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An Art Intervention for Foster Youth: One Year Outcomes

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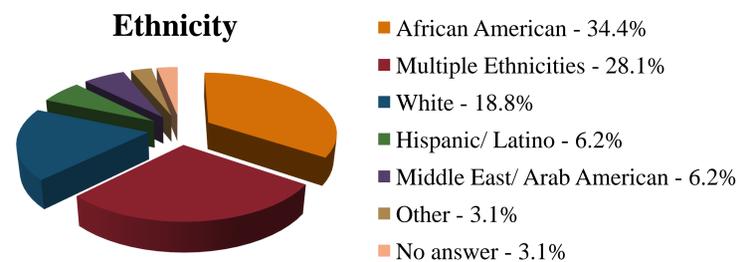
Background & Information

- Children who experience abuse and/or neglect are at higher risk for experiencing health problems, social adaptation deficits, emotional and cognitive difficulties, and behavioral problems
- Children who are placed into foster care as a result of abuse/ neglect typically experience changes in residences and separation from siblings, and subsequently demonstrate anxiety, depression, and attachment issues
- Youth aging out of foster care are ill-equipped to face the challenges of young adulthood and demonstrate increased rates of physical and mental health problems, homelessness, education, unemployment, and legal troubles
- Interventions designed to assist foster youth transition out of care include education, employment assistance, and psychotherapy
- Fostering Art offers an alternative to traditional psychotherapy by providing a creative outlet, a structured learning environment, instruction in photography skills, and the opportunity to share experiences with other foster youth
- The current study evaluates the impact of the Fostering Art on adolescent foster youth using data collected during the first four years of program implementation

Methods

Participants

- Foster youth: 10 pretest respondents; 23 posttest respondents
- Mean age 19.2 years (range 14 – 24 years)
- Predominantly female (53.1%)



- Participants report an average of 10.7 out-of-home placements (range 1 - 45)
- Average age at first placement was 9.1 years old (range= 0 - 17)

Design and Procedure

- Pre-test survey and face to face interview
- Weekly photography art class for 8 month period
- Post-test survey and face-to-face interview

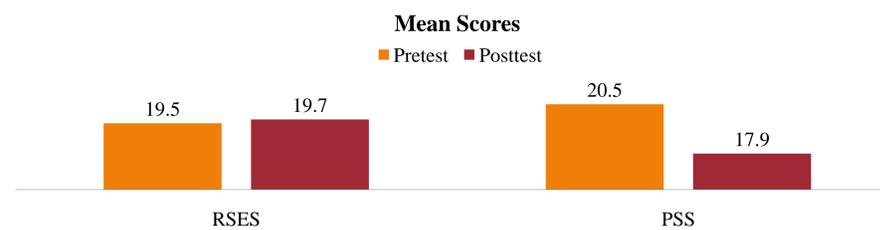
Measures

- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)
- Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)
- Semi-structured questionnaire:
 - Demographics
 - Behavioral and Emotional Functioning
 - Class Evaluation

Results

Standardized Scales

- Pretest and posttest participants reported lower than average self-esteem on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
- Posttest participants reported, on average, lower stress on the Perceived Stress Scale than pretest participants, although this difference did not reach statistical significance

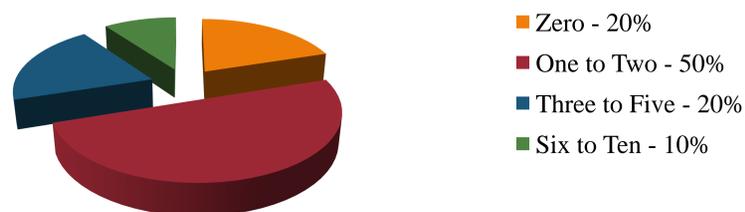


Life Changes

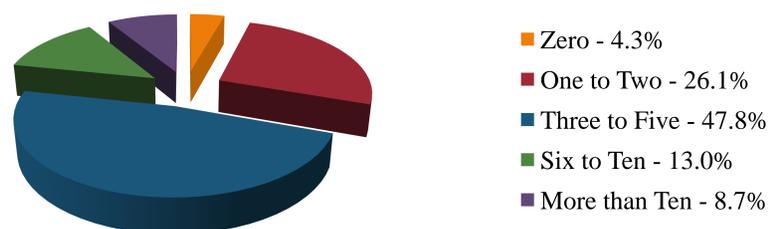
- The majority of posttest participants reported experiencing a change in behavior (72.7%) and all posttest participants reported that Fostering Art had something to do with recent changes in behavior (100%)
- The majority of posttest participants reported that Fostering Art added stability to their lives (82.6%)

“How many important things can you name that have recently changed in your life?”

Pretest Participants



Posttest Participants

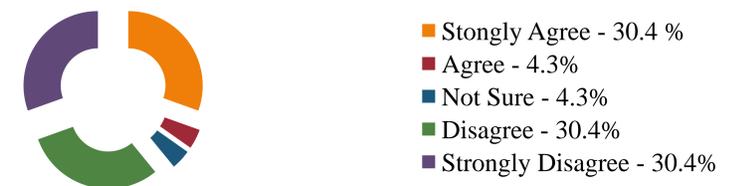


Results

Class Experience

- The majority of foster youth participants indicated that meeting youth similar to them was important to them (77.8% pretest participants and 91.3% posttest participants)
- Posttest participants reported looking forward to attending class
- Posttest participants reported class experience as being an environment in which they could express themselves
- The majority of posttest participants reported that they could focus on themselves and their feelings during class (95.7%)

“At times, I feel uncomfortable being in the Fostering Art Program” Reported by Posttest Participants



“When I’m in the Fostering Art class, I feel like I can escape from my problems” Reported by Posttest Participants



Discussion

- Current results suggest that Fostering Art provides an effective alternative for mental health treatment for foster youth transitioning out of care
- Participants felt positively about the Fostering Art intervention, reported non-significant lower perceived stress, and reported that meeting other foster youth was important to them
- Current study is limited by small sample size, lack of comparison group, and the inability to make direct comparisons between pre and posttest participants
- Fostering Art provides an alternative to mental health treatment, offers a forum for emotional expression and temporary respite from life’s difficulties for older foster youth, and helps them create attachments with other youth like themselves