

The Center for Fostering Success

Best Practice, Best Fit

Webinar Series

**Discovery Driven Solutions Related
to Educational Attainment for
Students from Foster Care**

May 8, 2014



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 **Center for Fostering Success**
An initiative of WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



College Students from Foster Care: Is there a Gap between Academic Aspirations and College Readiness?

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Acknowledgements

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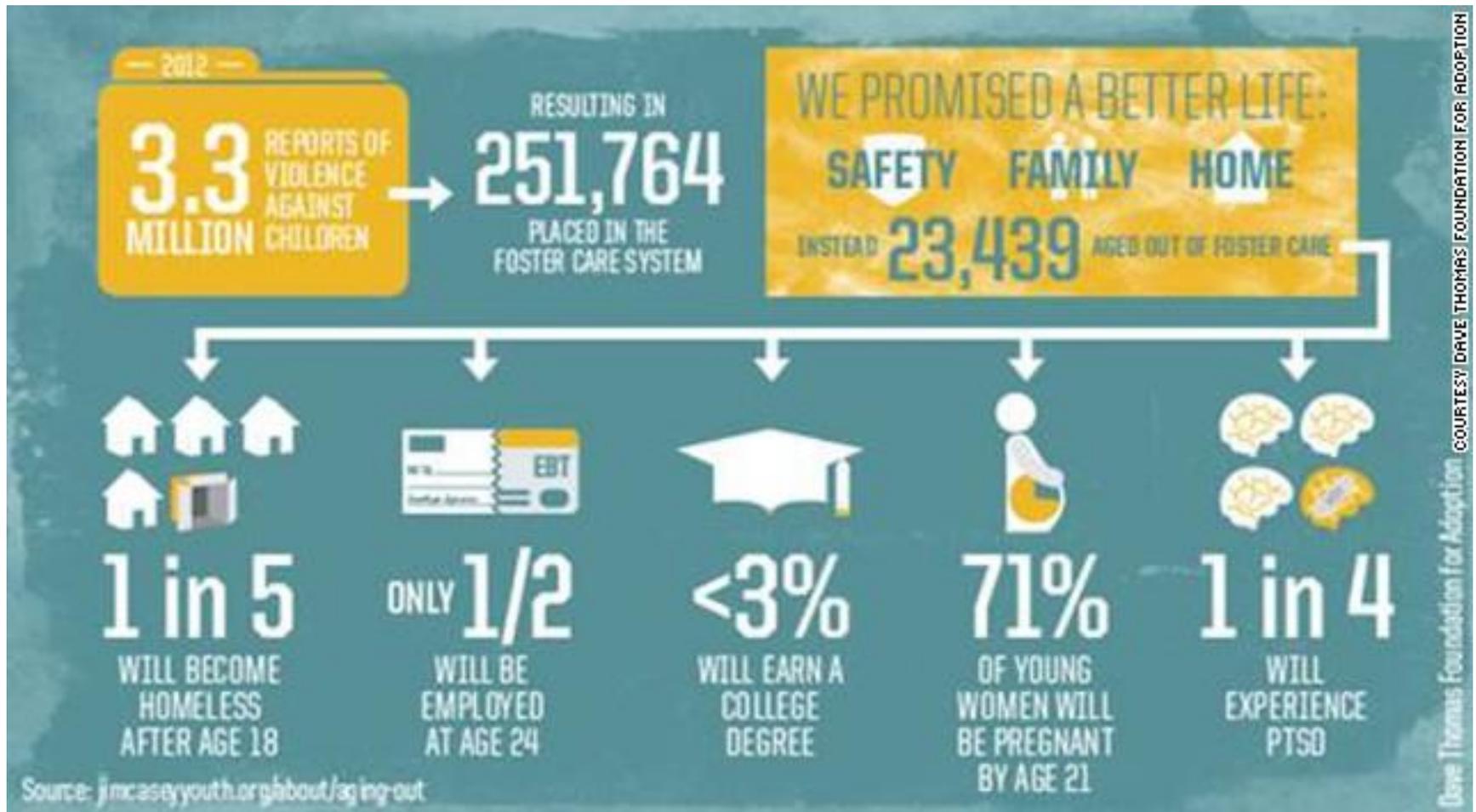
Staff and Students

Seita Scholars Program
Western Michigan University



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Challenges for College Students from Foster Care



http://www.cnn.com/2014/04/16/opinion/soronen-foster-children/index.html?hpt=op_t1

“Aging out” & the Brain



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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVOX1dZ1J6s&feature=youtu.be>

Aspirations for College

- 93 % of high school seniors had aspirations to go to college
 - [Higher Education: Gaps in Access and Persistence Study \(2012\)](#)
- 71 % of foster youth “want to graduate college;” this increases to 84% when aspirations for “some college” is included.
 - [Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth \(2004\)](#)



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What is Aging out?

- “Aging out” of foster care is a legal event that occurs when the court formally discharges a young person from the State’s custody based on the youth’s chronological age.
- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008
 - Increasing number of States offer foster care beyond 18 years old



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Resources for Youth Aging out of Foster Care

www.fosteringsuccessmichigan.com

- Independent living programs
- Education Training Voucher Program
 - Provides up to \$5,000 per year for youth enrolled in post-secondary education, up to age 23 years old
- Health care for former foster youth to 26 years old
- Campus-based support Programs



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Research on youth aging out of foster care

Compared to others approaching emerging adulthood, foster youth

- are unprepared and without a viable plan;
- Less able to depend on family for shelter, adult guidance, and financial support
- Lag behind other youth in educational attainment
- Received few encouraging messages from adults about pursuing college

(Literature review: Unrau, Font, Rawls, 2012)



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EDUCATIONAL Barriers to Post Secondary Education

Foster youth are more likely than others children to:

- ↑ drop out
- ↑ be placed in special education classes
- ↑ repeat a grade
- ↑ suspended or expelled
- ↑ rate of changing schools

(Literature review: Unrau, Font, Rawls, 2012)



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OTHER Barriers

to Post Secondary Education

Foster youth are more likely than other emerging adults to

- ↑ FINANCES – coordinate multiple systems for financial resources
- ↑ HOUSING – not have a co-signer
- ↑ HEALTH – have physical & mental health needs
- ↑ LIFE SKILLS – assume “adult” responsibilities earlier
- ↑ RELATIONSHIP – discontinuity with caregivers
- ↑ IDENTITY – pseudo-independence, survivor thinking



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Research Questions

Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

- How do freshman students from foster care compare to other college students in terms of their “readiness for college engagement”?
- How do freshman students from foster care perform academically in their first semester of college, compared to other first-time in any college freshman at the same institution?



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Study Sample

Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

Convenience Sample

- 81 students who aged out of foster care attending WMU, 17 – 20 years old
- 65% female
- 55% minority race or multiracial

Population of First-Time-in-Any-College (FTIAC) at WMU

- 50% female
- 21% minority race or multiracial



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Data Collection

Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

Readiness for College Engagement

- College Student Inventory (CSI), Noel-Levitz
- 194 questions, 17 scales, 4 broad categories
 - Academic Motivation
 - Social Motivation
 - Receptivity to Student Services
 - General Coping

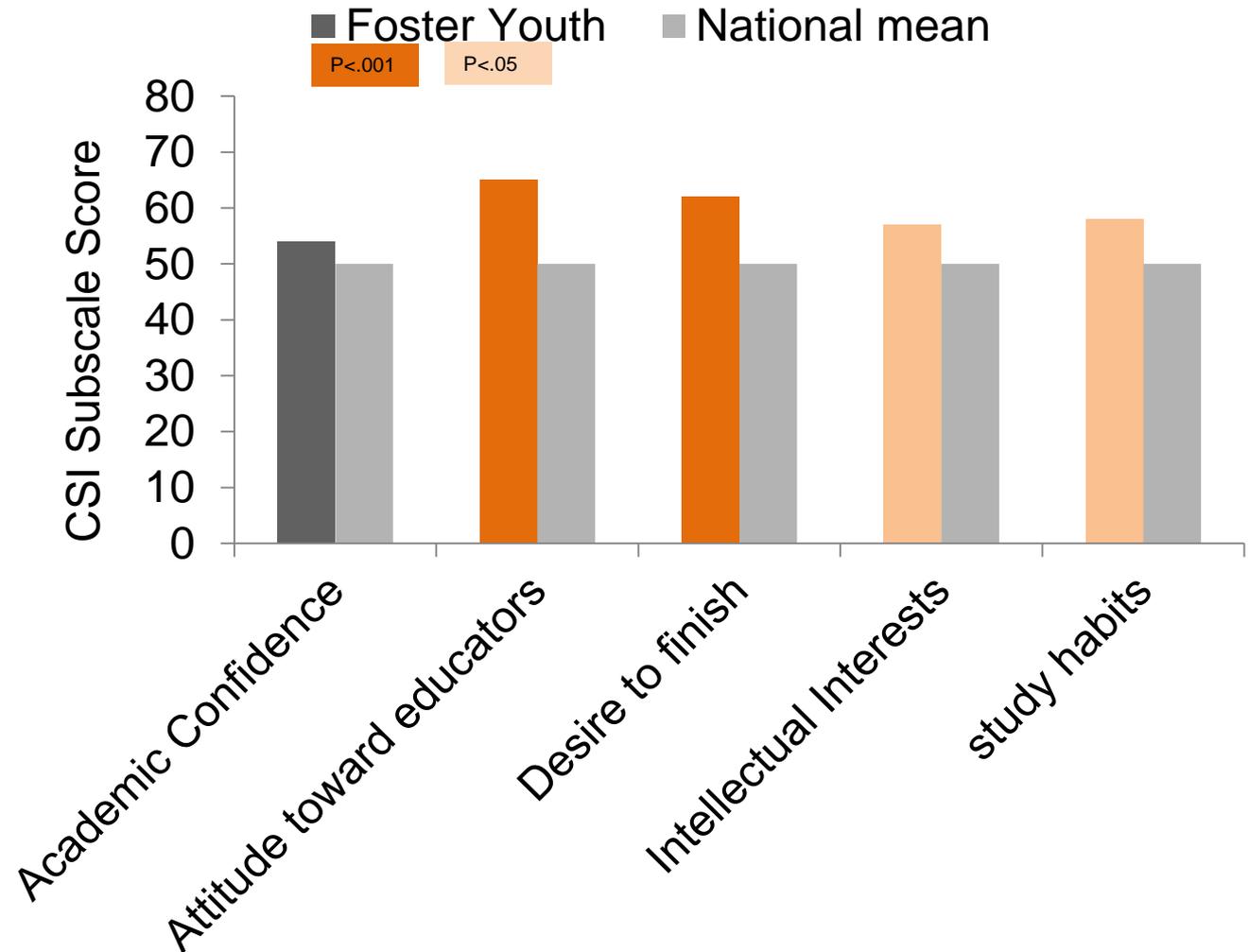


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Readiness for College Engagement

- **Academic Motivation**
 - Academic confidence
 - Attitude to educators
 - Desire to finish college
 - Intellectual interests
 - Study habits
- **Receptivity to...**
 - ...academic assistance
 - ...career counseling
 - ...social enrichment
 - ...personal counseling
- **Social Motivation**
 - Sociability
 - Self-reliance
 - Leadership
- **General Coping**
 - Sense of financial security
 - Family support
 - Openness
 - Ease of transition
 - Career planning

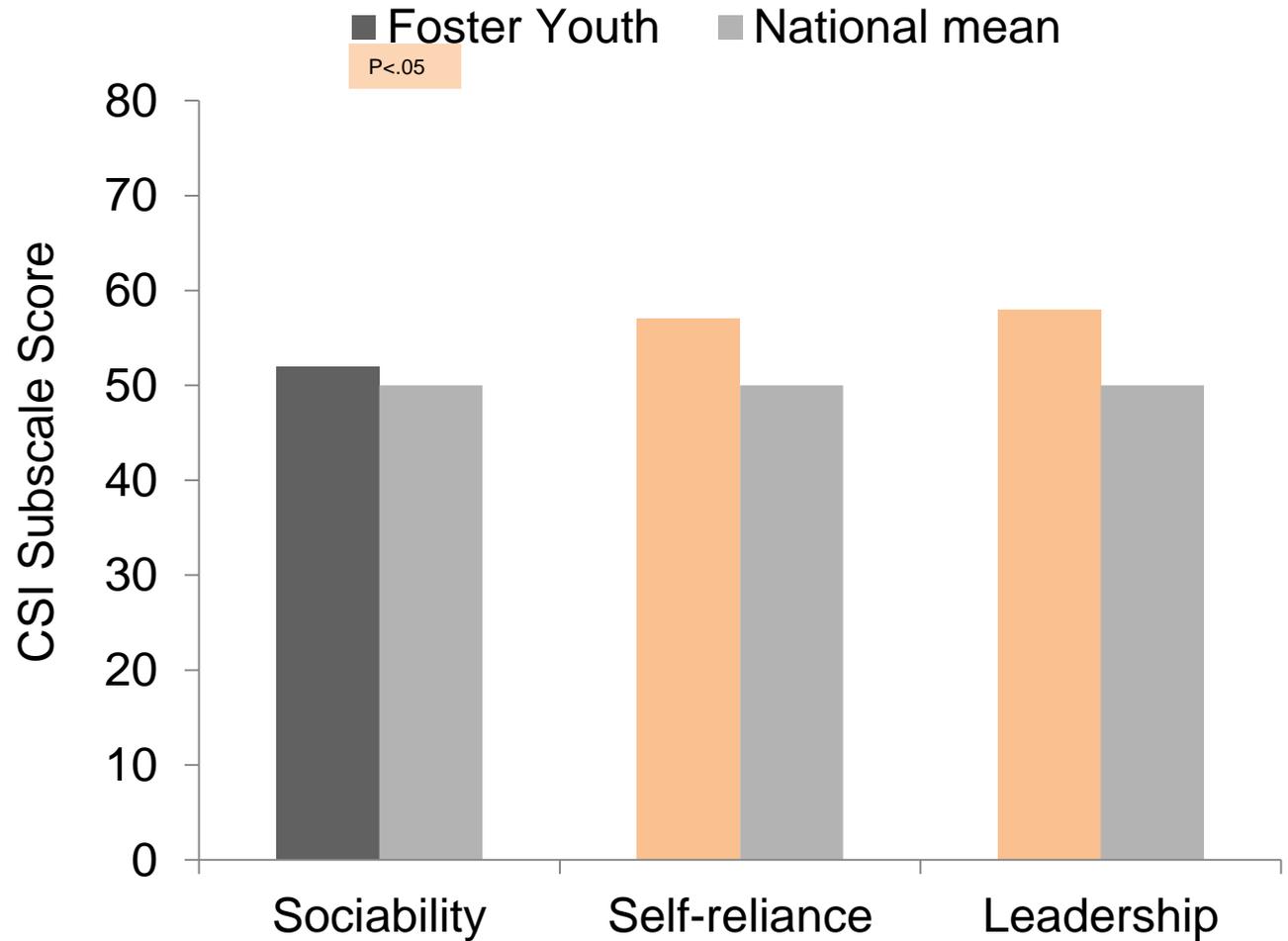
Academic Motivation



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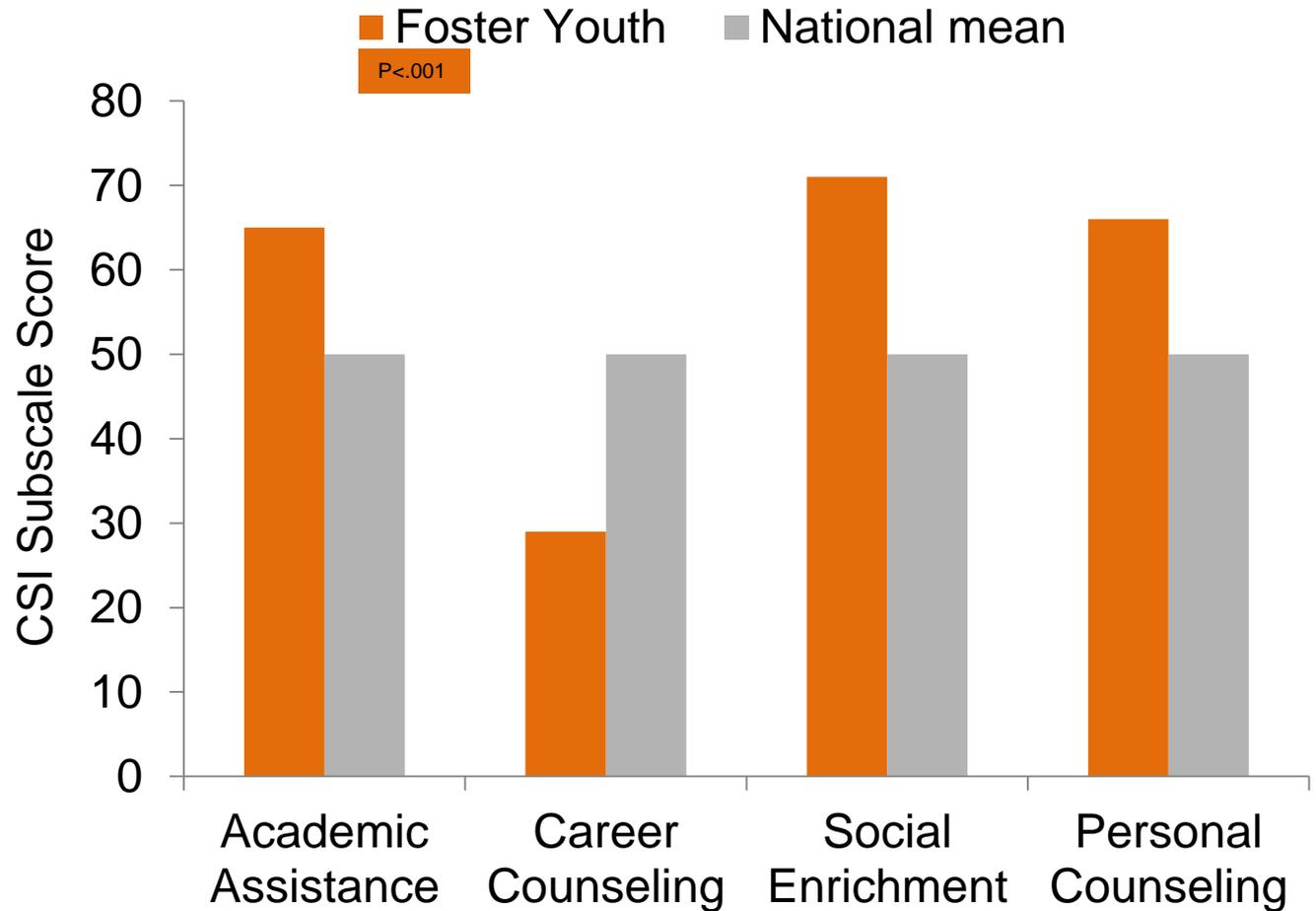
Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

Social Motivation



Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

Receptivity to Student Services

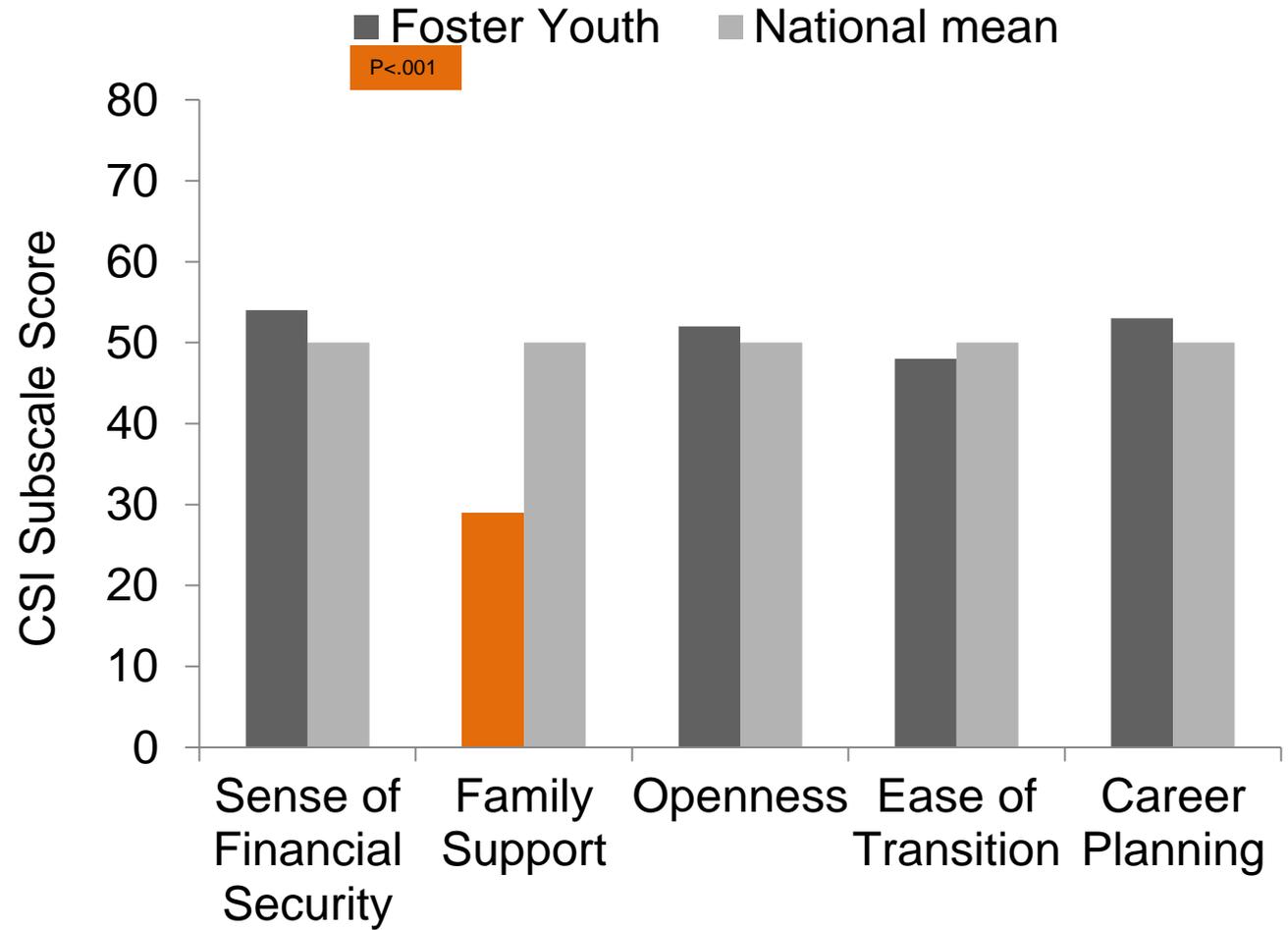


Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)



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General Coping

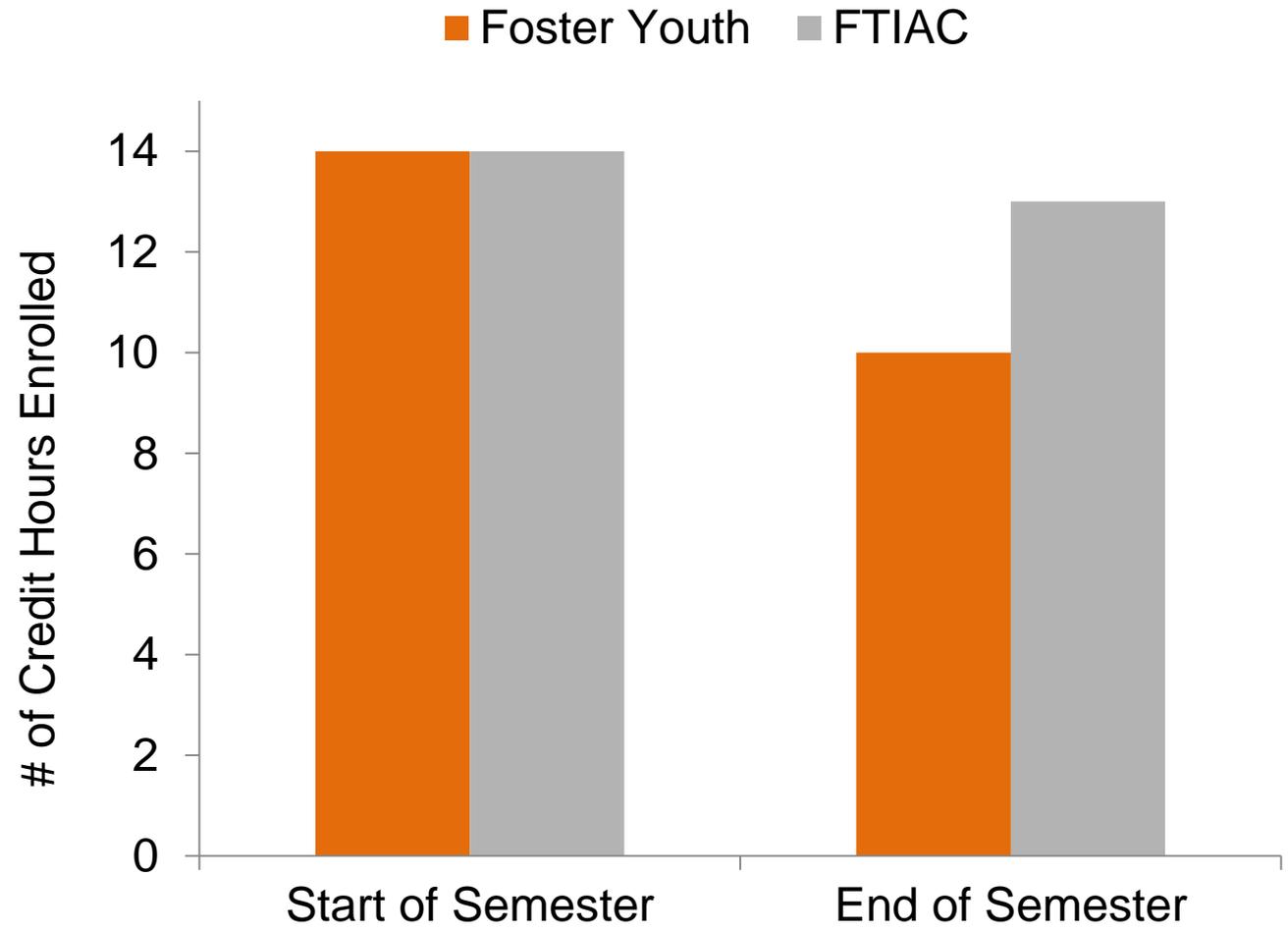


Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)



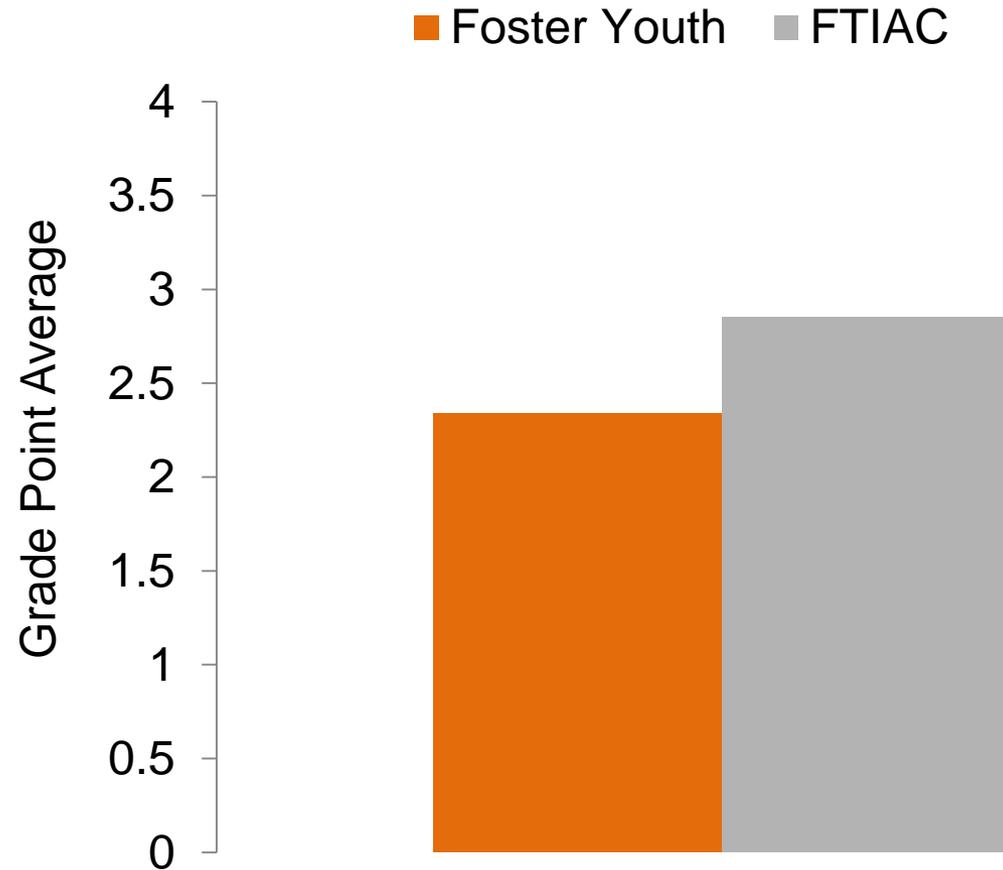
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First Semester Credit Hours



Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

First-Semester GPA



* The difference in end-of-semester GPA parallels observed differences in ACT and GPA scores at admission.

Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)



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Summary of Results

Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

Compared to other college freshman,
students from foster care report

- Higher motivation to engage academically
- Higher motivation to engage socially
- Lower family support
- About the same level of coping skills
- Completing fewer credit hours
- Lower Grade point average



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Implications for Practice

Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

- Perfect storm leading to academic failure and drop out
 - The combination of high hopes, low (or difficult) family support, academic struggle, and average coping skills is a set up for “high confidence, low competence”
- Aspirations ≠ Actions
 - What students from foster care wish for will not necessarily translate into actions or results. Skilled support and intervention is needed.



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What You Can Do

Unrau, Font & Rawls (2012)

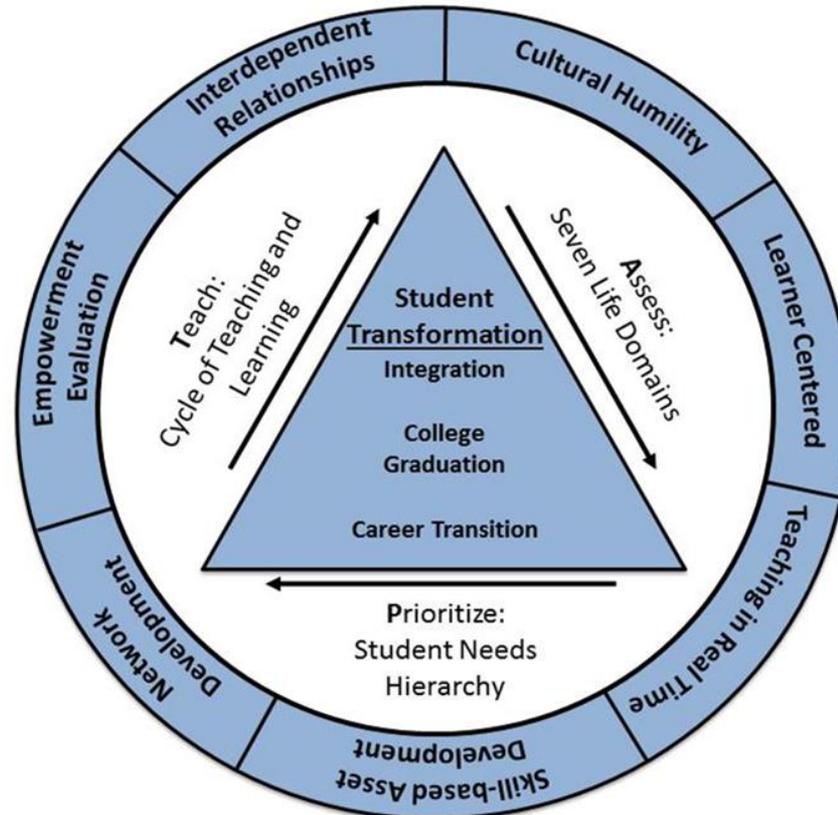
- Educate child welfare and college professionals about the unique needs of student from foster care
 - www.fosteringsuccessmichigan.com
- Early engagement with students from foster care is critical
 - Target competence building with students
 - Do not overplay confidence building with students
- Get specialized training to support students from foster care



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Become a Trained Coach

The Fostering Success Coach Model



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Information about training: contact jamie.crandell@wmich.edu
(After 5/30/14 go to: www.wmich.edu/fosteringSUCCESS)

Thank you for attending!

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- Visit www.fosteringuccessmichigan.com for more information about upcoming webinars or to access a recording of today's webinar.
- If you have a research study that you are interested in presenting via this series, please contact Dr. Yvonne Unrau, Director of the Center for Fostering Success at Yvonne.Unrau@wmich.edu with your ideas.



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