

Beacon Focus Groups on Barriers for Aged Out Youth Attending College

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Why

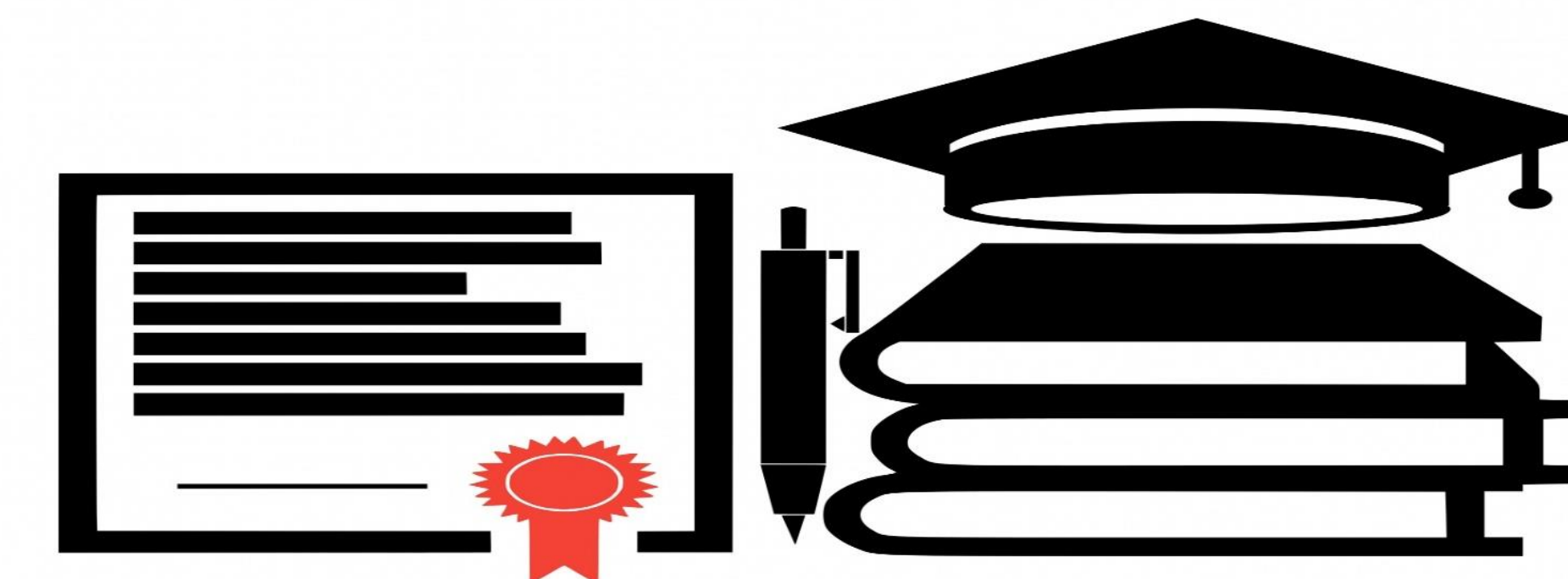
- 19, 130 youth aged out of foster care in 2021 without permanent placement (AFCARS, 2022)
- In 2018, 265 youth aged out of care in New Jersey without permanent placement (NFYI, 2022)
- Only 3-4% of former foster youth will receive a 4-year degree and only 2-6% will get a 2-year degree (NFYI, 2022)

Introduction

49 Stockton Students volunteered to participate in focus groups. (Hernandez-Mekonnen, Kirzner, Haria, Swenson Brilla, 2017)

- Of those 49 only 20 were able to participate
- Many students struggled to find time to participate in the focus groups

Questions were asked in each focus group regarding various topics.
“We would like to explore with you things like housing, work, transportation, daily or personal dorm room needs, clothing, tutoring, books, computers or technology, and what if any struggle you have had in managing all of those things since coming to Stockton...”



Selected Themes

Family

“I’ve watched girls on my floor call their parents like, “hey...” Even going home, I have to call my mentor and see if he’s available to pick me up on my schedule, the little things that are just taken for granted.”

Administrative/paperwork

“It was really, really hard to figure out what to put on the [FAFSA] form without making any mistakes because it’s federal and they really really check on it. My grandmother didn’t know how to help me and mom and dad never went to college.”

Financial

“It was really hard fall semester especially coming back to Jersey and not having Foster Care people reimbursing for clothes and they reimbursed me for books and I had to buy a computer. But I had a credit card and it was a just lot of me figuring out how to budget without going into debt...”

Housing

“...I’m not even sure people were listening on the phone but I was like, hey, I just really need an answer please. I have transferred all over. I got transferred to a lawnmowing service at one point because somebody gave me the wrong number. ..because there was a problem with the housing.”

Help/support (receiving or giving)

“He was available by text, he’s always there to help me. The veterans that need counseling...is right there for you if you need her or you walk into her office at any time. If you can’t reach her you have her card.”

“I also feel compelled to share my story and let people know that you’re not alone. Not just for this group but for the campus wide to understand...”

My Learning Experience

Nvivo

- Qualitative data analysis
- Coding
- Coding comparison

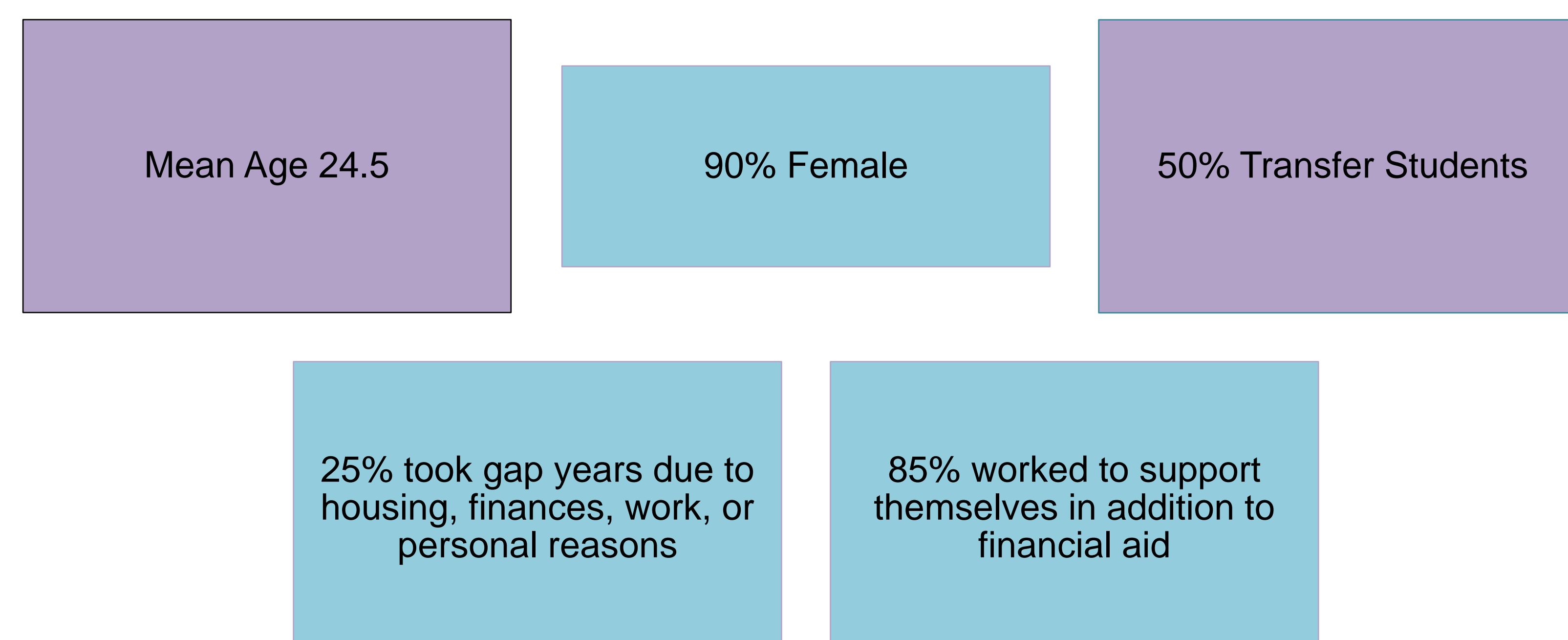
Nvivo is one of the leading programs used for qualitative data analysis. Though I still have much to learn to become proficient in the utilization of this program, the ability to utilize Nvivo will assist in my career as I continue to work towards a PhD. in social work.

Professional Development

- Professional interaction and communication
- Time management
- Patience

Working on the coding comparison for focus group 5, my advisors and I were challenged to complete the merge of our respective files. There were meetings we spent attempting to identify how to complete the merge with little success, this helped me with my patience and interacting with my advisors as a professional.

Participant Demographics



Acknowledgements

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References

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