

# FOSTERING ART: AN ART INTERVENTION FOR OLDER FOSTER YOUTH

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## BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

- There are an estimated 408,426 children currently in foster care and 255,114 youth age out of care each year
- Research indicates that foster youth are in need of mental health care; 75%-80% of youth in foster care score in the clinical or borderline clinical range on behavioral and social competence scales and foster youth are significantly more likely than the general population to meet criteria for at least one psychiatric diagnosis during their lifetime
- Only one in six children receive mental health services while in foster care
- Some adolescent foster youth are reluctant to attend traditional psychotherapy
- Alternative therapy methods such as art therapy are increasingly accepted as effective alternative mental health interventions
- The current analysis is a case study of seven adolescent foster youth who participated in a Fostering Art, a photography class, offered by a local nonprofit organization serving foster youth

## METHODS

### Participants

- Seven adolescents who completed pretests upon entering the program and posttests after completing one year in the program
- 71.4% female
- Mean age = 20.67 years, range = 16-23 years, SD = 2.55 years
- Multi-ethnic (42.9%) or African American (28.6%)

### Procedure

- Pretests were administered at the start of the program
  - Research assistants interviewed participants
  - Participants completed a self-report survey which included standardized measures
- Posttests were administered at program completion and included the same instruments as the pretest

### Measures

- Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES)
- Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)
- Face to face interview with questions about: demographics, school, housing, and feelings expressed in art work
- Self-report survey with questions about photography skills, life changes, and experiences in class

## RESULTS

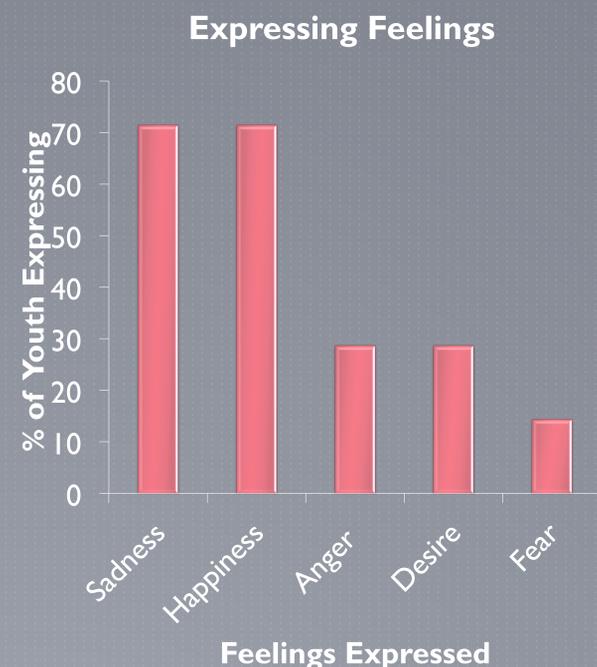
### Standardized Measures

	Pre-tests Scores			Post-test Scores			Significant P Value
	n	mean	SD	n	mean	SD	
RSES	7	18.0	7.73	7	14.6	4.54	.006*
PSS	7	18.4	7.04	7	15.7	8.06	.414

$p < .05$

### Expression of Feelings

- 100% of youth indicated that they expressed feelings while taking pictures



## RESULTS

- When asked “Lately I have been getting into more physical or verbal fights” participant’s answers indicated that their fights had decreased significantly ( $p = .039$   $df = 6$   $t = 6.635$ )

### Meeting Similar Youth

- 71.4% of students stated that Fostering Art helped them to meet similar youth
- 57.1% said meeting similar youth was important to them

## DISCUSSION

- Older foster youth value meeting youth similar to themselves and efforts should be made to create shared spaces for these youth
- Interventions like Fostering Art may be used to provide stability and connections for older foster youth
- Alternatives to traditional mental health treatment such as an art intervention may be effective for older foster youth in reducing mental health symptoms
- Future steps should address the efficacy of specific art intervention models to find the best fit for the foster youth population