

25+ Years of Research on and with Youth Transitioning to Adulthood from Care

Mark E. Courtney
Samuel Deutsch Professor
School of Social Service Administration

1

Why study youth in foster care?

- *It's personal!*
 - 5 years living and working in group care for maltreated teens in state care
 - 25+ years working with child welfare services policymakers, program managers, and practitioners
- *And my studies have always involved youth with care experience*
 - Students involved with my research teams have included two adoptees from care and four care leavers
 - Studies were designed in collaboration with foster youth organizations



2

Primary studies

- Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study
 - 1995-1998; Wisconsin; panel study with in-person interviews; n = 141 at age 17; follow-up 12-18 months after care exit, n = 113 or 80% follow-up
- Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth (“Midwest Study”)
 - 2001-2011; Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin; panel study with in-person interviews
 - N = 732 at age 17; followed-up with over 80% at ages 19, 21, 23, and 26
 - Linked to administrative records on crime and postsecondary education
- California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study
 - 2012 to present
 - N = 727 at age 17; panel study with in-person interviews; followed up with over 84% at ages 19, 21, and 23
 - Linked to administrative data on postsecondary education, employment, and use of need-based public benefit programs, and to caseworker surveys
- Experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations of interventions intended to improve outcomes for youth in care (2001 to present)

3

It is not my program of research alone...

- *Many collaborators* along the way, including PhD students who are now social work faculty:
 - Andy Grogan-Kaylor and Ethan Park, University of Michigan
 - Ande Nesmith, University of St. Thomas
 - Andy Zinn, University of Kansas (we miss Andy!)
 - Amy Dworsky, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
 - Gina Samuels, University of Chicago
 - Clark Peters, University of Missouri
 - Judy Havlicek, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
 - Julia Pryce, Loyola University
 - Alfred Perez, Stanislaus State University
 - JoAnn Lee, George Mason University
 - Adam Brown, Hunter College
 - Colleen Katz, Hunter College
 - Nate Okpych, University of Connecticut
 - Kune Park, Michigan State University
- Many other collaborators and co-investigators

4