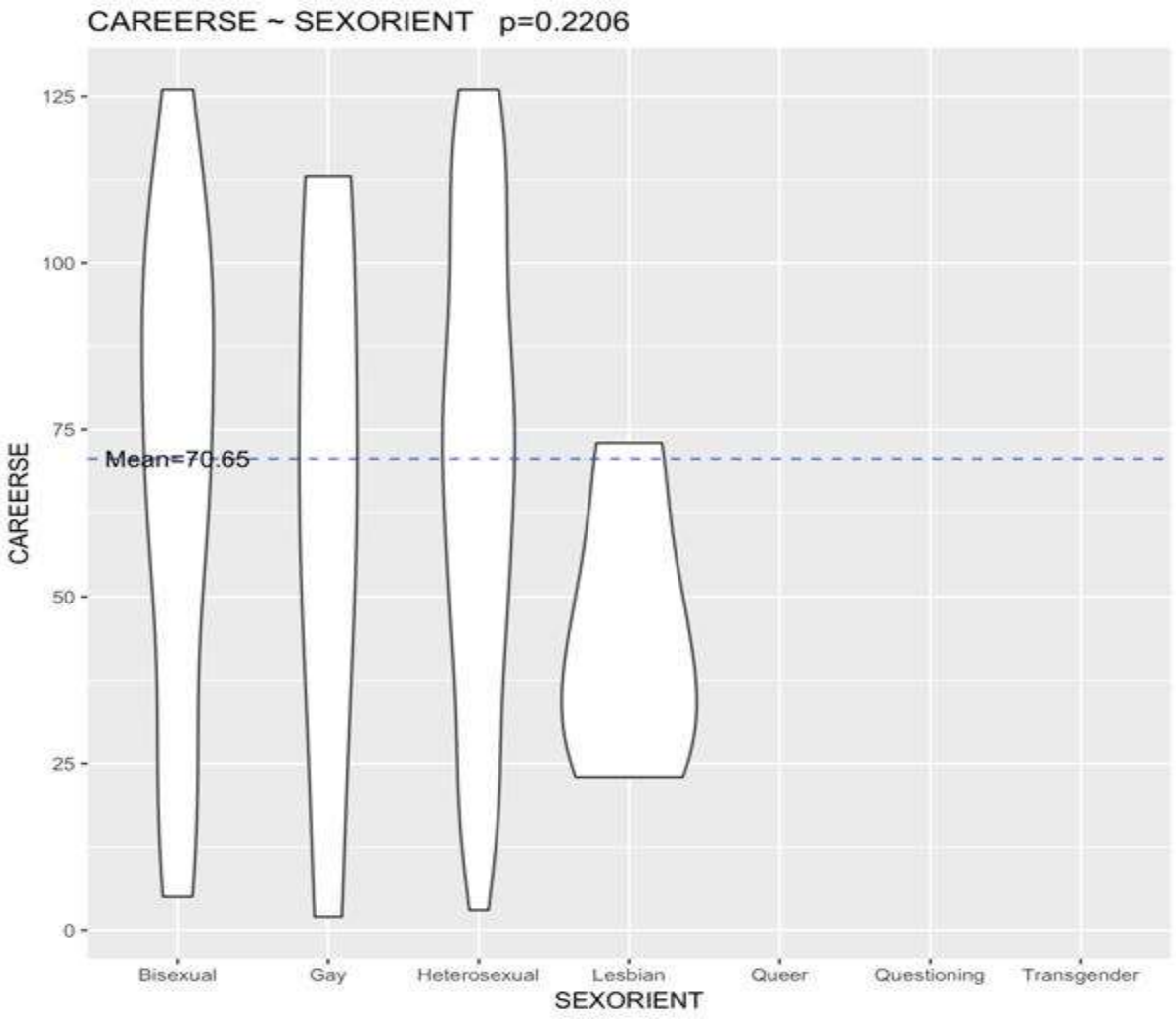

Figure 25. Hypothesis 3 – Career Self-Efficacy and Sexual Orientation

4. Grade point average of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students will be related to college student experiences and career self-efficacy.

    Grade point average is not related to college student experiences and career self-efficacy. There is no statistically significant difference between grade point average and college student experiences and career self-efficacy, with a p-value of 0.3727 ($p<=0.05$) for college student experiences and 0.1509 ($p<=0.05$) for career self-efficacy. An

ANOVA was used. Figures 25 and 26 provide an illustration of mean scores, along with the p-values.

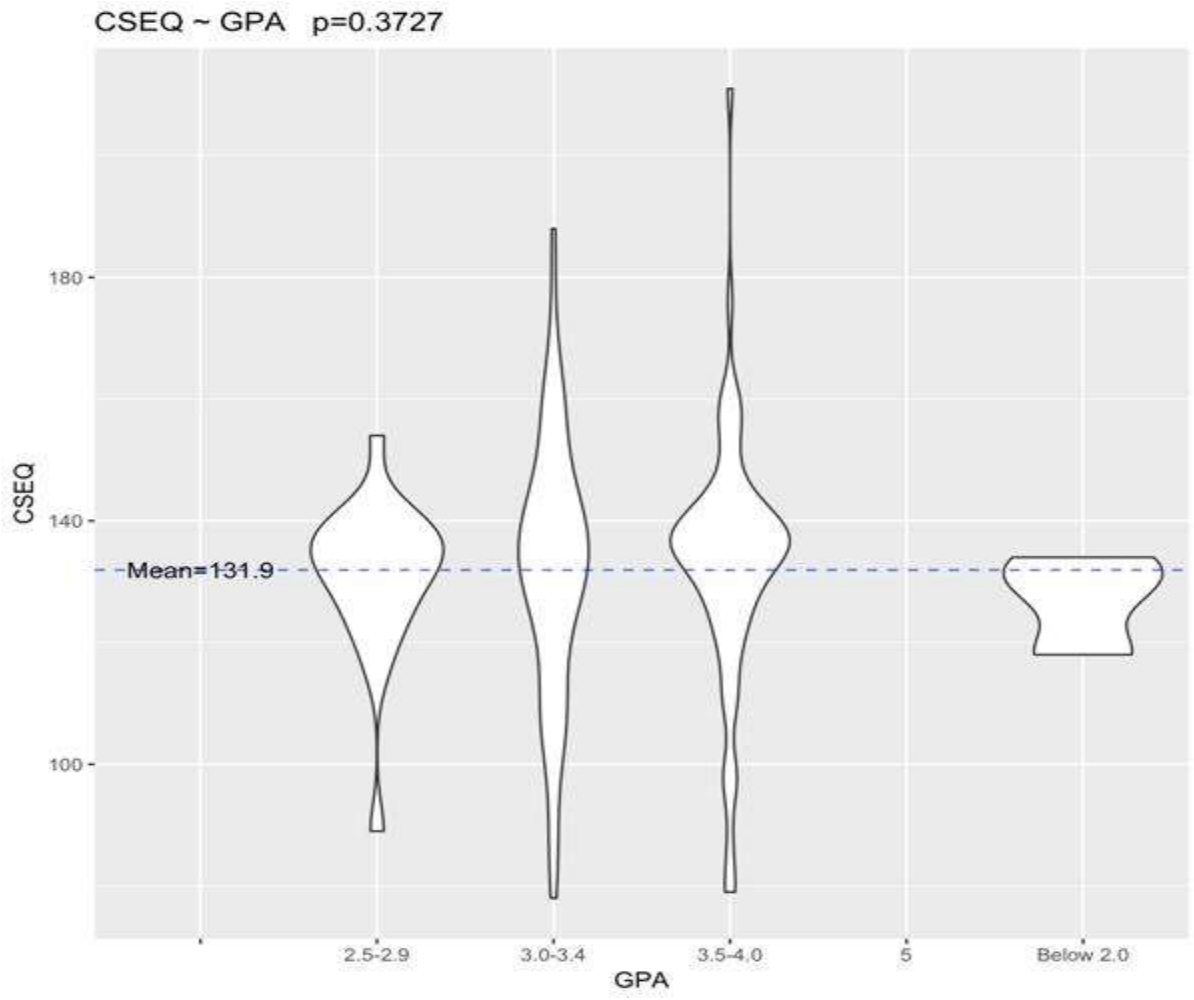

Figure 26. Hypothesis 4 – College Student Experiences and Grade Point Average

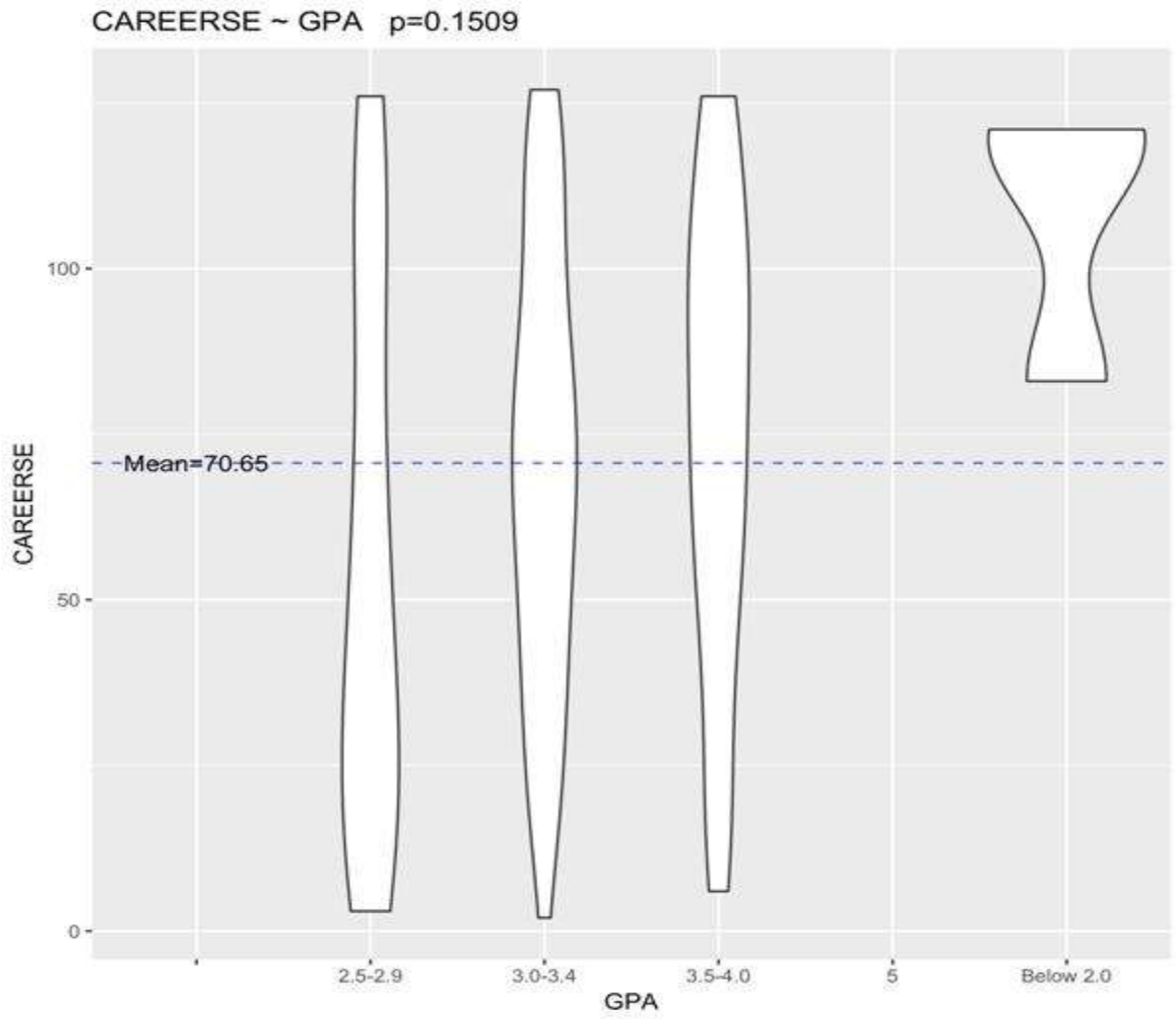

Figure 27. Hypothesis 4 – Career Self-Efficacy and Grade Point Average

5. Race or ethnicity of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students will be related to college student experiences and career self-efficacy.

    Race or ethnicity is not related to college student experiences and career self-efficacy. There is no statistically significant difference between race or ethnicity and college student experiences and career self-efficacy, with a p-value of 0.6738 (P<=0.05) for college student experiences and 0.4233 (p<=0.05) for career self-efficacy. An

ANOVA was used. Figures 27 and 28 provide an illustration of the mean scores, along with the p-values.

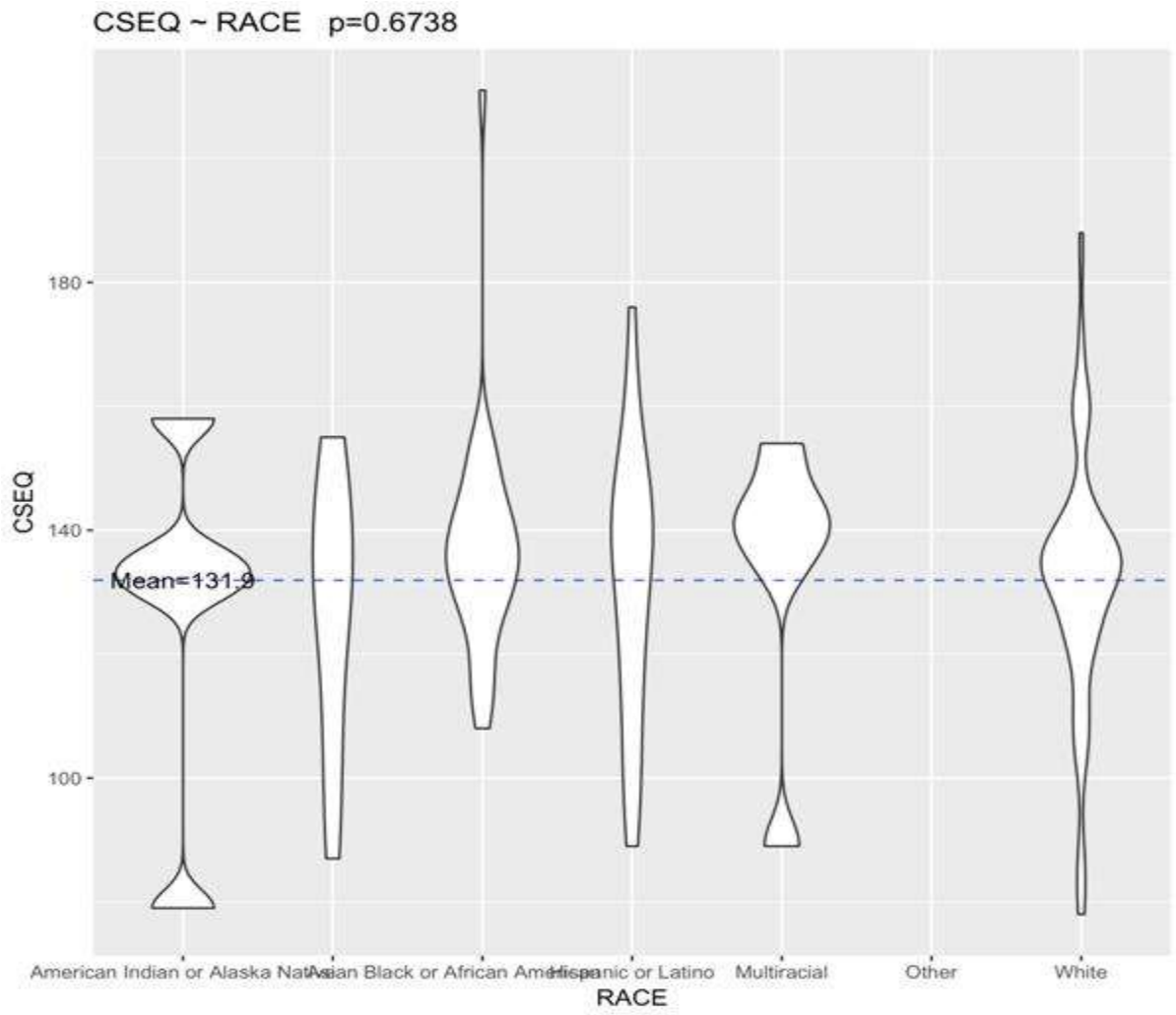

Figure 28. Hypothesis 5 – College Student Experiences and Race

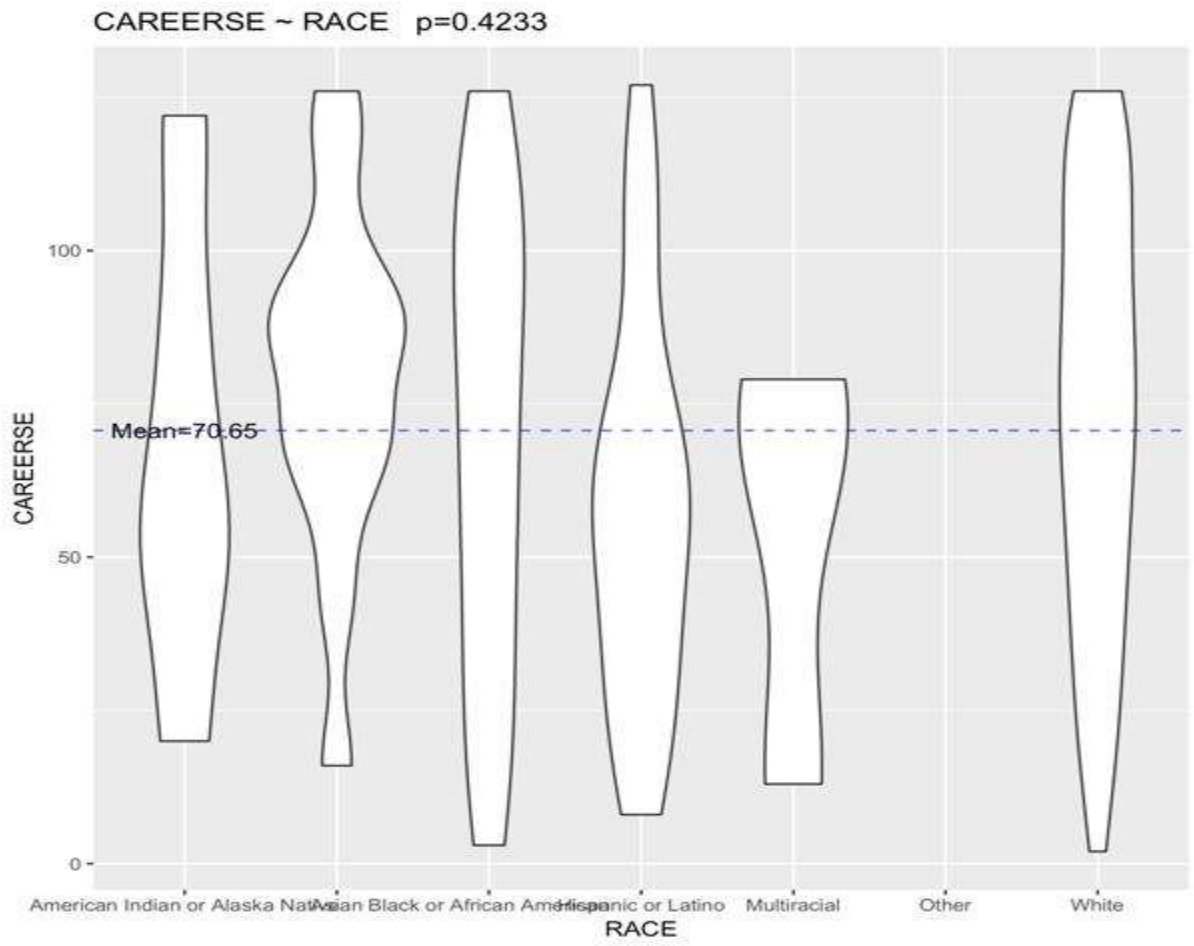

Figure 29. Hypothesis 5 – College Student Experiences and Race

A categorical significance table is presented in Table 4.17 to illustrate the significances between the independent variables (categorical) and dependent variables (five metrics) based on the developed hypotheses. There is significance between the independent and dependent variables if $p<0.05$.

Table 4.17. Categorical Significance

Variable	Campus Connectedness	ASE	CSXQ	CareerSE	CSEQ	NumLevel	Method
CLASS	0.8231	0.2312	0.0594	0.0401	0.5501	5	ANOVA
NCOURSES	0.7782	0.7710	0.8147	0.1927	0.7752	8	ANOVA
ONLINE	0.0787	0.5269	0.6323	0.0769	0.0689	8	ANOVA
GPA	0.1350	0.9588	0.2002	0.1509	0.3727	5	ANOVA
ATTENDED	0.0382	0.8027	0.3594	0.7429	0.2277	4	ANOVA
EDGOAL	0.9579	0.3156	0.2154	0.0950	0.0561	4	ANOVA
FMOTHERED	0.0425	0.0057	0.044	0.0652	0.2127	8	ANOVA
FFATHERED	0.3173	0.2261	0.0015	0.0070	0.0307	8	ANOVA
GENDERID	0.0003	0.9030	0.1025	0.4145	0.1105	2	t-Test
INTERNA	0.0002	0.0134	0.0007	0.5248	0.2555	2	t-Test
RACE	0.3473	0.8296	0.1060	0.4233	0.6738	7	ANOVA
GREEK	0.0169	0.0345	0.0061	0.1639	0.0533	2	t-Test
ATHLETE	0.0018	0.0003	0.0000	0.0524	0.0050	2	t-Test
DISABILITY	0.4933	0.5583	0.6543	0.9301	0.4705	2	t-Test
SEXORIENT	0.3596	0.1740	0.8570	0.2206	0.9248	7	ANOVA
GAFOSTER	0.0001	0.0295	0.0358	0.7083	0.0020	2	t-Test
REMEDIAL	0.0037	0.0281	0.0067	0.1845	0.0299	2	t-Test
FCSUPPORT	0.0301	0.0046	0.0000	0.0021	0.0361	2	t-Test
KNOWFCS	0.9474	0.0039	0.0001	0.0238	0.0526	2	t-Test
CSPS	0.0371	0.0046	0.0000	0.0042	0.0422	3	ANOVA
BINRACE	0.3522	0.5349	0.4114	0.1591	0.8057	2	t-Test

Table 4.17 shows the p-values from the statistical tests. If the independent variable had more than two categories (levels), a t-test was used; otherwise an ANOVA was used. Cells with $p<=0.05$ are considered significant and highlighted in yellow.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this exploratory study was to determine foster students' knowledge of campus support programs. The study revealed how foster students become aware of programs tailored specifically to their unique needs and raised important questions about the aspects or success factors of campus support programs that encourage foster students to remain in college and persist to graduation and help these students overcome personal adversity, limited educational opportunities, and challenging socioeconomic circumstances to excel academically. As a result, college administrators, student personnel services staff, faculty, and counselors should increase their understanding of how to design, develop, and execute programs leading towards improved college completion rates. Adams et al. (2013) reiterated that the goal of social justice is full and equal participation of all groups in a society mutually shaped to meet their needs.

Unfortunately, gaps in higher education achievement and barriers to persistence were significant reasons for conducting this study. Foster youth experience very low rates of college attendance (Courtney, 2009). Fewer than 10% of foster youth attend college (Courtney et al., 2010). One study that tracked enrollment of foster care youth in postsecondary education found that only 26% completed a degree or certificate, 16% completed a vocational/technical degree,

and only 2.7% completed a four-year degree (Pecora et al., 2006). Many who do enroll do not persist to degree completion (Day, 2011). The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO, 2016) reported that little information is available on the percentage of foster youth who enroll in college. One major three-state study of foster youth in 2011 found a gap in college experience between foster youth and other youth; specifically, 40% of former foster youth in the study reported completing at least one year of college, compared to an estimated 68% of youth in the general population (GAO, 2016).

Available data further suggested that a smaller number of foster youth who begin college ultimately finish with a degree than other students (GAO, 2016). Therefore, it is not surprising that more descriptive information was needed to create a snapshot of a population in need of support beyond their transition from foster care, into the context of being college students. Although many foster and homeless youth can turn to certain professionals to help them with college applications and planning, these professionals may not have the time or knowledge to provide the full extent of college guidance that some homeless and foster youth need (GAO, 2016). High school counselors are often tasked with many responsibilities in addition to college counseling and have high caseloads, especially those who serve low-income students (GAO, 2016). Similarly, child welfare caseworkers are often more focused on helping foster youth transition to independence as they age out of the foster care system. Therefore, it was imperative that this researcher conduct survey research about foster students' knowledge of campus support programs.

Limitations

All research studies have limitations (Heppner & Heppner, 2004), including this exploratory study on foster care students' knowledge of campus support programs. The study

was not intended to generalize feedback to all students who have experienced foster care nor impose a snapshot of their understanding of campus support programs onto the general population. Its purpose was to provide insight, information, and understanding from students who have actually participated in campus support programs in an effort to understand foster students' knowledge of campus support programs. The researcher does not assume that these experiences are linear in scope. The study aimed to provide a voice to a population historically silenced.

The study further aimed to provide a forum and space for members of this population to share their experiences with a comments section on how they became aware of and have utilized campus support programs to persist towards college completion. This study provides counselors, school counselors, college administrators, and student personnel services professionals with knowledge to design, develop, execute, and improve college campus support programs for foster students. Unfortunately, the literature that encouraged the researcher to conduct this study did not provide enough information on campus support programs and how participants are surveyed to provide feedback on how the program helped them. Moreover, no other study has been conducted to include the large number of independent variables or five metrics (dependent variables) that this researcher included to determine if there is a statistically significant difference among variables that the researcher believed would be related based on the research questions and hypotheses that followed. This study is preliminary in scope with an aim to further research in the area of campus support programs that help this population persist in college and graduate successfully.

The lack of research in this area encouraged the researcher to conduct an exploratory study to help understand the characteristics and factors that make up this population and possibly

help explain how this population maneuvers in college. Accessing the population through public child welfare agencies and higher education institutions was very challenging. The population is vulnerable, and child welfare agencies and higher education institutions have not had a history of collaborating to help this population access and attain higher education. Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to compare this population with the general population using the independent and dependent variables. There is not enough literature to support such a study because little is known about how this population is tracked in higher education institutions under evolving campus support programs. This study also had a small participant sample that began with 199 participants; ultimately, 195 participants fully completed the survey. The researcher also had to develop an integrated instrument based on a number of instruments that would capture college student data, along with data related specifically to the participants' experiences in foster care. Frequencies, ANOVAS, and t-tests were completed to provide snapshot of potential relationships that warrant further research.

Analyses

As reported in Chapter 4, significant differences related to the research questions and hypotheses led this researcher to believe that more work needs to be done at the college level to support this population in completing college successfully. Multiple types of professionals are attempting to work with this population, but communication about the programs and services available is stagnant. Outreach is very low, as evidenced by the number of students who did not know about the campus support programs available, and some did not have access to a program at all. Moreover, professionals who have historically worked with this population are unfamiliar with college student affairs practices in postsecondary institutions. The results of the study clearly led the researcher to infer that a partnership between public and private entities is needed

to ensure that foster students do not fall through the cracks and become unable to take care of themselves. The vast majority of homeless and foster youth come from low-income backgrounds with limited access to financial supports; foster youth are much more likely than their peers to be poor before, during, and after they are in foster care, and a lack of stable income is common among homeless families, according to some studies (GAO, 2016). Among college-enrolled foster youth, an estimated 95% had annual incomes of less than $25,000, along with 100% of college-enrolled homeless youth (GAO, 2016).

The research questions used to provide the framework for this study were as follows:

RQ1: How does the campus connectedness of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students (as measured by the Campus Connectedness Scale) correlate with engagement in a campus support program to meet their needs (as indicated by the Guardian/Renaissance Scholars Student Survey)?

RQ2: What is the relationship between the academic self-efficacy (as measured by the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale) and expectations (as measured by the College Student Expectations Questionnaire) of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students participating in a campus support program to meet their needs?

RQ3: How do college student experiences (as measured by the College Student Experiences Survey) of currently enrolled foster care undergraduate students participating in a campus support program correlate with career self-efficacy (as measured by the Career Search Self-Efficacy Scale)?

There was a large number of hypotheses for each research question, and there was a statistically significant difference between the independent and dependent variables for some but not all of the hypotheses. For research question 1, two out of the five hypotheses yielded a

statistically significant difference. Gender identity and institution type attended in the past were related to campus connectedness. For research question 2, none of the seven hypotheses yielded a statistically significant difference. Therefore, it seems that academic self-efficacy is not related to college student expectations. For research question 3, out of the five hypotheses, only student classification was related to career self-efficacy. It is possible that different hypotheses could have been developed to determine if a relationship existed between the independent and dependent variables.

Additional Findings

The researcher discovered that providing a space for participants to provide feedback in their own words was just as meaningful for them as answering questions quantitatively. Those comments are presented in the appendix section of this document. Moreover, the researcher believes that feedback from participants via comments certainly makes the case for future qualitative or mixed method research in the near future.

Implications and Conclusion

All young people, including foster youth, can succeed academically given adequate support and advocacy from educators, professionals, and their caregivers. Lovitt and Emerson (2008) noted in an information brief that an inevitable question concerning foster youth who have succeeded academically is “What do those individuals have in common?” Any person who asks this question may wish to explore characteristics that she or he could instill in less-successful youth, in the hopes of offering them improved access to opportunities that will retain them in a college or training setting so they can be successful. Lovitt and Emerson (2008) noted that the only trait observed in a study they conducted with eight young men and women was a persistent drive to succeed educationally, which was manifested in their graduation from college.

Participants in the Lovitt and Emerson (2008) study reported that school was always a safe place where they could escape chaotic lives. They did, however, seem to share several other experiences as well (Lovitt & Emerson, 2008):

- First, an influential person or two—a foster parent, cousin, aunt or uncle, grandparent, supervisor, or coach—came into their lives at critical times and encouraged them to do well in school. This stable, caring, and trusted educational advocacy made an important contribution to their college success.
- Second, they reported having lived in supportive homes just prior to attending college. Several had foster parents with college experience who aimed them in a positive direction.
- Third and finally, during their adolescences, these eight foster youth began telling their stories, either informally to teachers, social workers, or other adults or formally as members of youth panels that addressed groups of foster children. Relating these experiences helped them begin to understand themselves. Each came to the realization that she or he could accept the past, and each found illumination concerning the future.

Perez and Romo (2010) expressed in their study on the reliance on peers as social capital that peer social networks become essential in establishing immediate sources of social capital, with housing as the most crucial need. For youth, the ability to survive depended on multiple episodes of couch surfing as they moved among extended family and friends, eventually relying upon peers for support. Perez and Romo (2010) concluded that social capital provided through peer networks created important ties necessary for housing sustainability and access to resources, while compensating for absent family relationships.

In a growing number of states, like California, the educational needs of foster youth are gaining momentum as a priority issue. For example, the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care (California College Pathways, 2009) named the establishment of campus support programs as a priority recommendation in its final report released in September 2008. The commission convened by California Supreme Court Chief Justice Ron George was joined by the California Child Welfare Council in its support for campus support programs. The following key activities to ensure the expansion of high-quality campus support programs in California were presented:

- Adopt and systematically collect data through a system like Cal-PASS: Currently, there is no consistent manner in which campus support programs collect data about program performance and student outcomes. Creating a strong evidence base and clear accountability measures will help make the case for public investment. Additionally, the regular collection and review of data at the program level will ensure that future campus support programs produce the high-quality results of the first generation of programs. As a data system that is currently developed and in use on campuses throughout the state of California, the Cal-PASS (California Partnership for Achieving Student Success) system is a strong candidate to collect data for campus support programs.
- Build a strong coalition of campus support programs: The primary emphasis in the campus support program movement has been on program development. To effectively advocate for required public resources, the network of campus support programs must build a strong, coordinated coalition that consists of P–16 educators, administrators, and students. Moreover, professional counselors, school counselors, social workers, and student affairs professionals need to collaborate collectively between child welfare

agencies and higher education institutions to meet the needs of this population. Together, this coalition will develop informed policies to promote higher education for former foster youth and take the necessary action to see them adopted on a state level.

- Expand access: While the growth in campus support programs statewide is a positive development, the current capacity assists just 5% of the former foster youth from California, age 18 to 24 (an example). To truly promote educational attainment among former foster youth in California and the U.S. as a whole, campus support programs must be expanded on campuses where they currently exist and introduced on campuses where they do not. This expansion needs to be nationwide and not limited to the state of California.
- Leverage federal funding: Given the current state fiscal environment, it is critical that funding for campus support programs in California leverage federal funding. One opportunity for this is to utilize newly available federal aid to extend foster care to age 21 to support foster youth in higher education. Another is to ensure that the new federal education coordination requirements are interpreted so as to promote readiness for higher education. In each step of the policy development process, it is important to consider the primary role of the federal government in the execution and funding of the child-welfare system.

Finally, the perspectives of current and former foster care youth on going to college and obtaining a degree despite numerous barriers present an opportunity to show how other young adults like them might be better supported. These perspectives may allow student personnel services professionals and other stakeholders to be able to support these students, retain them, and graduate them from their institutions. No one, regardless of their circumstances, should be

deprived of access, opportunities, or resources that can help them become independent and self-sufficient.

Lacking a stable family home and support from parents, homeless youth and foster youth are a particularly vulnerable group of young people who face significant challenges in pursuing college (GAO, 2016). While it is true that funding over the years has increased to support this population with access to higher education, there has not been enough support provided to help this population complete their degree programs. As a result, campus support programs in some higher education institutions have emerged to help this population achieve success and transition into adulthood. However, without effective program development and management, making a case for additional program funding will not be possible. Foster youth who become college students would benefit from campus support programs that are tailored to their specific needs. However, it is crucial that student progress is tracked. A metric that allows for quantifiable data would also help capture the students being served and provide specific independent and dependent variables that can be measured. It is important to understand the experiences of the students in a campus support program, their progress as it relates to their GPAs and movement towards degree completion, and their satisfaction with the program. Unfortunately, there are no standardized instruments to capture the experiences of students participating in campus support programs.

Epilogue and Call to Action

As the researcher, I reflected on my personal experience transitioning from secondary to post-secondary education after emancipating from foster care in 1998. It was crucial for me to engage in this process of exploration and discovery to understand and provide a space for others to share their experiences through quantitative research (survey research). This reflection,

according to Djuraskovi and Arthur (2010), provided a personal encounter and an attempt to discover the nature and meaning of a phenomenon through internal self-search, exploration, and discovery. This approach is typically a qualitative research approach. Even though this study was partially conducted using the first person to reflect the researcher's personal experience, the linking of research with personal experience was inextricably influenced by the researcher's need to present this study as more than an educational requirement. Therefore, it is in this context that I share fully the experience of transition from secondary to postsecondary education. The experience affected my overall journey in higher education after the first year of college, which was an experience in itself and connected me to the phenomenon.

At the end of my high school senior year in May 1996, I was residing at the Boys Home of the South (BHOTS) in Belton, SC, and charting a path towards success as defined by school officials at Woodmont High School and staff members at BHOTS. I recall my BHOTS house mother conveying the importance of continuing my education beyond high school. She indicated that increased schooling would help me become financially independent and stable once I "aged out" of the foster care system. At the time, it felt good to hear her calm, soothing, and encouraging voice of support. However, I must admit that I was a bit overwhelmed and wondered about the meaning of it all. Many questions and much confusion consumed me as I attempted to prepare for life outside of the foster care system.

Was I ready to relocate to the College of Charleston (COC) and settle into an environment that I had only visited once to complete placement exams? How could I possibly know what to expect at such a reputable institution? I had only visited Southern Wesleyan University (SWU) with my BHOTS weekend relief house parents, Mike and Sandy Preusz. They were alumni of the institution and echoed the importance of studying hard to attain a better life.

Mike also served as the soccer coach. As a BHOTS youngster, I was very fortunate to have a place to study while the other boys in my cottage enjoyed the soccer games. Remember, I was merely an average student hanging on the words of school counselors making a difference in the lives of youth.

I wondered if COC closed on the weekends and holidays. Where would I go or stay during that time? I knew no one in the area. Who would be the school contact for me when I needed assistance in adjusting to a new way of life, one of privilege? After all, no one expected me to receive an acceptance letter to a private, Christian school like SWU or even dreamed of my receiving a full scholarship to COC. It was too astonishing for me to comprehend, and I was very afraid of disappointing the school officials who had defined success for me.

In the midst of that transition, I was not prepared to accept a $40,000 scholarship from an organization that prided itself in "saving our sons." In fact, the name of the organization is Save Our Sons, Inc. The mission of the organization is to mentor and advocate for minority and disadvantaged young men between the ages of 10 and 18 by providing mentoring relationships to assist them in developing positive self-images. It believes that providing young men with tools and resources helps they become empowered to compete in a global market and become successful, productive citizens in the local community and society at large. However, I did not find the mission to be too convincing after the organization did not fulfill its scholarship commitment. My life truly became a media frenzy before I relocated to Charleston, SC, because everyone thought I was receiving the largest scholarship at the school. I was on the local news and in the newspapers. The principal even presented the news about my receiving a scholarship on the school marquee. School counselors and the principal of the school had no idea that the

organization was unable to provide me with the full scholarship it promised or any resources to support me in my academic pursuits.

Imagine having your personal story exploited only to realize that the organization really did not intend to completely fund the scholarship. Nothing prepared me for that experience. I felt as if a rug had been pulled right from underneath my feet after I had been trying so hard to move in a positive direction. This experience affected my emotional and psychological well-being and left me feeling vulnerable, lost, and without options. And, just when I thought that my situation could not get any worse, I was robbed and physically attacked at COC. Consequently, I was hospitalized after a suicide attempt in spring 1997. Despite this terrible experience, I managed to bounce back and attend SWU in fall 1997. My anxiety was so high at the time that I constantly worried about not having a place to go when school closed. Sometimes, I slept in my car or on friends' floors just to keep moving forward. I needed my experience to mean something or matter despite the odds.

As a 40-year-old African-American, Black, Gay male, I now wonder how I survived it all. My resources are slim to none. It costs a lot of money to attend school and live from day to day. The financial burden of postsecondary education continues to increase, but access to financial resources relieves this burden for foster care students today. However, this resource was not available for me during my time of transition. The call to action for counselors, school counselors, P–16 educators, and student affairs professionals is to speak up, speak out, and act on advocacy efforts. Telling someone's story on his or her behalf is no longer enough. People in need are looking for allies to advocate through action. It is time to use the social justice advocacy competencies at the micro, meso, and macro levels in order to move all stakeholders toward

sharing the wealth and helping anyone underserved and oppressed to have an opportunity to sit at the table of opportunity.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER

Research Recruitment

Date: May, 2017

Dear Future Participant:

My name is Nathaniel Brown. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia. As a partial requirement to complete my doctoral program in counseling and student personnel services, I am conducting a study to learn about the experiences of foster care undergraduate students who participate in campus support programs designed to meet their needs. As a foster care alumnus, I recall my experiences in transitioning from foster care to an undergraduate college experience. The transition from foster care to college was very challenging because of a lack of support. Unfortunately, there were no campus support programs available or tailored to meet my specific needs as a foster care undergraduate student. Given my background and college experiences I am especially interested in this topic. Therefore, I would like to invite you to participate in a study that will help improve support services for students who have experienced foster care. My aim is to help foster care students remain in, and complete college. Participants are required to be 18 years of age or older. Your participation will involve sharing your experience in participating in a foster student college campus support program through the completion of a survey that should only take about 45 minutes.

There may be some emotional discomfort in answering questions related to program participation and expression of foster care issues. For this reason, you may skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering. The anticipated direct benefits to participants include the opportunity to respond to questions related to your experience in participating in college campus support programs; provide feedback in comment sections of the survey; and reflect and share suggestions for college campus support program improvements. If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me Nathaniel O. Brown at (770) 873-5971 or send an e-mail to natebrow@uga.edu. Dr. Rosemary Phelps is the principal investigator for this study. Dr. Phelps may be contacted at rphelps@uga.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel O. Brown
Foster Care Alumnus
Doctoral Candidate
The University of Georgia

APPENDIX B

FOSTER STUDENTS COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY SURVEY

Foster Students College and University Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 **Research Study Informed Consent** Dear Participant: My name is Nathaniel Brown. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia. I am working on my dissertation focusing on the experiences of foster care undergraduate students participating in campus support programs designed to meet their needs. As a foster care alumnus, I recall my experiences in transitioning from foster care to an undergraduate college experience. There were no campus support programs available or tailored to meet my specific needs as a foster care undergraduate student. Given my background and college experiences I am especially interested in this topic.

Participants are required to be 18 years of age or older. Your participation will involve sharing your experience in participating in a foster student college campus support program through the completion of a survey that should only take approximately 30 minutes. Your involvement in the study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or stop at any time without penalty. As the research investigator, I will: (1) retain and analyze collected data related to the subject up to the time of subject withdrawal; or (2) honor a research subject's request that the investigator destroy the subject's data or that the investigator exclude the subject's data from analysis. If you decide to stop or withdraw from the study, the information/data collected from or about you up to the point of withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information. All data collected will be

confidential and only the research investigator and Dr. Rosemary Phelps in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services will have access. No identifying information of participants will be revealed. The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only. The findings from this project may provide information on the experiences of foster students' participation in college campus support programs for increasing student engagement and program improvement to better support students in college or university completion. There may be some emotional discomfort in answering questions related to program participation and expression of foster care issues. For this reason, you may skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering. If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me Nathaniel O. Brown at (770) 873-5971 or send an e-mail to natebrow@uga.edu. The chairperson for my dissertation study is Dr. Rosemary Phelps at the University of Georgia. She can be contacted at rephelps@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu. By completing and returning this survey via online, you are agreeing to participate in the above described research project. Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records. Sincerely,

Nathaniel Brown

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Research Study Informed Consent Dear Participant: My name is Nathaniel Brown. I am a doctoral c... = No

Q2 Have you ever experienced foster care (anyone who has spent at least one day in the foster care system)?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Have you ever experienced foster care (anyone who has spent at least one day in the foster care s... = No

Q3 What is your class level?

- ○ Freshman (First Year) (1)
- ○ Sophomore (2)
- ○ Junior (3)
- ○ Senior (4)
- ○ Graduate student (5)

Q4 Are you currently enrolled in college courses?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Are you currently enrolled in college courses? = No

---

Q5 How many courses are you currently taking for credit?

- ○ 0 (1)
- ○ 1 (2)
- ○ 2 (3)
- ○ 3 (4)
- ○ 4 (5)
- ○ 5 (6)
- ○ 6 (7)
- ○ 7 or more (8)

Q6 Of the courses you are currently taking this term, how many are online?

- ○ 0 (1)
- ○ 1 (2)
- ○ 2 (3)
- ○ 3 (4)
- ○ 4 (5)
- ○ 5 (6)
- ○ 6 (7)
- ○ 7 or more (8)

Q7 What is your current grade point average (GPA)?

- ○ 3.5 - 4.0 (1)
- ○ 3.0-3.4 (2)
- ○ 2.5-2.9 (3)
- ○ 2.0-2.4 (4)
- ○ Below 2.0 (5)

Q8 Since graduating from high school, which of the following types of institutions have you attended other than the one you are now attending? (Select all that apply.)

- ○ Vocational or technical college (1)
- ○ Community or junior college (2)
- ○ 4-year college or university other than this one (3)
- ○ None (4)

Q9 What is the highest level of education you expect to complete?

- ○ Some college but less than a bachelor's degree (1)
- ○ Bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.) (2)
- ○ Master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.) (3)
- ○ Doctoral or professional degree (Ph.D., J.D., M.D., etc. (4)

Q10 What is the highest level of education completed by your foster mother?

- ○ Did not finish high school (1)
- ○ High school diploma/G.E.D. (2)
- ○ Attended college but did not complete degree (3)
- ○ Associate's degree (A.A., A.S., etc.) (4)
- ○ Bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.) (5)
- ○ Master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.) (6)
- ○ Doctoral or professional degree (Ph.D., J.D., M.D., etc.) (7)
- ○ Not sure (8)

Q11 What is the highest level of education completed by your foster father?

- ○ Did not finish high school (1)
- ○ High school diploma/G.E.D. (2)
- ○ Attended college but did not complete degree (3)
- ○ Associate's degree (A.A., A.S., etc.) (4)
- ○ Bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.) (5)
- ○ Master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.) (6)
- ○ Doctoral or professional degree (Ph.D., J.D., M.D., etc.) (7)
- ○ Not sure (8)

Q12 What is your gender identity?

- ○ Man (1)
- ○ Woman (2)
- ○ Another gender identity, please specify (3)

_____

Q13 What is your age?

_____

Q14 Are you an international student?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q15 What is your country of citizenship?

_____

Q16 What is your racial or ethnic identification? (Select all that apply.)

- ○ American Indian or Alaska Native (1)
- ○ Asian (2)
- ○ Black or African American (3)
- ○ Hispanic or Latino (4)
- ○ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (5)
- ○ White (6)
- ○ Multiracial (7)
- ○ Other (8) _____

Q17 Are you a member of a fraternity or sorority?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q18 Which of the following best describes where you are living while attending college?

- Residence Hall or other campus housing (not fraternity or sorority house) (1)
- Fraternity or sorority house (2)
- Residence (house, apartment, etc.) within walking distance to the institution (3)
- Residence (house, apartment, etc.) farther than walking distance to the institution (4)

Q19 Are you a student-athlete on a team sponsored by your institution's athletic department?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q20 Are you a current or former member of the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q21 Have you been diagnosed with any disability or impairment?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q22 Which of the following has been diagnosed (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ A sensory impairment (vision or hearing) (1)
- ☐ A mobility impairment (walking) (2)
- ☐ A learning disability (e.g. ADHD, Dyslexia) (3)
- ☐ A mental health disorder (4)
- ☒ None of the above (5)

Q23 Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- ○ Heterosexual (1)
- ○ Gay (2)
- ○ Lesbian (3)
- ○ Bisexual (4)
- ○ Transgender (5)
- ○ Queer (6)
- ○ Questioning (7)

Q24 Were you in foster care in Georgia? If no, what state were you in foster care (Please specify.)

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No, please provide the name of the state (2)

_____

Q25 How long have you lived in foster care?

_____

Q26 Where are you enrolled in college or university?

_____

Q27 Were you required to take remedial courses at your college or university before you began college courses?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q28 Are you currently participating in a foster student campus support program at your college or university?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q29 Did you learn about the foster student campus support program during your first year at your college or university?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q30 If you participate in a foster student campus support program, when did you first start?

- ○ First year (1)
- ○ Second year (2)
- ○ Third year (3)
- ○ Fourth year (4)

Q31 How did you learn about the foster care student campus support program at your college or university? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ Admissions Department (1)
- ☐ Admissions Department materials (2)
- ☐ Financial Aid Department (3)
- ☐ Foster Student Campus Support program flyer or communication (4)
- ☐ Social Worker (5)
- ☐ Counselor (6)
- ☐ Case Worker (7)
- ☐ Academic or Career Advisor (8)
- ☐ School Counselor (9)
- ☐ High School Teacher (10)
- ☐ Foster Student Campus Support Program Peer (11)
- ☐ Other (12) _____

Q32 Were you required to submit an application to participate in the foster student campus support program?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q33 Has your participation in the foster student campus support program motivated and encouraged you to complete your college or university degree? Please respond in at least 1 to 2 sentences.

- ○ Yes - If yes, how (1) _____
- ○ No (2)

Q34 Why is it important to receive support in transitioning from the foster care system to college or university life? Please specify in the box below in at least 1 to 2 sentences.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q35 Has the foster student campus support program been helpful in your transition to college or university life? (Very Helpful, Helpful, Somewhat Helpful, Not Helpful)

- Very Helpful (1)
- Helpful (2)
- Somewhat Helpful (3)
- Not Helpful (4)

Q36 What academic and social supports have you received from your foster student campus support program? (Select all that apply.)

- ☐ Course registration (1)
- ☐ Selecting a major (2)
- ☐ Tutoring (3)
- ☐ Student skills (4)
- ☐ Exam preparation (5)
- ☐ Learning disability or other disability assistance (6)
- ☐ Access to campus resources (7)
- ☐ Social interaction (8)
- ☐ Interpersonal skills (9)
- ☐ Student clubs and organizations (10)
- ☐ Housing (11)
- ☐ Financial management (12)
- ☐ Medical and mental health support (13)

- [ ] Mentoring (14)
- [ ] Employment (15)
- [ ] If other, please specify (16) _____

Q37 As you think about your ability to succeed in college or university, how important is it to receive assistance and support in the following areas? (Very important, Important, Somewhat Important, Not Important)

	Very Important (1)	Important (2)	Somewhat Important (3)	Not Important (4)
Course registration (1)	○	○	○	○
Selecting a major (2)	○	○	○	○
Tutoring (3)	○	○	○	○
Student skills (4)	○	○	○	○
Exam preparation (5)	○	○	○	○
Learning disability or other disability assistance (6)	○	○	○	○
Access to campus resources (7)	○	○	○	○
Social interaction (8)	○	○	○	○
Interpersonal skills (9)	○	○	○	○
Student clubs and organizations (10)	○	○	○	○
Housing (11)	○	○	○	○
Financial management (12)	○	○	○	○

Medical and mental health support (13)	○	○	○	○
Mentoring (14)	○	○	○	○
Employment (15)	○	○	○	○

Q38 Does the foster student campus support program provide opportunities for leadership development?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q39 Does the foster student campus support program provide you with a peer mentor?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q40 Does the foster student campus support program provide you with an adult "Point of Contact" to assist you in accessing needed resources at your college or university?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q41 As a participant in the foster student campus support program, have you received priority registration? Priority registration allows certain student populations an opportunity to register for classes before the regular registration period begins.

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q42 Does the foster student campus support program provide you with a sense of family or community?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q43 Did the foster student campus support program provide you with a summer bridge program? A summer bridge program is a residential program that provides first-time college students with the opportunity to experience the college environment during the first summer prior to the beginning of the freshman year.

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q44 How helpful was the foster student campus support summer bridge program? (Very Helpful, Helpful, Somewhat Helpful, Not Helpful)

- ○ Very Helpful (1)
- ○ Helpful (2)
- ○ Somewhat Helpful (3)
- ○ Not Helpful (4)
- ○ Not Applicable (5)

Q45 What other supports have you received from the foster care student campus support program? Please respond in at least 1 to 2 sentences.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q46 What other services or supports would you like to see offered by the foster care student campus support program? Please respond in at least 1 to 2 sentences.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q47 Is there an on-campus drop-in center for the foster student campus support program?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't know (3)

Q48 If there is an on-campus drop-in center for the foster student campus support program, how often to you visit or use the center?

- Daily (1)
- Once a week (2)
- Two or more times a week (3)
- Once a semester (4)
- Two or more times a semester (5)
- Never (6)
- Not Applicable (7)

Q49 Which type of support is more helpful?

- ○ One on One (1)
- ○ Group (2)
- ○ Both (3)

Q50 How often do you meet one-on-one with an adult point of contact from the foster student campus support program?

- ○ Daily (1)
- ○ Once a week (2)
- ○ Two or more times a week (3)
- ○ Once a semester (4)
- ○ Two or more times a semester (5)
- ○ Never (6)

Q51 How often do you have e-mail or telephone contact with an adult point of contact from the foster student campus support program?

- ○ Daily (1)
- ○ Once a week (2)
- ○ Two or more times a week (3)
- ○ Once a semester (4)
- ○ Two or more times a semester (5)
- ○ Never (6)

Q52 How helpful is the foster student campus support program adult point of contact and staff when you need assistance?

- ○ Very Helpful (1)
- ○ Helpful (2)
- ○ Somewhat Helpful (3)
- ○ Not Helpful (4)

Q53 When you need assistance and support beyond the foster student campus support program, where are you referred? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Student counseling services (1)
- ☐ Student health services (2)
- ☐ Community mental health agency (3)
- ☐ Other community agency (4)

Q54 What was the biggest challenge you faced during your transition from foster care to college or university? Please respond in at least 1 to 2 sentences.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q55 Did the foster student campus support program help you cope with, and overcome this challenge?

- ○ Yes - If yes, how (1) _____
- ○ No (2)

Q56 What is the best part about being a participant in the foster student campus support program? Please respond in at least 1 to 2 sentences.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q57 Are there any other changes or suggestions you would make to improve the foster student campus support program? Please respond in at least 1 to 2 sentences.

- ○ Yes - If yes, please list the changes (1)

  _____

- ○ No (2)

Q58 How likely are you to recommend a foster student campus support program to other foster students transitioning from foster care to college or university?

- ○ Very Likely (1)
- ○ Likely (2)
- ○ Somewhat Likely (3)
- ○ Not Likely (4)

Q59 The following statements reflect various ways in which you may describe your experience on this entire college campus. Rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each

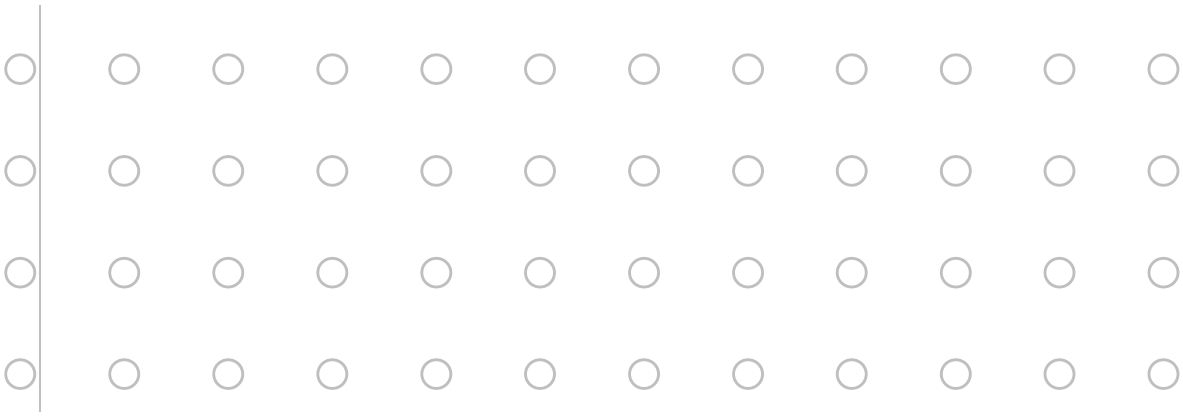
statement. There is no right or wrong answer. Do not spend too much time with any one statement and do not leave any unanswered.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Mildly Disagree (3)	Mildly Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)
There are people on campus with whom I feel a close bond. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I don't feel that I really belong around the people that I know on campus. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that I can share personal concerns with other students. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am able to make connections with a diverse group of people. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel so distant from the other students. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have no sense of togetherness with my peers. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I can relate to my fellow classmates. (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I catch myself losing all sense of connectedness with college life. (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that I fit in on campus. (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○

There is no sense of brother/sisterhood with my college friends. (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○	
I don't feel related to anyone on campus. (11)	○	○	○	○	○	○	
Other students make me feel at home on campus. (12)	○	○	○	○	○	○	
I feel disconnected from campus life. (13)	○	○	○	○	○	○	
I don't feel I participate with anyone or any group. (14)	○	○	○	○	○	○	

Q60 Please answer how confident you are that you can successfully complete the tasks below, from 0-10. 0 = not at all confident to 10 = extremely confident

0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	8 (8)	9 (9)	10 (10)



Q61 During the coming year in college, how often do you expect to do the following? Indicate your response by choosing (Very Often, Often, Occasionally, Never)

	Very Often (1)	Often (2)	Occasionally (3)	Never (4)
Ask your instructor for information related to a course you are taking (grades, make-up work, assignments, etc.) (1)	○	○	○	○
Discuss your academic program or course selection with a faculty member (2)	○	○	○	○
Discuss ideas for a term paper or other class project with a faculty member (3)	○	○	○	○
Discuss your career plans and ambitions with a faculty member (4)	○	○	○	○
Socialize with a faculty member outside the classroom (have a snack or soft drink, etc.) (5)	○	○	○	○
Ask your instructor for comments and criticisms about your academic performance (6)	○	○	○	○

Work with a faculty member on a research project (7)	○	○	○	○
Complete the assigned readings before class (8)	○	○	○	○
Take detailed notes during class (9)	○	○	○	○
Contribute to class discussions (10)	○	○	○	○
Try to see how different facts and ideas fit together (11)	○	○	○	○
Apply material learned in a class to other areas (a job or internship, other courses, relationships with friends, family, co-workers, etc.) (12)	○	○	○	○
Summarize major points and information from your readings or class notes (13)	○	○	○	○

Use the information or experience from other areas of your life (job, internship, interactions with others) in class discussions or assignments (14)	○	○	○	○
Explain material from a course to someone else (another student, friend, co-worker, family member) (15)	○	○	○	○
Prepare a paper or project where you had to integrate ideas from various sources (16)	○	○	○	○
Attend a meeting of a campus club, organization, or student government group (17)	○	○	○	○
Work on a campus committee, student organization, or service project (publications, student government, special event, etc.) (18)	○	○	○	○

Meet with a faculty member or staff advisor to discuss the activities of a group or organization (19)	○	○	○	○
Manage or provide leadership for an organization or service project, on or off the campus (20)	○	○	○	○
Make friends with students whose interests are different from yours (21)	○	○	○	○
Make friends with students whose family background (economic, social) is different from yours (22)	○	○	○	○
Make friends with students whose race or ethnic background is different from yours (23)	○	○	○	○
Have serious discussions with students whose philosophy of life or personal values are very different from yours (24)	○	○	○	○

Have serious discussions with students whose political opinions are very different from yours (25)	○	○	○	○
Have serious discussions with students whose race or ethnic identification is very different from yours (26)	○	○	○	○
Current events in the news (27)	○	○	○	○
Social issues such as peace, justice, human rights, equality, race relations (28)	○	○	○	○
Different lifestyles, customs, and religions (29)	○	○	○	○
The ideas and views of writers, philosophers, historians (30)	○	○	○	○
The arts (painting, poetry, theatrical productions, dance, symphony, movies, etc.) (31)	○	○	○	○

Science (theories, experiments, methods, etc.) (32)	○	○	○	○
Computers and other technologies (33)	○	○	○	○
Social and other ethical issues related to science and technology such as energy, pollution, chemicals, genetics, military use (34)	○	○	○	○
The economy (employment, wealth, poverty, debt, trade, etc.) (35)	○	○	○	○
International relations (human rights, free trade, military activities, political differences, etc.) (36)	○	○	○	○

Q62 During the current year, about how much reading and writing do you expect to do?

	More than 20 (1)	Between 11 and 20 (2)	Between 5 and 10 (3)	Fewer than 5 (4)	None (5)
Non-assigned books (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Textbooks or assigned books (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Term papers or other written papers (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Essay exams for your courses (4)	○	○	○	○	○

Q63 During the time school is in session this coming year, about how many hours a week do you expect to spend outside of class on activities related to your academic program, such as studying, writing, reading, lab work, rehearsing, etc.?

- ○ 5 or fewer hours a week (1)
- ○ 6-10 hours a week (2)
- ○ 11-15 hours a week (3)
- ○ 16-20 hours a week (4)
- ○ 21-25 hours a week (5)
- ○ 26-30 hours a week (6)
- ○ More than 30 hours a week (7)

Q64 During the current time school is in session, about how many hours a week do you plan to work on a job?

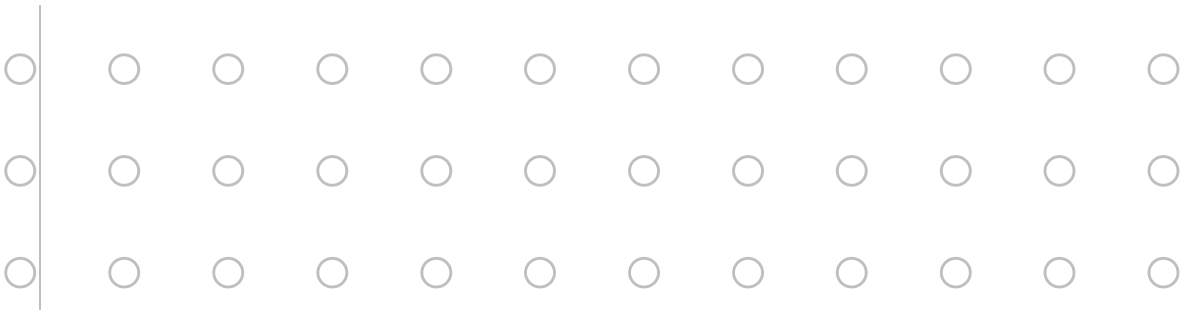
	On-Campus (1)	Off-Campus (2)	Not On or Off Campus (3)
None; I won't have a job (1)	○	○	○
1-10 hours a week (2)	○	○	○
11-20 hours a week (3)	○	○	○
21-30 hours a week (4)	○	○	○
31-40 hours a week (5)	○	○	○
More than 40 hours a week (6)	○	○	○

Q65 About how much of your college expenses this year will be provided by your foster parents (including your own contribution)?

- ○ All or nearly all (1)
- ○ More than half (2)
- ○ Less than half (3)
- ○ None or very little (4)

Q66 Please answer how confident you are that you can successfully complete the tasks listed below, from 0-10. 0 = not at all confident to 10 = extremely confident

0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	8 (8)	9 (9)	10 (10)



Q67 In your experience at this institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? (Very Often, Often, Occasionally, Never)

	Very Often (1)	Often (2)	Occasionally (3)	Never (4)
Made a judgment about the quality of information obtained from the library, World Web, or other sources (1)	○	○	○	○
Used a computer to produce a resume (2)	○	○	○	○
Used e-mail to communicate with an employer (3)	○	○	○	○
Used a dictionary or thesaurus to look up the proper meaning of words (4)	○	○	○	○
Thought about grammar, sentence structure, word choice, and sequence of ideas or points as you were writing (5)	○	○	○	○
Asked other people to read something you wrote to see if it was clear to them (6)	○	○	○	○
Referred to a book or manual about writing style, grammar, etc. (7)	○	○	○	○

Revised a paper or composition two or more times before you were satisfied with it (8)	○	○	○	○
Asked an instructor or staff member for advice and help to improve your writing (9)	○	○	○	○
Discussed your career plans and ambitions with a faculty member (10)	○	○	○	○
Read articles or books about personal growth, self-improvement, or social development (11)	○	○	○	○
Identified with a character in a book, movie, or television show and wondered what you might have done under similar circumstances (12)	○	○	○	○
Current events in the news (13)	○	○	○	○

Social issues such as peace, justice, human rights, equality, race relations (14)	○	○	○	○
Different lifestyles, customs, and religions (15)	○	○	○	○
The ideas and views of other people such as writers, philosophers, historians (16)	○	○	○	○
The arts (painting, poetry, dance, theatrical productions, symphony, movies, etc.) (17)	○	○	○	○
Science (theories, experiments, methods, etc. (18)	○	○	○	○
Computers and other technologies (19)	○	○	○	○
Social and ethical issues related to science and technology such as energy, pollution, chemicals, genetics, military use (20)	○	○	○	○

The economy (employment, wealth, poverty, debt, trade, etc.) (21)	○	○	○	○
International relations (human rights, free trade, military activities, political differences, etc.) (22)	○	○	○	○
Referred to knowledge you acquired in your reading or classes (23)	○	○	○	○
Explored different way of thinking about the topic (24)	○	○	○	○
Referred to something one of your instructors said about the topic (25)	○	○	○	○
Subsequently read something that was related to the topic (26)	○	○	○	○
Changed your opinion as a result of the knowledge or arguments presented by others (27)	○	○	○	○

Persuaded others to change their minds as a result of the knowledge of arguments you cited (28)	○	○	○	○

Q68 How well do you like college?

- ○ I am enthusiastic about it (1)
- ○ I like it (2)
- ○ I am more or less neutral about it (3)
- ○ I don't like it (4)

Q69 If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?

- ○ Yes, definitely (1)
- ○ Probably yes (2)
- ○ Probably no (3)
- ○ No, definitely (4)

Q70 In thinking about your college or university experience up to now, to what extent do you feel you have gained or made progress in the following areas? (Very Little, Some, Quite a Bit, Very Much)

	Very Little (1)	Some (2)	Quite a Bit (3)	Very Much (4)
Acquiring knowledge and skills applicable to a specific job or type of work (vocational preparation) (1)	○	○	○	○
Acquiring background and specialization for further education in a professional, scientific, or scholarly field (2)	○	○	○	○
Gaining a broad general education about different fields of knowledge (3)	○	○	○	○
Gaining a range of information that may be relevant to a career (4)	○	○	○	○
Developing an understanding and enjoyment of art, music, and drama (5)	○	○	○	○
Broadening your acquaintance with and enjoyment of literature (6)	○	○	○	○

Seeing the importance of history for understanding the present as well as the past (7)	○	○	○	○
Gaining knowledge about other parts of the world and other people (Asia, Africa, South America, etc.) (8)	○	○	○	○
Writing clearly and effectively (9)	○	○	○	○
Presenting ideas and information effectively when speaking to others (10)	○	○	○	○
Using computers and other information technologies (11)	○	○	○	○
Becoming aware of different philosophies, cultures, and ways of life (12)	○	○	○	○
Developing your own values and ethical standards (13)	○	○	○	○
Understanding yourself, your abilities interests, and personality (14)	○	○	○	○

Developing the ability to get along with different kinds of people (15)	○	○	○	○
Developing the ability to function as a member of a team (16)	○	○	○	○
Developing good health habits and physical fitness (17)	○	○	○	○
Understanding the nature of science and experimentation (18)	○	○	○	○
Understanding new developments in science and technology (19)	○	○	○	○
Becoming aware of the consequences (benefits, hazards, dangers) of new applications of science and technology (20)	○	○	○	○
Thinking analytically and logically (21)	○	○	○	○

Analyzing quantitative problems (understanding probabilities, proportions, etc.) (22)	○	○	○	○
Putting ideas together, seeing relationships, similarities, and differences between ideas (23)	○	○	○	○
Learning on your own, pursuing ideas, and finding information you need (24)	○	○	○	○
Learning to adapt to change (new technologies, different jobs or personal circumstances, etc.) (25)	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Default Question Block

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMED CONSENT

Research Study Informed Consent

Date

Dear Participant:

My name is Nathaniel Brown. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia. I am working on my dissertation focusing on the experiences of foster care undergraduate students participating in campus support programs designed to meet their needs. As a foster care alumnus, I recall my experiences in transitioning from foster care to an undergraduate college experience. There were no campus support programs available or tailored to meet my specific needs as a foster care undergraduate student. Given my background and college experiences I am especially interested in this topic.

Participants are required to be 18 years of age or older. Your participation will involve sharing your experience in participating in a foster student college campus support program through the completion of a survey that should only take about 45 minutes. Your involvement in the study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or stop at any time without penalty. As the research investigator, I will: (1) retain and analyze collected data related to the subject up to the time of subject withdrawal; or (2) honor a research subject's request that the investigator destroy the subject's data or that the investigator exclude the subject's data from analysis. If you decide to stop or withdraw from the study, the information/data collected from or about you up to the point of withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

All data collected will be confidential and only the research investigator and Dr. Rosemary Phelps in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services will have access. No identifying information of participants will be revealed. The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only. The findings from this project may provide information on the experiences of foster students' participation in college campus support programs for increasing student engagement and program improvement to better support students in college or university completion. There may be some emotional discomfort in answering questions related to program participation and expression of foster care issues. For this reason, you may skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering. If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me Nathaniel O. Brown at (770) 873-5971 or send an e-mail to natebrow@uga.edu. The chairperson for my dissertation study is Dr. Rosemary Phelps at the University of Georgia. She can be contacted at rephelps@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu. By completing and returning this survey via online, you are agreeing to participate in the above described research project.

Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel O. Brown

APPENDIX D

FOSTER CARE COLLEGE STUDENTS SURVEY FLYER

FOSTER CARE STUDENT SURVEY

INFORMATION

My name is Nathaniel O. Brown and I am a Ph.D. candidate in Counseling and Student Personnel Services at the University of Georgia. I am also an alumnus of foster care. I am conducting a research study on 18 year old (or older) undergraduate students who experienced foster care and attend any college in Georgia. I am interested in learning about the knowledge and perceptions of campus support programs or services tailored to their needs. Thank you.

https://ugeorgia.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3lVlvj2N57gjHDv

Nathan's Story

http://www.myajc.com/news/local-education/nathaniel-brown-journey-from-foster-care-phd-candidate/EzYOHM4UIi7Za0ir32oQQI/

AGE 18 OR OLDER

Foster Care Young Adults currently enrolled in college or university in the U.S.

CONTACT

Nathaniel Brown
Ph.D. Candidate
The University of Georgia
770-873-5971
natebrow@uga.edu

BENEFITING

College students who experienced foster care.

APPENDIX E

COMMENTS SECTION OF FOSTER CARE STUDENTS SURVEY

Comments from Foster Care Students College and University Survey

Q54 What was the biggest challenge you faced during your transition from foster care to college or university? Please respond in at least 1 to 2 sentences.

"My biggest challenge was lack of exposure in an effort to see myself entering college, remaining in college, and graduating college."

"Lack of resources for college, a challenge to secure important documents (i.e. Social Security card, birth certificate, and driver's license or state ID."

"Socialization. I felt alone a lot of the times."

"Accepting the fact that is was now time for me to be independent and that I would have to learn to stand on my own and not depend on someone else to get things done for me."

"Friends."

"Learning to adapt to a large university"

"Timing to do so."

"Not sure."

"Meeting new people. Feeling inadequate."

"Trying to fit in and find my niche."

"College is tough, but not because of foster care."

"Making new friends."

"Issues of depression and stress and how to overcome them."

"Change of scene and not having money like a lot of the other students for partying"

"Higher education."

"I didn't experience any major challenges. I made a lot of great friends at university and they helped me a lot."

"Probably being able to get used to the environment itself. I am very driven and a social butterfly so it wasn't too difficult for me."

"I don't know."

“Just being around a different group of people, honestly, I'm pretty good at change, done it my whole life.”

“None really.”

“Money and how to make ends meet.”

“Can we keep each other company.”

“There was no one there to help. I began my college journey in 1998. Alone. And afraid. I ended up dropping out. Years later (2013), tired of minimum wage jobs. I returned to school. STILL No support system. I have made it this far this time around on a strong desire to make it to the finish line.”

“Being on my own.”

“Not having a home to go to for breaks and the college wouldn't let me stay, I had to pay extra money and I couldn't afford it and I was a freshman so I couldn't move off campus so I was homeless for breaks luckily my friend let me stay at his house.”

“My physical and mental health became worse.”

“In my first quarter of school, I got depressed being away from my younger siblings and I could not really connect with anyone, including my roommates who I had known for more than 10 years. The only thing I was motivated to do was wrestle and when practice was over I went back to feeling depressed and anxious.”

“My biggest challenge was having to figure everything out on my own. I've never had anyone to help me.”

“Being on my own.”

“There's not a lot of diversity at my school at it seems like everyone is smart. My program helped me adjust and gain confidence.”

“I'm not sure.”

“Living and housing transition.”

“It's great to be helped by peers. I learn more about myself that way.”

“Trying to get the foster children use to your way of doing things.”

“Courses.”

“I don't dwell on it.”

“I am not sure.”

“A big change and feeling different.”

“The fact in being in a totally different surrounding not knowing what to expect.”

“Financial assistance.”

“Meeting new people. And being in another new place.”

“Using all the programs offered.”

“Be able to attend meetings and also go to class.”

“Passing my classes.”

“Just being able to have the help needed to transition into life.”

“No family.”

“Getting use to the whole transition and college life with new people.”

“Being able to be in social settings and be successful.”

“Learning to adjust.”

“My biggest challenge was the environment. At first I felt lonely, but with the help of my mentor I am fitting in better.”

“Getting to class on time and getting good grades.”

“It was not all that hard like you may think for me.”

“It is a different atmosphere. Not everyone here is a foster kid.”

“Application process, having to list the family portion of the latter, left a void.”

“Friends and understanding of what is like to live in Alaska, which is fucked up.”

“Everything is a challenge in life. Day to day we face challenges.”

“Not having my parents to fill out important paperwork.”

“I am very anti-social. It is hard for me to communicate to people.”

“Learning how to be around so many people.”

“Getting back into school.”

“Feeling of being alone in a big situation. Believing I could do it.”

“Having that support you need and being on your own. Your pretty much starting life on your own and it's a lot.”

“Did not transition from foster care to university.”

“Fitting in.”

“Money.”

“Just adjusting into a new environment.”

“ADHD.”

“My biggest challenge was making friends.”

“Just getting to know people.”

“Being independent finally.”

“Timing is the biggest factor.”

“Really just adjusting to real life.”

“The biggest challenge transitioning to college is being on one’s own and making sensible decisions about one's future.”

“Being by myself.”

“The culture shock and the fast paced environment. It is very easy to fall behind. The uncomfortable interactions with wealthier students.”

“Probably becoming more social. I was very nervous and I felt intimidated.”

“Having no one supporting me.”

“Dealing with my anxiety and depression in a highly populated environment.”

“The change in routine, doing everything on my own, No adult to push me, study patterns.”

“Many colleges have adopted specialized programs geared toward recruiting, retaining, and supporting Foster Care Alumni. At a number of institutions these programs are known as Guardian Scholars or Renaissance Scholars. These programs are generally located on residential campuses through a student services model.”

“Being away from my family although we aren't biological we're still so close.”

“I had no help when I started college back in '92.”

“Being accepted.”

“Freedom.”

“I didn't feel worthy as a student entering college.”

“I faced financial burdens and found it difficult to assimilate into the new freedoms. It was challenging to focus on my studies.”

“Trying to fit in with other students and feel comfortable despite the differences.”

“Being on my own and making my own plans.”

“Housing during breaks.”

“Just being alone was hard for me.”

“The biggest transitions I faced were being on my own . And being kind of independent in away.”

“Getting accustomed to all the freedom and free time.”

“Believing I belong.”

“Back when I was transitioning from foster care to college, the biggest challenge was stable housing. But I also had no other skills whatsoever to prepare me for school.”

“My biggest problem was battling with my emotions.”

“I did not transition directly from foster care to a university. I experienced foster care for a short period as a child.”

“Being alone again.”

“Community services Experienced in the past or may currently be.”

“Learning to change and accepting help from others.”

“My biggest challenges involved financial stability and social interactions.”

“Transitioning into dealing with peers.”

“The communication from students and professors.”

“Needed more information about where to go.”

“It would benefit the requirements for any college. It would help everyone!!”

“The biggest challenge was yet again uncertainty that comes along with change! Learning to believe in myself and my ability!”

“Making friends and finding my place.”

“Socializing and trusting.”

“Being normal and really accepted in society.”

“Making friends.”

“Didn't really have any, I felt like I transitioned well, just like any other student
I didn't know where I would go if I failed my classes.”

“Keeping us safe.”

“It was definitely tough having a lot of people ask me if I was traumatized or abused, just because I was in foster care. They had no idea why I was there, but made a lot of judgments.”

“The fact that without my parents I had no documents that I needed.”

“The environment and how you’re not treated as an adult in foster care.”

“Trying to take care of my family while travelling between the city where I went to school and where my family was. Having enough time to do both was tough.”

“Not having close family members to rely on for support.”

“Connecting with students.”

“Just being comfortable with what I am doing.”

“Feeling like I was all alone it was very scary.”

“Being in college with no money.”

“Dealing with the students and the stress of changing into a foreign environment.”

“There was no challenge. It was very easy because my foster family was evil.”

“Feeling alone.”

“Being alone new place.”

“I commute so I can still remain in the ILP program and still go to college . I truly could not do everything on my own, It is hard to have little class time and you have to choose to get the work done on your own.”

Q55 Did the foster student campus support program help you cope with, and overcome this challenge? - Yes - If yes, how

“The semester encouragement and care packages with words of encouragement.”

“I was referred to appropriate resources.”

“Offered the support I needed.”

“It helps to ease my anxiousness.”

“We had an MSW intern that I saw weekly and she gave me confidence and helped me address some skeletons in my closet.”

“By coping.”

“Encouragement on a weekly basis.”

“Counseling.”

“They help me.”

“Guidance.”

“Sat down and talked to me.”

“It helped me.”

“Group counseling.”

“Meeting new people on campus.”

“My mentor has become like my best friend. He helps me with everything.”

"I met other kids like me."

"Yes, anxiety."

"I speak with a lot of people."

"Understanding."

"It made me feel safe."

"Yes they helped a lot."

"I met great people."

"Through mental health services."

"I was able to meet people similar to me and my situation."

"Yes made me a better person."

"It definitely helped me stay strong."

"Just having people to talk to is helpful in the decision making process."

"Support."

"Peer support groups, social justice programs."

"Yes, I met more people just like me. I heard their stories and they heard mine."

"Tools for dealing with anxiety and depression."

"So many ways, support, ideas, advice."

"Many colleges have adopted specialized programs geared toward recruiting, retaining, and supporting Foster Care Alumni. At a number of institutions these programs are known as Guardian Scholars or Renaissance Scholars. These programs are generally located on residential campuses through a student services model."

"It helps you find yourself."

"I like the hands on approach."

"They understand exactly what you've been through."

"The extra support."

“Relating to others.”

“If we had one, it would be the support and mentorship.”

“Feeling like I have other people to talk to who can relate.”

“I feel involved.”

“Did not participate.”

“Always having a friend to talk to.”

“Not Applicable.”

“The best part was knowing that I had support from people during my journey through school. Having help was very helpful and very much appreciated.”

“It provided me a community that understood me.”

“Somebody knows what you are going through.”

“I imagine just knowing there is someone/somewhere to get all your questions answered is very helpful. I also think the peer connections could be helpful.”

“The best part is people know what you've been through your life. It helps when you have a support group as well as friends and family members to depend on and can relate to your situation.”

“The best part was definitely the mentoring.”

“My foster family has peace of mind.”

“Meeting new people that have went through similar things.”

“Interacting with different personalities and opinions.”

“I feel encouraged.”

“Being around great people who actually care about your education.”

“The people were nice and helpful.”

“I was able to experience college life before it actually started. I did not feel like I was thrown to the wolves! Also being given preference in registering early and the constant support and sense of community!”

“I don't feel like I'm alone any longer.”

“All the different types of programs or assistance they offer.”

“Having friends who have the same experiences as me is very important.”

“I feel like I belong.”

“Feeling like belong and have people that care when I need that support and guidance.”

“The best part about the foster care assistance program is the financial assistance.”

“I get the extra support I need to do my best.”

“Being a part of the groups meeting new people and the assistance that is there for the complications of financial issues.”

“I really have no experience with this type of program.”

Q56 What is the best part about being a participant in the foster student campus support program? Please respond in at least 1 to 2 sentences.

“Community and family feeling. I can depend on the people to respond to me.”

“Not a part of it actually my first time hearing about it.”

“Getting resources that I really need like talking to a mentor.”

“Bien.”

“Very good.”

“Everything.”

“None.”

“Not sure.”

“I do not use this.”

“Helping other students.”

“Support and friends.”

“It helped me become acquainted with the campus.”

“N/A.”

“Having support with interpersonal skill.”

“People feel so sorry for me that I did make friends with a few people.”

“Education research.”

“I'm not in one.”

“The support.”

“Just being able to have a lot of support from everyone. It means so much to me.”

“I don't want to talk about it.”

“Being able to get the help when I need.”

“Companionship.”

“N/A.”

“I will show you the best side of the dark side.”

“There is not a program. I hate that I keep typing that!!! My school needs something!!!!”

“The counseling services.”

“Financial assistance.”

“It is nice to see others like me.”

“I know that if I have a problem, they can help me out.”

“Food. People.”

“Nothing.”

“I've never heard of this program.”

“Makes things overall easier.”

“Support.”

“Loved to join there.”

“The wonderful support that I receive.”

“I've met some of my good friends through it. It is important to find people to relate to you. Personally, having that "support group" of friends really helped me push through some tough times.”

“I don't.”

“The support and counseling provided and the feeling of belonging somewhere.”

“It helps make things easier. A great easy transition.”

“It's something that I always wanted to do so that's what I am doing.”

“Support.”

“I'm not sure.”

“They will help you overcome.”

“I'm not sure I'm a participant.”

“Move.”

“Nothing. I do not care.”

“Not sure.”

“When I need help I have several places to go to. Although sometimes I feel like I get more than I deserve and other students don't get anything like this.”

“It helps me be a better person by giving back.”

“Good.”

“Working one on one with people that understand what you’re going through.”

“Being able to help others that are going through the same thing as me.”

“Getting support.”

“Family like setting.”

“So it is very easy to do and fix my life.”

“Getting help.”

Q57 Are there any other changes or suggestions you would make to improve the foster student campus support program? Please respond in at least 1 to 2 sentences. - Yes - If yes, please list the changes

“Make it so you that you qualify no matter what age you enter foster care.”

“Create a program at my school!”

“Provide these services for regular students just separately.”

“To fix the foster care system.”

“Better grades, more help.”

“Make this program mandatory at all schools, and advertise it heavily to junior-senior high-school students, especially.”

“I think it is hard to identify us just because we are in foster care, it makes us stand out.”