



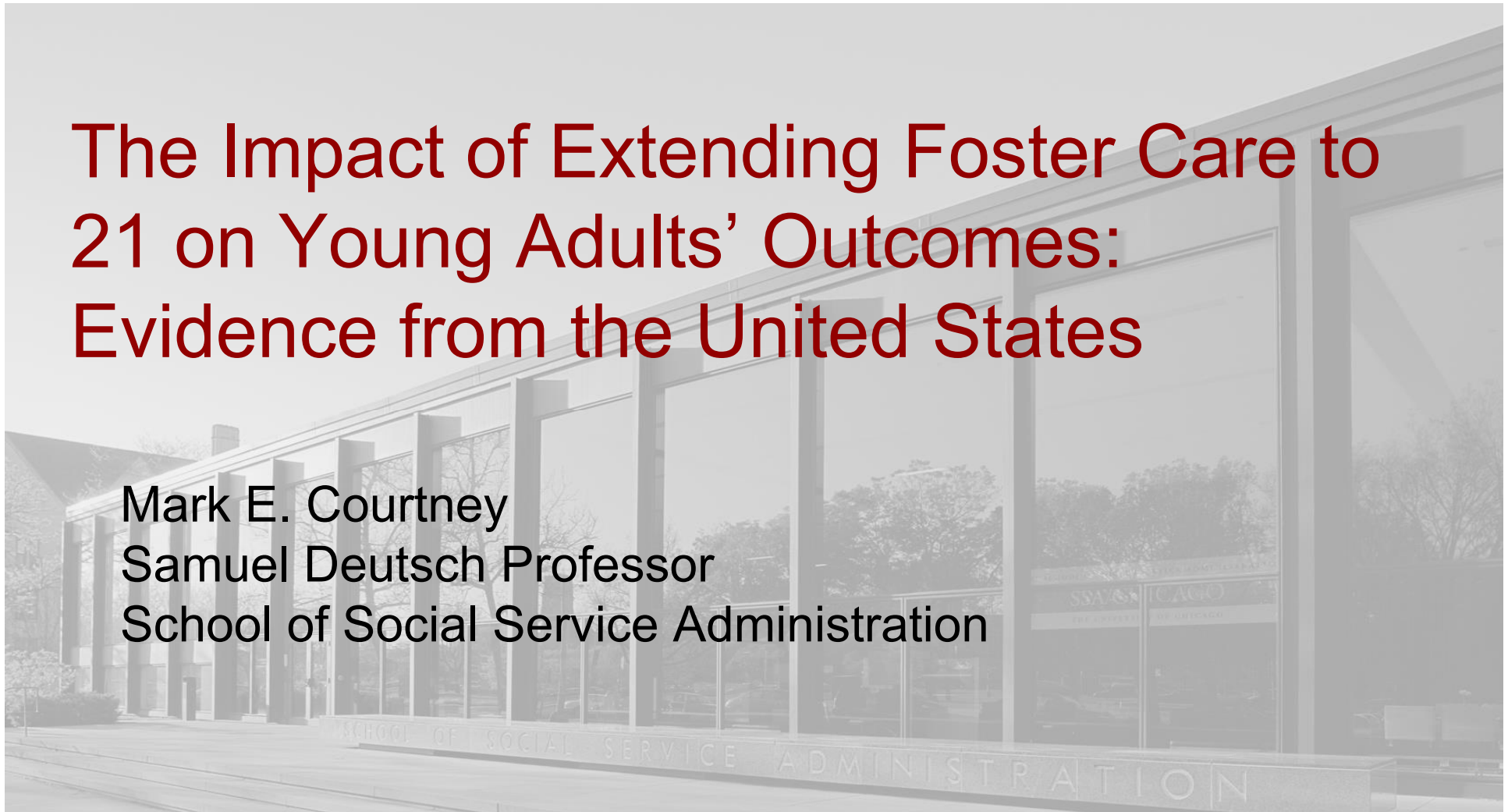
THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SERVICE ADMINISTRATION

DEFINING PROBLEMS. SHAPING SOLUTIONS.

The Impact of Extending Foster Care to 21 on Young Adults' Outcomes: Evidence from the United States

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



Purpose

- Situate the transition to adulthood for youth in state care within the broader context of changes in the transition to adulthood
- Share findings from two studies conducted in the United States
 - Midwest Study (2002-2011)
 - CalYOUTH (2013-2020)
- Assess the relationships between extending foster care to age 21 and outcomes during early adulthood for youth transitioning from care to adulthood

How does the transition to adulthood look for young people generally in the US?

- *Scholars describe the transition...*
 - Markers of the transition (living independently; completing education; parenting) are happening later; half of young people between 18-24 live with a parent
 - Continuing and considerable parental support (\$38k in direct support between 18-34)
 - Developmental psychologists describe a new period of “emerging adulthood”
 - Developments in neuroscience
- *Yet, U.S. policy provides relatively little support for young adults*

The Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth

- “Midwest Study,” a collaboration between state child welfare agencies and the research team
- Foster youth in Iowa, Wisconsin and Illinois who:
 - Were still in care at age 17
 - Had entered care before their 16th birthday
 - Had been placed in care because they were abused, neglected or dependent
 - Not originally placed because of delinquency
- Data from in-person interviews (structured and in-depth qualitative) and government program administrative data

Study Design and Sample

Wave	Year	Number Interviewed	Response Rate	Age at interview
1	'02 – '03	732	96%	17 – 18
2	'04	603	82%	19
3	'06	591	81%	21
4	'08	602	82%	23-24
5	'10-'11	596	83%	26

Demographic Characteristics

Wave 1:

n = 732

%

Gender

Male

49

Female

51

Race

Black

57

White

31

Other/Multi-racial

12

Ethnicity

Hispanic origin

9

State

Illinois

65

Wisconsin

26

Iowa

9

Summary of Early Adult Outcomes from the Midwest Study (and CaYOUTH too)

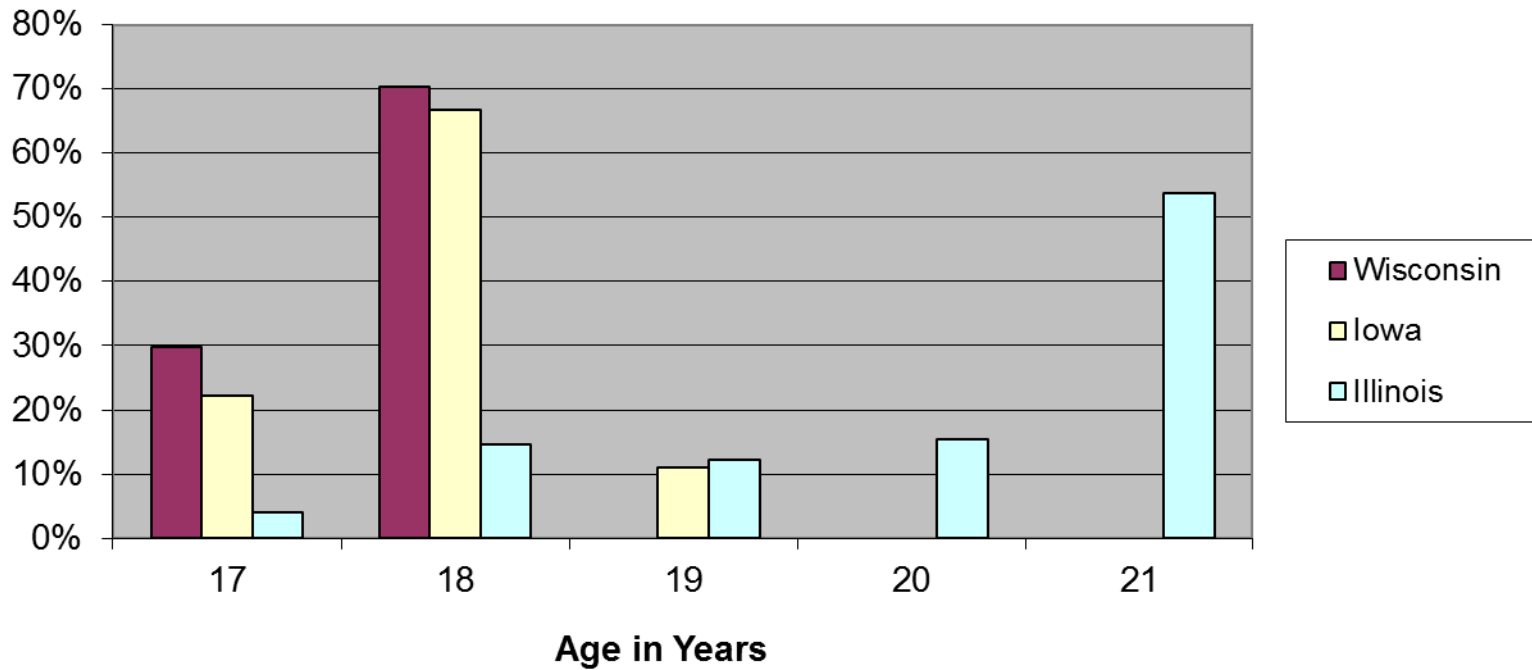
- Outcomes are relatively poor across a variety of important transition domains
- Outcomes vary by gender; males fare worse
- Despite a sobering picture overall, many young people leaving the care of the state do well

*What is a concerned parent (policymaker)
to do about these poor outcomes?*

Testing the Wisdom of Extended Care: A Natural Experiment

- Ability of foster youth to remain “in care” beyond age 18 varies across states
- Illinois was, at the time, one of the few jurisdictions where courts could and did routinely extend care and supervision until age 21
- Wisconsin and Iowa generally discharged youth around their 18th birthday during the study period
 - Exception for Iowa foster youth who were on track to graduate from high school
 - Exception for Wisconsin foster youth who were pregnant

Age at Discharge by State



Average age at discharge

Wisconsin=17.8

Iowa=17.9

Illinois=20.0

Summary of Findings on Extending Care

Overall outcomes obscure between-state differences driven by extended care in Illinois; policy does matter!

- Allowing foster youth to remain in care until age 21 is associated with:
 - Increased likelihood of obtaining post-secondary education; though few youth have completed a degree by age 26, many remain in college
 - Increased earnings
 - Delayed pregnancy
 - Increased involvement of young fathers with their children
 - Reduced crime
 - Delayed homelessness

Summary of Findings on Extending Care

Overall outcomes obscure between-state differences driven by extended care in Illinois; policy does matter!

- Allowing foster youth to remain in care until age 21 also increases their likelihood of receiving independent living services after age 18
- Benefit-cost analysis based on increased post-secondary education finds that each dollar spent on extended care generates \$2 in increased lifetime earnings
 - This likely understates the ratio of benefits to costs since other benefits have not yet been monetized

Overview of the CaYOUTH Study

California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study
(CaYOUTH)

Evaluation of the impact of the California Fostering
Connections to Success Act on outcomes for foster youth

CaYOUTH Study includes:

- Longitudinal study of young people in CA foster care making the transition to adulthood
- Periodic surveys of caseworkers serving young people in CA foster care
- Analysis of government program administrative data

Youth Surveys:

Data Collection and Response Rate

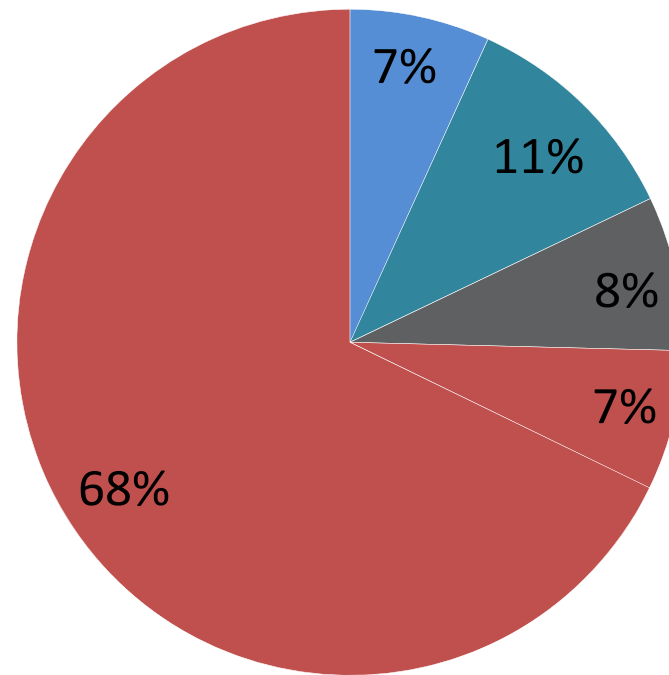
- **Wave 1 Survey Period (age 17)**
 - April 2013 to October 2013
 - 51 counties included in final sample
 - Youth eligible for study $n = 763$
 - Completed interviews $n = 727$ (response rate = 95.3%)
 - **Wave 2 Survey Period (age 19)**
 - March 2015 to December 2015
 - Youth eligible for study $n = 724$
 - Completed interviews $n = 611$ (response rate = 84.1%)
 - **Wave 3 Survey Period (age 21)**
 - March 2017 to December 2017
 - Youth eligible for study $n = 721$
 - Completed interviews $n = 616$ (response rate = 84.7%)
- Stay tuned!
Wave 4, 2019, Age 23

Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics at Wave 1	#	%
Gender		
Female	429	59.4
Male	298	40.6
Age		
16 years old	43	6.1
17 years old	673	92.6
18 years old	11	1.3
Hispanic	319	46.7
Race		
White	210	24.2
African American	112	18.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	18	2.2
American Indian/Alaskan Native	26	3.6
Mixed race	328	47.3
Language spoken at home		
English	655	88.0
Spanish	66	11.2
Other	5	0.6

Foster Care Status

Age at Discharge
($n=614$)



■ 17 or younger ■ 18 ■ 19 ■ 20 ■ 21

Relationships between Extended Care and Outcomes: Analytic Approaches, Data, & Sample

Analytic Approach	Data Source	Sample	Description
1	California administrative data	Over 40,000 Youths	Child welfare system involvement data linked to college attendance, employment, earnings, and need-based public food assistance
			Youth in care at least 6 months sometime after 16th birthday (between 2006-2015)
			Youth turned 18 <i>before or after</i> policy change
2	CalYOUTH longitudinal surveys	616 Youths	Data drawn from three waves of interviews
			Youth between 16.75 and 17.75 years old at the end of 2012 and had been in care for at least 6 months
			Youth turned 18 <i>after</i> policy change
			727 Wave 1 respondents, present analyses restricted to youth who completed the first and third interview waves ($n = 616$)

Analysis and Study Methods

Extended care was evaluated by estimating the impact that a year in extended care had on each of the outcomes

- Instrumental variable approach used for models leveraging administrative data
- Several types of statistical models used with longitudinal youth surveys (based on measure of outcome)
 - E.g., Instrumental variable, linear probability model, OLS
- Controlled for a wide range of youth-level and county-level characteristics

Positive Impacts on Many Outcomes

Domain	Each additional year in extended foster care ¹ :
Education	Increased the probability that youth completed a secondary education credential by about 8%
	Increased their expected probability of enrolling in college by 10–11%
Employment	Increased number of quarters youth were employed between 18 and 21 by .6 quarters
Assets	Increased amount of money youth had in bank accounts by about \$404
Hardships	Decreased receipt of need-based public food assistance by more than \$700
	Decreased odds of an additional economic hardship between 17-21 by about 12%
	Decreased odds of being homeless or couch-surfing between 17-21 by about 28%
Social Support	Increased odds youth described professionals as source of social support by about 42%
Family Formation	Decreased odds that youth became pregnant (females) or impregnated a female (males) between 17-21 by about 28%
Criminal Justice	Decreased odds that youth had been arrested between 17-21 by about 41%
	Decreased odds that youth had been convicted of a crime between 17-21 by about 40%

¹ Results displayed are from the administrative data analyses and the youth survey analyses that found statistically significant ($p < .05$) relationships between extended foster care and listed outcomes.

But No Impacts on Some Outcomes

Outcomes not found to be significantly associated with the number of years in extended care:

- College persistence
- Number of semesters completed (among college entrants)
- Earnings between ages 18-21
- Food insecurity
- Physical and behavioral health
- Victimization

No negative impacts of extended care have been identified

Conclusions and Next Steps

- Findings from ongoing CaYOUTH study reinforce findings from earlier Midwest Study
- Findings thus far are encouraging
- Some future directions for CaYOUTH
 - Harness new data (e.g., criminal justice; vital stats on birth and deaths)
 - Explore impact beyond age 21 (e.g., to 23)
 - Explore between-county differences
 - More nuanced approach to investigating each outcome
 - Examine *how* extended care affects outcomes

Embracing the Task...

Extending care into adulthood requires rethinking policy and practice:

- Developmentally-appropriate care
 - Living arrangements
 - Opportunity to learn from experience (including “failure”)
- Engagement and collaboration with adult-serving systems
- More active involvement of youth in developing policies, programs, and their own care planning

For more information...

Midwest Study:

<https://www.chapinhall.org/research/midwest-evaluation-of-the-adult-functioning-of-former-foster-youth/>

CaIYOUTH:

<https://www.chapinhall.org/research/cal youth/>