Make or Break: College-going and College-leaving among Foster Care Youth

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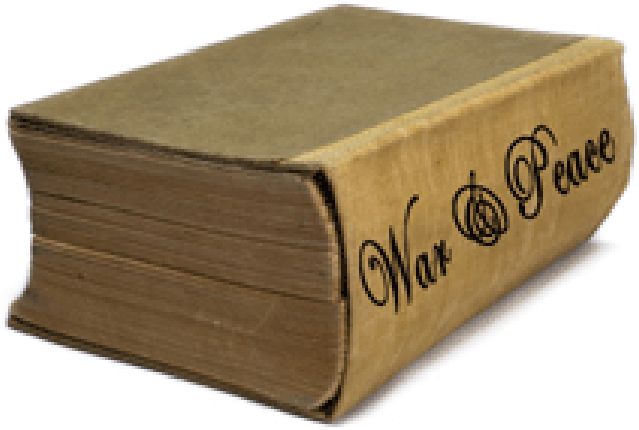
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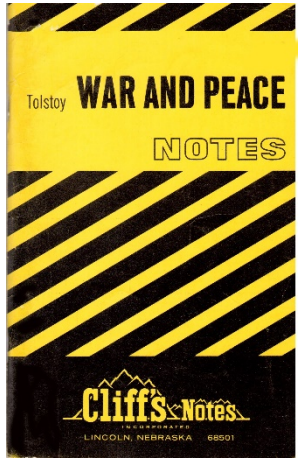
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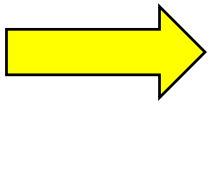

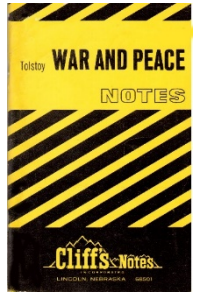
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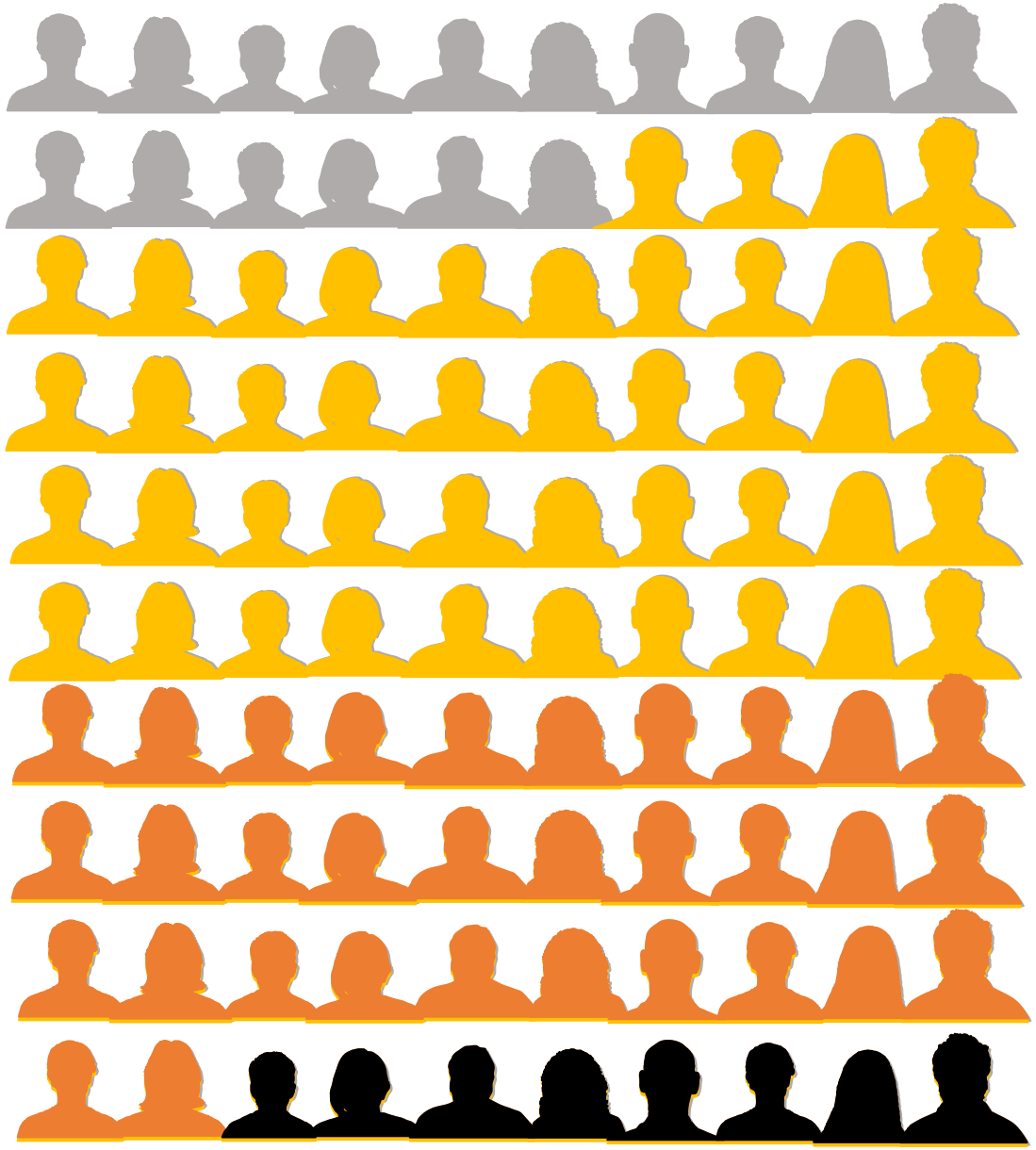
Foster care youth and college

- 70,000 foster youth in care age 16 or older
- Most aspire to go to and finish college
- College can be a life changer
- We have a window of opportunity
- Child welfare, along with other systems, can play a key role



100
17-year-olds in foster care

84
Aspire to go to college

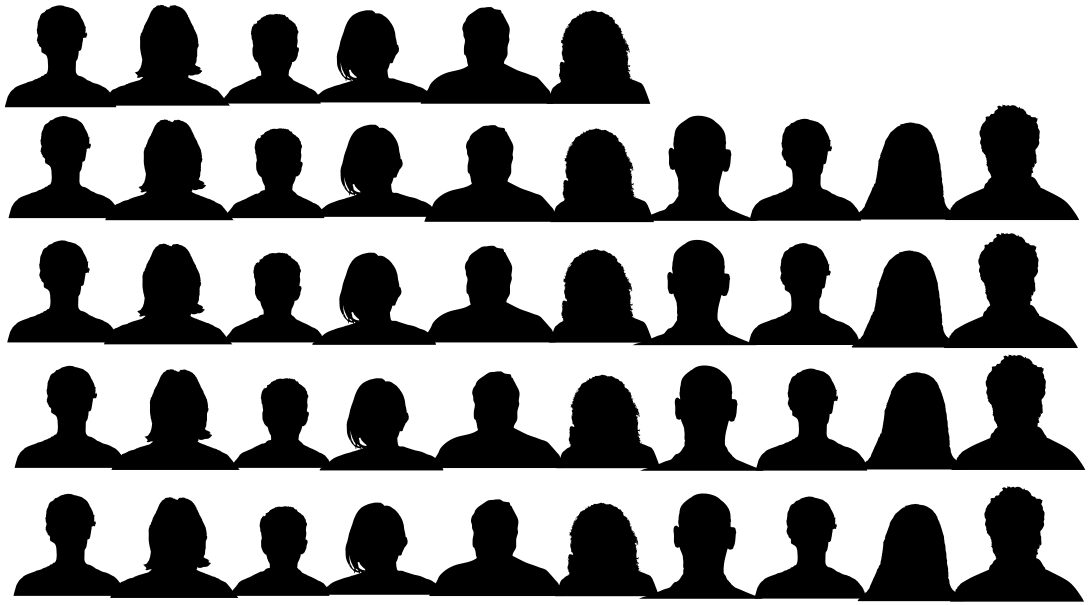
40
Enroll in college by age 25/26

8
Earn 2yr/4yr degree by age 25/26

College completion rates by age 25/26

46 %

U.S. Youth (Add Health Study)



8 %

Foster Youth (Midwest Study)

My dissertation at-a-glance

Main objective

- Examine factors related to college enrollment, persistence, and completion
  - Individual, college-level, extended foster care policy

Data

- Midwest Study (2002 to 2011, PI: Mark Courtney)
  - Longitudinal study of 732 foster youth in three Midwestern stages
  - Gathered extensive data on background and current life circumstances
- National Student Clearinghouse
  - Obtained college records in 2015, when participants were 29/30
  - Semester-by-semester data on colleges attended & degree completion

Analyses

- Logistic regression, survival analysis, probit model with selection, instrumental varaible

Some Main Findings

Barriers to college success

- Academic difficulties & underpreparedness
- Life events after entering college: money, FT job, kids
- Avoidant attachment

Promoters of college success

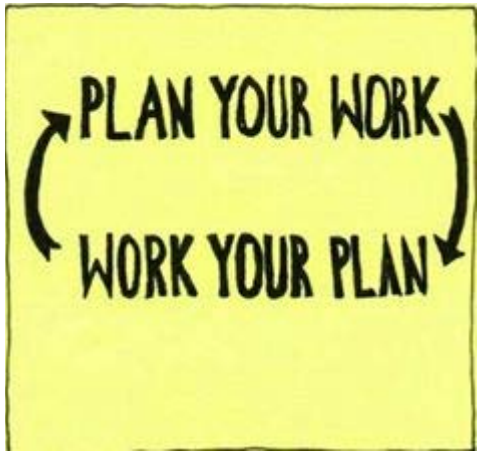
- College attended matters in likelihood of earning a degree
- Extended foster care increased college enrollment by age 21

What we can do:

Child welfare services

- Use Transition to Independent Living Plan (TILP) as tool for targeted education goals

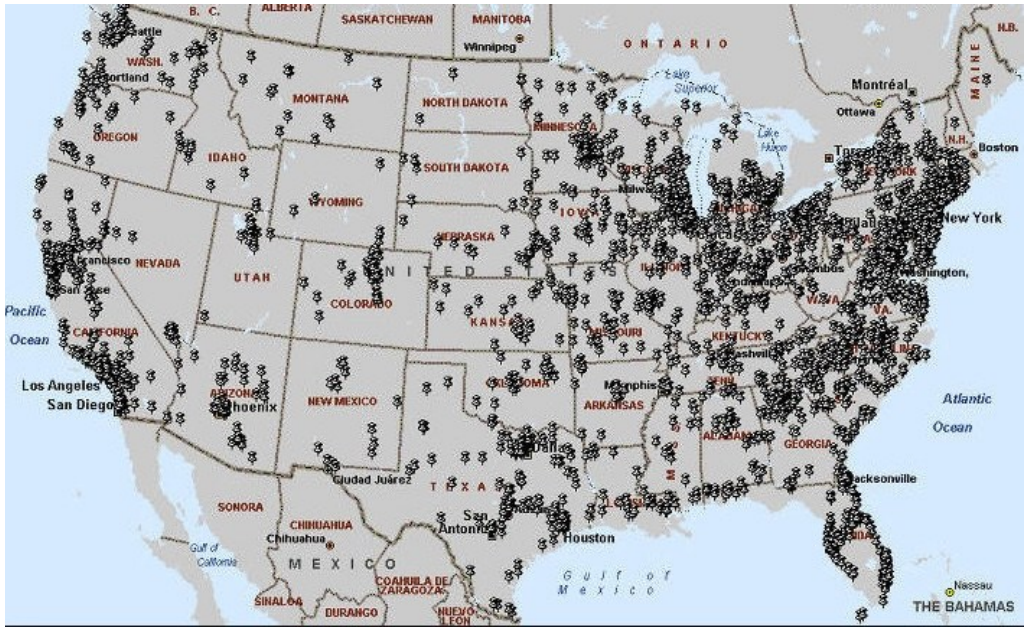
- Strengthen partnerships with high schools and youth serving organizations
  - Tutoring
  - Develop college mindset
  - Guidance and application assistance



What we can do:

Strategic use of administrative data

- Identify colleges foster youth commonly enroll in
- Identify colleges foster youth succeed in
- Use National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) to gather more information



NYTD
National Youth in Transition Database

What we can do:

Support and partner with colleges

- Identify foster care youth

- Campus support programs

What we can do:
Strengthen policies

- Education and training voucher (ETV)—age limit and amount

- Extended foster care

FOSTER PROGRESS

What we can do:

Hard, but worth it

Thank you.

Doris Duke Fellowships
for the Promotion of Child Well-Being
Seeking innovations to prevent child abuse and neglect

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Thank YOU!!