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It’s Personal: The Tangible and (In)tangible of Aging Out of Foster Care Into Adulthood

By
Chris Lee

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Social Welfare

in the Graduate Division

of the University of California, Berkeley

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Spring 2013

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Abstract

It's Personal: The Tangible and (In)tangible of Aging Out of Foster Care into Adulthood

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Close to 20,000 youth age out of foster care into early adulthood every year, hard pressed to achieve independence at an accelerated pace. Most current state policies require youth to leave foster care between ages 18 to 21, leading to considerably more compressed transition periods than what is typically found among the general population. Though not true of all youth who age out of care, low levels of educational attainment, great economic and housing instability, and generally poor adjustment is well documented among former foster youth in adulthood. In response, legislative efforts have targeted the needs of older youth in foster care for over three decades, primarily focused on teaching youth practical skills for independent living. However, the efficacy of existing independent living skills programs is unclear, resulting in a lack of clarity regarding "what works" in supporting youth during their transition to adulthood. "Soft" resources and skills, such as adult identity and level of personal agency, are also often missing from living skills programs and may be just as important in facilitating stable transitions and nurturing readiness to take on the challenges of adulthood.

This study investigated transitions to adulthood among youth who aged out of foster care in California. The study sought to move beyond previous research by exploring the utility of a theoretical framework, Côté's identity capital model, for explaining differential pathways to adulthood among youth aging out of care. The first study question examined housing pathways taken by youth after aging out of care, following commonly used models in demographic analyses of pathways in transitions to adulthood. The three remaining research questions focused more specifically on the identity capital model, and explored constructs of adult identity and agency in relation to youth functioning after exiting the foster care system.

Similar to patterns found among youth in the general population, more than a few youth in the study sample relied on supportive relatives or non-related adults for housing during their transition to adulthood. Many youth in the sample also lived in their own place, and in fact, this was the most common housing status observed among the study sample, by far. Furthermore, very few youth left and returned to a relative home or transitional housing, suggesting youth accessed these housing safety nets on a limited basis. Cronbach's alpha estimates and confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) indicated that previously validated scales used to measure adult identity and agency had low reliability and validity in use with the current study sample. Similarly, CFA goodness-of-fit tests indicated a poor fit of model constructs and indicators to data of the current study sample.

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CHAPTER 1 – BACKGROUND & LITERATURE REVIEW

An introduction: Aging out of foster care

Close to 20,000 youth age out of foster care into early adulthood every year (Administration for Children & Families, 2009; 2010; 2011), hard pressed to achieve independence at an accelerated pace. Shaped by childhoods of abuse or neglect and living in environments away from the care of their parents, young people who age out of care are commonly expected to be self-sufficient at a time when their similar-aged, family-supported peers are not. "Aging out" of care refers to transitioning out of the foster care system due to reaching the age of legal majority while still under custody of the state (Courtney & Heuring, 2007). Most current state policies require youth to leave foster care between ages 18 to 21 (Dworsky & Havlicek, 2009), leading to considerably more compressed transition periods than what is typically found among the general population. Though not true of all youth who age out of care (Courtney, Hook, & Lee, 2010), low levels of educational attainment, great economic and housing instability, and generally poor adjustment is well documented among former foster youth in adulthood (Barth, 1990; Cook, 1994; Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith; Festinger, 2001; Needell, Cuccaro-Alamin, Brookhart, Jackman, & Shlonsky, 2002). In response, legislative efforts have targeted the needs of older youth in foster care for over three decades (Allen & Nixon, 2000; Magyar, 2006), primarily focused on teaching youth practical skills for independent living, such as securing employment and managing a budget. Yet "soft" resources and skills, such as identifying as an adult and possessing a level of agency, may be just as important in facilitating stable transitions and nurturing readiness to take on the challenges of adulthood (Côté, 1997; 2002; Luyckx, De Witte, & Goossens, 2011). Research regarding adult identity and personal agency among youth aging out of care, however, is largely absent.

Comparing transitions to adulthood among youth who age out of care to typical pathways to adulthood found among the general population reveal that typical pathways to adulthood have become increasingly more prolonged, complex, and less structured than in previous times (Côté & Bynner, 2008; Settersten, 2007; Shanahan, 2000). This prolonged duration and unique complexity has led to debates regarding whether the transition to adulthood should instead be recognized as a developmental stage in its own right (Arnett 2000; 2011; Hendry & Kloep, 2007; 2010). Changing social and economic conditions are likely driving the longer periods of transition (Furstenberg, Rumbaut, & Settersten, 2005), with contemporary labor markets making it especially difficult for inexperienced young adults to secure gainful employment and become self-sufficient (Furstenberg, 2010), particularly young adults from families with lesser means (Furstenberg, 2008). As a result, with social institutions and policies yet to adapt to contemporary realities of the adult transition, families have been the primary bearers left to absorb increased costs involved in more prolonged transitions to adulthood (Swartz, 2008). This is true across levels of family income, with young adults of lower and higher socioeconomic status typically receiving some sort of financial assistance and/or ancillary support from their families between ages 18-34 (Fingerman et al., 2012; Fingerman, Miller, Birditt, & Zarit, 2009; Schoeni & Ross, 2005).

Though institutions and policies have been slow to respond to the potentially changing needs of youth in the general population, policies and programming have targeted the needs of

older youth in foster care for over three decades (Allen & Nixon, 2000; Magyar, 2006). Indeed, recent federal legislation, the 2008 Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, includes specific provisions for supporting older youth in foster care (Child Trends, 2013). However, most programmatic efforts aimed at preparing youth for the transition to adulthood focus on increasing practical skills for independent living, such as securing employment and managing a budget, and few address "soft" resources such as identifying as an adult and possessing a level of agency, which may be just as important in facilitating stable transitions to adulthood (Côté, 1997; 2002; Luyckx, De Witte, & Goossens, 2011). The efficacy of existing independent living skills programs is also unclear, due to inconsistent program implementation and few rigorously conducted evaluations (Montgomery, Donkoh, & Underhill, 2006), resulting in a lack of clarity regarding "what works" in supporting youth during their transition to adulthood.

Adding to a lack of clear direction in best ways to support youth who age out of care, few researchers have focused on identifying theory to help explain why so many young people experience difficulty transitioning out of foster care into adulthood (Stein, 2006). Also absent are theories to explain how some youth, despite facing challenges common across this population, manage stable transitions to adulthood upon aging out of care – remaining housed, engaged in school or work, and connected to relational networks of support. Côté's identity capital model, which proposes that becoming an adult involves both tangible and intangible resources (defined further in chapter two), provides a promising framework to examine factors associated with shaping trajectories into adulthood among aging-out foster youth. In an effort to begin moving toward a theoretical discussion of this phenomenon, the current study investigated a relationship between personal resources and the transition to adulthood among youth who age out of foster care. This chapter provides context for the current study, first reviewing how this life period is commonly understood, along with typical markers studied in normative transitions to adulthood. The chapter begins with an overview of two prominent frameworks used to refer to this period in the general population, followed by a review of what is known of adult outcomes for youth who age out of foster care, and ending with a discussion of specific research questions that guided this study.

Framing the transition from adolescence to adulthood

The period directly following adolescence has largely been framed in one of two ways: as a transitional period involving high rates of change in adult roles and statuses (Furstenberg, 2010; Marini, 1984; Modell, Furstenberg, & Hershberg, 1976; Settersten, 2007; Shanahan, 2000; Staff & Mortimer, 2008), and as a newly recognized stage of development, referred to as "emerging adulthood," distinct from either adolescence or adulthood (Arnett, 2000; 2011). The disciplinary backgrounds of these two perspectives help to explain their different foci, the first borne out of a sociological perspective focused on demographic analyses of population change and trends, and the second emerging from a developmental, psychological perspective. The first perspective has primarily been interested in examining patterns of change in adult roles and statuses, and movement toward self-sufficiency. The second perspective, though also interested in the acquisition of adult roles and responsibility, more frequently seeks to explore change in subjective or internal processes, such as in identity development and acquisition. The

first perspective is also backed by a longer history (Hogan & Astone, 1986; Marini, 1984; Modell et al., 1976), while the developmental perspective was introduced more recently near the turn of the century (Arnett & Taber, 1994; Arnett, 2000). The following section describes these two perspectives more in-depth, highlighting how each has contributed to current understanding of this unique life period.

Adolescence to adulthood: A major life transition

Much of what is known regarding the transition to adulthood may be attributed to scholars of the first perspective noted above, focused on examining changes in adult role acquisitions and status. Until recently, adulthood was generally considered to begin at the end of adolescence, with little gap in between, though little agreement has ever been reached regarding the specific start of adulthood (Modell et al., 1976). There is agreement, however, that contemporary young people, especially in developed nations, are prolonging the transition from adolescence to adulthood over several or more years, commonly extending it through the twenties and even thirties (Settersten, Furstenberg, & Rumbaut, 2005). The number and types of role changes that occur during this time is diverse and more numerous and fluid than any other period over the life course, with individuals commonly switching back and forth between statuses such as going to school then working full time, or moving in and out of the parental home (Cohen, Kasen, Chen, Hartmark, & Gordon, 2003; Mouw, 2005; Rindfuss, 1991). Present day transitions are also more disorganized, as youth take longer to explore multiple possible life long directions than previous generations (Osgood, Ruth, Eccles, Jacobs, & Barber, 2005). Indeed, what was once a generally predictable sequence of adult role transitions and acquisitions (e.g., enter full-time work, get married, start a family) (Marini, 1984), became much more varied and individualized in the latter half of the 20th century (Rindfuss, Swicegood, & Rosenfeld, 1987; Settersten, 2007; Shanahan, Sulloway, & Hofer, 2000; Shanahan, 2000).

Explanations for the changes seen in contemporary adult transitions are multiple, with proponents of this first perspective arguing that structural and institutional, not developmental, factors largely shape individuals' adult transition experiences (Bynner, 2005; Côté & Bynner, 2008). Modern labor markets make it especially difficult for inexperienced young adults to secure gainful employment and become self-sufficient (Corcoran & Matsudaira, 2005; Furstenberg, 2010), particularly young adults of families with lesser means (Furstenberg, 2008). Structural and institutional factors help to facilitate or constrain available opportunities and pathways to adulthood (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2008; Shanahan, 2000). Structural factors, as defined here, refer to social class, gender, race/ethnicity, and locality, while institutional factors include ways in which society manages the transition from school to work (Bynner, 2005).

Scholars also suggest that influences of structure and institutions are greatest for those belonging to marginalized populations (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2008), due to social institutions most likely to have the largest impact during this time (e.g., high schools, colleges, health care clinics) being of varying quality (Fuligni & Hardway, 2004). This variation in quality and subsequent variation in institutional support toward achieving greater levels of education or meeting needs related to health and mental health, help contribute to a gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged that increasingly widens into adulthood (Furstenberg, 2008). Furthermore, families have become the primary bearers of increased costs involved in more

prolonged transitions to adulthood (Swartz, 2008), with young adults of both lower and higher socioeconomic status reporting receiving some sort of financial assistance and/or ancillary support from their families between the ages of 18-34 (Fingerman et al., 2012; Fingerman et al., 2009; Schoeni & Ross, 2005). Thus, those who enter early adulthood with adequate support and resources frequently continue to accumulate greater assets and resources, while enjoying a protracted transition period. Whereas those with limited means and support are more likely to begin the adult transition earlier out of necessity, only to consistently lag behind their more affluent counterparts in the accumulation of resources and attaining self-sufficiency (Bynner, 2005; Settersten, 2007).

Emerging adulthood: A new stage of development?

Challenging the notion that the period following adolescence is simply a transitional phase on the way to adulthood, other scholars argue that the increasing pattern of prolonged durations to adulthood suggests that this period should instead be recognized as a stage of development in its own right (Arnett, 2000; 2011). Proponents of this perspective refer to this proposed new stage as “emerging adulthood,” encompassing the latter teens and early twenties and consisting of extended experimentation and exploration previously limited to adolescence, as well as increased self-focus and feelings of “in-between” (Arias & Hernández, 2007; Arnett, 2001; 2003; Badger, Nelson, & Barry, 2006; Galambos, Barker, & Krahn, 2006). Prior organized life patterns are questioned and reviewed while new possibilities for change are explored, creating uncertainty for both well-functioning and struggling adolescents (Schulenberg, Bryant, & O’Malley, 2004). Individuals exercise greater autonomy and individuation, and engage in internal processes related to developing their own identity and making sense of who they are (Walsh, Shulman, Feldman, & Maurer, 2005).

Research into the subjective experiences of emerging adult individuals indicate that adulthood is equated with achieving certain changes in conduct and in relationships with others: establishing a more equal relationship with parents, deciding on personal beliefs and values, and becoming less self-oriented and more considerate of others (Arnett, 2000). Other aspects include taking on and following through with adult responsibilities, and getting along with and enjoying one’s relationship with parents (Sassler, Ciambrone, & Benway, 2008). Many young people acknowledge receiving various kinds of parental support during this time, and see it as appropriate and helpful in achieving their goals, while also providing a safety net following experiences of hardship (Sassler et al., 2008; Swartz, Kim, Uno, Mortimer, & O'Brien, 2011).

Challenges to this perspective, however, note that by designating this time as a universal stage of development, individuals who don’t share these experiences may be considered “abnormal” or developmentally deficient in some way, when in fact the reasons for their differential pathways may be structural, not developmental (Côté & Bynner, 2008; Hendry & Kloep, 2010). Put another way, under the emerging adulthood framework, rather than entering adulthood at a more accelerated pace, as young people from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds are typically pressed to do, deliberately delaying transitions into adult roles and responsibilities might be beneficial (Côté & Bynner, 2008). However, little evidence suggests that delayed entry is beneficial. Indeed, a long transitional period may lead to greater challenges in achieving self-sufficiency. Moreover, in assuming that emerging

adulthood represents a distinct stage of development, one would expect that failing to engage in developmental tasks associated with this time period, such as taking time to explore future life course directions, would lead to worse functioning, manifested as greater or lesser wellbeing. Finally, opponents argue that the instability and prolonged exploration tied to emerging adulthood is actually characteristic of any interval of change, not only limited to this age span (Hendry & Kloep, 2007; 2010). In recent years, proponents have suggested that the emerging adulthood framework is a cultural, rather than developmental theory, manifested only in certain cultural conditions and contexts (Arnett, 2011).

Toward self-sufficiency for youth aging out of foster care: What's the problem?

The two perspectives discussed above both emphasize how the transitional years from adolescence to adulthood are unique and distinct from other periods over the life course. Whether this stage is universally developmental or a marker of changing structural and institutional conditions, recognition of this period as a time of change is particularly salient for youth aging out of foster care. Ready or not, policy contexts require that between ages 18 and 21, these youth navigate a path to living on their own. With few youth in foster care typically having family they can safely turn to after exiting the system, the risk of starting down a troubled trajectory to adulthood is dramatically higher for this population. Borrowing from both sociological and psychological perspectives of this period may lead to greater understanding of factors particularly relevant during this time, helping to inform best ways for supporting youth who age out of care into adulthood. For the purposes of this dissertation, the terms *transition to adulthood* and *emerging adulthood* will be used interchangeably, as useful labels for referring to this age period.

The remainder of this chapter reviews what is known about how youth fare during and after aging out of foster care, first focusing on transitions into adult roles commonly associated with movement toward self-sufficiency. This is followed by a review of evidence regarding some of the internal factors and processes also relevant during this time. Due to the transitory nature of this life period, acknowledged by both perspectives, studies of normative transitions to adulthood often focus on examining the nature of trajectories and processes that may eventually lead to adult self-sufficiency or perceiving oneself as an adult, as well as change or status of adult roles (e.g., living on one's own, type of employment). Outcomes of interest also include identifying factors likely to lead to greater stability in adulthood, such as connections to social institutions (e.g., institutions of higher education or the labor market) or the accumulation of personal resources (e.g., social support or readiness to take on challenges of adulthood). The section below begins with a discussion of unique contextual factors likely contributing to why pathways to adulthood among former foster youth diverge from those seen among young people in the general population.

Unique contexts of development affecting youth who age out of care

This section reviews a body of research implicating youth experiences prior to the adult transition that increase their risk of adverse outcomes. This prior history includes developmental experiences typically distinct from those of their non-foster care peers, which

are thought to contribute to some of the negative outcomes seen among former foster youth in adulthood. First and foremost, the family environments that generally lead children to placement in foster care are frequently dysfunctional and chaotic. Normative opportunities for growth and development may not have been available, and it is not uncommon for young people to struggle with the effects of emotional, mental, and physical trauma upon their entrance and duration in care. Second, the subsequent contexts in which foster children reside are often drastically different than those of their non-foster care peers, involving multiple caregivers who may be relatives or strangers, and institutional congregate care settings such as group homes. Though foster care may strive to replicate family environments in which young people can develop and flourish, adverse outcomes typically seen among the majority of former foster youth are thought to stem partly from these challenges to developmental opportunities. Third, as noted above, trends in the general population depict young people taking longer to move out from the parental home and complete the full transition to adult self-sufficiency. However, child welfare policy, historically dictating that youth still in care exit the system upon reaching legal adult age, has been slow to respond at the state level to contemporary norms of transitioning to adulthood. Consequently, youth who age out of foster care face compressed and inflexible timelines for negotiating the transition to adult self-sufficiency, undermining their opportunity to accumulate adequate resources for a stable and positive pathway to adulthood.

Impact of trauma

Children in foster care have been subjected to at least two types of trauma upon their entrance into care: the abuse and/or neglect that brought them into care, and separation from their family or caregiver(s). Their histories of childhood maltreatment and trauma are thought to place them at greater risk for psychopathology or other mental health issues, however, evidence regarding this relationship is mixed, especially when mediated by access to social support (Collishaw et al., 2007; DuMont, Widom, & Czaja, 2007; McGloin & Widom, 2001). Longitudinal research following the functioning and outcomes of adults who experienced childhood abuse and neglect found that while some developed mental health issues, others recovered from the experiences of their youth and displayed great resilience and wellbeing in adulthood (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007; McGloin & Widom, 2001). In addition to maltreatment, children placed in care are typically separated from their known family and primary caregivers. Despite abuse and neglect weakening the bond between parent and child, loss of access to relationships with primary figures can have detrimental effects on children (Oosterman, Schuengel, Slot, Bullens, & Doreleijers, 2007; Stovall & Dozier, 2000). Accordingly, the struggles of former foster youth may be partially explained by histories of childhood maltreatment and separation from their birth families. However, given that not all youth who age out of foster care struggle in adulthood (reviewed in further detail below), despite facing similar experiences of abuse or neglect and separation from family and parents, these histories do not seem to account for all experiences seen across former foster youth transitions into adulthood.

Challenges of growing up in foster care

In addition to having experienced abuse or neglect and removal from the care of their parents, residing in out-of-home care can bring its own set of risk factors. Research indicates that adults who grew up in foster care are more likely to live in poverty, experience homelessness, complete lower levels of education, become teen parents, and struggle with mental health issues (Buehler, Orme, Post, & Patterson, 2000; Cook, 1994; Courtney et al., 2007; Havlicek, 2011; Viner & Taylor, 2005). Children residing in foster care, especially in congregate care settings, are also more likely to struggle with emotional or behavioral difficulties than children who do not experience out-of-home care (Roy, Rutter, & Pickles, 2000). However, some research indicates that family history and individual characteristics may be more predictive of poor functioning than growing up in foster care itself (Berzin, 2008; Buehler et al., 2000). Though the overall impact of growing up in substitute care is unclear, unstable living arrangements involving multiple relocations and/or multiple caregivers, in addition to limited opportunities to develop and practice and independent living skills before moving out on one's own, are associated with worse outcomes later in life.

Residential mobility and instability are common for children and youth in care (Brown & Wilderson, 2010; Havlicek, 2011; Needell et al., 2002; Newton, Litrownik, & Landsverk, 2000). Residing in one long-term, stable placement in foster care is not the norm for many young people who enter care (Connell et al., 2006; Fowler, Toro, & Miles, 2009; Havlicek, 2011; James, Landsverk, & Slymen, 2004) and the inevitable sense of loss or trauma that must be resolved after every move is frequently overlooked (Samuels, 2008). Particularly for older youth in foster care, movement from placement to placement can occur more often than desired (Connell et al., 2006; Needell et al., 2002; Oosterman et al., 2007; Wulczyn, Kogan, & Harden, 2003). Multiple placements and placement in institutional, congregate care settings make it difficult to develop and nurture supportive social networks or meaningful relationships with supportive adults, critical resources associated with positive adjustment and stability (Perry, 2006; Samuels, 2008; Unrau, Seita, & Putney, 2008). Youth who enter or remain in care during later adolescence are also more likely to age out, rather than be adopted or reunite with their families (McMillen & Tucker, 1999; Needell et al., 2002; Wulczyn, 2009) (McMillen and Tucker, 1999; Needell et al., 2002; Wulczyn, 2009). Thus, more often than not, youth aging out of care potentially face the ambiguity and lack of structure inherent in the adult transition after already experiencing a childhood of instability and impermanency.

Secondly, because older youth are more likely to be placed in institutional or congregate care settings, their opportunities to practice independent living skills before moving out on their own may be severely limited (McMillen and Tucker, 1999; Needell et al., 2002). Study findings estimate a range of 21 to 60 percent of youth are placed in group care settings at any given time, and 15 to 42 percent of youth exit care from a congregate care setting (Havlicek, 2011). The restrictive and highly structured environments of such residential placements frequently preclude opportunities to exercise autonomy and practice real world skills necessary for living on one's own (Mech, Ludy-Dobson, & Hulseman, 1994; Mech and Fung, 1999; Rauktis, Fusco, Cahalane, Bennett, & Reinhart, 2011).

Compressed and inflexible timelines for transitioning out of care

Adding to backgrounds of difficult family contexts and growing up in out-of-home care, timelines within which youth who age out of care are expected to complete the adult transition also raise challenges. These timelines are considerably compressed and inflexible compared to the experiences of youth in the general population. Until recently, federal and, thus, state policies frequently required youth still in foster care to exit the system at age 18 (Dworsky & Havlicek, 2009). Federal legislation passed in 2008 (discussed in further detail later in the chapter) now allows states the option to extend foster care services to youth aging out of care past age 18, though the majority of states have yet to adopt relevant bills (Child Trends, 2013).

Also related to the systemic context of foster youth transitions to adulthood, preparation and planning for the transition out of care is rarely smooth – more often occurring abruptly and with little notice (Freundlich & Avery, 2006; Geenen & Powers, 2006; McCoy, McMillen, & Spitznagel, 2008; Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick, & Painter, 2007). Both youth and practitioners report that transition planning is frequently last minute, and youth are commonly left uninformed and minimally involved in the process. Evidence also suggests a need to support and increase awareness regarding the needs of this population among youth-serving practitioners, based on reports of youth being misinformed of their eligibility for services and resources, or of options available to them upon exiting care (Freundlich & Avery, 2006; Geenen & Powers, 2006; Scannapieco et al., 2007). Resulting from such interactions with child welfare professionals, some youth have reported exiting care even when given the option to stay, due to frustration with the child welfare system (McCoy et al., 2008).

Outcomes among former foster youth during the transition to adulthood

Now turning to the adjustment of former foster youth in adulthood, the remainder of the chapter reviews what is known about how youth who age out of care fare during the transition to adulthood. As noted earlier, investigations into this life period are generally devoted to processes (e.g., exploration into future life course directions) and identifying factors associated with later stability and positive wellbeing in adulthood (Settersten et al., 2005). Examples of such factors include remaining connected to social institutions, such as participating in postsecondary education or securing gainful employment, and maintaining stable housing. This section begins with a review of the most recent and comprehensive study of aged out foster youth, followed by a review of other relevant research through the lens of the more sociological, demographic perspective described earlier. Evidence regarding more intangible processes is reviewed next, reflecting the psychological, developmental perspective of emerging adulthood.

Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth

One of the most recent and comprehensive studies conducted with aged out foster youth, known as the Midwest Study, involves youth residing in three states: Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin (Courtney et al., 2005; Courtney, Terao, & Bost, 2004; Courtney, Dworsky, et al., 2010; Courtney & Dworsky, 2006; Courtney et al., 2007; Courtney, Hook, et al., 2010). This longitudinal study began following youth at their discharge from care in 2002-03 (N=732), followed up with them two years later (N=603), again when youth reached their early twenties

(N=591), and continued through their mid-twenties at six to seven years post-foster care exit (N=602). The researchers used mixed methods to collect data, analyzing secondary administrative data combined with data collected from semi-structured interviews involving questions taken from several normed scales (Medical Outcomes Study Social Support Survey; Composite International Diagnostic Interview; Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure; USDA measure of food insecurity; Conflict Tactics Scales; Child Parent Conflict Tactics Scale; and the Lifetime Experiences Questionnaire). The outcomes and progress of these youth are compared with a separate, nationally representative sample from another study known as the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). The Midwest Study provides descriptive information on the evolving situations of youth who age out of foster care as they work to establish adult independence, with the Midwest sample generally faring worse than the Add Health sample across multiple domains.

Overall, the Midwest youth left care with lower levels of completed education, and also discontinued school earlier than the average found among similar-aged Add Health youth (Courtney et al., 2005). Comparing 19-year-olds among the foster care and non-foster care samples, youth in the non-foster care sample were significantly more likely to have their high school diploma or GED, and more likely to be enrolled in a 4-year university. Among the 23 and 24 year olds, only 2.5 percent of the former foster youth had graduated from a 4-year college or university, compared to over 19 percent of similarly aged youth in the Add Health sample (Courtney, Dworsky, et al., 2010). Further, 37 percent of the Midwest Study sample had experienced homelessness or couch-surfed at least once since leaving care, with many of them experiencing more than one bout of homelessness and having homeless episodes lasting one month or more (Courtney, Dworsky, et al., 2010). By age 21, only half of youths in the former foster care sample were employed, compared to an approximate 64 percent employed youth in the non-foster care sample (Courtney et al., 2007). And though individuals in either group worked similar numbers of hours per week, by age 24, young adults in the non-foster care sample, on average, earned approximately $4.00/hour more than those in the former foster care group (Courtney, Dworsky, et al., 2010). Young women in the foster care sample were also significantly more likely to become pregnant than women in the Add Health sample, with one-third and one-half of women in the Midwest Study having been pregnant by ages 18 and 19, compared to 14 and 20 percent among similar aged women in the non-foster care sample (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010a).

Conversely, more than a few youth in the Midwest study manage the adult transition successfully, evident at their follow up at 23-24 years of age. Many youth throughout the study reported feeling close to at least one family member, most often a grandparent, and many scored high on a scale measuring levels of social support (Courtney et al., 2005; Courtney, Dworsky, et al., 2010). By age 24, of the 584 youth followed through all waves of the study, more than one-half were in stable situations and seemed to have successfully made key adult transitions (Courtney, Hook, et al., 2010). Participants at age 24 were categorized into four groups, identified from results of a latent class analysis. Two of the four groups had attained stable transitions, with the first group consisting of the largest distinct class in the sample (36%), referred to as *Accelerated Adults* (Courtney, Hook, et al., 2010). These young people had high rates of high school graduation, college attendance, employment, and children in their care (versus not having custody of their children), along with low rates of criminal convictions.

The second group, called *Emerging Adults*, described 21 percent of the sample and also had high rates of high school graduation, college attendance, employment and low rates of criminal convictions. The Emerging Adults differed from the first group, however, in that a majority were not living on their own and did not have children (Courtney, Hook, et al., 2010).

The two other groups identified from this analysis were called *Struggling Parents* and *Troubled and Troubling* (Courtney, Hook, et al., 2010). As the name implies, members of the *Struggling Parents* group were predominantly parents, with all but two percent having at least one living child. Almost all these parents also had children in their care. Differing from the *Accelerated Adults*, however, members of this group were least likely to have completed high school or attended college, and the least likely to be currently enrolled in school. This group was also the most likely to be receiving need-based government support, such as food stamps. While a majority of *Struggling Parents* were female, members of the *Troubled and Troubling* group were mostly male. The *Troubled and Troubling* group was also most likely to be currently incarcerated, otherwise institutionalized, or homeless (Courtney, Hook, et al., 2010). High rates of high school dropout and low rates of college attendance were also found in this group, along with low rates of current employment. Though almost half of this group indicated being a parent, none reported having children in their care. Individuals in the *Troubled and Troubling* group also reported the greatest number of challenges to wellbeing, including mental health and/or substance use problems, low levels of social support, high rates of victimization, and a rate of criminal convictions five times that of any other group (Courtney, Hook, et al., 2010).

Conducting more in-depth analyses, a few efforts have used the Midwest Study data to explore underlying reasons driving young people's differential adult pathways, with some findings reflecting similar patterns found in the general population. For example, employment and greater earnings were found to be associated with race, education, and mental health status. Tobit analyses (Naccarato, Brophy, & Courtney, 2010) and multilevel modeling (Hook & Courtney, 2011) revealed that being Black (Hook & Courtney, 2011; Naccarato et al., 2010) or having a mental health diagnosis (Naccarato et al., 2010) was associated with a higher likelihood of unemployment and decreased yearly earnings, while greater levels of education was associated with employment and higher earnings (Hook & Courtney, 2011; Naccarato et al., 2010). One study found an association between having a drug or alcohol diagnosis and being employed and having greater earnings (Naccarato et al., 2010), though the authors note that this finding is anomalous and contradicts existing research. Also contrary to expectations, receiving mentoring services or participating in a summer employment program was not linked to employment or increased earnings (Naccarato et al., 2010). More specific to youth placed in foster care, a separate study found that having supportive relationships with others was associated with a higher likelihood of being employed, and experiencing multiple placement moves while in foster care was linked to a decreased capacity for earnings (Hook & Courtney, 2011). Finally, an investigation into the likelihood of homelessness revealed that having been physically abused in childhood, a history of running away while in care, and engaging in delinquent behavior may increase the likelihood of homelessness later on, while feeling very close to at least one adult family member significantly decreased the odds (Dworsky & Courtney, 2009).

Summary

In sum, findings from the Midwest Study indicate that, on average, youth who aged out of foster care fared worse than youth involved in the Add Health study. Compared to the Add Health participants, youth aging out of care adjusted more poorly across a myriad of domains, including education, employment and earnings, housing, and avoiding teen parenthood. Additional research with participants of the Midwest Study highlights a few factors that may help to explain some of these poor outcomes. Those who were physically abused as a child were more likely to be homeless in adulthood, and those who were neglected were less likely to report feeling very close to a caregiver. Having supportive relationships and feeling close to a caregiver appears to be a positive factor, associated with lower odds of homelessness, and a higher likelihood of employment. Placement experiences are also significant, with youth who had a more stable foster care experience more likely to do well in the labor market once out of care. Finally, race/ethnicity and gender may be associated with certain outcome patterns, however, due to mixed findings, it is not clear what inferences may be made at this time.

Similarly, though the Add Health sample and youth in the Midwest Study have in common age and life period (transitioning to adulthood), the two groups significantly differ in several ways, limiting the Add Health study's utility in providing a true comparison group. Specifically, youth in the Add Health group were sampled from high schools all over the U.S., and included young people across varying socioeconomic status, regional location, and school type (public, private, parochial), among other factors (Harris et al., 2009). These characteristics alone distinguish youth in the general population from youth in foster care, who have high likelihoods of not completing high school and primarily being from families of lower socioeconomic status. Further, the varying geographic locations of youth in either study also limit true comparisons between the two samples. Despite these limitations, the Midwest Study is the most recent, systematic, large-scale effort to follow youth aging out of foster care into adulthood and offers insight into their needs and experiences. Other studies have also followed youth aging out of care into adulthood, discussed in the section below.

Other research on aged out foster youths' transitions to self-sufficiency

Numerous other descriptive studies of young adults aging out of foster care document similar experiences across multiple domains, including homelessness, low educational attainment, inadequate employment and income, teen and single parenthood, and lower overall wellbeing (Barth, 1990; Brandford & English, 2002; Brown & Wilderson, 2010; Buehler et al., 2000; Cook, 1994; Courtney et al., 2001; Daining & DePanfilis, 2007; English, Kouidou-Giles, & Plocke, 1994; Festinger, 1983; Iglehart & Becerra, 2002; Jones, 2011a; McMillen & Tucker, 1999; Reilly, 2003). These studies range from large-scale surveys to smaller qualitative studies involving in-depth and semi-structured interviews. They take place nationally (Buehler et al., 2000; Cook, 1994) and locally (CA, WA, WI, NY, NV, and TX), all yielding similar indicators of hardship in youths' efforts to establish independence. More positively, and supporting findings of the Midwest Study, the majority of youth across studies report having a strong connection with at least one supportive adult upon leaving care, and depending on locale, youth report feeling somewhat to mostly prepared for living on their own.

Comparable to the design of the Midwest Study, many of these studies also focus on a group of youth as they age out of care, and document their functioning in multiple domain areas associated with stability and positive wellbeing in adulthood. A majority of studies, however, involve cross-sectional views of aged out youth after their exit from care, and do not move beyond descriptions of young people's functioning and adjustment. Due to their wide net, with findings that mirror those of the Midwest Study, an in-depth look into each study is not taken here. However, studies that focused on specific domains of functioning and provide insight into factors that may be associated with differential functioning are reviewed in greater detail below.

Educational attainment

Not counting the studies of former foster youth discussed above, educational attainment is perhaps the most commonly studied factor of transitions to adulthood for youth aging out of care. Studies highlight similar findings to the Midwest and other comprehensive studies: that former foster care youth do significantly worse in academic achievement and educational attainment than their non-foster care counterparts. A study of 81 former foster youth attending college in Michigan found that, on average, they completed fewer credits and had significantly lower GPAs by the end of their first semester than their non-foster care peers. (Unrau, Font, & Rawls, 2012). However, the foster youth had more positive attitudes toward education, a stronger desire to finish college, greater interest in intellectual activities, and were more likely to access campus resources and services than the non-foster care youth (Unrau et al., 2012). In another study of students in Michigan, school retention and degree completion rates among young people who aged out of care were compared to those of first-generation college students of low-income backgrounds without foster care experience (Day, Dworsky, Fogarty, & Damashek, 2011). Analyzing college administrative data, students who identified themselves as "wards of the court" on their Federal Application for Student Aid were categorized as former foster youth, and students who reported that neither parent had attended college and also indicated a taxable parent income not exceeding 150% of the federal poverty level, were selected into the comparison group of first-generation college students. Controlling for race and gender, logistic regression results indicated that the odds of dropping out within the first year were close to two times higher for youth who had applied to college while in foster care, and more than two times higher for dropping out before degree completion (Day et al., 2011).

Exploring possible factors that may explain low rates of attainment and achievement in school suggests that there are both systemic and individual characteristics. In a study of 158 aging out youth in Illinois, youth living in less restrictive settings before exiting care, such as an apartment, were more likely than youth living in more restrictive settings to complete high school in a timely manner and continue onto postsecondary education (Mech & Fung, 1999). However, selection bias most likely played a role, due to apartment-like placements being reserved for youth already deemed better adjusted and more prepared for living independently. A separate study of 152 youth in Illinois found that having aspirations for higher education, living with relatives, participating in extracurricular activities, and avoiding drug abuse led to greater educational attainment (Shin, 2003). In a survey of 216 former foster youth

attending university in California, receiving information regarding financial aid, advisement about college, and completing college preparation classes were cited as most helpful for informing decisions to attend college (Merdinger, Hines, Lemon Osterling, & Wyatt, 2005). First attending community college may also be helpful, with 53 percent of participants taking this route before continuing on to university. A majority of youth also reported that having people they could turn to for financial or emotional support is also helpful. Sixty-four percent of participants did not think the foster care system prepared them very well for college (Merdinger et al., 2005).

Employment and earned income

Comparable depictions of vulnerability to unemployment and unstable earnings among former foster youth also emerge from studies focused on this area. Large-scale studies of administrative data from Wisconsin found that though youth who aged out of care had, on average, higher earned incomes than other youth with a history of foster care, their earnings fell below the poverty threshold and did not increase enough to lift them out of poverty, even at eight years post-discharge (Dworsky & Courtney, 2001; Dworsky, 2005). In addition, slightly more than 20 percent of youth in these studies remained consistently unemployed during their initial two-years post-discharge (Dworsky & Courtney, 2001; Dworsky, 2005). These findings are echoed in other studies of state administrative data, including in California, Illinois, Minnesota, North Carolina, and South Carolina (George et al., 2002; Macomber et al., 2008). Similar to Wisconsin's experience, there were proportions of youth (13 to 30 percent) across studies who did not secure employment for the entire study durations, which ranged from two (George et al., 2002) to six years (Macomber et al., 2008). Youth who aged out of care in these states were also more likely to be employed than comparison groups of other young people, including: non-foster care youth from families receiving TANF, youth in foster care who were reunified with their families, and non-foster care youth from a nationally representative sample. However, on average, aged out youth earned less than their counterparts (George et al., 2002; Macomber et al., 2008), with the only exception being aged out youth who started working during adolescence and continued to do so through adulthood. These youth were the most likely to be earning a living wage at age 24 (Macomber et al., 2008).

Housing

Closely tied to difficulties with economic security, homelessness among young adults with a foster care history is all too prevalent, and frequently cited in studies of former foster youth functioning in adulthood. One particular study sought to estimate the prevalence of homelessness, housing trajectories, and psychosocial outcomes among young adults aging out of care in the Detroit area (Fowler et al., 2009). Over two-fifths of the 265 youth in the study had enduring housing problems over the two-year study period, with homelessness rates exceeding the national 12.9 percent prevalence rate for experiencing at least one episode of homelessness among adults in the U.S. (Tompsett, Toro, Guzicki, Manrique, & Zatakia, 2006). Results also suggest that having multiple placements in foster care is associated with a greater likelihood of housing instability later in life (Fowler et al., 2009). Homelessness among this

population may be preventable, however, as suggested by findings from another study of 106 young adults with foster care backgrounds (Jones, 2011b). Housing stability was compared between two groups of former foster youth: one group that participated in a transitional housing program and another group that participated in services not including housing. All study participants were youth who had previously participated in a specialized residential placement during foster care, designed for youth without any known behavioral or severe mental health issues, and likely to age out of care. Members self-selected into one of the two groups compared: choosing whether to participate in the transitional housing program or live elsewhere. None of the participants from the housing program became homeless after discharge from the program, though participants of both groups did experience a degree of instability with housing, employment, and finances (Jones, 2011b).

Summary

Reiterating the theme consistently repeated across studies: youth who age out of care typically endure difficulty in their efforts to attain self-sufficiency. Though small numbers of youth who age out of care are making it to college, their dropout and graduation rates remain considerably higher than youth without foster care histories, including first-generation college students of low-income backgrounds (Day et al., 2011). In terms of employment and income stability, youth who age out of care commonly experience longer periods of unemployment and earn lower wages when compared to other groups of young people. One promising finding, however, suggests that youth who begin working during adolescence and consistently do so into adulthood have a higher likelihood of earning a living wage by their mid-twenties. Finally, comprehensive service programs that include a housing component may be one way to effectively decrease housing instability and homelessness in adulthood. Turning now to research from a more developmental perspective, the following section reviews what is known about some of the internal processes and change that may impact functioning in adulthood.

Personal resources of youth aging out of foster care

The research reviewed above mirrors the more sociological, demographic perspective of the transition to adulthood, which focuses on identifying factors more likely to lead to stability and wellbeing in adulthood, such as completing higher education and securing gainful employment. This section reviews research more relevant to the emerging adulthood perspective, related to internal processes and change. While many youth not in care have the option of prolonging this transitional period to devote attention to developing their sense of identity and exploring future life course directions, due to the compressed and inflexible timeline with which youth aging out of care must contend, it's not clear whether aging out foster youth share similar experiences of self-exploration and development. As found in the Midwest and other studies, some youth aging out of care do develop supportive social networks and transition out of care successfully, though the majority are challenged to do so. A theoretical discussion of these concepts is explored in greater detail in the following chapter, but first, this section reviews relevant research found in this area, beginning with identity development.

Identity development among youth in foster care

Little research is available on how youth aging out of foster care develop and acquire a sense of self-identity, with most existing research having occurred within the past ten years. Earlier literature is largely limited to conceptual pieces, and calls for further research (Yancey, 1992) and informed practice in this area (Herrick & Piccus, 2005). In addition, existing studies that have focused on identity have generally focused on elements associated with identity development, and rarely investigated a sense of identity itself. Given that a child's experience of family and childhood plays a large role in the development of self-concept, understanding identity development among young people in foster care seems especially relevant (McFadden, Rice, Ryan, & Warren, 1989; Ward, 2011). Evidence points to frequently lower levels of self-esteem among maltreated children, thought to emerge from the internalization of abusive or neglectful experiences (Benbenishty & Schiff, 2009; Taussig, 2002). Family dynamics before and after entering foster care, the degree of connectedness maintained with family members, and the experience of growing up in foster care can have a lasting impact on development and, ultimately, acquisition of identity (Herrick & Piccus, 2005; Moss, 2009; Rustin, 2006). Due to the scarcity of research focused on identity development specifically among youth who age out of care, the research reviewed here includes studies of identity among any children or youth with foster care experience.

Self-perception, sense of self – The handful of studies focused on examining identity development among young people in foster care reveal several prominent themes particular to this population. With the exception of one survey, studies on this topic largely follow a qualitative approach, involving in-depth, semi-structured interviews and allowing patterns and themes to emerge from the data (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Common themes across studies include a devalued sense of self or lowered self-esteem, deriving from children's reported shame of their family background and being in foster care. Children strive to protect themselves by keeping an emotional distance from others, including their peers and caregivers. Foster children also feel they do not belong anywhere or to anyone, and miss having a sense of family. They frequently develop a strong sense of self-reliance and great reluctance to ask for help or depend on others. Not surprisingly, experiences with foster care and the larger child welfare system are also influential to young people's descriptions of self.

One of the earliest studies to empirically examine the issue of identity surveyed 116 randomly selected adolescents in foster care, and focused on levels of self-esteem. The study found that those youth who reported greater acceptance or identification with their birth parents exhibited significantly higher levels of self-esteem than those who reported less (Salahu-Din & Bollman, 1994). A smaller study that interviewed 17 teens living in foster care uncovered themes of a "devalued self" and perceived diminished status of being a foster child, largely influenced by the institutional foster care setting in which they lived (Kools, 1997). Excessive restrictiveness and discontinuity of caregiving contributed to how youth thought about themselves, and many reported wondering if other people thought they "must be crazy" because they lived in a group home (Kools, 1997). Many perceived the status of foster children as abnormal, bad, or damaged, and experienced difficulty in understanding "who they were"

due to fragile or absent ties to their family and past, manifested in beliefs that they had few viable future opportunities (Kools, 1997).

Other research highlights patterns of separateness and feeling different from others. From the same study referenced above, participants reported avoiding closeness with others and keeping relationships superficial in order to keep their status as foster child private (Kools, 1997; 1999). In a study of 14 aged out young adults attending college, many spoke of trying hard to fit in and "seem normal" around their peers, while also feeling more mature than other students their age, due to having had to care for themselves and/or their younger siblings beginning at a young age (Hines, Merdinger, & Wyatt, 2005). A study of 27 Norwegian youth aging out of care revealed similar experiences, with many reporting that they felt different from others their age due to not sharing similar experiences of childhood or adolescence, and felt inferior or ashamed of their family backgrounds (Fransson & Storø, 2011).

Feelings of not belonging to anyone or anywhere are also common. A study conducted with 29 aging out youth revealed that many of the young people attempted to reconnect with their biological families after exiting care, in search of finding a family to which they "belong" (Samuels, 2009). Based on the experiences of these 29 young people, however, reconnecting with biological parents does not necessarily result in belongingness (Samuels, 2009). In another study, increased distrust and disappointment arose from not being accepted by biological parents after reconnecting with them upon leaving care (Goodkind, Schelbe, & Shook, 2011). The Norwegian young adult sample referenced previously reported feeling unsure of how to relate to a sense of family, and many felt more culturally connected to their foster, rather than biological, caregivers (Fransson & Storø, 2011). Feelings of loneliness after aging out of care, compounded by feelings of not belonging anywhere are also reported elsewhere (Mulkerns & Owen, 2008). Mostly, young people indicate that blood, legal, or financial ties are not what solidifies membership within a family for them, but rather, a relational presence by which they are unconditionally accepted, welcome and protected if needed, throughout their lifetime (Samuels, 2009).

A strong sense of self-reliance is another theme highlighted among aging out foster youth, sometimes to their detriment. A study involving 44 youth from the Midwest Study uncovered ongoing, competing tensions between independence and dependence among youth struggling to integrate experiences of both. Youth pointed to instances where they simultaneously experienced minimal control over their lives in foster care, together with feeling they had grown up "early or too fast" compared to their similar-aged counterparts without foster care histories (Samuels & Pryce, 2008). These feelings stemmed from an absence of consistent or stable parenting in childhood, thus resulting in youth learning to become one's own advocate, and relying on their own personal emotional strength to survive. Several youth reported trying to be an "ideal foster child," not requiring a lot of caretaking, and taking on the role of provider, rather than receiver, of support in relationships with biological parents. Reflecting their age, however, interviewees were still insecure in their capability of being an adult. Conversely, having survived outside the context of parental support and resources also served as an important source of pride and self-esteem for these young people (Samuels & Pryce, 2008).

Countering the push for relationships with supportive adults, depending on others or expressing personal vulnerability is sometimes seen as risks to independence and success

(Samuels & Pryce, 2008). This is reflected in rejections of emotional support, and preferring to cope with emotional and psychological pain alone and in private. However, accessing support to meet concrete or tangible needs, such as access to jobs or housing, is seen as appropriate and necessary (Samuels & Pryce, 2008). Asking for help from others is also seen as burdensome, shameful, or portraying to others that they are incompetent and unable to accomplish things on their own (Mulkerns & Owen, 2008). As a result, young people who feel they are not on track in their transition to self-sufficiency frequently blame themselves for their lack of progress, suggesting that strong self-reliance may serve as both a strength and barrier to success (Samuels & Pryce, 2008).

Parenthood and identity – Similar themes of identity arose among youth who became parents while in care, though they also experienced changes in self-concept distinct from that of non-parenting youth. In a study of 63 British young parents in foster care, participants shared that becoming a parent helped alleviate feelings of loneliness, rejection, and abandonment (Chase, Maxwell, Knight, & Aggleton, 2006). Most participants perceived parenthood as a positive experience that increased their maturity and provided focus in their lives, while a few admitted that, in hindsight, they would have delayed becoming a parent (Chase et al., 2006). A subset of young mothers from the Midwest Study indicated developing a sense of purpose and belonging from their new emotional bond with their child, unlike anything they had experienced in relationships with their own parents or foster families. They saw themselves as valued, loved, and depended on in their new role as mother, also a new experience for many (Pryce & Samuels, 2010). Biological mothers frequently serve as role models for these young mothers, for what not to do in caring for their children, making a point to "do things the right way" so as not to repeat the same mistakes of their parents (Pryce & Samuels, 2010; Rolfe, 2008). Indeed, these mothers reported feeling pressure to "prove themselves" as good mothers, due to their childhood history (Haight, Finet, Bamba, & Helton, 2009; Rolfe, 2008).

Agency development in the foster care context

In addition to a sense of identity, developing a level of agency may also be useful for positive transitions to adulthood. Agency, as defined here, refers to exercising self-direction, taking responsibility for one's decisions and actions, and having the confidence to overcome obstacles (Côté & Schwartz, 2002; Schwartz et al., 2005). Though few studies on youth aging out of foster care have specifically examined the development of agency, young people aging out of care commonly express frustration with not having opportunities to make their own decisions or being allowed input into planning for their future (Freundlich & Avery, 2006; Gaskell, 2010; Geenen & Powers, 2007; Samuels, 2008). Youth also report feeling a loss of control, becoming disillusioned, and developing increased distrust in people when they are moved numerous times, or without warning or consultation (Gaskell, 2010). Growing up in contexts that make achieving typical developmental tasks difficult can influence subsequent capacity for navigating the transition out of care.

One study seeking to learn why youth having the option to stay and receive foster care services past age 18 were consistently not doing so, found that the two most commonly cited reasons for leaving care related to: misunderstanding options for staying in the system, and

desiring greater autonomy and independence (Goodkind et al., 2011). Several participants discussed wanting more control over their lives, tired of living by someone else's rules within the rigid structure of system care (Goodkind et al., 2011). Participants also felt dismissed or unheard by adults while in foster care. However, this was often paired with an acknowledgement of needing others' help to make it on their own (Goodkind et al., 2011).

Though the nature of institutional care is more likely to be restrictive than traditional family settings, thoughtfully planned residential environments may provide opportunities for exercising autonomy for youth in foster care. Foster care placements range widely, from foster family homes, to group homes with more restrictive rules and guidelines, to supervised independent living environments designed to prepare older youth for living on their own. From a young person's perspective, restrictiveness is best understood as "the rules" of living in a foster care setting and the degree to which rules attempt to control, punish or force youth to comply, which, from a programmatic standpoint are seen as necessary to provide for the safety, developmental, and therapeutic needs of a young person (Rauktis et al., 2009; Rauktis, Fusco, Cahalane, Bennett, & Reinhart, 2011). In this regard, rules are viewed as oppressive, rather than supportive, when they seem arbitrary, developmentally inappropriate, invasive, frequently changing, inconsistently enforced, and imparted by adults who do not seem caring or supportive (Rauktis et al., 2011).

In regards to the effects of placement restrictiveness on autonomy development, restrictiveness of the living environment before leaving foster care may significantly contribute to adjustment after exiting the system. A study of 534 adolescents in foster care in Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio found that youth living in more independence promoting settings, such as apartments, scored significantly better on a survey of life skills, than youth living in foster family or group home/institutional settings (Mech, Ludy-Dobson, & Hulseman, 1994). In a separate study of 168 youth in Illinois, those living in less restrictive placements during their teen years were significantly more likely than youth in more restrictive settings to do better in school and continue on to complete additional education past high school (Mech & Fung, 1999). However, as noted earlier, bias in the selection of youth given the opportunity to reside in less restrictive settings most likely helps to explain the better functioning of youth in these studies.

Pushing for permanency: Social support and relatedness

Social support and networks – Finally, access to and availability of social support is perhaps one of the most common personal resources studied among youth aging out of foster care (Barth, 1990; Charles & Nelson, 2000; Cook, 1994; Courtney & Dworsky, 2006). Despite absence of a traditional family unit, there are many opportunities to foster supportive relationships for youth in foster care, including with foster families, extended relatives, social workers and other helping professionals, mentors, peers and when appropriate, birth parents (Antle, Johnson, Barbee, & Sullivan, 2009). It is generally presumed that more social support will lead to better outcomes in multiple domains, including education (Harker, Dobel-Ober, Akhurst, Berridge, & Sinclair, 2004; Hass & Graydon, 2009) and wellbeing (Bender & Losel, 1997; Perry, 2006). Qualitative studies with youth aged out of foster care also confirm the great importance young adults place on their relationships with others, as they seek to establish themselves in adulthood (Greeson & Bowen, 2008; Jones, 2011a; Luster, Qin, Bates, Rana, &

Lee, 2010; Perez & Romo, 2010; Samuels, 2008; Smith, 2011). This may be especially true for young people with cultural backgrounds where concepts of family are of central importance (Perez & Romo, 2010).

Empirical evidence suggests a myriad of benefits from having a social support network during adolescence and early adulthood. A study of 163 foster youth age 17 years and older found an association between positive youth adjustment and having support from an important non-parental adult (Farruggia, Greenberger, Chen, & Heckhausen, 2006). In Brazil, comparing the effects of social networks for 155 youth in out-of-home care to 142 low-income young people living with their parents, greater life satisfaction was predicted by fewer experiences of stressful life events and family conflict, and higher scores of social support (Siqueira, Spath, Dell'Aglio, & Koller, 2011). Another study of 48 young mothers residing in foster care found that satisfaction with, not size of, support network was significantly associated with lower parenting stress (Budd, Holdsworth, & HoganBruen, 2006). A study of 66 youth in Israel transitioning out of foster care to independent living found that though tangible support (financial or behavioral assistance) was not significantly related, emotional and social forms of support were significantly associated with readiness for living independently (Benbenishty & Schiff, 2009). Research with a sub-sample of participants from the Midwest Study also suggests positive, but limited effects of social support (Salazar, Keller, & Courtney, 2011). Specifically, social support may act as a moderator in becoming depressed, with experiences of maltreatment significantly related to increased symptoms of depression, and greater social support minimizing experiences of depressive episodes. However, social support is less effective in protecting against depression for persons with severe maltreatment histories (Salazar et al., 2011).

The composition and structure of a support network can also have an impact. A qualitative study of Latino youth aging out of foster care in Texas (N=25) found that upon exiting the system, youth put much effort into trying to locate and reunite with members of their biological and extended families (Perez & Romo, 2010). For those who were able to reconnect with family, however, family members were often unable to provide support in the ways youth needed, such as with housing or financial assistance. Some young people located family only to find they were deceased or dysfunctional. A majority ultimately relied on peers for places to stay until they could find a place of their own (Perez & Romo, 2010). Another qualitative study of 29 young adults also found that youth commonly exit care with a foundation of social support involving a mix of family members, peers, and other supportive adults (Samuels, 2008). Asked to map their social networks and identify relationships according to how close they felt to each person, youth also included systems and organizations as sources of support, such as family systems, service systems, and religious organizations and churches. Both peers and adults were commonly present in social support networks, while emotional support was the most frequently cited type of support missing from young people's maps (Samuels, 2008).

Contrary to the widely accepted notion that having a close and caring relationship with any one adult serves as a protective factor for vulnerable youth, in a study of 154 teens in foster care, results indicated that multiple strong support networks are needed to have a preventative effect on psychological distress (Perry, 2006). Specifically, adolescents with multiple types of strong relationships, including biological family members, foster family members, and peers, fared better than those reporting none or only one type of strong

relationship. Though further research is needed to understand why this is, individuals may benefit differently from the types and amount of support provided by peers, caregivers, and biological family members (Perry, 2006). In addition, adolescents living in group homes were more likely to report experiences of ongoing and increasing levels of network disruption, associated with greater rates of depression and anxiety (Perry, 2006).

Mentorship – Increasingly, research on the effects of social support has been focused on the benefits of having a mentor (Greeson, Usher, & Grinstein-Weiss, 2010; Spencer, Collins, Ward, & Smashnaya, 2010). Most often, findings suggest that mentoring relationships lead to more positive wellbeing or asset accumulation (Greeson et al., 2010), if the relationship is enduring, consistent, and emotionally close (Ahrens et al., 2011). A longitudinal study tracking the effects of mentorship confirms the benefits of having a relationship with an adult mentor, especially as young people are preparing to leave care to live on their own (Munson & McMillen, 2006; Munson & McMillen, 2009; Munson, Smalling, Spencer, Scott, & Tracy, 2010). At first follow up (age 19 for majority of participants), those who had a mentor were significantly more likely than those without a mentor, to indicate fewer depressive symptoms, lower levels of stress, and higher life satisfaction (Munson & McMillen, 2009). Youth involved in long-term mentoring relationships (> 1 year) were also less likely than those without mentors to experience these negative psychosocial outcomes or to have been arrested (Munson & McMillen, 2009). Self-reports from participants on the benefits of mentorship highlight that mentors provide help and support in many ways, including offering advice, emotional support, and "keeping them on track" through providing meaningful, honest input (Munson et al., 2010).

Conversely, other studies have produced mixed findings on the benefits of mentorship. In a study with 96 youth who aged out of care at age 18, mentors provided a variety of support types, including concrete (e.g., a place to stay) and emotional (e.g., encouragement) (Collins, Spencer, & Ward, 2010). And while having a mentor was significantly associated with completing high school or a GED and not experiencing homelessness, it was also related to more frequent episodes of feeling sad or hopeless, though the connection between the two is not clear (Collins et al., 2010). Analyzing data from Waves 1 and 3 of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) (n=310), another study found that youth formerly in foster care are less likely to be mentored and generally fare worse on measured outcomes when compared to youth without foster care experience (Ahrens, DuBois, Richardson, Fan, & Lozano, 2008). Former foster youth in the Add Health study are not limited only to youth who aged out of care, but any young adult who reported having been in foster care as a child (i.e., "Did you ever live in a foster home?"). Mentored youth (with and without histories of foster care) had significantly better outcomes than those without mentors, including in health, education, and self-esteem (Ahrens et al., 2008).

Summary

Research suggests that some youth in foster care develop personal resources that may aid in facilitating smoother transitions out of care. Youth in care may struggle with low self-esteem and self-worth, but many also develop a strong sense of self-reliance and maturity from having taken on greater responsibilities earlier than their non-foster care counterparts. Many

youth with foster care experience also feel they don't belong anywhere and tend to distance themselves emotionally from others, while also valuing supportive relationships with peers and adults. Indeed, young people commonly leave care with a supportive social network in place, or quickly establish one after exiting the system. Further, social networks not only include peers and family members, but other supportive adults, as well as community organizations and institutions. Other findings highlight that youth in foster care want to succeed at what they do, and make efforts to learn from their mistakes as well as from the mistakes of their parents. Finally, opportunities to exercise autonomy while in foster care appear to be infrequent. Though limited in number, these existing studies suggest that further examinations of adult identity and personal agency may reveal slightly different patterns than what is found among young adults in the general population, with former foster youth perhaps more likely to identify as an adult at younger ages, but less likely to indicate higher levels of agency due to their histories of growing up in state systems of care. Before delving into the current study's investigation into these constructs among youth aged out of care, the next section reviews legislative and programmatic efforts that have been made to support older youth residing in and aging out of care.

Systemic efforts to support youth aging out of foster care

The research reviewed thus far paints a picture of how young people who age out of foster care make their way out of the system to living on their own. Growing up in the context of the foster care system brings its own challenges. Placement in foster care often means experiencing loss and separation from caregivers and other loved ones (Havlicek, 2011). As noted earlier, once in foster care, many young people experience great mobility and instability, rather than safe, stable environments for growth and development. This is especially true for older youth in care. Young people may reside in settings where they have limited opportunities to develop stable attachments with supportive adults, gain real world experiences, or responsibly exercise the autonomy needed to successfully live on one's own (Havlicek, 2011). Some of the challenges these youth have are similar to those facing disadvantaged youth not involved with the system, such as limited resources and family support. Former foster youth, however, have one advantage in that policies and institutions are in place designed especially to support foster care youth. Increasing attention has been devoted to the needs of youth who age out of care, highlighted by recent changes in legislation. This section reviews the history of policy and program development aimed at older youth in foster care. The efficacy of these policies and programs will also be discussed, though little is currently known of what works and further research is clearly needed.

Legislation supporting older youth in foster care

Though formal legislation aimed at promoting the wellbeing of children and families may be traced back to the original Social Security Act of 1935 (Magyar, 2006), legislative efforts specifically targeting the needs of older children in care were first realized with the Independent Living Initiative (ILI) of the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (Allen & Nixon, 2000; Magyar, 2006). ILI financially enabled states to provide a range of

services for assisting older children in foster care at least age 16 but not older than 21, to prepare for living independently (Courtney, 2009). The initiative continued, approved on an annual basis, until authorized indefinitely in 1993 (Allen & Nixon, 2000). Though ILI, also referred to as the Independent Living Program (ILP), allowed for the provision of a range of programs and services, ILP funds could not be used for room and board. This changed in 1999, with the passage of the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA), which created the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. The FCIA amended Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to provide states more funding and greater flexibility in providing ILPs, including the ability to spend up to 30 percent of their funds on room and board for young adults aged 18 to 21 eligible for receiving IV-E funds (Courtney, 2009). States also now had the option to expand Medicaid coverage to include youth who had aged out of foster care, up to age 21 (Magyar, 2006). Legislation was revised again in 2001, to include funding for educational and training vouchers (ETVs) for former foster youth between ages 18 and 21.

Little is known of the effectiveness of these policies, or of the programs developed as a result, in meeting the needs of older youth in and leaving foster care. The research reviewed in the previous sections suggests they may have not been as effective as hoped. Federal statutes require very little reporting, mostly limited to state documentation of their state ILP plans (Courtney, 2009). Indeed, state annual program reports have been the primary source of information indicating policy and program effectiveness, which varies widely by state and generally includes little information on actual program outcomes (GAO, 1999). Thus, it is not clear whether the outcomes seen among youth who age out of foster care are due to ineffective programs and services, lack of necessary resources, lack of service provision, or individual risk factors, such as histories of trauma or dysfunctional family contexts. Two reports conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) indicate that, in 1999, service provision was not consistently monitored or evaluated (GAO, 1999), and continued to be so five years later (GAO, 2004).

Extending foster care past age 18

Building on these earlier legislative developments, an important piece of legislation was realized with the 2008 Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, passed at the federal level and creating new funding opportunities for policies and programs implemented at the state level (Geen, 2009). The legislation amends Title IV-E of the Social Security Act yet again, and enables states to extend the duration for which they can provide foster care to youth by allowing states, beginning in federal fiscal year 2011, to claim federal reimbursement for costs of providing care to IV-E eligible young people until age 21 (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010a). Other key areas that the policy addresses include: increased support for relatives caring for foster children, more attention to ensuring positive educational and health care outcomes for foster children, greater support and incentives for adoption, and direct access to federal funds for Native American tribes (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010a).

Because this legislation is fairly new and only 16 states have moved to adopt plans for providing foster care services to youth past age 18 (Child Trends, 2013), little research is available on the impact of extending care services to older aged youth (Goodkind et al., 2011; Kerman, Wildfire, & Barth, 2002; McCoy et al., 2008). California passed state legislation in

September 2010, known as the California Fostering Connections to Success Act (AB 12), which extends the option to remain in foster care for young people age 18 to 21 (Lemley et al., 2010). Research that does exist indicates that young people who stay in care longer ultimately experience better transitions out of care, and young people who leave care at age 18 fare considerably worse than those who are adopted or remain in care past age 18 (Kerman et al., 2002). This is supported by findings highlighted elsewhere where youth who left care at an older age managed better than those who left earlier (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007). However, findings from both these studies are likely impacted by selection bias, due to youth self-selecting to remain in or leave care.

Data from the Midwest Study also provide insight into potential effects of extending the option of foster care to youth past age 18. One of the states in the study, Illinois, has allowed for some time for young people to stay in foster care through their 21st birthday, while Iowa and Wisconsin are more typical of other states and discharge youth from care on their 18th birthday (Courtney et al., 2005). Youth in Illinois are not mandated to stay in care past age 18, thus, youth who do remain in care voluntarily do so. Comparing outcomes of youth who stayed in care past age 18 to those who did not suggests that staying in care longer may have a protective effect for young people (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010b, 2010a). Specifically, until age 18, when all young women in the study were in foster care, there are no significant differences in pregnancy rates across the three states (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010a). Between ages 18 and 19, however, women who stayed in care past age 18 were significantly less likely to become pregnant and to have multiple pregnancies, compared to women forced to leave care at age18 (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010a). Similar effects are seen with educational attainment. Young people in the study from Illinois attain significantly more years of education than those from Iowa or Wisconsin, though this does not translate into higher rates of college graduation or degree attainment among Illinois youth (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010b).

Independent living skills training and services

Though legislation began directing funds in 1986 toward providing independent living skills training and services to older youth in foster care, the extent to which foster care youth are adequately prepared for attaining self-sufficiency and independence, is still not well understood (Avery, 2009). While federal legislation requires the provision of ILP services, it does not prescribe program development or specify particular services (Berzin & Taylor, 2009). This has led to a wide variety in type, scope, and structure of programs offered across jurisdictions, making it difficult to conduct evaluations that are generalizable beyond a locality. The potential for long-term savings, however, from having more youth achieve self-sufficiency and fewer youth imprisoned or dependent on welfare in adulthood, increases the need for an established knowledge base (Packard, Delgado, Fellmeth, & McCready, 2008).

Inconsistent provision of ILP services

Precluding the ability to assess their efficacy, research indicates that ILP services are inconsistently provided, including before or after youth exit the foster care system (Barth, 1990; Cook, 1994; Courtney et al., 2005; Shin, 2009). Data from the Midwest Study indicate that study

participants received an average of 14 out of 47 possible types of independent living services prior to age 18, when youth in two of the three states studied age out of the system (Courtney, Lee, & Perez, 2011). Even fewer services are reported at later ages. These results are not a reflection of lack of interest on the part of young people, as many participants reported wanting more help than they received, and felt unprepared to make the transition out of care to living on their own. This is not to say that these youth were not offered or made aware of more available services, only that many youth did not receive all possible services aimed at providing independent living skills (Courtney, Lee, & Perez, 2011). Other interviews and focus groups held with youth aged out of care also reveal inadequate or inconsistent receipt of services (Collins & Ward, 2011; Mares, 2010; Petr, 2008).

Lack of rigorous evidence regarding efficacy of ILPs

Undermining a call for more consistent ILP service provision is a lack of reliable evidence supporting the basic premise of independent living programs: that providing independent living skills training to youth will lead to smoother and more stable transitions to self-sufficiency for those who participate (Montgomery et al., 2006). Some earlier research suggests that more comprehensive training and services lead to better outcomes, however methodological limitations prevent definitive conclusions (Clark & Crosland, 2009; Cook, 1994). A systematic review found no research, at the time, involving randomized or quasi-randomized controlled studies, considered to be the most rigorous for assessing program effectiveness, and thus, prevented the ability to make reliable inferences regarding ILP efficacy (Donkoh, Underhill, & Montgomery, 2006; Montgomery et al., 2006). Of the located research, eight of the studies at least compared groups of youth who received ILP services to one or more other groups of youth who received: usual care, no intervention, or another intervention (Montgomery et al., 2006). Almost every study had challenges to their internal validity, however, due to significant differences found between comparison groups. Samples were also small (N=53) or so unique that generalizing to the general population of care leavers is difficult. Further, much of the outcome data are biased due to measurement by self-report or case records, and it is unclear what programs consisted of or how they were implemented. Some evidence did suggest that ILPs may improve educational, employment, and housing outcomes for young people aging out of the system. However, due to the limitations listed above, it remains unclear which elements of ILPs may be most effective, which youth may benefit most from ILPs, and/or by which mechanisms ILPs may actually influence outcomes (Montgomery et al., 2006).

In addition to having more rigorous evaluations of ILP programs and services to begin moving toward an empirical knowledge base, greater attention to the design and implementation of programs and services is also needed (Naccarato & DeLorenzo, 2008). A separate systematic review found that young people’s needs and skills are not always matched well with training and services provided, and outcomes for ILPs vary widely in terms of how they are measured and assessed. In a recent study of one community-based employment and job placement program for foster youth, findings revealed that participants were frequently placed in jobs that did not reflect their stated preferences (Dworsky & Havlicek, 2010). Clear identification of the intervention at hand, and more standardized methods of measuring outcomes can help promote programs and evaluation findings that are more replicable and

generalizable across geographic jurisdictions (Naccarato & DeLorenzo, 2008). Since recognition of the scarcity of research in this area, promising efforts in this direction have emerged (Hadley, Mbwana, & Hair, 2010), especially of programs supporting young people aspiring to, or attending, post-secondary education (Dworsky & Perez, 2009).

Emerging evidence from recent ILP evaluations

A handful of more recent randomized, controlled studies provide preliminary evidence of what may be useful in an ILP program. An evaluation of L.A. County's Life Skills Training (LST) program, comprised of a five-week curriculum encompassing seven competency skill areas designated for this population, suggests that classroom-based skills training may do little in helping youth to acquire targeted life skills (Courtney, Zinn, et al., 2008). The evaluation consisted of an experimental study design, with random assignment of eligible youth to either the LST program or receiving usual ILP support services. Another evaluation, a randomized control study of a separate ILP program in L.A. County, of the Early Start to Emancipation Preparation (ESTEP) tutoring program involving 65 hours of in-home tutoring and mentoring activities, resulted in findings challenging the nature of services provided (Courtney, Zinn, et al., 2008). Youth involved in ESTEP did not do any better than the control group in educational outcomes, and few tutoring relationships developed into long-term mentoring relationships. Authors note, however, that establishing a control group of youth who did not receive or have any access to some kind of tutoring program was difficult; ESTEP's effects may have been limited due to treatment diffusion (Courtney, Zinn, et al., 2008).

Two other randomized, controlled evaluations suggest that an intensive, individualized, relationship-based approach may be effective (Courtney, Zinn, Johnson, & Malm, 2011), while a less intensive, more hands-off approach may not (Courtney, Zinn, Koralek, & Bess, 2011). Evaluation of the Massachusetts Adolescent Outreach Program for Youths in Intensive Foster Care (Outreach), a voluntary service that assists teens in foster care to prepare for living independently and achieve permanency after exiting care, is the only evaluation of the four presented here that uncovered any statistically significant program impacts (Courtney, Zinn, et al., 2011). The Outreach program relies heavily on a relationship model, focused on building trusting connections between young people and their Outreach workers. The two-year evaluation, which compared youth in the Outreach program to youth who received intensive foster care services as usual, found that Outreach youth were more likely than youth in the control group to enroll in college and continue attending for more than one year. Youth in the Outreach group were also more likely to remain in foster care, which was strongly correlated with attending college. Analysis of administrative data revealed significant differences between study participants (including both treatment and control groups) and the general foster youth population, however, limiting the generalizability of study findings (Courtney, Zinn, et al., 2011).

In contrast, the second randomized trial evaluated the Independent Living-Employment Services Program (IL-ES) in Kern County, California, based on an encouragement model and a much more hands-off approach to assisting youth gain employment (Courtney et al., 2011). IL-ES involves sending an introductory letter and then weekly newsletters to participants in the program, as well as one-on-one counseling in job search and preparation skills. There were no significant impacts in employment or other key outcome areas, though limiting participants'

exposure to other employment services in the community was difficult, and IL-ES was inconsistently implemented, which may have contributed to the lack of findings (Courtney et al., 2011).

Summary

In sum, ILP policy and services have been dominated by inconsistent service provision, inadequate matching of services to needs, treatment infidelity, inconsistent measurement of outcomes, and less than rigorous evaluations. Better identification of young people's needs, further program development, and more rigorous evaluation research are clearly needed to move towards building an empirical knowledge base in this area. With current initiatives involving development of a national database of ILP services, the National Youth in Transitions Database (NYTD), efforts in this direction are promising. States are required to provide data for NYTD on youth outcomes in six areas: financial self-sufficiency, housing, educational attainment, connections with adults, high-risk behaviors, and access to health insurance (Administration for Children & Families, 2012b). Data will also be collected on independent living service and supports provided to youth in broad categories, including: educational support, employment training and support, budget and financial management, housing support, health education, relational and family planning support, and mentoring. Documenting outcomes and the types of services and supports provided to youth aging out of care may help to move toward more consistent service provision, and perhaps, better matching of needs and services. However, it is not clear whether detailed enough information regarding specific models of service will be captured by NYTD, continuing to preclude the ability to identify effective interventions leading to desired outcomes. While effective interventions promoting greater enrollment in post-secondary education and training, and securing gainful employment remains to be identified, existing findings suggest that encouraging youth to remain in foster care past age 18 and creating opportunities for relationship-building with supportive adults are important areas of focus (Courtney, Zinn, et al., 2011).

Study questions

The research reviewed in this chapter depicts how young people who age out of care, often ill-prepared and with limited resources, fare during the transition to adulthood. Prior experiences in care have some influence. For example, a history of running away in foster care predicts a greater risk for adult homelessness. Those who were physically abused in childhood may be more likely to be homeless, while those who were neglected may be more likely to have difficulty forming meaningful, supportive relationships with other adults. Not feeling close to other adults may also be a sign of multiple difficulties, as these young people are more likely to experience homelessness, develop an alcohol use disorder, and earn lower wages or be unemployed. Conversely, having more education clearly leads to better prospects for employment and earnings. Contrary to expectations, receiving mentoring services or participating in a short-term employment program, as they are currently offered, does not appear to make a difference in earnings or more stable employment. However, ILP evaluations

suggest that relationships with supportive others may make a difference in increasing educational attainment among youth in care.

Aside from mixed findings regarding relationships with supportive adults, however, theoretical explanations for how some young people manage to successfully transition toward self-sufficiency, despite facing challenges similar to all aging out youth, remain relatively absent. This study moves beyond previous research by exploring the utility of a theoretical framework, specifically elements of adult identity and agency in helping to explain differential pathways to adulthood seen among this population. Largely guided by Côté's (1997; 2002) identity capital model, three of the four study questions explore whether themes of agency and sense of adult identity hold true for aging-out youth.

The first study question, however, focuses on understanding the housing experiences of youth who age out of foster care. Aligned with the larger body of literature rooted in the sociological, demographic perspective of research on normative transitions to adulthood, this question sought to answer how youth who likely have access to only a limited or absent parental housing safety net, navigate housing once exiting the system. The question also builds on research suggesting that experiences of multiple placements while in foster care negatively impacts individual functioning, and recognizes the difficulty of meeting other needs when housing is not stable or available (Collins & Curtis, 2011). This question is answered first to provide some context regarding the availability of concrete supports, which may relate to the development of the more intangible resources of identity and agency described above. Though there have been multiple investigations into the housing status of former foster youth in adulthood, most studies have been cross-sectional, and primarily focused on documenting experiences of homelessness rather than general examinations of housing status.

Following are the four specific research questions that guided the current study:

Q1: What do early adulthood housing trajectories look like for youth who age out of care?

Q2: How well does Côté's identity capital model fit the study sample's data? Are Côté's scales for agency and adult identity reliable and valid measures for use with a sample of youth who have aged out of care?

Q3: Are personal agency and adult identity related to a likelihood of seeking support?

Q4: Are personal agency and adult identity related to transitions into adult roles among youth who age out of care in California?

CHAPTER 2 – TOWARDS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR APPROACHING ADULTHOOD

Building on findings that personal capital along with family resources are central in assisting or hindering the transition to adulthood (Shulman, Kalnitzki, & Shahar, 2009), this study was primarily guided by the theoretical framework of identity capital (Côté, 1997; 2002). The identity capital model helps to explain how adult identity and personal agency shape the experience of transitioning to adulthood. Due to the identity capital framework never having been used in previous studies of aging out foster youth, this study is exploratory and sought to examine whether the framework may or may not be relevant for youth transitioning to adulthood out of foster care. This chapter begins with a presentation of influential factors generally associated with diverse trajectories into adulthood, before providing an overview of the identity capital model.

Explanations for young people's difficulty after aging out of foster care

Though most research on youth aging out of foster care is atheoretical, scholars have identified factors that appear to consistently contribute to outcomes for all children and youth in care. These factors include placement mobility and instability, and achieving a sense of permanency. Permanency is defined as creating a stable, long-term experience of family for young people placed in out-of-home care (Administration for Children & Families, 2012a). As noted earlier, an abundance of research highlights that it is not uncommon for children and youth to experience great instability while in foster care, including with physical living arrangements, caregivers, educational settings, and keeping track of personal possessions and belongings (Havlicek, 2011; Newton et al., 2000; Ward, 2011). Adolescents are much more likely than younger children to experience instability in care (Stott, 2011), and the longer they stay in care, the more likely a young person is to experience greater instability. Young people who experience great mobility and instability in care tend to have worse outcomes than those with more stable placement experiences (Havlicek, 2011; Newton et al., 2000; Stott, 2011). Disruptions in relationships with caregivers and peers, interruptions to academic progress, and lacking a sense of security and stability due to residential turnover are thought to explain why placement mobility frequently leads to worse outcomes (Stott, 2011).

Conversely, achieving a sense of permanency, for example, by having a network of supportive adults to rely on for emotional and other forms of support, is thought to be critical for success when transitioning out of foster care (Charles & Nelson, 2000; Greeson et al., 2010; Munson & McMillen, 2006; Munson & McMillen, 2009; Perry, 2006). As noted in the previous chapter, having a social support network is associated with readiness to live independently, better adjustment once out of care, and greater life satisfaction. Social networks of youth aging out of care may also be comprised of various relationships, including biological and foster family members, other supportive adults, intimate partners, and peers. However, young people's previous experiences can make it difficult to develop secure attachments with other adults, and experiences of instability and discontinuity during care can also make it difficult to develop agentic characteristics or a stable sense of identity (Ward, 2011).

Resiliency theory is sometimes used to understand the experiences of these young people (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007; Hass & Graydon, 2009; Jones, 2011a; Samuels & Pryce,

2008; Schofield & Beek, 2005; Stein, 2008). Resiliency, broadly defined, refers to achieving competence, or successful adaptation and development, despite having endured challenging, threatening, or traumatic circumstances (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Masten et al., 1990). Several factors may contribute to the development of resiliency, including stable foster care placements, being placed in kinship rather than non-relative foster care (Metzger, 2008), achieving continuity and success in school, having opportunities for positive identity development, relationships with supportive adults, and preparation in practical, emotional, and interpersonal skills (Stein, 2008). Additional research is still needed, however, to better understand how and why some youth leaving foster care exhibit greater characteristics of resiliency than others (Masten et al., 2004).

The next section discusses factors associated with shaping the transition to adulthood for youth in the general population, in order to discern how foster youth experiences differ.

Structural-social factors shaping the transition to adulthood

Whether from a developmental perspective, demographic analysis, or both, existing research indicates that multiple layers and factors shape the pathway to adulthood. Namely, individual capacities and skills, opportunities shaped by structural and institutional contexts, and nurturing and support of a family network appear to foster adaptation amidst a period involving much instability and ambiguity (Settersten, 2007). Societal context and policies (Ryan, 2001), and broader economic conditions may also contribute to adulthood trajectories (Matsudaira, 2006). Following are structural-social factors presented to explain variation between cohorts of youth, including: socioeconomic status and family support and resources. Relevant to the guiding conceptual framework of the current study, Côté's identity capital model, the section below also helps to highlight the contribution of socioeconomic status and family support to the accumulation of more tangible forms of capital, such as human (education, employable skills) and financial capital.

Socioeconomic status

Research suggests that socioeconomic status and mobility is largely passed on from parent to child, and this is clearly seen during the transition to adulthood. For example, a qualitative study of 20 young adults in their early twenties explored participants' experiences of transitioning from school to work, and found that those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds (HSES) differed from those of lower socioeconomic backgrounds (LSES) on several factors (Blustein et al., 2002). Young people of the HSES group generally worked in jobs or areas related to their interests and goals, while those from the LSES group often did not. Accordingly, more individuals in the LSES group viewed work as a means of economic survival (to pay bills, obtain material necessities), while individuals in the HSES group viewed work as an opportunity for self-fulfillment and personal satisfaction. HSES young adults also experienced fewer external barriers to educational achievement and access to resources, including from school, the community and their parents. Young adults of the LSES group also received support and guidance from other adults, but frequently had to seek out information and make decisions

regarding their education and careers on their own (Blustein et al., 2002). Similarly, a study comparing adulthood trajectories among another sample of young adults found that they differed according to socioeconomic status (SES), especially in regards to attaining financial independence (Cohen et al., 2003). Both males and females of higher SES backgrounds were supported by others (usually family) for longer periods than those in the lower SES group, and were more likely to achieve a stable sense of financial self-sufficiency than individuals of lower SES backgrounds.

The transfer of SES effects is also indicated elsewhere. An analysis of longitudinal data on over 12,000 students attending four-year educational institutions in the U.S. found that SES is a powerful predictor of postsecondary educational attainment and achievement, and that capital accumulation activities during college differed by SES background (Walpole, 2003). Specifically, students of lower SES worked more during college, studied fewer hours, and were less involved in school clubs or other extracurricular school activities. Lower SES students also had subsequently lower incomes after college graduation and lower levels of educational aspirations compared to their more affluent counterparts. Greater contact with faculty and engagement in athletics or other extracurricular academic activities increased the odds of lower SES students' attendance in graduate school (Walpole, 2003). Analyses of other large datasets have produced similar results indicating a relationship between parents' education, employment and income status on children's later educational attainment (Conley, 2001; Rumberger, 2010). Higher parental educational attainment and income are significantly associated with greater years of schooling and attainment for their children. Parental wealth, measured by income and financial assets such as home ownership, is especially associated with children's education even when holding other socio-demographic characteristics constant (Conley, 2001). In particular, this study found that children of parents with greater wealth were more likely to attend college and complete a greater number of years of college than children of parents with less wealth (Conley, 2001), though specific results are reported only in log-odds, making a direct comparison between these findings to other studies difficult. In another analysis that measured the impact of family SES using parental income and education, higher and middle SES students were six and two times more likely than a lower SES student to complete college (Rumberger, 2010).

Focusing on outcomes outside of education and employment, research also indicates that SES is related to the timing of leaving the parental home, getting married, and entering parenthood. Evidence suggests that before age 18, poorer youth are more likely than non-poor youth to leave home, however after age 18, non-poor youth are more likely to leave home (Berzin & De Marco, 2010). SES appears to have less of an impact on marriage, though poorer youth are more likely to marry at later ages than non-poor youth. Regarding parenthood, youth of poorer backgrounds are consistently more likely to be a parent, beginning at age 18 and continuing through the late twenties (Berzin & De Marco, 2010). These findings are especially relevant for individuals of race/ethnic minority backgrounds in that they are frequently over represented among lower levels of SES, and have access to the fewest quality supports and services (Fuligni & Hardway, 2004).

Family support and resources

As noted earlier, families often bear much of the costs associated with contemporary adult transitions, and thus, are largely influential on young people's trajectories into adulthood (Furstenberg, 2008; Swartz, 2008). Related to SES, family assistance, whether material or otherwise ancillary, can make the difference for a young person attempting to find their footing in early adulthood, with potential effects on subsequent attainments over the life course (Swartz, 2008). Parents across all income groups typically provide at least some monetary assistance to their children during the transition to adulthood (Fingerman et al., 2009; Schoeni & Ross, 2005; Swartz, Kim, Uno, Mortimer, & O'Brien, 2011). This is consistent, independent of the quality of the parent-child relationship, as reported by parent and child (Swartz et al., 2011). An analysis of two national datasets (1988 Panel Study of Income Dynamics; 1992-93 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study) found that of all young adults aged 18-34 living on their own, approximately 34 and 47 percent received cash or other assistance from their family, respectively (Schoeni & Ross, 2005). Due to the way in which data were collected, these results did not include youth still living in the family home. Financial assistance included parents' monetary assistance given towards any purpose, such as school expenses, purchasing a home, or rent. The average amount of assistance received by all youth was $38,000; however, further analysis revealed that levels of assistance varied by parental income, with youth in the bottom two income categories receiving, on average, about $25,000 between ages 18-34, compared to just under $71,000 for youth in the top income brackets. Youth from both low- and high-income families, however, received similar amounts of assistance in time spent on childcare, household tasks or other supportive activities, averaging about 3,867 hours of help across both income groups (Schoeni & Ross, 2005).

In addition to time and money, research indicates that families assist their children into adulthood in other ways. A study of longitudinal educational data found that the amount and ways in which families are able to assist their children in school make a significant difference on the likelihood of their graduation from college (Charles, Roscigno, & Torres, 2007). Types of assistance include direct financial assistance, emotional and social support, and passing on cultural capital denoting norms and traditions associated with participating in higher education (Charles et al., 2007). While disparities in educational attainment are often categorized according to race, results of this study highlight that these disparities may be better explained by differences in resources and support. Namely, compared to White parents, parents of minority race/ethnic backgrounds are less able to provide direct financial assistance or guidance to their children in making plans for or attending college.

Finally, families also influence the adulthood transition via socialization. For example, results of a longitudinal study found that the more a child talks with her/his parents about their work over time, the greater her/his economic self-efficacy during high school (Lee & Mortimer, 2009). Contrary to expectations, receiving an allowance was related to lower economic self-efficacy. The greater one's economic self-efficacy in high school, the higher the likelihood of employment or attaining more education by age 24. The effect of family SES status diminished by age 23-24, with youth of more affluent backgrounds no more likely to be financially self-sufficient than those of more disadvantaged backgrounds. Rather, being male, White, and having greater economic self-efficacy in high school, were the strongest predictors of being employed, resulting in greater educational attainment and a higher income by age 24 (Lee & Mortimer, 2009). Other research also highlights the effects of family socialization practices on

the adult transition, finding parents' financial behavior and imparting knowledge to children serving as the strongest predictors of financial behavior in adulthood (Shim, Barber, Card, Xiao, & Serido, 2010; Shim, Xiao, Barber, & Lyons, 2009).

Summary

Research indicates that trajectories into adulthood are at least partially explained by family support and resources. Similarly, parental SES and support also relate to the accumulation of human and financial capital among their young adult children. Young adults of higher SES backgrounds tend to have more stable and upward transitions into adulthood, while those of lower SES backgrounds struggle to achieve the same stability. Youth of lower SES backgrounds are left to actively seek out and secure information and resources pertaining to greater educational attainment and opportunities for higher earnings, while such information and resources are more readily available within families of higher SES backgrounds. Young adults of lower SES backgrounds, who balance work with active participation in the culture of high school and postsecondary education, such as in athletics or extracurricular clubs, increase their likelihood of enrollment in and graduation from college.

These findings are relevant for youth aging out of foster care in that they are frequently without a stable sense of family or support, and have backgrounds most similar to those of young adults of lower socioeconomic status. Given the link between parental SES and support and the accumulation of human and financial capital among their young adult children, it is not surprising that aging out youth, who are less likely than most to have a family support network to turn to, experience difficulty in attaining higher levels of education and accumulating financial assets. In addition to having limited family resources and support to turn to upon exiting the system, youth aging out of care are likely not commonly exposed to the norms of navigating postsecondary education or otherwise establishing financial independence, as is typically found in the cultural capital among families of more affluent backgrounds. Similarly, as found with youth of lower SES backgrounds, youth leaving care likely face making major life decisions regarding future careers or general life course directions on their own, without parental guidance and input. Studies have found that youth in foster care who consistently work starting in adolescence through early adulthood are more likely to secure gainful employment as adults. However, some evidence also suggests that youth in care are frequently placed in jobs not matched to their interests, decreasing the likelihood of their remaining in the job long-term or achieving a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. Further, by not matching youth with jobs related to their interests and goals, youth also miss opportunities to explore and develop plans for pursuing future career directions.

The tangible and intangible of identity capital

Within the contexts of socioeconomic structure and family support and resources, personal capital is another factor that may make a difference in how (and whether) external resources are accessed and subsequently used to navigate a pathway to adulthood. To this end, Côté's (1997) identity capital model provides a framework from which to understand the impact of internal resources and assets on identity development and thus, the transition to

adulthood. The model posits that due to a combination of decreased structural guidance from social institutions, such as schools and communities, and changing economic markets in which it is difficult for inexperienced young people to secure gainful employment and attain self-sufficiency, contemporary transitions to adulthood especially require certain personal resources (Côté & Bynner, 2008; Côté, 2005). Accordingly, the model proposes that the accumulation of identity capital, or identity-related assets, enable a person to effectively negotiate the challenges and opportunities of contemporary adult life (Côté, 2000; Côté, 1997). *Identity capital*, as broadly defined by the model, is the investments that individuals make towards their identity, or "who they are" (Côté & Levine, 2002, p. 147), and these investments are both tangible and intangible.

Tangible and intangible investments, or resources, are thought to affect identity acquisition, which in turn affects stability during the transition to adulthood. *Tangible resources or assets* refer to "socially visible" resources deemed valuable by society, providing entrance and membership into social groups and institutions (Côté & Levine, 2002; Côté, 1997). Examples include human, social, or financial capital. Educational attainment, as a form of human capital, helps to provide entrance into progressively advanced educational institutions, certain employment opportunities, and membership in a particular socioeconomic status or social class. Similarly, employable skills or financial resources enable entrance into social institutions that would otherwise not be possible, such as labor or financial markets. Social capital, as defined by the model, refers to membership in groups or communities. Conversely, *intangible resources* are personal or internal assets, and specifically, personal agency (Côté & Levine, 2002; Côté, 1997). *Personal agency* is defined as having a level of self-direction, bearing responsibility for one's decisions and life course, and having confidence to overcome obstacles (Côté & Schwartz, 2002; Schwartz et al., 2005). Without asserting a level of agency, individuals are more likely to follow a 'path of least resistance' and miss opportunities to actively shape and direct one's life course (Schwartz et al., 2005).

Subsequently, personal agency is posited to be key in the development of a coherent and healthy sense of identity (Schwartz, 2007), the third major component of Côté's framework. Identity development is thought to be a primary task of adolescence, though not confined to this age period and most often continuing into early adulthood (Marcia, 1980). Simply put, *identity* refers to self-definition, or the ways in which one defines her/himself (Schwartz, 2006). In the identity capital framework, it specifically refers to identifying as an adult or with a sense of adulthood (Côté, 2002; Côté, 1997; Schwartz, 2007). The development of identity occurs on multiple levels: internally, in the formation of a consistent sense of self and view of the world (Côté, 1996; Marcia, 1980), and externally, marked by behaviors and the taking on of roles that help to shape others' view of the self (Côté, 1996). The father of identity theory, Erik Erikson (1968), posited that a healthy and coherent sense of identity is needed in order to function well in society, which is achieved when identity synthesis predominates over identity confusion (Erikson, 1964). Expanding on Erikson's theory, Schwartz (2007) suggests that a greater level of personal agency and self-direction is more likely to result in identity synthesis, while a conflicted, haphazard, and fragmented sense of self is more likely to lead to identity confusion.

Agency and identity: The intangibles of transitioning to adulthood out of foster care

Elements of the identity capital model comprise the conceptual framework for this study, providing a useful lens from which to view functioning and adjustment of youth aging out of foster care. Please refer to Appendix A for a visual depiction of the conceptual framework. Côté's model helps to explain how an experience that typifies many foster youth, of identifying as an adult and possessing a level of individual agency, may work to shape their transition to adulthood. With qualitative research findings highlighting the prevalence of strong feelings of (required) self-reliance and feelings of advanced maturity among youth aging out of care, agency development may be one unintended benefit resulting from their family circumstances and experiences of care. How this translates into acquiring information, accessing and securing resources, and making decisions may explain some of the diversity seen among youth who age out of care on their way to adulthood. Conversely, though qualitative studies indicate that it may be common for youth in foster care to feel older than their similar-aged peers without foster care histories, developing a sense of identity may still be challenging for youth aging out care. A young person's sense of identity and competence may be affected by the stigma of being in foster care (Kools, 1997), as well as unresolved feelings from ambiguous separations from one's biological family before and during foster care (Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997). Qualitative studies have also uncovered themes related to strategies of self-protection that include keeping an emotional distance from others and avoiding reliance on others for support (Kools, 1999; Samuels, 2008; Samuels, 2009), potentially affecting individual feelings of belonging. Thus, the development of an adult identity for youth in care may require resolving tensions between feeling older than one's chronological age, with broader self-perceptions of feeling like "bad," not belonging anywhere, and having low levels of self-esteem.

Honing in on the role of context, how do contexts in which youth are situated before and during the transition out of foster care impact their adjustment and functioning? Some research suggests a relationship between context and identity development, with identity exploration thought to be inhibited among adolescents living in poverty, due to perceived limits on life opportunities and ascribing to the stigma of being poor (Phillips & Pittman, 2003). Similarly, the often-restrictive nature of state sponsored living arrangements may limit opportunities for youth to explore their identity or exercise agency over their lives. Are missed opportunities to engage in identity exploration and agency development associated with the accumulation (or lack) of more tangible resources, such as attaining greater education or securing stable, gainful employment? Social support and permanency are common themes found in discussions of wellbeing for children and youth in foster care. Does the degree to which one allows her/himself to feel close to others affect the development of a social support network? And is this related to identity development or the securing of tangible resources? This study seeks to explore these issues further and move toward a more theoretical understanding of young people's transitions out of care and into adulthood.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

Study Design & Methodology: Overview

This study employed a concurrent transformative mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2009) to data collection, analyzing both secondary and primary data. Non-probabilistic, purposive sampling methods were chosen to recruit participants for primary data collection. This strategy was chosen due to: 1) a historic difficulty in locating and recruiting members of the aged-out foster youth population to participate in research, and 2) a primary study objective aimed at building theory related to understanding the experiences of youth who age out of care, rather than generalizability. Purposive sampling strategies are especially useful when accessing an entire population is difficult or not possible, and a subset of the population of interest is easily identified and accessible (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). This design, rather than an experimental or randomized control study design, was also appropriate due to the exploratory nature of the study (Rubin & Babbie, 2008).

The current research relied on two sets of data. The first is an administrative (secondary) dataset of former foster youth, the largest such sample ever formally tracked in California. The second is data from a survey administered by the author to a subset of youth drawn from the administrative data. Though extensive data are available on young people while they are still under public care through the Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS), the availability of reliable data on youth once they leave the foster care system is much more limited. The secondary data, collected for program administrative purposes, have been collected since 2006, and track limited but longitudinal trajectories of youth after their exit from foster care.

Using the list of youth described in the secondary data as a sampling frame, the author administered a cross-sectional survey to a purposive sample of youth served by one of the two aforementioned aftercare initiatives. Only youth who had ever participated in one of the two aftercare initiatives were invited to participate. The survey was administered from March to June 2012, and service providers involved with either of the two aftercare initiatives assisted in recruiting participants for the survey by directing interested youth to a website that linked to the survey. The survey was available to youth statewide, and $10 gift cards were provided to participants who completed the survey.

The study's two-part approach to data collection followed a concurrent transformative model, in which multiple types of data are collected for analysis, and choices regarding study purpose, research questions, and methodology are explicitly guided by a specific theoretical framework (Creswell, 2009). The first dataset was used to answer the study's first research question related to examining housing patterns among youth who aged out of foster care in California, aligned with the demographic tradition of scholarship regarding transitions to adulthood. The program administrative data includes limited, longitudinal data on program participants regarding their housing situation at program entrance, exit, and at 6- and 12-months post program exit. The remaining three study questions were informed by Côté's identity capital framework, which includes constructs of personal agency and adult identity – information not readily available in the secondary dataset. This led to the choice to administer a survey to collect these data. Finally, scales specifically developed for measuring the conceptual

framework's constructs were administered as a series of survey questions rather than in an interview format, based on advisement from the scales' developer (J. Côté, personal communication, December 6, 2010).

This chapter discusses the current study's design and methodology in more detail. It first gives a brief description of the two aftercare initiatives for which the secondary data analyzed in the study was originally collected. The population and sample represented in the secondary dataset is described next, followed by a review of survey administration procedures, and a presentation of survey measures used to collect information regarding identity capital. The chapter ends with a summary of analysis methods used to answer each research question, and a note regarding human subjects' research protocol used to ensure participants' protections in the current study.

THP-Plus and CC25I: Aftercare programs for youth aged out of foster care in California[1]

The two aftercare initiatives for which the secondary data were originally collected are the Transitional Housing Placement Program Plus (THP-Plus) and the California Connected by 25 Initiative (CC25I). Both initiatives serve and support youth who age out of foster care in California, and participation in either is voluntary. THP-Plus is available in 50 counties throughout the state (Tureck, 2012) and CC25I in the following eight: Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Orange, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Solano, and Stanislaus (CC25I, 2011). Thus, all eight CC25I-participating counties provide both CC25I-related resources as well as THP-Plus services. Please refer to Appendix B for a map depicting counties participating in THP-Plus.

THP-Plus is a program that first began in 2001, providing affordable, transitional housing and comprehensive support services designed to assist young people during the transition from foster care to living independently (THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project John Burton Foundation, 2009). The program is available for up to 24 months to any youth, ages 18 to 24, who aged out of foster care in California. Program involvement does not have to be continuous, and youth may enter and exit the program multiple times up until accruing 24 months of participation. THP-Plus is not strictly standardized, and program administrators may tailor housing, types of services, and service provision according to their particular locale's capacity and needs. Thus actual implementation of the THP-Plus program model varies widely across the state, with each program having their own set of eligibility criteria for entrance and continued participation in the program – outside of the age and 24-month participation guidelines that are consistent across all programs. Prior to the passing of AB 12, funding for THP-Plus was provided by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), and matched by county-specific funds.

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[1] Information regarding the two aftercare initiatives described here is based on their implementation prior to the passing of California state legislation (AB 12) that extends foster care services to youth beyond age 18. As of this writing, CC25I is no longer current and ended in December 2011. THP+ is still in operation, however, has changed in structure and implementation to accommodate implementation of AB 12 – which began January 1, 2012 (Arora Dow, Schwartz, Lemley, Heimov, & Elliot, 2012).

CC25I is a separate initiative in California that also aims to improve the outcomes of former foster youth, however, it is not a delineated program as in the case of THP-Plus. CC25I was launched in 2005, and involvement in CC25I was offered to all counties in the state on a voluntary basis, ultimately resulting in the eight counties listed above (Family to Family California, 2012). Participating counties are free to determine how to focus their service provision depending on their specific capacity and needs, and encouraged to develop their own locally designed strategies. Thus, similar to THP-Plus, implementation varies widely across the eight counties, including in the types of programs and services provided to youth. The initiative, however, did identify five key areas of focus to guide program development: permanency, education, housing, employment, and financial literacy (CC25I, 2011). CC25I is primarily funded by grants from the Stuart Foundation and the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, with additional support provided by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation. Though CC25I and THP-Plus are separate initiatives, due to their target populations, they often work with the same participants, and all eight CC25I-participating counties also provide THP-Plus programs. The table (Figure 1) below provides an overview of THP-Plus and CC25I, regarding geographic availability, types of services provided, and program participation guidelines.

	THP-Plus	CC25I
Geographic availability	50 participating counties; Counties **without** THP-Plus: • Alpine • Amador • Colusa • Modoc • Mono • San Benito • Sierra • Siskiyou	8 participating counties: • Fresno • Glenn • Humboldt • Orange • San Francisco • Santa Clara • Solano • Stanislaus
Services provided	Housing, w/comprehensive services provided according to youth need and provider capacity: • Education • Employment seeking / vocational training • Independent living skills • Financial/personal/social competency and asset development	Varies; focus areas include: • Education • Vocational training • Housing • Independent living skills • Financial/personal/social competency and asset development • Permanent adult relationships
Participation guidelines	• Voluntary, after exiting foster care • Available to youth ages 18 to 24, who have aged out of	• Voluntary, during or after exiting foster care • Available to youth ages 14 to 24, who have or are likely to

	foster care • May participate for up to 24 months; may be non-continuous • Other criteria set by individual providers	age out of care • Other criteria determined by individual programs and service providers

(Figure 1 – Overview of THP-Plus and CC25I)

Description of Secondary Data

All data collected on youth ages 18 to 24 who participated in either THP-Plus or CC25I from January 2008 through December 2011 form the secondary dataset analyzed in the current study, described further in this section. Data for THP-Plus and CC25I are collected separately, and housed in different databases. Most of the data for THP-Plus are collected via the THP-Plus Participant Tracking System (PTS), a voluntary, web-based database program used by THP-Plus providers to collect information about participants in THP-Plus (THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project John Burton Foundation, 2009). Providers are not required to use PTS, and may choose to track their program information on their own. Though officially created by legislation in 2001, implementation was realized in 2003, and PTS includes participant data from 2006 until present (THP-Plus Statewide Implementation Project John Burton Foundation, 2009). The current analysis included data only through December 2011 due to the unavailability of 2012 data from all providers at the time data were acquired for this study. Separately, data for CC25I are housed in the Efforts-to-Outcomes (ETO) database, managed by the Center for Social Services Research at the School of Social Welfare of the University of California, Berkeley. The ETO database can also be accessed online, and CC25I data have been collected since 2008. In addition to holding all CC25I-related data, some THP-Plus providers located in a CC25I-participating county also store their data in the ETO database. Data stored in PTS and ETO represent a sample of former foster youth who have ever had contact with providers from one of these initiatives.

Both THP-Plus and CC25I providers collect demographic information related to gender, race/ethnicity, and age. Information related to adult transition domains (e.g., education, housing, employment) are also collected by both programs. CC25I uses forms specifically designed for data collection from program participants, titled Assessments A, B, C, and D. Assessments A through C were designed to collect information from youth still in foster care up until the point of their aging out, while Assessment D is used to collect information from youth once they have exited care. To maintain consistency with the THP-Plus data, which only describe youth already out of care, only data collected via Assessment D were included in the secondary dataset of the current study. Figure 2 below provides a summary of data collection procedures for THP-Plus and CC25I.

THP+ data collection		CC25I data collection
Program Entrance	• May occur any time after youth leaves public care, before age 24	• Dependent on social worker and youth schedules • Generally aims to collect data every six months • No standardized or maximum # of times data collection may occur
Program Exit	• May occur at a maximum of 2 years after entrance into THP-Plus	
6-month follow up	• Occurs 6 months after youth exits THP-Plus program	
12-month follow up	• Occurs 12 months after youth exits THP-Plus program	

(Figure 2 – Secondary data: Data collection points)

Description of Cross-Sectional Survey

Sampling frame

Using the list of youth represented in the secondary data as a sampling frame, recruitment for the cross-sectional survey administered for this study targeted any young adult, ages 18-28 years, who had ever participated in either THP-Plus or CC25I. Since THP-Plus began regularly collecting data on its program in FY2007-08, it has served approximately 2000 youth, on average, every year (Tureck, 2012). As noted earlier, regular data collection for CC25I began in FY2008-09, and served an average of 280 youth annually through 2011. All young adults who had ever participated were invited to participate with the exception of incarcerated youth, who were not eligible.

Participant recruitment and procedures

Service providers assisted with recruitment, serving as primary points of contact between youth and the author. Recruitment emails and flyers describing the study were first sent out in early March 2012, and follow up recruitment requests were sent to providers approximately every two weeks afterward through late April 2012. Emails and flyers shared information regarding the study, and directed interested participants to a website where the survey could be accessed and completed. Please refer to Appendix C for copies of materials used for recruitment. Providers statewide were asked to share information regarding the study with eligible youth with whom they had contact. Each participant who completed the survey was eligible to receive a $10 gift card of their choice from either Amazon or Target, and asked to provide either an email or mailing address at which a gift card could be sent. In May 2012, additional outreach was conducted via an organization, the California Youth Connection (CYC), where the director agreed to share study recruitment emails through their member email listserv. Two recruitment emails were sent through the member listerv, resulting in no new participants. The author was then invited to attend a CYC meeting of youth members from the state's Northern region, resulting in the recruitment of six more participants, of whom three were former participants of THP-Plus. The three non-THP-Plus participants reported residing in

Sacramento County, suggesting they likely also did not participate in any CC25I-related initiatives. The survey was officially closed at the end of June 2012. The final sample size for analyses conducted to answer the last three research questions was (n=195). Please refer to Appendix D for a description of methods used to address response errors and other technical aspects related to survey administration.

Survey data were merged with secondary data in order to answer the last three research questions and analyze relationships between identity and agency, and transitions into adult roles. Names and birthdays were used to match participants between the two datasets. To facilitate matching while ensuring as much anonymity as possible, survey respondents were not asked for their full names and birthdays, but instead: the first three letters of their last name, the first three letters of their first name, and the four digits corresponding to the month and day of their birthday. Though slightly more than one-third of survey records successfully matched (n=69), it is unclear why so few records matched between the two datasets. It may be that youth chose not to share their actual name and birthday information, switched the order in which they provided the letters for their names (i.e., first then last name instead of last then first name), or participated in a THP+ program that does not utilize PTS to store their data. Due to so few records matching between datasets, the merged dataset was not used for any analyses in the current study. The following section describes analyzed variables, including the survey instrument and relevant scales.

Variables: Data Sources and Measurement

Secondary data: Housing status

The secondary and primary data provided different information pertaining to variables analyzed in the current study. Secondary data included information related to domains of adult role transitions, such as young adults' educational attainment and status, housing situation, employment status, parenting status, and socio-demographic characteristics including age, race/ethnicity, and gender. Only data pertaining to housing status were analyzed in the current study. Further information regarding how housing status was measured and coded is described in the section below under Analysis Plan.

Cross-sectional survey: Closeness to others, seeking support, agency, adult identity

The online survey collected data pertaining to participants' current age, age at foster care exit, educational background, employment status, ease in seeking support, closeness to others, adult identity, and personal agency. Refer to Appendix E for a codebook of all variables captured in the survey. *Ease in seeking support* was captured in the survey by asking participants to respond "yes/no" to, "Is it easy for you to ask and/or receive help and support from others?" According to premises of the identity capital framework, those who possess a greater level of agency are better positioned to seek out and secure necessary resources. *Closeness to others* was measured using Aron, Aron, and Smollan's (1992) *Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale*, a one-item scale designed to assess the degree to which an individual feels close to others. Due to its one-item design, traditional methods of assessing reliability are not

possible (e.g., item analyses or inter-item consistency measures), however its consistency was assessed using alternate-form and test-rest reliability checks. These checks resulted in alpha reliability coefficients of *r* = .93 and .83, respectively (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992), above the traditionally accepted alpha criterion level of .7. Checks for validity also support the IOS' concurrent validity with marital quality (*r* = .57 – .62) and perceptions of closeness (*r* = .72 – .84), and construct validity with marital commitment (*r* = .32).

Operationalization of adult identity and personal agency

Several existing scales were used to measure adult identity and personal agency, based on previous efforts to operationalize identity capital (Côté, 1997). As a recently emerging framework (Côté, 1997; 2002), the identity capital model has mostly been applied in research with college-age youth ages 18 to mid-20s. This may be due to the impetus for research on this construct, which focused on exploring why individuals from similar backgrounds (White, middle class, college students) ultimately follow different paths and experience different outcomes in adulthood (Côté, 2006). James Côté developed the following scales to help operationalize variables encompassed by the identity capital model (*agency, adult identity*), also included in the current study's cross-sectional survey.

Beginning with *adult identity*, this construct was measured using the *Identity Stage Resolution Index (ISRI),* comprised of two sub-scales: the *Adult Identity Resolution Scale (AIRS)* and the *Societal Identity Resolution Scale (SIRS).* AIRS and SIRS both had three questions each, with responses given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (0 = "not at all true" to 4 = "totally true"). In an exploratory factor analysis conducted by Côté the two sub-scales loaded as two separate factors: *adult self-identity* (AIRS) and *community identity integration* (SIRS). Put another way, Côté proposed that adult identity stems from how "adult" one perceives her/himself along with how integrated they feel within an adult community. Alpha reliability coefficients for the ISRI have ranged from (*r* = .75 – .79) overall, and from (r = .64 – .72) and (r = .77 – .78) for the AIRS and SIRS sub-scales, respectively (Côté, 1997; 2002). All six items were included in the current study's survey measure.

Personal agency was measured using a variety of established personality scales, also identified by Côté. Côté (1997) initially selected several scales measuring personality attributes representing an agentic-communal range of characteristics, based on the identity capital framework's position that strengths in this area may help foster growth and development during the transition to adulthood. Exploratory factor analysis revealed one factor relating the following qualities to an agentic personality: self-esteem, purpose in life, internal locus of control, ego strength, self-actualization, and ideological commitment. Each of these constructs was measured with their own corresponding scale, and the six scales were combined to form what Côté (1997) named the *Multimeasure Agentic Personality Scale (MAPS)*. A condensed version of the scale was used for this study (*MAPS-20*) with permission from the scale's author, and includes a total of 20 questions targeted at measuring four of the six constructs above: *internal locus of control*, *self-efficacy, self-esteem*, and *purpose in life* (Côté, n.d.). The sub-scales for internal locus of control and self-efficacy were each administered on 5-point Likert scales, ranging from (0 = "strongly disagree" to 4 "strongly agree") for internal locus of control and (0 = "completely not true" to 4 = "completely true") for self-efficacy. The "purpose in life"

sub-scale was assessed on a 7-point Likert scale, and the self-esteem measure on a dichotomous (“not like me”/”like me”) response scale. The alpha reliability coefficient for the MAPS-20 overall is .73, while the alpha scores for the four sub-scales have ranged from .61 – .75 (J. Côté, personal communication, December 6, 2010).

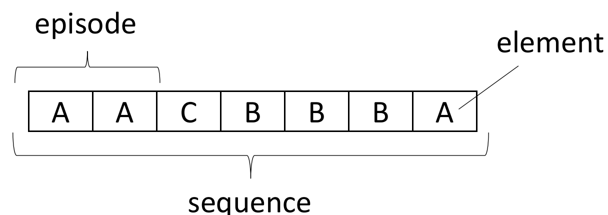
Analysis Plan

Stata 12 was the primary software used to conduct data analyses for the current study, and several modeling techniques were used to answer the study’s research questions. Methods used to answer each of the study questions are discussed in greater detail below.

Secondary data analyses

Research Question 1: What do early adulthood housing trajectories look like for youth who age out of foster care in California?

Sequence analysis (SA) was used to answer the first research question regarding housing patterns and trajectories among study participants (Brzinsky-Fay, Kohler, & Luniak, 2006). SA enables the identification of *sequences*, or an ordered list of *elements* (defined here as housing status), pertaining to the subject of interest (Abbott, 1990; Aisenbrey & Fasang, 2010). Sequences were analyzed to detect patterns of housing pathways travelled by youth as they age out of foster care. The *position* (1st, 2nd, etc.) of each element in a sequence is fixed, usually according to chronological time or other natural order. Multiple, successive occurrences of an identical element is referred to as an *episode*, and there may be multiple episodes in one sequence. Finally, the beginning and endpoint of a sequence is defined by the organizing structure of the sequence, for example, the duration of time for which the elements occurred. Sequences are viewed as entities of their own, with each sequence or sequential character of elements typically seen as the point of interest. SA has been used in the physical sciences, for example to identify DNA structures, as well as the social sciences to investigate phenomena such as life course pathways or career trajectories (Brzinsky-Fay et al., 2006). An example of a sequence is presented below:



(Figure 3 – Example of a sequence)

For the current study, SA was chosen as the method of analysis due to the focused interest on housing status, and not necessarily the timing or duration for which a particular housing status may have occurred. The study sought to examine the types of housing youth access after exiting foster care, given their limited housing safety net – in comparison to typical

transitional age youth who frequently rely on the parental home in times of housing difficulty. In the current study, sequences were comprised of a minimum of four occurrences (data collection points) of elements (housing status), due to the way in which data were collected for THP-Plus and CC25I. As noted earlier, information (including housing status) was collected from youth participating in THP-Plus for a possible maximum of four times, at: 1) entrance and 2) exit from the program, and 3) six- and 4) twelve-months follow up after participants' exit from the program. The duration between entrance and exit from the program is not the same across participants due to youth having a choice in how long they stay in the program, up to 24 months. Data suggest that most participants do not stay in the program for the full two years, and the average length of stay is 13 months. Data analyzed here are data collected from THP-Plus participants when they were not in the program. In other words, data were collected once at entrance into THP-Plus; a second time at exit from the program; then a third and fourth time at 6- and 12-months post-program exit. As seen in the Figure 4 below, a housing option of "A THP-Plus program" represents youth who may have transferred between THP-Plus programs. This option only captures youth directly coming out of a THP-Plus program, so would not necessarily represent all youth with a prior history of participating in the program.

Youth who did not participate in THP-Plus, but were involved with CC25I, were also asked about their housing status at multiple points over time, however data collection with these youth did not occur at regular intervals as compared to their THP-Plus counterparts. Housing status of youth in THP-Plus or CC25I was originally coded into 15 and 11 categories, respectively (depicted in Figure 4). THP-Plus housing was not an original option available for data entry in ETO, and several THP-Plus participants were instead identified as living in an "other" housing type. Thus, the author created a "THP-Plus" category for the ETO data, reviewed all "other" answers reported for this question, and recoded participants as living in THP-Plus housing when applicable.

THP-Plus: Housing status	CC25I: Housing status
1 = Renting own/shared housing	1 = Own home or apartment
2 = College dorm	2 = College dorm
3 = Living with relative/other supportive adult	3 = With family member / lifelong connection
7 = Shelter, homeless, other unstable housing	7 = Shelter
4 = A THP-Plus program	4 = THP-Plus
4 = Other transitional housing program	6 = Residential training program
6 = Foster care (FC)/probation: THPP	5 = Military housing
6 = FC/probation: Group home	1 = With non-relative friend, roommate, other
6 = FC/probation: Foster family agency	7 = Street or car
6 = FC/probation: County foster family	6 = Board and care facility
6 = FC/probation: Kinship/NREFM home	Other
7 = Incarcerated	Unknown
6 = Institutionalized	
Other	
Unknown	

(Figure 4 – Housing status, as originally coded in THP-Plus and CC25I data)

As seen in Figure 4, there was great overlap in how each program categorized housing status. To create a consistent coding structure across datasets, a new variable for housing status was created for the current analysis. The numbers next to each category in the table above indicate the category into which it was ultimately coded according to the list below. Any "Unknown" data were excluded from analysis, and "Other" data were reviewed to determine whether they could be coded into one of the seven categories below, excluding any data that could not.

1. Living on own (including w/roommates)
2. College dorm
3. Living with parent, relative, or non-related supportive adult
4. Supportive/transitional housing
5. Military or Corps
6. Program/treatment housing
7. Unstable housing (e.g., homeless, staying at a shelter, couch surfing, or other temporary living situation)

Survey data analyses

Survey data were analyzed to answer the remaining three research questions, detailed further below.

Research Question 2: How well does Côté's identity capital model fit the study sample's data? Are Côté's scales for agency and adult identity reliable and valid measures for use with a sample of youth who have aged out of care?

To answer research question 2, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the overall fit of the conceptual model to the study data, as well as to assess the construct validity of Côté's (1997; 2002) scales in use with a sample of aged-out foster youth. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients were calculated to assess reliability of the scales in use with the current study sample. CFA is a theory-driven, statistical technique used to test whether unobserved (latent) constructs are statistically related to their observed variables, or variables measured to serve as indicators of the latent constructs (Kolenikov, 2009; Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow, & King, 2006). Relationships between unobserved constructs and their observed variables are postulated to be linear. Construct validity and overall fit of the model was assessed by testing the relationships between unobserved constructs of the conceptual framework (adult identity, agency) to observed variables measured via the scales and survey. In the context of CFA, other terms used in place of "unobserved constructs" include *latent construct*, *construct*, *latent factor*, or *factor* (Schreiber et al., 2006). "Observed variables" are also referred to as *measured variables*, *indicators*, *indicator variables*, or *manifest variables*. CFA resembles exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in that both methods are used to identify relationships between latent constructs and observed variables (Kolenikov, 2009). However,

unlike EFA, CFA specifies in advance (prior to analysis) the number of latent factors and proposed relationships between those and the observed variables in a model, dictated by theory or other pre-identified conceptual framework. The current study identified the number of factors prior to analysis based on previous findings reported by Côté (1996; 2002).

The latent constructs examined in the current study include *agency*, measured via the four sub-scales of the MAPS-20, assessing purpose in life, internal locus of control, self-efficacy, and self-esteem; and *adult identity*, measured via the two sub-scales of the ISRI (AIRS, SIRS). As noted earlier, exploratory factor analyses (EFA) conducted by Côté revealed *agency* as a single factor comprised of four indicators, and *adult identity* as two factors comprised of *adult self-identity* (AIRS) and *community identity integration* (SIRS). In the current study, CFA were performed comparing *agency* as one- or four-factors, *adult identity* as one- or two-factors, and identity capital (agency + adult identity) as one-, two-, or three-factors.

Research Question 3: Are personal agency and adult identity related to a likelihood of seeking support?

Logistic regression was used to answer research question 3, regarding whether agency and identity are associated with a propensity to seek out support. Seeking support was measured as a dichotomous variable (yes/no), resulting from responses to the question: “Is it easy for you to ask and/or receive help and support from others?” Bivariate analyses were first conducted with “seeking support” and age, the two indicators of adult identity, and the four indicators of agency. Variables significant at the bivariate level were then included in a multivariate model. Observed indicators rather than latent constructs (agency, adult identity) were included in these models.

Research Question 4: Are personal agency and adult identity related to transitions into adult roles among youth who age out of care in California?

Initial analysis plans to answer research question 4 involved employing structure equation modeling with a merged dataset linking survey and secondary data together, to determine the fit of conceptual framework constructs (agency, identity, transitions into adult roles) to the data. However, structural equation modeling methods are best used with sample sizes no smaller than 200, and outcome variables that are normally distributed (i.e., measured as continuous or interval) (Kline, 2010). As noted earlier, only (n=69) records ultimately matched between the secondary and survey data, precluding the option to analyze these data. The final survey sample size, though close to 200 at (n=195), measured relevant outcome variables (education or adult housing attainment) as ordinal and nominal.

Thus, logistic regression was employed instead to answer research question 4, and only the survey data, not the secondary data, were used. Two new dichotomous variables representing domains of *adult role transitions* were created for analysis, listed below. The original variables as captured in the survey are presented in Figure 5. A “1” or “0” preceding each response option in the table indicates how it was recoded to create the two dichotomous variables listed below.

1) "*Human capital*" – indicating whether a participant reported completing any type of postsecondary education and/or being employed at any capacity (part- or full-time).
2) "*Adult housing*" – indicating whether a participant reported stable adult housing, defined as living on her/his own or in a college dorm.

New variable: **Human capital accumulation**		New variable: **Adult housing**
Highest education completed	***Working now***	***Current housing status***
0 = Some high school	1 = Yes, < 32 hrs/week	0 = THP-Plus housing
0 = Graduate with HS diploma	1 = Yes, 32 or more hrs/week	0 = With foster family
0 = Completed GED	0 = No	0 = With a relative
1 = Vocational training		0 = With biological mom/dad
1 = Some college		1 = Own place
1 = Completed 2-year degree		1 = College dorm
1 = Completed 4-year degree		0 = Group home
Other		0 = Residential treatment facility
		0 = Other housing program
		0 = Homeless
		Other

(Figure 5 – Highest education level completed, employment status, housing status, as captured in cross-sectional survey)

The same independent variables (*purpose in life; self-efficacy; internal locus of control; self-esteem; adult self-identity; integration into adult community*) were analyzed with each dependent variable (*human capital accumulation, adult housing*) separately, introduced in the same order and using the same control variables (*age, ease in seeking support, closeness with others*). Observed indicators, rather than latent constructs, were included in these models.

Human Subjects

The University of California, Berkeley Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (UCB CPHS) approved this study (Protocol # 2011-09-3577) effective December 16, 2011. The protocol was renewed and approved again on December 16, 2012. All data used in the study were stored on an encrypted, password-protected digital storage device and additionally kept in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher had access. All hard copies of surveys and secondary data use agreements were also kept in the same locked cabinet. Survey respondents were identified in the data files using numerical identifiers, and no key to the identifiers was developed or maintained.

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS

Older Youth Exits Out of Care in California: An Overview

As noted earlier, the population for the current study, youth who ever participated in either THP-Plus or CC25I, is a sub-group of the total population of youth who have ever aged out of foster care in California. To provide a broader context in which to understand the current study's population and sample, common characteristics of the entire population of youth who have ever aged out of foster care in the state are described in Appendix G. Data described in Appendix G were retrieved, in aggregate, from the websites for California's Department of Social Services (CDSS), and the Child Welfare Dynamic Reporting System (CWDRS) for Child Welfare Services Case Management data (CWS/CMS), a collaborative project of CDSS and the School of Social Welfare at the University of California at Berkeley. These websites provide summary information on the number of youth who age out in a given year, along with the county in which they resided when exiting from care. Beginning in October 2008, data have also been collected on certain outcomes of youth aging out of foster care, related to parenting status, education, employment, housing, financial resources, and social support.

Study Population: Characteristics of Youth in THP-Plus and CC25I

This section presents characteristics of the current study's population, drawn from the administrative (secondary) dataset. Demographic information, including age, gender, and ethnicity are presented in Table 1 below, and characteristics that may vary over time, such as housing or employment status are available in summary format in Appendix H. The dataset for the current study's population is a combination of administrative data that have been collected for THP+ and CC25I since 2008 up through December 2011. A total of 4175 youth served during 2008 – 2011 are represented in this dataset, with about 90 percent comprised of THP+ participants (N=3764). More youth in the population are female (57%), and a majority identified as Black (35%), Hispanic (30%), and White (24%). The youngest youth included in the data is age 17, and the oldest is age 26. Among those who participated in THP+, the average amount of time youth participated in the program is about one year, with the mean age at entrance and exit 20 and 21, respectively.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS & THP+ PARTICIPATION, 2006 – 2012			
	Total (%)	**THP+**	**CC25I only**
Total # of Youth	4175	3764	411
(“Total %” are of N=4175 / other % are of individual row N)	N (%)	%	%
Age			
Average/median age at THP+ entrance	--	20 / 19	--
Average/median age at THP+ exit	--	21 / 20	--
Gender			
Gender not reported	284 (6.8)		
Female	2366 (56.7)	95.3	4.7
Male	1525 (36.5)	94.3	5.6
Ethnicity			
Race not reported	129 (3.0)		
American Indian	93 (2.2)	93.5	6.5
Asian / Pacific Islander	131 (3.1)	93.1	6.9
Black	1453 (34.8)	96.8	3.2
Hispanic	1269 (30.3)	94.3	5.7
White	994 (23.8)	94.4	5.5
Other / Mixed	106 (2.5)	100	0
THP+			
Average/median duration in THP+ (in months)	--	13 / 11	--

(Table 1 – Study population: Demographic characteristics and THP-Plus participation)

Remaining information discussed in this section relates to non-static outcomes including parenting status, place of residence, education, and employment, also presented in Appendix H. Only data from 2008 through 2011 are presented here. In addition, because data were collected relative to an individual’s timetable of participation in either THP+ or CC25I, and not necessarily by year, a young adult’s status in any one of these domains may have been recorded more than once per year. As noted earlier, while THP+ data are collected at clear points in time (e.g., entrance, exit, 6- and 12-month follow up), CC25I data are not collected in a similarly uniform manner, thus making aggregate comparisons of youth involved in either initiative difficult. Accordingly, percentages reported in Appendix H are of the total number of *reports* collected by year, not of individual youth, and include both THP+ and non-THP+ participant youth combined. Thus, (N = 1,820) indicated for 2009 do not refer to 1,820 *youth*, but rather, 1,820 unique *reports* recorded for youth in 2009 for either THP+ or CC25I. In other words, the data presented in Appendix H were analyzed by year, and a young person reflected in data reported for 2008 may also be reflected in data reported for 2009. Numbers listed for each year should not be considered as the total number of youth served, but simply the total number of all youth served for that year. Youth represented more than once in a given year is likely small, potentially including:

1. Youth who participated in a CC25I program, but not in THP+
2. Youth who exited THP+ and were reached at their 6-month post-exit follow up, or
3. Youth who participated in THP+ for less than one year.

Findings: Housing, Adult Identity, Agency, Seeking Support, and Transitions into Adult Roles

Turning now to findings resulting from the current study's research questions, the remainder of this chapter discusses patterns of housing trajectories and the prevalence of intangible resources among youth in the study population. The first research question focused on examining patterns of housing trajectories or pathways travelled by youth in the study population. Especially in light of the findings above regarding rates of unstable housing, the study sought to determine how youth who age out of foster care navigate housing during the transition to adulthood.

Housing pathways

Research Question 1:
What do early adulthood housing trajectories look like for youth who age out of foster care in California?

Sequence analyses were conducted to identify the housing trajectories of youth in the current study. Research suggests that among normative transitions to adulthood, it is not uncommon for youth to move out and return to the parental home when they find themselves in difficult financial circumstances or unstable housing situations. Due to the lower likelihood of youth who age out of foster care having a similar housing safety net on which to rely, the first research question sought to examine how youth navigate housing absent such a safety net.

Beginning with the total population of N=4175, all youth who were missing data for two or more data collection points related to their housing status were excluded, resulting in a final sample of (n=2,411) youth for this analysis. The sample of excluded participants was compared to the final study sample to examine whether any significant differences existed between the two groups. Analysis revealed that almost all participants of the excluded sample were THP-Plus participants, of whom less than one percent had available THP exit data, suggesting that these youth were likely missing housing data for two or more data collection points due to not having yet exited the program. The two samples were also compared according to other variables including in the sequence analyses using Chi-square methods, listed in Table 2. Values listed in the table are reported in percentages. The excluded sample included significantly more youth identifying as Black or other race/ethnicity, while the study sample included significantly more youth who identified as custodial parents or Hispanic.

	Study sample (n=2411)	Excluded sample (n=1764)
THP-Plus participant*	83.2	99.9*
Female	61.6	59.8
Custodial parent*	18.7*	1.5
American Indian	2.3	2.1
Asian	2.2	1.9
Black*	31.1	40.0*
Hispanic*	43.1*	33.2
Pacific Islander	1.0	1.1
White	24.0	23.5
Other race/ethnicity*	2.0	3.3*

**p-value < .05*

(Table 2 – Characteristics of study versus excluded samples, in percent)

Referring now to youth in the study sample, 2,002 youth (83%) were participants of THP+, versus 409 non-THP+ youth. Living on one's own (34%) or living with a relative or non-related supportive adult (29%) at any one time were the two most common types of residence found among the sample, followed by supportive or transitional housing settings (19%) and unstable housing (8%). This same pattern generally holds true when examining housing status according to THP+ non-/participation, however, among the non-THP+ sample the numbers of youth who reported residing in a housing program setting (n=22) and experiencing unstable housing (n=24) were very similar.

	Total Sample (n=2,411) % (n=)	THP+ (n=2,002) % (n=)	Non-THP+ (n=409) % (n=)
Living on one's own	33.7 (812)	32.3 (644)	41.1 (168)
Living with relative/non-related adult	29.4 (708)	27.5 (551)	38.4 (157)
Supportive/transitional housing	11.0 (266)	12.2 (244)	5.4 (22)
Program/treatment housing	8.5 (204)	10.0 (201)	.7 (3)
College dorm	2.2 (52)	1.9 (39)	3.2 (13)
Military	.4 (9)	.4 (9)	0
Unstable housing	7.9 (191)	8.3 (167)	5.9 (24)

(Table 3 – Overview of housing status, THP+ versus non-THP+ participants)

Results of the sequence analysis indicate that with seven possible elements (i.e., types of housing, shown in the table above) and one to nine possible data collection points (for non-THP+, CC25I participants), 3,793 sequence patterns or combinations were possible. Identifying only sequences at least three elements long (i.e., participants with housing information for three or more data collection points), further analysis revealed the following top 20 most

commonly occurring housing sequences found among the study sample, presented in order of frequency (see Table 4).

O = Own place
R = Relative/supportive adult
T = Transitional housing
P = Program/treatment housing
U = Unstable housing
X = Missing/Unknown

Sequence	Frequency	Sequence	Frequency	Sequence	Frequency	Sequence	Frequency
OOOO	*80*	RRRX	*26*	XOOO	*11*	UOOO	*8*
RRRR	*51*	OOXO	*18*	OOPO	*10*	OOOU	*7*
TTTT	*34*	OOOR	*15*	OPOO	*9*	RXRR	*7*
OOOX	*27*	TTTX	*15*	OORO	*8*	XUUU	*6*
ROOO	*26*	OXOO	*12*	POOO	*8*	OXOR	*6*

(Table 4 – Top 20 most commonly occurring housing sequences)

The top 20 most common sequences shown above represent 384 youth or close to 16 percent of the sample. A large majority of the sequences identified in the sample occur only once, with the most common sequences occurring five times or more. The two most commonly occurring elements, by far, were living on one's own (O) or living with a relative or non-related supportive adult (R), indicating that in lieu of access to a parental home safety net, more than a few youth in this sample had access to housing with a relative or non-related supportive adult. Due to the way in which the question was posed, living with a relative or supportive adult may also include living with a parent. Further, of the top 20 sequences shown above, when sequences containing only one type of element are grouped together, almost two-thirds of the sequences can be described by youth who either reported living on their own or with a relative, depicted in Table 5 below.

Sequence	Frequency	Sequence	Frequency
OOOO	*80*	RRRR	*51*
OOOX	*27*	RRRX	*26*
OOXO	*18*	RXRR	*7*
OXOO	*12*		
XOOO	*11*		
Total	*148*	Total	*84*

(Table 5 – Top sequences containing only elements "O" and "R")

In contrast to research on normative adult transitions, however, moving out and returning to live with a relative or supportive adult did not occur often. In fact, this pattern did not occur once in any of the sequences shown above, and only occurred 72 times (< 3%) in the entire sample. Not surprisingly, the third most commonly occurring housing involved

transitional housing. However, despite THP+ allowing the option to leave and return to the program, results indicate that very few youth in this sample chose to do so. Only 41 total sequences reflect patterns of leaving and returning to a transitional housing program. Refer to Appendix I for a full list of sequences involving an exit and return to a relative/adult home, or leaving and returning to live in transitional housing. Episodes of unstable housing appear in three of the top 20 most common sequences representing a total of 21 youth, shown in the table above (UOOO, OOOU, and XUUU). Living in a college dorm, incarceration, or enrollment in the military does not occur in any of the most commonly occurring sequences, likely due to selection bias from the way in which the current study sample was selected.

In addition to identifying full sequences of housing status, data were also examined to identify the number of occurrences housing statuses occurred. This analysis slightly differs from the one described above in that the focus was on identifying the frequency of *single elements*, rather than full sequences. Thus, findings reported here may also include records for which housing status was only known for fewer than three data points (which are not represented in the table above). Confirming what was found from the review of top sequences above, the most commonly occurring element in the entire sample was living on one's own, with 607 youth reporting living on their own at least once, and 611 youth reporting living on their own two or more times. Also similar to the findings above, the next most commonly occurring element was living with a relative, with 708 youth reporting living with a relative at least once. Though more youth reported living with a relative at least once versus living on their own, youth in the current sample appeared to not have stayed with relatives for long periods, reflected in the drastically fewer occurrences of living with a relative reported by youth for multiple data collection points. Over 370 youth reported living in unstable housing at least once during the study period. Appendix I and Table 6 below provide further information regarding the frequency at which youth in the sample lived in different types of housing.

	Own place	**Relative/Adult**	**Transitional housing**	**College dorm**	**Unstable housing**
Occurrences	(n =)	(n =)	(n =)	(n =)	(n =)
1	607	708	263	45	376
2	313	258	103	11	66
3	225	88	68	8	21
4	73	33	29	8	1
Total	*1218*	*1087*	*463*	*72*	*464*

(Table 6 – Frequencies of occurrences for top 5 most common elements)

In sum, sequence analysis findings suggest that youth who age out of foster care are not completely without supports for housing, whether in the form of a relative home or transitional housing program. Though most youth in the sample did not repeat their utilization of these housing safety nets after leaving them once, a small percent did, in much the same way has been found among their similar-aged peers in the general population. The most commonly occurring types of housing among the sample was living on one's own or staying with a relative or non-related supportive adult, with living on one's own being the most common housing status by far. Similarly, living on one's own was the most common housing type for a young

person to reside in continuously, followed by living with a relative or in transitional housing. Though very few youth in the sample reported ever living in a college dorm, eight youth who did report this type of housing remained there continuously without change. Finally, experiences of unstable housing were rare when compared to other types of housing, however, 376 youth in the sample did report living in an unstable housing situation at least once.

Identity capital: Agency and adult identity

This next section focuses on the remaining three study questions related to identity capital among youth aging out of foster care, and discusses findings from analyses of primary data collected via the online survey. Due to how closely related the following questions are, their findings are presented together.

Survey Sample Characteristics

Not surprisingly, due to the heavy outreach conducted through THP+ service providers, a majority of survey respondents are current or former participants of THP+ (62%). Almost all of the THP+ participant respondent data matched up with the secondary data, resulting in 97 percent of the matched survey sample as reporting THP+ involvement. On average, all respondents (matched and non-matched) had been out of foster care for about three years and were 21 years of age at the time of the survey. With the heavy representation of THP+ participants in the matched survey sample, the most common type of residence to which respondents reported leaving care to was transitional housing (22%). Transitional housing was also common among the sample as a whole, at 12 percent. However, leaving care to live on one's own was the most common residence among the total survey sample (19%), followed by having no place to go to (12%), and staying in their foster family home (12%). Conversely, after transitional housing, living with a relative or other adult was the next most common type of housing (16%), followed by living in a place of one's own (13%). Ten percent of the matched survey sample reported having no place to go to after leaving foster care.

About half of respondents in both the total survey sample (49%), and the matched survey sample (51%) reported having their high school diploma by the time they left foster care. About one-quarter of both samples (25%, 25%) had only completed some high school, however. In contrast, 12 percent of both samples indicated having completed some college coursework by the time they left care. Finally, when asked if it was easy for them to ask others for assistance or support, 60 percent of the total survey sample agreed and 65 percent of the matched survey sample agreed. Persons whom respondents reported feeling the closest to, in order of frequency, are: a boy/girlfriend (27%, 33%), sibling (17%, 22%), friend/peer (12%, 13%), foster parent (7%, 6%), and biological or stepmother (5%, 6%). Reported percentages are for the total and matched survey samples, respectively. Please refer to Appendix J for a summary of survey sample characteristics.

*Research Question 2***:**

How well does Côté's identity capital model fit the study's sample data? Are Côté's scales for agency and adult identity reliable and valid measures for use with a sample of youth who have aged out of care?

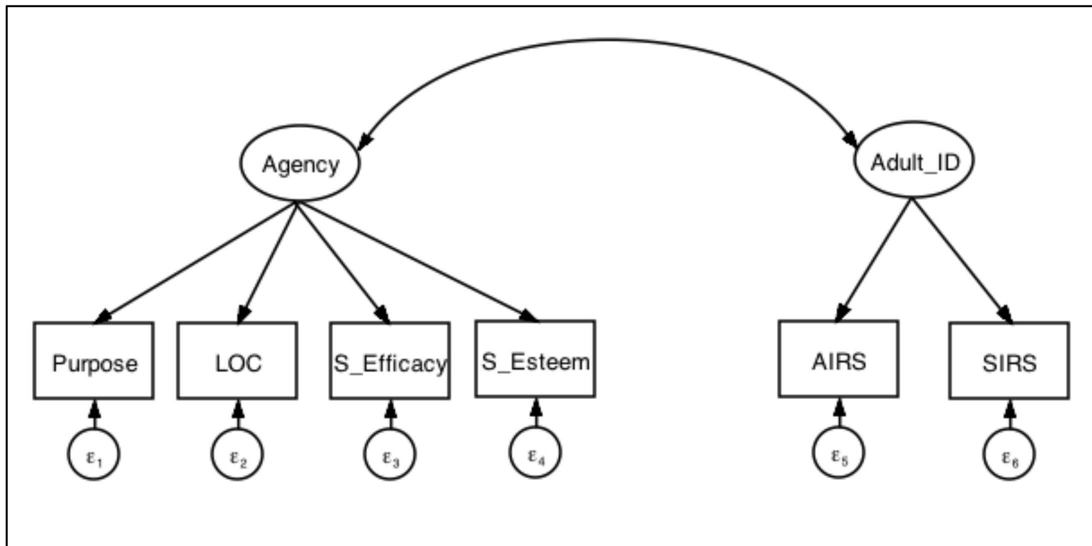
The first research question related to how well the identity capital framework fit the current study's sample data. The reliability and validity of scales for use with the current study population were also examined, comparing findings to the results reported by Côté after using the scales with a sample of similar-aged college students in the general population. Average scores of participants were first examined, calculating simple means and standard deviations. After removing any records for which data were missing related to the latent constructs (agency, adult identity), the sample size for the current and remaining analyses for research questions three and four was (n=168). The means and standard deviations reported here are also available in summary format in Appendix K. On average, survey respondents scored fairly high on the Identity Stage Resolution Index (ISRI) sub-scale, Adult Identity Resolution Scale (AIRS), scoring > 3 out of a possible perfect score of 4. Questions on AIRS relate to whether a respondent perceives her/himself to be and is viewed by others as "an adult." Average scores for the other ISRI sub-scale, the Societal Identity Resolution Scale (SIRS), though measured on a similar point scale as the AIRS, were slightly lower, not quite reaching 3.

Survey respondents also scored above median levels on constructs related to agency, measured using the Multi-Agentic Personality Scale (MAPS-20). With a possible perfect score of 6, youth scores averaged at or just below 4 on the sub-scale assessing sense of purpose in life, with the exception of one statement where respondents were asked to indicate whether they were "very irresponsible," "very responsible," or somewhere in-between. Scores averaged closer to 4.5, indicating that youth in the sample tend to consider themselves more responsible than irresponsible. Regarding internal locus of control, scores averaged near 3 out of a possible 4, with the exception of a statement related to whether chance or luck play an important role in the respondent's life. Averaging at 2.4, results indicate that youth in the current study tend to believe chance or luck does have a role in their lives. Scores were slightly lower on the self-efficacy sub-scale, reaching just below 3, on average. On self-esteem, assessed on a 2-point scale (like me/not like me), average scores ranged from (.61 – .96). Most youth agreed that they are "a lot of fun to be with," but didn't agree as wholeheartedly that they are "as nice looking as most people." Finally, in terms of relationships with people they consider to be close, youth, on average, scored > 5 out of a perfect 6.

Regarding the reliability of the ISRI and MAPS-20 scales for use with the current sample, reliability coefficients were calculated for each sub-scale, then separately for the ISRI, MAPS-20, and both scales combined. Using a cutoff criterion of .70 (Cortina, 1993; Lance, Butts, & Michels, 2006), results indicate that both ISRI sub-scales were reliable measures for use with the current sample, with alpha scores of .86 (AIRS) and .87 (SIRS). Among the MAPS-20 scales, the sub-scale for self-esteem (SE) was the only one identified as unreliable measure for use with this study sample, with an alpha score of .50. This score is considerably lower than the cutoff criterion as well as what was reported in previous research by Côté (personal communication, December 6, 2010). Reliability coefficients for the purpose in life (PIL), locus of control (LOC), and self-efficacy were .83, .76, and .82, respectively.

Further examining the utility of ISRI and MAPS-20 scales with the current study sample, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to examine fit of the study data to the conceptual framework by assessing relationships between the framework's latent constructs (agency and adult identity) and their measured indicators. The diagram in Figure 6 depicts the hypothesized pattern of observed indicators to their latent factors, modeled after findings reported by Côté (1997; 2002). "Purpose in life," "self-efficacy," "internal locus of control," and "self-esteem" were hypothesized indicators of the latent construct, *agency*, while "adult self-identity" (AIRS) and "community identity integration" (SIRS) were hypothesized indicators of the latent construct, *adult identity*. Latent factors are depicted by ovals, observed indicators by rectangles, and the small circles located underneath the rectangles represent error terms or residuals associated with each observed variable. Straight directional arrows represent the hypothesized causal effect of the latent factors on each of the observed indicators, while the curved arrow implies a correlation between the two latent factors, agency and adult identity.

Purpose =	Purpose in life
LOC =	Internal locus of control
S_Efficacy =	Self-efficacy
S_Esteem =	Self-esteem
AIRS =	Adult self-identity
SIRS =	Integration into an adult community



(Figure 6 – Latent constructs and observed indicators)

To perform the CFA, a weighted least squares approach was used, to account for the ordinally scaled indicator variables included in the model. Though maximum likelihood (MLE) is the most frequently used method of estimation within CFA (Flora & Curran, 2004; Kolenikov, 2009), this method assumes variables are normally distributed and measured on an interval, or continuous, scale. Observed variables for the current analysis were measured on five- and seven-point Likert scales, thus, leading to the choice of using a weighted least squares

approach. To assess correlation among measured variables, a matrix of polychoric correlations was calculated, which assumes that observed discrete values of measured variables stem from an underlying (unobserved) distribution that is actually continuous, also referred to as a bivariate normal or latent response distribution (Ekstrom, 2010; Flora & Curran, 2004). Table 7 presents the estimates from the polychoric correlations of observed indicators.

	AIRS	SIRS	Purpose	LOC	Self-efficacy	Self-esteem
AIRS	1					
SIRS	.582	1				
Purpose	.436	.440	1			
LOC	.355	.192	.311	1		
Self-efficacy	.381	.278	.386	.619	1	
Self-esteem	.134	.054	.381	.184	.278	1

(Table 7 – Polychoric correlations of observed indicators)

The moderate correlations found among measured indicators across latent constructs suggest a lack of construct validity for assessing agency and adult identity in the current study sample. For example, it was expected that the four indicators for “agency” would correlate with one another, and the two indicators for “adult identity” would correlate with each other. However, the moderate correlations found among the adult identity indicator, “AIRS,” and three agency indicators, “purpose in life,” “locus of control” and “self-efficacy” suggest overlap in the construct these four indicators measured. Though not as correlated with the agency indicators, the other adult indicator, “SIRS,” also correlated moderately with “purpose in life,” suggesting the scale for “purpose” may especially overlap in its measurement with the construct of “adult identity.” Finally, it was expected that the indicator of “self-esteem” would have a moderate to strong correlation with the other three indicators for agency. However, it correlated weakly with “locus of control” and “self-efficacy,” suggesting the need for a more valid scale to measure “self-esteem” or that this variable may not be a valid indicator of agency. Together with the findings reported above regarding the reliability of scales used to measure each of the observed indicators, it is likely that a more reliable and valid scale may have been needed to measure “self-esteem” in the current sample.

Continuing to explore fit between the study data and proposed conceptual framework, CFA findings suggest that these data did not fit well to the conceptual framework, across multiple analyses comparing models of one-, two-, and three-factors. Seeking to replicate the structures found via exploratory factor analyses conducted by Côté (1997), each latent construct and corresponding indicators were loaded and assessed as one-, two-, or four-factor models. The two constructs were then combined into a single model and assessed as one-, two-, and three-factor models. Following the recommendations of Schreiber and colleagues (2006) regarding goodness of fit indices to report for one-time analyses of models with categorical variables, results are reported for the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and the Root Mean Square of Approximation (RMSEA) with corresponding confidence intervals. The first two indices (also referred to as incremental, comparative, or relative fit indices) measure the degree to which all variables in the model are correlated. The RMSEA (an absolute

fit index) measures how well an a priori model fits sample data (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008). These values are also presented in Table 8.

Adult ID =	Adult identity
Agency =	Composite of 4 sub-scales described above
ID Capital =	Identity capital (Adult ID + Agency)
χ^2 =	Chi-square test of nested vs. saturated model
CFI =	Comparative Fit Index
TLI =	Tucker-Lewis Fit
RMSEA =	Root Mean Square of Approximation

	Adult ID *1-factor*	**Adult ID** *2-factor*	**Agency** *1-factor*	**Agency** *4-factor*	**ID Capital** *1-factor*	**ID Capital** *2-factor*	**ID Capital** *3-factor*
CFI	.713	.805	.891	.855	.785	.815	.836
TLI	.828	.896	.672	.842	.641	.654	.769
RMSEA	.147	.121	.141	.070	.147	.144	.099
Conf. Int.	*(.11 – .19)*	*(.08 – .17)*	*(.06 – .24)*	*(.06 – .08)*	*(.11 – .19)*	*(.10 – .19)*	*(.08 – .13)*

(Table 8 – CFA goodness-of-fit indices values)

Values from all three indices suggest a poor fit between the proposed identity capital framework and study data, using recommended respective cutoff criterion levels (Hooper et al., 2008; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The CFI has been found to perform well even with smaller sample sizes and is one of the most commonly reported fit indices due to its lack of sample size sensitivity. As such, none of the models in the current study reached the cutoff criterion of > .90, shown in the table above. The TFI (also known as the Non-Normed Fit Index, NNFI) also indicated poor fit, with none of the models attaining the cutoff criterion of TFI > .90. This index is considered more influenced by sample size, however, underestimating fit for samples fewer than 200, and not recommended as a sole measure of fit (Hooper et al., 2008). Finally, calculated RMSEA values also support a lack of fit between study data and proposed models. The utility in this index lies in its sensitivity to the number of estimated parameters in a model, tending to choose the most parsimonious available model. Using stringent criterion of values close to .06 and no greater than .07 (Hooper et al., 2008; Hu & Bentler, 1999), only the model measuring *agency* as a four-factor construct reached .07. Its confidence interval also approaches the recommended range of close to 0 for the lower limit, and less than .08 for the upper limit. However, due to the lack of fit suggested by the other two indices, this finding is taken with caution.

In examining only the full model including both agency and adult identity, results suggest the three-factor model came closest to fitting well to the study data. Of the three models (one-, two-, and three-factors) compared to assess the full conceptual framework (identity capital), the three-factor model came closest to reaching cutoff criterion across all three indices examined *(CFI and TFI > .90, RMSEA ≥ .06 < .07)*. This resembles Côté's (1997) proposal of modeling identity capital as three factors, with *adult identity* having two factors and *agency* having one. However, though this model approached a good fit to study data, fit was

ultimately not attained and further research into the utility of measuring these constructs with the given indicators and population of interest is needed. Further, given the relatively smaller than recommended sample size (n=168) used to perform the CFA, additional research with larger study samples are also needed.

Research Question 3:
Are personal agency and adult identity related to a likelihood of seeking support?

In addition to contributing to the accumulation of identity capital, and a sense of adulthood, Côté's identity capital model proposes that having a level of agency is useful for securing necessary resources, and thus helpful in contributing to more positive and stable transitions to adulthood. Accordingly, the current study sought to examine whether having a level of agency and sense of adult identity are related to an individual's likelihood of seeking support. In seeking support, an individual will be more likely to also secure necessary resources by learning of previously unknown resources and how to secure needed resources. As noted earlier, the sample size for the current analysis was (n=168). About 60 percent of respondents answered "yes" to, "Is it easy for you to ask/and or receive help and support from others?"

Bivariate logistic regressions were first run with seeking support and each of the independent variables. Due to the lack of fit determined between the latent constructs and measured indicators, agency and adult identity were not included as global variables in the logistic regressions. Rather, each construct's indicators (purpose, self-efficacy, locus of control, self-esteem, AIRS, SIRS) were included instead, as individual independent variables. Current age was also included as a control variable. At the bivariate level, adult self-identity (AIRS) and self-esteem were significantly associated with ease in seeking support. However, multivariate logistic regression results indicate that only self-esteem significantly related to ease in seeking support among the current study sample. The odds of those with a high self-esteem finding it easier to ask for support were over 16 times greater than those with a low self-esteem. Results of the multivariate logistic regression are presented in Table 9 below.

	Odds Ratio	**Std. Error**	**p-value**
Self-esteem	16.9	12.2	< .0001
AIRS (Adult self-identity)	1.1	.24	.58
Current age	1.1	.10	.23

(Table 9 – Logistic regression: Adult identity, agency, and seeking support)

Research Question 4:
Are personal agency and adult identity related to transitions into adult roles among youth who age out of care in California?

For the final study question, logistic regression was employed to determine whether transitions into adult roles (human capital accumulation, adult housing) are associated with constructs of the identity capital model. Due to the lack of fit determined between the latent

constructs and measured indicators, agency and identity were not included as global variables in the logistic regressions. Rather, each construct's indicators (purpose, self-efficacy, locus of control, self-esteem, AIRS, SIRS) were included instead, as individual independent variables. Age, ease in asking for support, and closeness to others were also included, as control variables. Given the lack of model fit revealed from performing the CFA, it was not expected that these analyses would uncover any significant relationships among model variables, and results confirmed expectations. Bivariate analyses were run first, and any independent variables identified as significantly associated at the bivariate level were included in multivariate analyses. Results of the bivariate analyses are presented in Table 10 below. Values are reported in odds ratios, and all reported values were statistically significant at $p < .05$.

	Age			**Seeking support**					
	OR	*Std. Error*	*p-value*	*OR*	*Std. Error*	*p-value*			
Human capital	1.2	.111	.043	2.1	.724	.030			
	Purpose			**SIRS**			**Age**		
	OR	*Std. Error*	*p-value*	*OR*	*Std. Error*	*p-value*	*OR*	*Std. Error*	*p-value*
Adult housing	1.6	.282	.005	1.4	.223	.05	1.2	.098	.006

(Table 10 – Odds ratios of bivariate logistic regressions)

At the bivariate level, there were no variables from the conceptual framework that were significantly associated with both dependent variables. However, one of the control variables (age) was associated with both human capital accumulation and attaining adult housing, with a one year increase in age associated with 20 percent greater odds of achieving either adult role transition. Ease in seeking support was also associated with human capital accumulation, with those finding it easy to ask for and receive support having twice the odds of accumulating human capital than those who find it difficult to ask for and receive support. Two variables from the conceptual framework were significantly associated with attaining adult housing: having a sense of purpose in life and feeling integrated into an adult community. The odds of attaining adult housing were 60 percent greater for those reporting a greater level of purpose, and 40 percent greater for those reporting feeling integrated into an adult community.

Multivariate analyses were conducted next, based on findings of the bivariate analyses. As depicted in Table 11 below, age was no longer significantly associated with human capital accumulation after examining a multivariate model including both age and seeking support. Ease in seeking support, however, did remain significantly associated with human capital accumulation, with those finding it easier to ask for and receive support having twice the odds of accumulating more human capital than those who have difficulty with asking for and receiving support. Conceptually speaking, it also seems likely that those who find it easier to ask for help (and do), would be more likely to access supports and resources, such as educational or vocational support. However, this does not explain why ease in seeking support was not also associated with attaining adult housing, as shown below. The multivariate analysis examining adult housing attainment with purpose in life, integration into an adult community, and age revealed no significant associations among variables at a significance level of $p < .05$.

	Age			Seeking support*					
	OR	*Std. Error*	*p-value*	*OR*	*Std. Error*	*p-value*			
Human capital	1.2	.117	.091	2.1	.785	.038			
	Purpose			**SIRS**			**Age**		
	OR	*Std. Error*	*p-value*	*OR*	*Std. Error*	*p-value*	*OR*	*Std. Error*	*p-value*
Adult housing	1.3	.201	.155	1.3	.194	.127	1.2	.097	.065

(Table 11 – Results of multivariate logistic regressions with human capital and adult housing)

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary and Discussion

This study investigated transitions to adulthood among youth who aged out of foster care in California. The study sought to move beyond previous research by exploring the utility of a theoretical framework, Côté's (1997; 2002) identity capital model, for explaining differential pathways to adulthood among youth aging out of care. Multiple sources of data were analyzed, with secondary administrative data providing information for the first research question, and cross-sectional survey data providing information for the remaining three study questions. The first study question examined housing pathways taken by youth after aging out of care, following commonly used models in demographic analyses of pathways in transitions to adulthood. Questions 2 through 4 focused more specifically on the identity capital model, and explored constructs of adult identity and agency in relation to youth functioning after exiting the foster care system. This chapter discusses major findings resulting from each study question, listed below:

1. Similar to patterns found among youth in the general population, more than a few youth in the study sample relied on supportive relatives or non-related adults for housing during their transition to adulthood. Many youth in the sample also lived in their own place – on their own or with a roommate. In fact, this was the most common housing status observed among the study sample, by far. Furthermore, very few youth left and returned to a relative home or transitional housing, suggesting youth accessed these housing safety nets on a limited basis.
2. Though direct comparisons are difficult due to the different methods used to examine housing status, youth in the current study sample appear to have had fewer experiences of unstable housing compared to youth in the Midwest or other studies. Specifically, by age 21, 17.7 percent of youth in the Midwest Study reported having been homeless at least once since leaving foster care. At age 19, Midwest Study participants were only asked about current living arrangements, and similar information is not available. Similarly, a study in Detroit reported homeless rates at over 13 percent during the two-year study period (Fowler et al., 2009). Conversely, among the current study sample, largely comprised of youth aged 18 to 21, fewer than 8 percent (7.9%) of youth reported being in any sort of unstable housing at any one of the four data collection points. More youth in the Midwest Study also reported staying with a relative or non-related supportive adult at age 19 (44.6%) and 21 (30.0%), compared to 29.4 percent of youth in the current study. However, again, direct comparisons are made with caution due to the different ways in which data were collected.
3. Cronbach's alpha estimates and confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) indicated that Côté's scales for measuring adult identity and agency, in their current form, had low reliability and validity in use with the current study sample. Data analyses resulted in reliability and construct validity scores falling below recommended criterion levels. Similarly, CFA goodness-of-fit tests indicated a poor fit of model constructs and indicators to data of the current study sample.

4. Perhaps due to how adult identity and agency were measured, neither construct had a significant relationship with ease in seeking support. Conducting logistic regression analyses with measured indicators, rather than the latent constructs, revealed only self-esteem as significantly related to seeking support. Youth who scored high on the self-esteem measure are 16 times more likely to find it easy to seek out support than those with lower self-esteem scores.
5. Similarly, the last analysis examining a relationship between personal agency, adult identity, and transition into adult roles (defined as accumulation of human capital or attaining adult housing) also revealed no significant associations between model constructs and outcomes of interest. This analysis also included measured indicators in logistic regression models, rather than latent constructs. Finding it easy to ask for support, a control variable, was the only factor that significantly related to one of the outcomes, specifically, the accumulation of human capital.

One aspect likely explaining some of the outcomes seen among the current study sample, especially in regards to their housing patterns, is the purposive sampling strategy used to recruit study participants. Unlike other studies of youth aging out of foster care, youth in the current study were selected from a population of current or former participants of a comprehensive transitional housing program or other service initiative. Other studies of former foster youth have also recruited youth using connections with service providers or organizations where youth were likely to have contact, however, not from such comprehensive or widely available aftercare programs. The current study differed in its recruitment of participants from a network of comprehensive, transitional housing program service providers, available across the state. Though current study findings may not be generalizable beyond the study population, results do suggest that THP-Plus and CC25I are having a positive impact on housing stability among youth who participate in the program – reflected in their lower than usual rates of unstable housing, and more youth living on their own with stability over time. These findings also align with findings from another study that compared housing outcomes of 106 youth who aged out of foster care and either participated in a transitional housing program or participated in services not including housing (Jones, 2011b). None of the participants who participated in the transitional housing program experienced homelessness after discharge from the program during the study period. These and other study findings are discussed more in-depth below.

Early adulthood housing trajectories of youth who aged out of care in California

The first research question examined housing pathways taken by youth after exiting from foster care. Overall, a majority of youth in the sample did not experience unstable housing, or did so only for brief durations, and also experienced lower rates of unstable housing compared to participants of the Midwest Study (Courtney et al., 2007). Similar to patterns observed among similar-aged youth in the general population (Goldscheider, Thornton, & Young-DeMarco, 1993; Rumbaut & Komaie, 2006; Settersten & Ray, 2010), more than a few youth stayed with a relative or non-related supportive adult after leaving the foster care system. Indeed, staying with a relative was the second most common type of housing observed

in the sample. In contrast, many youth lived in their own place after leaving care, either alone or with a roommate, and was the most common type of housing observed among the study sample. This is similar to findings from the Midwest Study, with 28.7 and 44.3 percent youth reporting living on their own at age 19 and 21, respectively (Courtney et al., 2007; Courtney et al., 2005). Additionally, patterns of leaving and returning to a relative's home or transitional housing setting were fairly infrequent, indicating very few youth in the sample relied on housing safety nets repeatedly, or for very long durations. In another departure from norms found among youth in the general population, only a small percentage of youth in the sample ever indicated staying in a college dorm (< 3%), although 16 of these youth, or 20 percent, remained in a college dorm for at least three data collection periods. Regarding youth in the study who struggled to establish stable housing, slightly fewer than eight percent (7.9%) of the sample reported being in unstable housing at any one time. At age 21, 24 percent of youth in the Midwest Study reported having been homeless at least once since exiting care (Courtney et al., 2007). Findings also highlight that youth identifying as American Indian were especially likely to experience instability in housing, compared to youth of other race/ethnic backgrounds.

These findings indicate that many youth in the study sample managed to move out on their own after leaving foster care, and successfully maintained their housing for the duration of the study period. Many youth were also able to rely on relatives or non-related supportive adults during times of need. However, stays with relatives tended to not last throughout the study period, and patterns of leaving and returning to a relative's home were fairly infrequent. Similarly, despite having the option to leave and return to transitional housing, especially with THP-Plus, few youth in the sample did so. Identifying ways to support youth to live on their own may not only be appropriate developmentally, but would also align with the most frequent and stable housing type found among youth in this sample.

Adult identity, agency, and youth aging out of care: Fit of the conceptual framework

Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted to assess fit of the study's conceptual framework to the study sample, analyzing data collected via cross-sectional survey. Two scales developed by Côté were used to assess levels of each construct among study participants: the Identity Stage Resolution Index (ISRI) and the Multi-Agentic Personality Scale (MAPS-20). Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicated acceptable reliability scores for almost all administered sub-scales, using a criterion cutoff level of .7. Only the sub-scale used to measure self-esteem, one of the indicators of agency assessed via the MAPS-20, did not meet the criterion cutoff for reliability, with an alpha score of .5. Alpha coefficients were not calculated for the global constructs of adult identity and agency (sub-scales combined), as scholars suggest that Cronbach's alpha coefficient is not as useful for assessing multi-dimensional scales (Cortina, 1993), such as the ISRI + MAPS-20.

Moderate correlations found among measured indicators across latent constructs suggest the scales used to assess adult identity and agency had low construct validity in use with the current study sample. Moderate correlations found between the adult identity indicator, "AIRS," and three of the agency indicators, "purpose in life," "locus of control" and "self-efficacy," suggest overlap in the measurement of the identity and agency latent constructs. Though not as correlated with the agency indicators, the other adult indicator,

"SIRS," also correlated moderately with "purpose in life," indicating that the scale for "purpose," (an indicator of agency) especially, may overlap in its measurement with the construct of "adult identity." The indicator for "self-esteem" also correlated weakly with "locus of control" and "self-efficacy," suggesting the need for a more valid scale to measure "self-esteem" or that this variable may not be a valid indicator of agency. The lower response scores and alpha coefficients for the self-esteem sub-scale together with the findings regarding construct validity suggest that an alternative measure may be more useful for assessing this construct among youth aging out of foster care.

To determine the overall fit of constructs from the Côté's conceptual framework to study data, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to replicate the exploratory factor analysis findings previously reported by Côté (1997). Scores of three goodness-of-fit tests were examined to determine the degree of fit between model constructs and data: the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and the Root Mean Square of Approximation (RMSEA). Results from all three tests indicated a poor fit between the current study data and the conceptual framework. Three models with one-, two-, and three-factors were compared to assess fit of the conceptual framework, with the three-factor model coming closest to reaching cutoff criterion levels across all three indices. This resembles Côté's (1997) proposed model of identity capital as three factors, with *adult identity* as two factors and *agency* as one. However, though this model approached a good fit to study data, fit was ultimately not attained and further research into the utility of measuring these constructs with the given indicators and population of interest is needed. Further, given the relatively smaller than recommended sample size (n=168) used to perform the CFA, additional research with larger study samples is also needed.

Adult identity, agency, and likelihood of seeking support

Logistic regression analyses were conducted to examine whether adult identity and agency might be related to ease in seeking support. A premise of the identity capital model states that a person having a greater level of agency would be better able to seek out and secure resources as necessary. About 60 percent of study participants agreed that it was easy for them to ask/and or receive help and support from others. Bivariate logistic regressions indicated ease in seeking support was significantly related to identifying as an adult and self-esteem. However, identifying as an adult was no longer significant after running a multivariate logistic regression model including variables deemed significant at the bivariate level. Self-esteem remained significant in the multivariate model, with higher self-esteem individuals finding it 16 times easier to seek out support than individuals with lower self-esteem.

Adult identity, agency, and accumulating human capital or attaining adult housing

Logistic regression was also employed to answer the last study question regarding whether transitions into adult roles were associated with adult identity and agency. Two adult role transitions were analyzed: accumulation of human capital and attainment of adult housing. Human capital accumulation was defined as either pursuing postsecondary education or being currently employed, and adult housing was defined as residing in a place of one's own or in a

college dorm. Bivariate logistic regressions were run first, indicating significant relationships between human capital accumulation and ease in seeking support. However, indicators for neither adult identity nor agency were significantly associated with accumulating human capital. Two variables from the conceptual framework were significantly associated with attaining adult housing, however: having a sense of purpose in life and feeling integrated into an adult community. The odds of attaining adult housing were 60 percent greater for youth reporting a greater level of purpose, and 40 percent greater for youth who reported feeling integrated into an adult community. These associations disappeared at the multivariate level, however, while seeking support remained significantly related to human capital accumulation. Individuals who indicated having an easier time with asking for and receiving support had twice the odds of accumulating greater human capital than those reporting difficulty with seeking support. Conceptually speaking, it also seems likely that those who find it easier to ask for help (and do), would be more likely to access supports and resources, such as educational or vocational support, but this does not explain why ease in seeking support was not also associated with attaining adult housing.

Implications for policy and social work practice

Housing

Perhaps the most pressing need for a young person at their exit from care is housing, especially due to its impact on functioning in other domains (Collins & Curtis, 2011). It is not uncommon for young people in the general population to move in and out of the parental home multiple times before finally establishing their own place of residence (Furstenberg, 2010; Goldscheider et al., 1993; Rumbaut & Komaie, 2006). Conversely, due to the policy context of foster care, youth who age out of care frequently face the challenge of establishing adult self-sufficiency within a compressed and inflexible timeframe. Having access to supportive transitional housing may be critical to facilitating stability for aging out foster youth as they work towards attaining self-sufficiency. To this end, the federal Fostering Connections to Success Act and California's corresponding AB 12, which extend foster care services to aging out youth beyond age 18 (Lemley et al., 2010), help to address the housing gap for older foster youth in California.

A large majority of youth in the current study experienced relatively stable housing over the study period, perhaps due to the purposive sampling strategy used to select with the current study sample. Still, transitional housing appears to serve as a helpful rung on the ladder toward establishing housing stability. Many youth moved on to live in a place of their own after exiting the housing program, and none of the youth in the sample reported having unstable housing after program exit. Though only a handful of youth in the sample reported staying in a college dorm, some of the youth who did stay in a dorm appeared to stay over multiple periods of data collection (n=16). Along with greater efforts in assisting youth to access and complete postsecondary education, it may also be helpful to encourage youth to reside in a college dorm. Dorms not only provide much needed housing, but also create opportunities for youth to develop and foster supportive relationships with peers outside of the foster care system,

expanding their networks of social support and potentially helping to create a sense of belonging for youth who age out of care.

In addition, while a number of youth relied on relatives and non-related supportive adults for housing, a majority of these stays were brief, and very few youth returned to a relative home after having moved out (< 3%). This suggests that relative homes did serve as a housing safety net for many youth in the sample, however, relatives' ability to support youth during their transition to adulthood may be limited. Further, information regarding whether youth were staying with the same or different relative at any point in time was also not available, potentially painting a different picture of youth who reported relying on relatives or supportive adults for housing. Conversely, it may also be that youth in the sample preferred to live on their own and did not want to stay with relatives for long periods. Or, the study period may simply not have been long enough to capture the types of housing patterns seen among youth in the general population. Unstable housing only affected a small portion of the current study sample, with most instances of housing instability occurring prior to program entrance. In sum, study findings suggest a need to further solidify a pathway into stable housing upon exiting care, focused on assisting youth in establishing their own place of residence. Transitional housing programs and college dorms are two options that offer much promise in supporting youth toward establishing stable adult housing. Identifying supportive relatives and adults to serve as temporary, rather than long-term, housing safety nets during times of need may also further prevent unstable housing occurrences, and align with housing patterns found among the current study sample.

Independent Living Program Services

Study findings regarding the low reliability and construct validity of scales used to measure adult identity and agency preclude the ability to make any inferences regarding the role of these constructs for aging out foster youth during the transition to adulthood. Current Independent Living Program (ILP) services, though inconsistent in their content and implementation, generally focus solely on practical skills such as managing a budget or household. Evidence regarding their efficacy in assisting young people to establish their independence is also mixed and inconclusive. Of the few randomized, controlled trials that have been conducted to evaluate ILP services, only one resulted in any significant findings, which compared a program based on an intense relational model with another that used a more "hands-off" approach. Participants of the intense relational model were significantly more likely to enroll in and continue attending college than participants of the hands-off model.

These ILP evaluation findings, and research related especially to the emerging adulthood perspective suggest that other supports and skill may be needed to facilitate stable and positive transitions to adulthood. The lack of effect found with the ILP model focused primarily on providing skills, and minimally on relationship-building, indicates that teaching practical skills alone may not be enough. Similarly, though participants in the current study generally scored average to high on most scale questions, raw scores for the three questions related to 'integration into an adult community' averaged lower than other scales. Study participants scored especially lower on a question asking if they had "found a 'community' in which to live for the remainder of my life." Again, though broad generalizations or inferences are not

possible, relationship-building and helping youth in fostering their own sense of belonging to a community may help lead to better adjustment and functioning during transitions out of care into adulthood.

The emerging adulthood framework also posits that the transition to adulthood is a time of self-exploration and solidifying one's identity (Arnett, 2000). While it is still unclear whether these tasks or absence of them will lead to better or worse functioning developmentally, this perspective suggests that transitioning to adulthood is not a straightforward task involving a checklist of concrete, practical skills that lead to becoming an "adult." Additionally, the emerging adulthood framework suggests the transition to adulthood is as much an internally transformative process, as it is a socially visible one involving changes in adult roles and status. Addressing "softer" qualities such as developing an adult identity and nurturing a level of agency via ILP services may assist youth in taking ownership of their transition and allow them to effectively negotiate adulthood on their own terms, rather than striking out on their own before feeling ready.

Limitations

The current study was exploratory, and employed a purposive sampling strategy to recruit study participants. Thus, findings are not generalizable to the broader population of youth who age out of foster care, but suggest future opportunities towards building theory. In addition, the secondary data use to analyze youth's housing trajectories (the first research question) only provides information on youth after having come in contact with one of two aftercare programs, leaving a gap between their exit from foster care and entrance into THP-Plus or CC25I, during which status of their functioning and adjustment is unknown. It would have been preferable to track youth beginning with their exit from the foster care system to capture their full trajectory into adulthood.

Similarly, the purposive sample of the survey reflects only youth who received information regarding the survey, and agreed to participate. Youth not reflected in the survey may be significantly different from youth who were unaware of or chose not to participate in the survey. Measurement methods also limit interpretation of survey results. Low reliability and construct validity preclude the ability to make any inferences regarding the role (or irrelevance) of adult identity and agency in navigating the transition to adulthood. Examination of either of these constructs in future research should focus on refining current measures or developing new ones for use with populations of aged-out foster youth.

Directions for future research

Several questions remain after results of the current study, creating multiple opportunities for future research. First and foremost, additional research is clearly needed to investigate and identify internal resources that may contribute to stable and positive transitions to adulthood, specific to youth aging out of foster care. Given that youth in the general population typically rely on family guidance and support during the transition to adulthood, further research is needed to delineate resources that may be developed and nurtured apart from a family context in order to understand how best to support youth who may not have a

family they can safely turn to upon exiting care. Qualitative studies related to youth self-perceptions, such as those indicating feelings of advanced maturity and strong self-reliance, also suggest that further investigations into understanding the development of agency and adult identity may be fruitful. Future research will include follow up with participants of the current study, to further explore the relevance of adult identity and agency among this population, which will help inform the refinement of existing scales or development of a new measure that captures these constructs with greater reliability and validity.

Relatedly, another conceptual framework that may be useful for future research, especially for developing relevant interventions, is Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Self-determination theory (SDT) proposes that all human beings have basic psychological needs, analogous to humans' basic physical needs for food and water, that must be met in order to function optimally and achieve a state of wellbeing. These three basic psychological needs are *autonomy*, *competence*, and a sense of *relatedness*. The degree to which these needs are met or thwarted affect a person's ability to thrive and reach her/his full potential (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000a, 2000b; Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006). Relevant throughout the life course, the most optimal outcomes are attained when all three needs are balanced, or equally satisfied (Milyavskaya et al., 2009; Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006; Vallerand, Koestner, & Pelletier, 2008). The contexts in which one is situated help to facilitate or prohibit the meeting of these needs (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000), and the extent to which competence, autonomy, and relatedness are experienced is linked to cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes (Vallerand et al., 2008). Thus, young people's contexts before and during the transition to adulthood may potentially affect their functioning and trajectories into adulthood.

Future studies might examine the degree to which autonomy, competence, and relatedness or belonging, are relevant constructs for youth aging out of care. A desire to exercise autonomy and experience a sense of belonging are both themes that have been uncovered in previous qualitative studies with aging out foster youth. Similarly, permanency or social supports are both variables commonly examined in studies of youth aging out of care into adulthood. Evidence from the Midwest Study and others indicate that youth are leaving care with fairly high levels of social support, yet data analyses have indicated mixed findings regarding an association between social supports and functioning in other domains. Thus, it may be that social support is not the most relevant construct during this life period, but rather a sense of belonging or relatedness. In addition, a study of neglectful mothers also suggests it may be the nature of relationships and social networks and how they are perceived, rather than levels of social support itself, that are most important in contributing to functioning and wellbeing (Beeman, 1997). Research into different contexts that may allow greater opportunities for youth to develop and effectively exercise agency in making decisions over their lives is also needed. This could be especially relevant in California with AB 12, which includes provisions for a range of living options for older youth beyond age 18, varying from more to less structured and supervised.

Finally, and perhaps, the most obvious need in future research is examining what works best in supporting youth to accumulate the concrete resources needed for stable and positive adult transitions, including the attainment of adult housing, accumulating human capital, and building financial resources. For example, study findings highlighted many youth in the sample

living in and maintaining a residence of their own. Future research might examine best ways to create a pathway out of care into stable housing to ensure youth are not falling into homelessness due to gaps in housing supports. Relatedly, greater investigation into college dorms as housing options may help to reveal their utility not only in providing housing, but also in helping youth develop broader social networks and creating a sense of belonging among similar-aged college peers. Similarly, future studies might focus on identifying best ways to assist youth in completing secondary education in a timely manner, and continuing onto postsecondary education, whether in the form of vocational training, community college, or attending a four-year university. Prior research suggests youth who begin working during adolescence and continue to do so into early adulthood (in balance with attending school) are more likely to earn a living wage by their mid-twenties (Macomber et al., 2008). However, an evaluation of an employment-focused ILP also discovered many youth may be placed in jobs that do not match their interests, decreasing the likelihood of youth remaining in their jobs long-term and also missing an opportunity to support young adults in practicing agency over their lives. Lastly, though more youth are reportedly leaving care with at least a bank account in their name, future efforts might focus on assisting youth in also building their financial resources, such as learning to plan for the future, build savings and understand how to responsibly use and manage credit.

A growing body of research indicating low levels of educational attainment, low levels of earned income, and high rates of housing instability highlight the need to better support aging-out youth in their transition to adulthood. Current study findings and future research directions aim to take next steps, and identify theoretical approaches and relevant interventions toward better supporting youth in shaping more positive and stable transitions out of foster care into adulthood.

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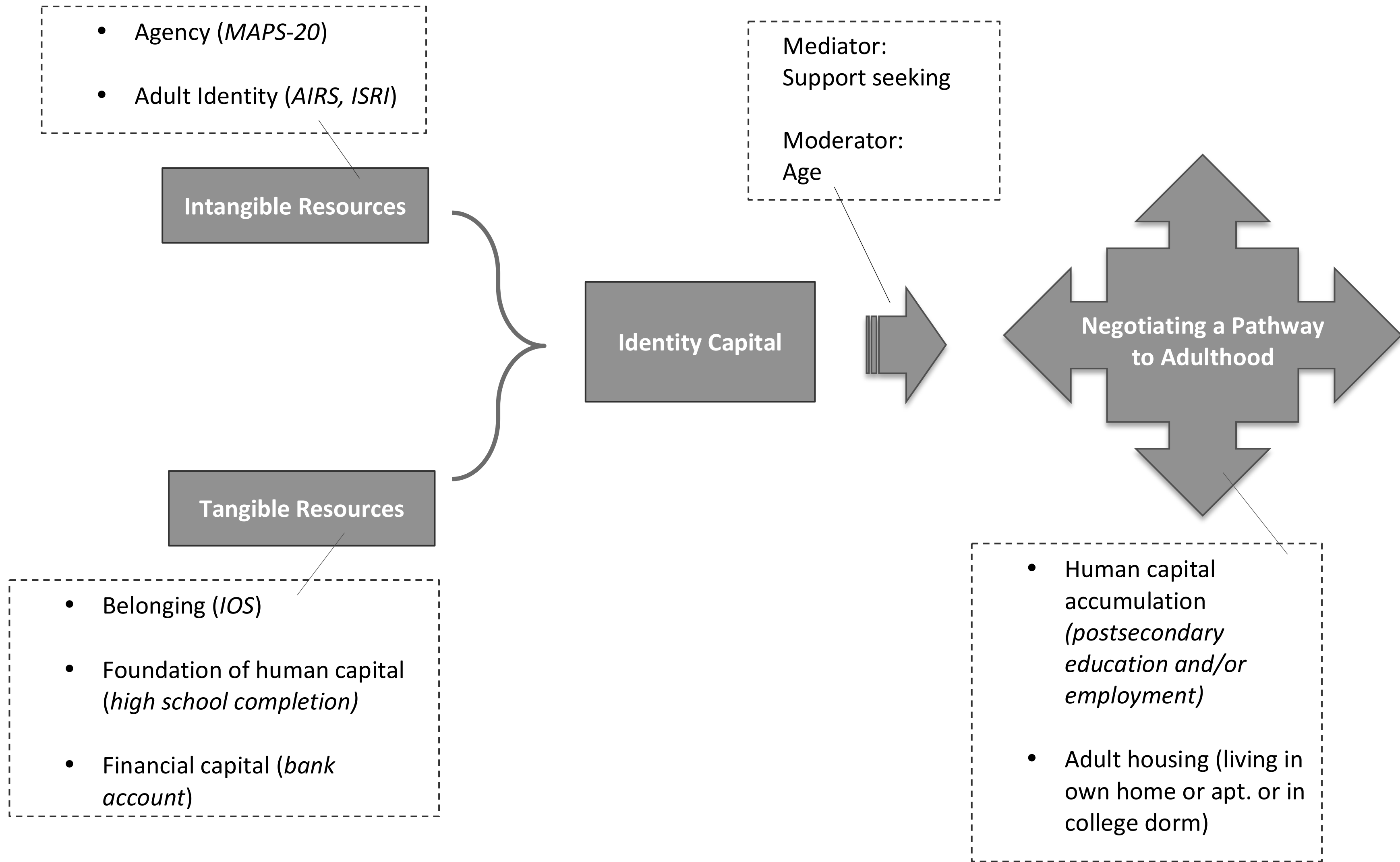
Appendix: Conceptual diagram, Identity Capital and the Transition to Adulthood



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Placer
Lake
Yolo
El Dorado
Sonoma
Napa
Sacra-mento
Alpine
Amador
Solano
Marin
Calaveras
Tuolumne
Contra Costa
San Joaquin
Mono
San Francisco
Alameda
Stanislaus
Mariposa
San Mateo
Santa Clara
Santa Cruz
Merced
Madera
Fresno
Inyo
San Benito
Tulare
Monterey
Kings
San Luis Obispo
Kern
San Bernardino
Santa Barbara
Ventura
Los Angeles
Orange
Riverside
Imperial
San Diego

Legend

No THP-Plus program

1-20 housing slots

21-70 housing slots

71 or more housing slots

"I have experienced all the ups and downs of the THP-Plus program and I am glad to say that I don't regret one bit of it. Without my case manager, I wouldn't be where I am today."

- Regina L. with case manager
(New Alternatives, San Diego County)

Subject Heading: Survey of emancipated or aged out transitional age youth (TAY)

December 1, 2011

Dear service provider,

I am a graduate student with the School of Social Welfare at University of California Berkeley, and recent summer intern of the John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes. I am writing to ask your help in sharing information about a study of emancipated foster youth in California. The study is being conducted as part of my dissertation research under the supervision of my faculty advisor, Dr. Jill Duerr Berrick, professor at the School of Social Welfare at UC Berkeley.

The study involves a survey for young adults (ages 18-28) who emancipated or aged out of foster care in California, including previous or current participants of THP-Plus. Currently incarcerated young adults are not eligible to participate. We hope the results of this study will increase our understanding of the role of personal resources during the transition to adulthood, and help inform programs and services supporting young people during this time.

The survey is estimated to take about 20-30 minutes to complete, and is available online at: www.youthintransition.weebly.com. To thank youth for their participation, they will receive a $10 gift card for iTunes, Amazon, or Target. Youth will be asked to share their email or mailing address after completing the survey in order to receive their gift card.

Your assistance in recruiting youth for the survey is very much appreciated, and I could not do this without you. I am attaching a flyer and an informational email for you to share with youth who are eligible to participate. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the study: clee07@berkeley.edu.

Thanks in advance for your time and assistance,
Chris Lee

PhD student
School of Social Welfare
University of California, Berkeley
clee07@berkeley.edu

Subject Heading:
You're invited! Survey of emancipated or aged out transitional age youth (TAY)

Hello,

I am a social welfare graduate student at UC Berkeley, and am writing to invite you to participate in a survey. I am conducting the survey as part of my graduate studies, under the supervision of my faculty advisor at UC Berkeley, Dr. Jill Duerr Berrick. I am interested in learning about the experiences of young people who emancipate out of state care, from the perspective of young people. As someone with experience in transitioning out of the foster care system into adulthood, your perspective is especially valued and I hope you will consider participating.

About the survey

The survey is for young adults in California (ages 18-28) who have emancipated or aged out of foster care, including previous or current participants of THP-Plus, and is estimated to take about 20-30 minutes to complete. The survey, and more information about the survey is available online at: www.youthintransition.weebly.com.

To thank you for your participation, you will receive a $10 gift card for iTunes, Amazon or Target after you complete the survey. If you'd like to participate, please click on the link below to go to the survey website, or copy and paste the link into your Internet browser: www.youthintransition.weebly.com.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at clee07@berkeley.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Chris Lee

PhD student
School of Social Welfare
University of California, Berkeley
clee07@berkeley.edu

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Be part of a study on how young adults transition from foster care into adulthood.

If you recently emancipated or “aged out” of foster care, and are between ages 18-28, we want to hear from you!

You’ll receive a $10 gift card from Amazon or Target, for completing the survey.

To participate, go to www.youthintransition.weebly.com and fill out the survey online.

If you’d prefer to take the survey by mail, contact Chris Lee at the email listed below and a paper copy will be mailed to you.

Go to:
www.youthintransition.weebly.com

Chris Lee
clee07@berkeley.edu

Methods Used to Clean Survey Data

By the end of June 2012, 372 surveys had been completed. This number does not include blank or partially completed surveys, and differs from the final survey sample size due to duplicate completed surveys and one incident of spamming identified by the author during data collection. These response errors were addressed in the following ways. All participants were asked to create a unique ID code at the beginning of the survey by providing the first three letters of their first name, the first three letters of their last name, and four numbers representing the month and day of their birthdate. As noted above, participants were asked at the end of the survey to provide an email or mailing address at which a gift card of their choice could be sent. Seven duplicate surveys were discarded, identified when more than one survey listed similar ID code information and the exact same email or mailing address to which the gift card was to be sent. In these cases, the first survey completed by a participant was retained and remaining surveys were excluded from analysis.

The spamming incident occurred on April 13 – 14, 2012, leading to the discarding of an additional 166 survey entries. These entries were identified as spam due to several characteristics not seen with other survey responses. The two primary factors used to identify these surveys as spam include: their completion within minutes of each other, and vast numbers of them completed from the same IP address, which was tracked by Qualtrics, the software used to administer the survey. These patterns were not seen with other survey entries, even those submitted on the same day. The author also reviewed each survey received on April 13 – 14 to determine whether any of the surveys completed during this block of time could be retained. A majority of surveys were determined unusable, excepting two, due to nonsensical responses indicating the unlikelihood of their completion by an eligible survey participant. Most nonsensical responses were characterized by the following:

1. Reported current age considerably younger than 18 (e.g., 11) or older than 28 (e.g., 39)
2. Reported age of leaving foster care was either considerably younger or older than 18, indicating that they likely did not age out of foster care or were never in foster care (i.e., since it is highly unlikely for a 26-year-old to still be in foster care)
3. The date at which they reported leaving foster care was very old (e.g., 1999)
4. Incongruent dates and ages, for example, reporting that they left foster care in 2004 at age 18 and currently participating in THP-Plus at age 22

After removing all survey entries identified from the above procedures, the final sample size for the study was (n=199). In further cleaning and preparing the data for analysis, three more surveys were excluded due to respondents listing the year they left foster care as 1990, 1992, and 1998. Aging out of foster care during any of these years would mean respondents were 40 years at the oldest and 32 years at the youngest, rendering them ineligible for participation in the current study. One more record was removed after being identified as an outlier due to the respondent consistently choosing “1” (or the first available response option) across scale questions. Thus, the final sample size for analyses conducted to answer the last three research questions was (n=195).

Survey Codebook

Ever participated in THP+?
- Yes
- No

If yes, which one?
- Select from list of providers

If no, why not?
- THP+ housing not in my area
- Applied, but no beds available
- Applied, other reasons
- Didn't apply, had other place to live
- Didn't apply, wanted to live on own
- Didn't apply, wanted to live with person of my choice
- Other

In which county do you live?
- Select from list of counties

Same residence lived in after foster care?
- Yes
- No

If not same residence, where?
- THP+ program
- With foster family
- With a relative
- With biological mom or dad
- Own place (on own or w/roommate)
- College dorm
- Group home
- Residential treatment facility
- Other housing program
- Homeless
- Other

When did you leave foster care?
- Month
- Year

Residence right after foster care?
- With foster family
- With a relative
- With biological mom or dad
- Own place (on own or w/roommate)
- College dorm
- Group home
- Residential treatment facility
- Other housing program
- Was homeless
- Was incarcerated
- Other

Age when left foster care?
- Numerical fill-in

Current age?
- Numerical fill-in

How did you decide to leave foster care?
- Open-ended response

Highest education level at foster care exit
- Some high school
- Graduated with high school diploma
- GED or other high school equivalent
- Attended vocational program
- Some college
- Other

Worked during high school?
- Yes
- No

How much worked during high school?
- Up to 10 hours/week
- About 11-20 hours/week
- About 21-31 hours/week
- About 32 hours or more/week

Survey Codebook

Highest level of education now?

- Same as above
- Some high school
- Graduate with high school diploma
- GED or other high school equivalent
- Attended vocational program
- Some college
- Completed 2-year degree
- Completed 4-year degree
- Other

Working now?

- Yes, fewer than 32 hours/week
- Yes, 32 hours or more/week
- No

Future school goals?

- GED or other high school equivalent
- Associates or other 2-year degree
- Complete vocational program
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Graduate level professional degree (JD, MSW, MPH, etc.)
- Doctorate degree
- Other

Do you think education is important?

- Yes
- No

ISRI scale statements

- I consider myself to be an adult
- I feel respected by others an adult
- I feel that I have fully matured
- I have found my "niche" place in life
- I have found a lifestyle that I am satisfied with having for the remainder of my life
- I have found a "community" in which to live for the remainder of my life

***ISRI scale* response options:**

- Totally true
- Mostly true
- Somewhat true
- A little true
- Not at all true

MAPS-20 scale (4 sub-scales)

Purpose-in-life sub-scale

I am usually:

- Completely bored (1)
- Neutral (4)
- Enthusiastic (7)

Life seems to me:

- Completely routine (1)
- Neutral (4)
- Always exciting (7)

Everyday is:

- Exactly the same (1)
- Neutral (4)
- Constantly new and different (7)

My life is:

- Empty (1)
- Neutral (4)
- Filled with exciting, good things (7)

I am:

- Very irresponsible (1)
- Neutral (4)
- Very responsible

Survey Codebook

Internal locus-of-control (LOC) subscale

- Becoming a success is a matter of hard work. Lucky breaks have little or nothing to do with it
- When I make plans, I am pretty confident that I can make them work
- There is a direct connection between how hard I study and the grades I get
- It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life
- What happens to me is my own doing

Internal LOC subscale response options

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Slightly agree
- Slightly disagree
- Strongly disagree

Self-efficacy subscale

- I enjoy difficult and challenging situations
- I have a lot of will power
- I am able to concentrate better than most people under distracting situations
- I can handle physical discomfort better than most
- When I have a job to do, I am not easily distracted

Self-efficacy subscale response options

- Completely true
- Mostly true
- Partly true, partly not true
- Mostly not true
- Completely not true

Self-esteem subscale

- I'm a lot of fun to be with
- I'm popular with persons of my own age
- People usually follow my ideas
- I'm not as nice looking as most people
- Most people are better liked than I am

Self-esteem subscale response options

- Not like me
- Like me

Is it easy for you to ask and/or receive help and support from others?

- Yes
- No

List people in your social network, and the type of support you are comfortable asking them for

- Concrete help (borrow money, etc.)
- Information or advice
- Emotional support

Of the people in your life who are important to you, who would you say you feel the closest to?

- Open-ended response

Closeness to other(s) scale

- Diagram of 7 pairs of circles, each with varying levels of overlap
- Respondents asked to circle which pair of circles best depicts how close they fell to the person they identified in previous question

Comparison Of Select Outcomes Over Time: Study Vs. Total Aged Out Youth Populations						
	2009		2010		2011	
	Study	Total	Study	Total	Study	Total
Parenting Status						
Custodial parent	13.9	*9.1*	15.7	*9.7*	12.5	*8.8*
Housing						
Renting own place	74.2	*22.6*	85.8	*24.4*	74.3	*22.5*
Living with relative or other adult	28.2	*31.6*	29.1	*36.1*	29.9	*35.9*
College dorm	2.6	*4.0*	2.0	*3.5*	1.8	*4.3*
Transitional housing program	12.2	*17.1*	13.8	*14.2*	11.8	*13.3*
Unstable housing	7.0	*1.1*	7.4	*1.1*	8.3	*1.0*
Incarcerated	.7	*1.1*	1.3	*1.0*	.9	*.7*
Education						
Received high school diploma	63.3	*42.9*	60.5	*45.9*	59.1	*45.7*
Enrolled in 2-year college	51.1	*22.9*	49.7	*22.7*	47.9	*18.5*
Enrolled in 4-year college/university	4.2	*5.5*	5.6	*7.0*	5.0	*5.7*
Employment						
Working FT	10.4	*6.0*	10.7	*5.2*	8.1	*4.6*
Working PT	19.9	*24.8*	21.7	*20.8*	17.7	*19.3*
Supports						
Financial support from family	5.1	*20.3*	4.7	*20.7*	4.7	*21.2*
Resources						
Has bank account[1]	37.2	*23.7*	40.1	*23.4*	35.5	*21.9*
Has permanent connection with adult	93.1	*79.8*	94.0	*82.6*	94.2	*79.8*

[1] Youth participating in THP+ were asked only if they had a bank account, while youth were asked whether they had a checking and/or a savings account upon their exit from care. Values listed for the Total Population are from the higher of the two percentages reported (i.e., youth having a checking account or savings account).

Aging Out Of Care: Youth Outcomes At Exit From Foster Care System				
	2009	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**[1]
Total # of youth aged out of care	3252	2951	2552	1492
Remaining values reported in percentages (%)	%	%	%	%
Parenting Status				
Is a custodial parent	9.1	9.7	8.8	9.0
Educational Attainment				
Graduated with high school diploma	42.9	45.9	45.7	4.1
Completed GED	3.6	2.7	2.3	2.6
Enrolled in 2-year college	22.9	22.7	18.5	18.0
Enrolled in 4-year college/university	5.5	7.0	5.7	2.1
Enrolled in vocational program	3.7	4.1	4.0	2.6
Employment				
Working full-time	6.0	5.2	4.6	3.0
Working part-time	24.8	20.8	19.3	14.8
Enlisted in the military	2.2	2.4	1.9	1.7
Applied for or receiving SSI	13.4	13.6	13.7	15.1
Finances				
Has a checking account	19.4	20.0	20.6	18.1
Has a savings account	23.7	23.4	21.9	18.6
Is or will be receiving financial support from family	20.3	20.7	21.2	22.2
Has no means of financial support	6.5	7.5	8.4	4.8
Housing				
Arranged rented housing	22.6	24.4	22.5	16.6
Arranged rent-free housing	31.6	36.1	35.9	37.2
Moving into transitional housing program	17.1	14.2	13.3	17.1
Arranged Section 8 housing	.6	.4	.6	.4
Arranged college dorm housing	4.0	3.5	4.3	1.5
Incarcerated or institutionalized	1.1	1.0	.7	.9
Staying in shelter or no housing arrangements	1.1	1.1	1.0	.7
Independent Living Program (ILP) Services				
Received ILP services before exiting care	77.8	78.6	75.0	68.4
Social Support				
Reported permanent connection with supportive adult	79.8	82.6	79.8	78.2
No permanent connection with supportive adult	2.6	1.9	1.3	1.3

[1] Numbers listed for 2012 are not for the full year, and represent data only from January through September

Description Of Total Population Of Aged-Out Youth In California

Methodology

Corresponding with the data analyzed for the current study, data presented here date from 2007 – 2011 (totals for 2012 were not yet available at the time of this writing), and are summarized in the table below (Table 1). These years were chosen to reflect youth most likely to be represented in the current study data. Data represent all youth ages 18 to 20 who exited from foster care in California in a given year, and percentages were calculated by dividing the number of youth in this age group who exited from care via emancipation by the total number of youth in this age group who exited from care via any type of exit (including reunification, adoption, or other).

$$\text{\% aged out of care each year} = \frac{\text{\# of 18 – 20 year olds aged out of care}}{\text{\# of total 18 – 20 year olds who left care (any type of exit)}}$$

CWS/CMS data were retrieved from the CWDRS website using the following filters:

1. Viewing *Menu by Topic*
2. Selecting *Caseload: Exits* under the Emancipation tab
3. Restricting Agency Type to *Child Welfare*
4. Selecting *SINGLE Time Period Summary Table (California and All Counties)* as the Output Type and *CWS Ethnicity Coding* for Ethnicity Coding
5. Limiting:
    a. Time Period to *Jan – Dec* for each year (e.g., 2006, 2007, etc.)
    b. Days in Care to *8 days or more*
    c. Episode Count to *Last Exit*
    d. Table Output to *Count*, and
    e. Column Dimension to *Exit Type*
6. Restricting output to the following age groups: *18+ 60 days, 18+ > 60 days, 19,* and *20*

Using these criteria, data indicate that, historically, 90 – 94 percent of 18- to 20-year-olds exiting from foster care in California have typically left care through aging out. In 2006, approximately 4,192 youth aged out of foster care, representing 89 percent of all exits from care made by youth in this age group for that year. This number increased slightly the following year, with 4,347 youth emancipating out of foster care in 2007, representing 90 percent of all exiting 18- to 20-year olds. In 2008, the number was a little higher at 4,470, and represented 91 percent of the total number of youth exited from foster care during the year. This trend continued in 2009, with 4,493 youth, or 95 percent, aging out of foster care. In 2010, however, the number of 18- to 20-year-olds who aged out of care decreased to 4,388, or 94 percent. And in 2011, 94 percent, or 3,791, of youth who left foster care that year exited via emancipation.

(Table 1: Total numbers of 18 – 20 year olds aged out of care in California, 2006 – 11)

Youth aged out of care, ages 18 - 20

Year	Total #	% of all exits from care
2007	4347	89.7
2008	4470	90.9
2009	4493	94.9
2010	4388	94.1
2011	3791	94.3

In Appendix F, data on the outcomes of youth aging out of foster care are presented, collected since October of 2008. Data for the full year are available beginning in 2009, and numbers reported for 2012 represent data from January through September. Total numbers of aging out youth reported in the tables of Table 1 and Appendix F differ due to the different methods used to retrieve each type of data. Data presented in Table 1 were pulled from the CWDRS website, using the criteria described above, while outcome data were pulled from the *SOC 405 E – Exit Outcomes for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care Quarterly Statistical Reports* posted on the CDSS website.

Outcomes at foster care exit

Overall, characteristics of the emancipating youth population in California are similar to those found among youth aging out of foster care elsewhere. Direct comparisons cannot be made between these data and those of the Midwest Study, due to the different timelines at which data were collected: data reported here were collected at the point of exit from care, while the Midwest Study interviewed youth before they left care at age 17 and then two years later when most youth were close to 19 years in age (Courtney et al., 2005, 2004). However, youth in the Midwest Study still serve as a comparable group to which the outcomes of youth in California may be referenced. In general, youth in the Midwest Study appear to have slightly higher rates of high school graduation, employment and having a bank account, while youth in California are less likely to have children in their care and more likely to have received Independent Living Program Services before exiting foster care. Relevant data on typical youth transitions are reported when available.

A little less than one-half of youth (43% – 46%) who aged out of foster care in California in 2009 through 2011 had their high school diploma by the time they exited care. In 2009 and 2010, close to one-third of youth were enrolled in either a 2- or 4-year postsecondary educational institution, and one-quarter of youth were enrolled in 2011. Conversely, about 58 percent of youth in the Midwest Study reported having their high school diploma at age 19, slightly higher than the trends seen among youth in California in the past three years. Forty-two and 18 percent of youth in the Midwest Study were also enrolled in either a 2- or a 4-year university at age 19, respectively. Normative trends in educational attainment highlight that, on average, about 75 percent of youth attain their high school diploma by age 18 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Estimates also indicate that close to 50 percent of youth typically attend college straight out of high school, and are more likely to attend four- rather than two-year post-secondary educational institutions.

Regarding parenting and employment status, fewer than 10 percent of youth in California emancipating from care were custodial parents at the time of exiting from care during 2009 – 2010. This is lower than numbers reported by the Midwest Study, with about 17 percent of Midwest participants indicating they were parents with children in their care. However, again, these data cannot be directly compared due to the slightly different ways in which questions were asked. California data specifically represent youth reporting to be custodial parents and Midwest data reflect youth who reported having children and living with their children. As far as employment status, in 2009 over 30 percent of youth who aged out of care in California were working either full- or part-time, and these numbers declined the following years to 26 and 24 percent of youth in 2010 and 2011. In the Midwest Study, about 41 percent of youth were employed to some extent at age 19.

In terms of financial support and housing, small proportions of youth in both California and the Midwest Study reported having no means of financial support or housing arrangements. About 42 – 43 percent of youth in California left care during the past three years with a bank account, being slightly more likely to have a savings rather than checking account. In the Midwest Study, about 47 percent of study participants at age 19 reported having either a savings or checking account. Interestingly, about one-fifth of California youth every year reported receiving or expecting to receive financial support from family members upon exiting from care. However, without any follow-up data, it is unknown whether these rates of family support accurately portray young people's financial resources after exiting care. Majority of youth in California exit care with some sort of housing in place, with the three most common housing arrangements involving (in order of frequency):

1. Rent-free housing with a family member, relative, or other supportive adult
2. Rented housing to live on one's own or with a roommate(s)
3. Housing as part of a transitional housing program

Only 1 percent of youth who aged out of foster care in California in the past three years reported having no housing in place upon their exit from care, similar to that reported in the Midwest Study.

Finally, the last domain area for which outcome data were collected relate to receipt of Independent Living Program Services (ILPS) and youth reports of their relationships with supportive adults. A majority of youth in California consistently reported receiving ILPS before leaving care (75% – 79%). These numbers are higher than those reported in the Midwest Study, though direct comparisons are difficult because youth in the Midwest Study were asked about their receipt of specific types of ILPS, related to educational, employment, financial management, housing, health education, and youth development services. Proportions of youth in the Midwest Study reporting the receipt of services in any of these domains range from 46 to 69 percent. Greater numbers of youth (80% – 83%) report having a permanent connection with at least one supportive adult at their exit from care in California. Though youth in the Midwest Study were asked about their perceived social support and not specifically about permanency connections, many youth in the Midwest Study scored high on a scale measuring social support.

Comparison of Study Population to Total Foster Youth Population (SOC 405E)

The information presented in this section compares data on outcomes reported at foster care exit (SOC 405E) to outcomes reported among the study population. These two populations are not directly comparable due to the SOC 405E providing information on youth mostly at age 18, while the study population data provide information on youth *after* having exited care (> age 18). However, the SOC 405E data are presented to provide further context for data on the study population. About 13 to 15 percent of youth in the study population reported being a *custodial parent* during 2009 through 2011, compared to less than 10 percent of youth at the time of their exit in 2009 through 2011. About half of youth exiting care reported *graduating from high school with a diploma* in a given year, corresponding to 53 to 63 percent of reports among the study population. With the exception of 2008 (36%), reports regarding *enrollment in a 2-year college* were at approximately 50 percent among the study population, compared to 19 to 23 percent of youth enrolled in a 2-year college at their exit from foster care. Four to nine percent of youth in the study population were *enrolled in a 4-year college or university* in a given year, compared to 6 – 7 percent among youth at exit from care. *Working part-time* occurred at similar rates, ranging from 19 to 25 percent among youth at foster care exit, and 18 to 22 percent in the study population. *Working full-time* was slightly more common among the study population, however, ranging from 8 to 11 percent – versus 5 to 6 percent of youth aging out of care. In terms of housing, *residing at a college dorm* was fairly uncommon in both groups, as was being *incarcerated* as an adult. The three most common living arrangements among both populations involved: renting a place of one's own, living with a relative or non-related supportive adult, and residing in a transitional housing program. While only 1 percent of youth exited care to a shelter or other *unstable housing* arrangement, 7 to 10 percent of youth among the study population indicated experiences of unstable housing.

Data regarding other supports and resources, such as: having a bank account, receiving financial support from family, and having a permanent connection with a supportive adult, differ more drastically at foster care exit compared to the study population. Reports of having a *bank account* (checking or savings) ranged from 33 to 40 percent among the study population, but only 18 to 24 percent among youth aging out of care. Similarly, though 20 to 22 percent of youth exiting care indicated that they were or would be receiving *financial support from family*, only 5 to 6 percent of reports among the study population indicated receiving or planning to receive family financial support. Finally, high percentages of youth reported having a *permanent connection with a supportive adult* at the time of exiting care (80% – 83%), and even higher percentages were reported among the study population, at 93 to 94 percent.

In sum, youth represented in the study population appear to be managing their transition to adulthood fairly positively in several domains. These differences may simply be due to time and maturity since youth represented in the data describing the total population are younger (at or near age 18) and have not had a chance to establish themselves out of foster care. Higher rates of youth reporting having their high school diploma or enrolled in a 2-year college among the study population, for example, may be partially explained by the passing of time and growing older. Alternatively, creaming may have also led to which youth were or were not included in the study population. As described earlier, youth must meet certain eligibility requirements in order to participate in either THP+ or CC25I. Thus, youth not represented in the

study population may be youth who could not, or chose not to, meet eligibility requirements, resulting in greater numbers of higher functioning youth included in the study population.

In contrast, two areas of significant difference where the study population appears to fare worse after exiting care relate to unstable housing and receiving financial support from family. According to these data, almost all youth indicate having some sort of housing arrangement to go to upon aging out of foster care (approximately 99% across all three years). However, 7 to 8 percent of reports from the study population indicated unstable housing during 2009 to 2011. Considering that youth in the study population appear to be doing better as a whole in other aspects, such as educational attainment or employment, the possibility that youth not represented here may experience even higher rates of unstable housing, is of concern. Similarly, close to 20 percent of youth reported receiving or planning to receive financial support from their family at their exit from care. However, only about 5 percent of the study population indicated receiving or planning to receive family financial support in a given year. Both of these findings suggest that youth aging out of foster care, though optimistic about the family support and resources available to them upon leaving care, are likely at risk of not having a parental home safety net or financial assistance to rely on that so many of their similar-aged peers in the general population do during the transition to adulthood.

Select Outcomes Over Time: 2008 – 2011				
	2008	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**
Total # of responses (N=)	1019	1820	2160	2191
Remaining values reported in percentages (%)	%	%	%	%
Parenting Status				
Parent	16.6	15.4	15.4	16.1
Custodial parent	14.0	13.9	15.7	12.5
Housing				
Renting own place	37.7	74.2	85.8	74.3
Living with relative or other supportive adult	30.8	28.2	29.1	29.9
College dorm	2.2	2.6	2.0	1.8
Transitional housing program	9.8	12.2	13.8	11.8
Homeless / other unstable housing	10.2	7.0	7.4	8.3
Incarcerated	.3	.7	1.3	.9
Military	.5	.5	1.0	.5
Employment				
Working FT	11.2	10.4	10.7	8.1
Working PT	19.4	19.9	21.7	17.7
Determined unemployable (SSI-eligible)	14.4	11.5	14.6	16.5
Education				
Completed high school	82.5	87.4	90.8	92.5
Received HS diploma	53.4	63.3	60.5	59.1
Dropped out of high school	12.7	7.2	7.5	9.3
Enrolled in 2-year college	35.8	51.1	49.7	47.9
Enrolled in 4-year college/university	8.8	4.2	5.6	5.0
Financial Supports				
SSI	2.5	1.0	2.2	1.5
CalWORKs / TANF	6.9	7.4	9.4	7.4
Is / will be receiving financial support from family	6.4	5.1	4.7	4.7
Resources				
Has bank account (THP+ status not available)	32.7	37.2	40.1	35.5
Has health insurance	50.3	51.1	55.8	47.5
Has permanent connection with supportive adult	93.4	93.1	94.0	94.2

3 = Living with relative or non-related supportive adult

Sequences With Exit and Return to a Relative/Adult Home	
Sequence	**Frequency**
3313	5
3131	4
3633	4
0313	3
0363	3
1313	3
3013	3
3133	3
3363	3
3630	3
0343	2
3063	2
3113	2
3373	2
3631	2
1323	1
1363	1
1373	1
3043	1
3073	1
3103	1
3131111	1
3163	1
3173	1
3203	1
3230	1
333113777	1
33343433	1
3430	1
3433	1
3530	1
3536	1
3603	1
3613	1
3637	1
3703	1
3730	1
3731	1
3733	1
3737	1
6373	1
7343	1
7363	1
Total	**72**

4 = Residing in transitional/supportive housing

Sequences With Exit and Return to Transitional Housing	
Sequence	**Frequency**
4640	3
0434	2
0464	2
4140	2
4144	2
4340	2
4414	2
4464	2
4474	2
4614	2
4644	2
1414	1
1434	1
4014	1
4034	1
4064	1
4074	1
4104	1
4147	1
4341	1
4344	1
4346	1
4434	1
44441444	1
4604	1
4674	1
4740	1
4741	1
4744	1
Total	**41**

Sequences With No Change: Living on One's Own	
Sequence	**Frequency**
1111	57
111	13
11111	10
111111	5
1111111	5
11111111	1
111111111	1
Total	**92**

Sequences With No Change: Living with Relative/Adult	
Sequence	**Frequency**
3333	24
333	17
33333	11
333333	9
3333333	5
33333333	1
Total	**67**

Sequences With No Change: Transitional Housing	
Sequence	**Frequency**
4444	11
444444	5
4444444	5
44444444	2
44444	1
Total	**24**

Sequences With No Change: College Dorm	
Sequence	**Frequency**
222	4
2222	3
Total	**7**

Sequences With No Change: Unstable Housing	
Sequence	**Frequency**
7777	1
Total	**1**

Survey Sample Characteristics, Non-matched vs. Matched		
Total "N"	**Total Survey Sample** N=196	**Matched Survey Sample** N=69
Remaining values reported in percent (%)	%	%
THP+ participant		
Yes	62.3	97.1
Years since left foster care		
Longest time out of care (in years)	10	9
Shortest time out of care (in years)	0	0
Mean	3	3
Median	3	3
Residence at foster care exit		
Foster family	11.7	10.1
Relative or non-related supportive adult	10.7	15.9
Birth mom or dad	5.6	7.3
Own place	18.9	13.0
Transitional housing program	11.7	21.7
Was homeless	12.2	10.1
Highest education level achieved by foster care exit		
Some high school	24.6	24.6
Received high school diploma	49.2	50.7
Completed GED	3.1	1.5
Attended or completed vocational program	7.7	4.4
Some college	12.3	11.6
Current age		
Youngest	17	18
Oldest	28	26
Mean	21	21
Median	21	20
Support		
Find it easy to ask for support	59.7	65.2
Person feel closest to		
Boy/girlfriend	27.2	33.3
Sibling	16.9	21.7
Friend/peer	11.8	13.0
Foster parent	6.7	5.8
Biological/stepmother	5.1	5.8

Identity, Agency, & Belongingness: Means and Standard Deviations				
*SD = Standard Deviation	**Total Survey Sample** *(n = 196)*		**Matched Survey Sample** *(n = 69)*	
ISRI (Identity Stage Resolution Index)	Mean	*SD**	Mean	*SD**
AIRS1 (Adult Identity Resolution Scale), 5-point scale	3.4	*.85*	3.4	*.84*
AIRS2	3.2	*1.01*	3.2	*1.00*
AIRS3	3.1	*1.08*	2.9	*1.15*
SIRS1 (Societal Identity Resolution Scale), 5-point scale	2.7	*1.25*	2.4	*1.26*
SIRS2	2.4	*1.40*	2.0	*1.51*
SIRS3	2.3	*1.54*	1.8	*1.54*
MAPS-20 (Multi-Agentic Personality Scale)				
Purpose1 (Purpose in Life), 7-point scale	3.9	*1.54*	4.0	*1.63*
Purpose2	3.6	*1.67*	3.4	*1.76*
Purpose3	3.7	*1.70*	3.7	*1.93*
Purpose4	3.8	*1.68*	4.0	*1.75*
Purpose5	4.5	*1.39*	4.5	*1.37*
Loc1 (Internal Locus of Control), 5-point scale	3.0	*.98*	3.0	*.96*
Loc2	3.1	*.93*	3.2	*.85*
Loc3	3.0	*.94*	3.0	*.94*
Loc4	2.4	*1.23*	2.2	*1.27*
Loc5	2.9	*1.07*	3.1	*1.06*
Efficacy1 (Self-Efficacy), 5-point scale	2.7	*1.02*	2.7	*1.02*
Efficacy2	3.0	*.93*	3.1	*.94*
Efficacy3	2.6	*1.09*	2.5	*1.15*
Efficacy4	2.7	*1.10*	2.9	*1.05*
Efficacy5	2.7	*1.15*	2.7	*1.23*
Esteem1 (Self-Esteem), dichotomous response	.89	*.31*	.96	*.21*
Esteem2	.73	*.45*	.74	*.44*
Esteem3	.72	*.45*	.77	*.43*
Esteem4	.63	*.48*	.61	*.49*
Esteem5	.70	*.46*	.78	*.42*
IOS (Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale)				
Closeness (1-item only), 7-point scale	5.3	*1.82*	5.5	*1.88*

Alpha Reliability Coefficients (α): Identity Capital Scales		
	Total Survey Sample α =	**Matched Survey Sample** α =
Adult Identity Resolution Index (AIRS) airs1 airs2 airs3	.855	.828
Societal Identity Resolution Index (SIRS) sirs1 sirs2 sirs3	.875	.832
Identity Stage Resolution Index (ISRI) airs1 – airs3 sirs1 – sirs3	.876	.843
Multi-Agentic Personality Scale (MAPS-20) purpose1 purpose2 purpose3 purpose4 purpose5	.826	.787
loc1 loc2 loc3 loc4 loc5	.761	**.636**
efficacy1 efficacy2 efficacy3 efficacy4 efficacy5	.822	.792
esteem1 esteem2 esteem3 esteem4 esteem5	**.504**	**.553**
purpose1 – purpose5 loc1 – loc5 efficacy1 – efficacy5 esteem1 – esteem5	.860	.809
ISRI + MAPS-20 airs1 – airs3 sirs1 – sirs3 purpose1 – purpose5 loc1 – loc5 efficacy1 – efficacy5 esteem1 – esteem5	.892	.859