Chapin Hall Research Brief

Foster Youths' Roles and Satisfaction Related to the Planning of their Transitions to Independent Adulthood[1]

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Introduction

Youth participation is the involvement of youth in the decisions related to their lives. For youth in foster care, this process is formalized through case planning that occurs between the youth, a child welfare worker, and other key players involved with the case. Although more research is needed, some studies find that actively engaging the youth and sharing power in the decision-making process can be beneficial to youth, as it influences aspects of their development (Havlicek, Curry, & Villalpando, 2018). For example, studies suggest that if transition-age foster youth feel involved in their case-planning decisions, they may have more positive concepts of themselves (Samuels & Pryce, 2008), improve their skills in self-advocacy (Nybell, 2013) and help-seeking (Pryce, Napolitano, & Samuels, 2017), and increase their social and financial supports (Abrams, Curry, Lalayants, & Montero, 2017). Moreover, participation in decision making is recognized as the child's right (see, for example, Richards-Schuster & Pritzker, 2015) and supported by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics (see Pritzker & Richards-Schuster, 2016).

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[1] This memo is based on findings published in *Children and Youth Services Review* by Park and colleagues (2020). Please see this journal article for more detailed information about the background, statistical analyses, and implications.

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Over the past three decades, several federal laws have been enacted that specify parameters for foster youth participation in the development of their transitional independent living plan (TILP). A TILP is a written case plan identifying their goals and needs as they prepare for independence. The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-272) was a landmark law, as its Independent Living Initiative (ILI) established funding for the development of programs to support youth during their transitions from care. For states to be eligible for ILI funding, caseworkers had to "provide each [youth] with a written transitional independent living plan which shall be based on an assessment of [the youth's] needs" (P.L. 99-272, 1985, Sec. 477). Since then, federal policies have called for increased participation of foster youth in their transition planning. For example, the 2008 Fostering Connections Act (P.L. 110-351) updated the original language of the ILI (P.L. 99-272) to describe TILP development as a collaborative process between the youth and caseworker. In 2014, foster youth participation was further promoted by the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P.L. 113-183), which enables youth to be engaged with the development of their case plans and TILPs at an earlier age (i.e., age 14) and provides guidelines for actively engaging youth.

Within the context of federal legislation that increasingly encourages the active engagement of youth in case planning and decision making, we still have limited understanding of youths' experiences with this engagement. This memo investigates youths' roles in and satisfaction with their transition-planning process in California's foster care system. We also examine factors that are associated with youths' case-planning involvement and satisfaction, including both characteristics of the youth and of the counties in which they are placed.

Methods

Data Sources

This memo uses three data sources from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH). The first data source is in-person interviews conducted with a representative sample of young people in California child-welfare-supervised foster care (n = 727; Courtney, Charles, Okpych, Napolitano, & Halsted, 2014). The structured interviews were conducted in 2013 and asked youth about a wide range of topics, including their experiences with transition planning. Data collected from the interviews were used to create our transition-planning outcome measures and many of the predictors of youth participation examined in this memo. The second data source is administrative child welfare data from California's Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). This statewide administrative data system was used to create several measures of youths' maltreatment and foster care histories. The third data source is an online survey conducted with a representative sample of California child welfare workers who had a youth on their caseload aged 18 years old or older (n = 235; Courtney, Charles, Okpych, & Halsted, 2015). Part of the online survey asked the workers a series of questions about their perceptions of the circumstances of their county relevant to foster youths' adulthood transition, including training and services available in their county for older youth in foster care. This information was used to create county-level measures of the services available in the county where the youth was placed.

Sample

The sample for this memo includes the 727 youths who participated in the first round of CalYOUTH interviews. Eligible youth included young people between the ages of 16.75 and 17.75 when the sample was drawn in December 2012 and who had been in child-welfare-supervised foster care for at least 6 months. Of the nearly 2,500 youths who met these study criteria, a sample of 880 youths were selected into the study and, after excluding 117 youths who were later deemed to be ineligible for the study, in-person interviews were conducted with 727 youths (response rate of 95%). As displayed in Table 1, the average age of the participants at the time of their interview was 17.5 years old. There were more females than males, and the sample was racially and ethnically diverse. Less than 5% of the youth were born outside of the United States, almost a quarter identified having a sexual orientation other than 100% heterosexual, and less than 7% reported being parents (i.e., having a living child).

Table 1. Demographic and Background Characteristics of Youth (*n* = 727)

Age at the time of interview (approximate mean age, years)	17.5
Male (%)	40.6
Race/Ethnicity (%)	
White	17.8
Black	17.5
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native American	2.5
Multiracial	15.5
Hispanic	47.8
U.S.-born (%)	95.1
Not 100% heterosexual (%)	23.3
Being a parent (%)	6.8

Measures

The two main outcomes examined in this memo measure youths' involvement in and satisfaction with their transition planning. Both outcomes were captured by questions asked during the transition-planning section of the CalYOUTH interview, which began with the following statement: "Now I'm going to ask you some questions about your experience in getting ready for foster care after 18." The first outcome, youths' role in their TILP development, was measured by a question asking, "How would you describe the role that you have played in the development of your transitional independent living plan?" The youth had four response options to choose from: (1) I am not aware of my independent living plan, (2) I was not involved in the development of my independent living plan, (3) I was involved in the development of my independent living plan but did not lead it, and (4) I led the development of my independent living plan. In this memo, response options (1) and (2)

were combined to create a single "uninvolved/unaware" category. The remaining two response options capture youth who were involved in their TILP development but did not lead it, and youth who led the development of their TILP.

The second outcome examined in this memo pertained to youths' levels of satisfaction with their transition planning. This was measured by the following interview question: "How satisfied are you with team meetings you participated in to help you decide about staying in foster care past 18, develop an independent living plan, or make other decisions about your future?" The original response options included: (1) not involved in team meetings, (2) very dissatisfied, (3) dissatisfied, (4) satisfied, and (5) very satisfied. In this memo, we recoded these options into three categories: (1) not involved in team meetings, (2) dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the meetings, and (3) satisfied or very satisfied with the meetings.

We examined many characteristics of the youth and the counties in which they resided as predictors of the two transition-planning outcomes described above. The selection of predictors in this memo was informed by a review of the current research literature on youths' involvement in or satisfaction with their transition planning. We have organized the predictors in the following groups: youth demographic characteristics, youth personality traits and perceptions, youth experiences with foster care, youth educational background, youth risk and protective factors, youth maltreatment and foster care history characteristics, and county-level characteristics. A full list of the predictors can be found at the bottom of Table 2. For more detailed information on the predictors, refer to Park and colleagues (2020).

Analyses

We first present descriptive statistics for the two outcomes, TILP involvement and youths' satisfaction with planning meetings. We then present findings from the two regression analyses that investigated predictors of each of the transition-planning outcomes.[2]

Findings

As displayed in Figure 1, the majority of youth participated in their TILP development, but about a third reported being uninvolved in or unaware of the process.[3] In terms of youths' satisfaction with the planning meetings (Figure 2), more than a quarter of youth said that they were not involved in the meetings, and the majority of youth who had participated in the meetings were satisfied or very satisfied with their experiences. Overall, fewer than one in ten youth reported being dissatisfied with their planning meetings.

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[2] We used multivariate multinomial logistic regression to analyze a wide range of youth- and county-level predictors of each outcome. Survey weights were used to expand estimates to the population of foster youth meeting the CalYOUTH study criteria (Courtney et al., 2014).

[3] We combined youth reports of being unaware with those who reported being uninvolved to create a single category of uninvolved/unaware. A total of 32% of youth reported being unaware of or uninvolved in the process; this breaks down to about 27% of the youth being unaware of the existence of their TILP, and about 5% knowing about their TILP but not being involved in its development process.

Figure 1. Youths' Role in TILP Development Process at Age 17 (*n* = 704)
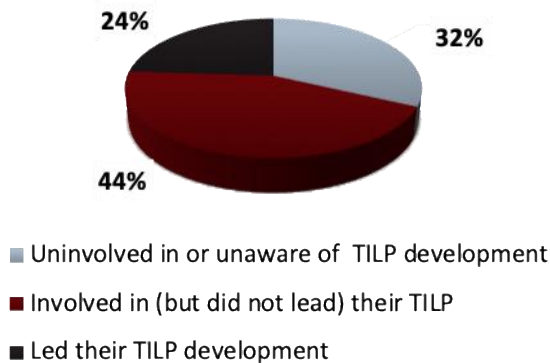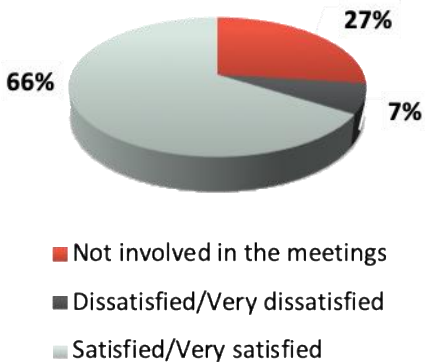

24%   32%
44%

- Uninvolved in or unaware of TILP development
- Involved in (but did not lead) their TILP
- Led their TILP development

Figure 2. Youths' Satisfaction with Care Decision Meetings (*n* = 724)

27%
66%   7%

- Not involved in the meetings
- Dissatisfied/Very dissatisfied
- Satisfied/Very satisfied

Abbreviated results from the first regression analysis are presented in Table 2. This analysis examined factors that predict the role youth played in their TILP development. This table only displays factors that were statistically significantly associated ($p < .05$) with youths' involvement in their TILP development. A note at the bottom of the table lists the full set of predictors included in the regression model, including those that were not significantly associated with the outcome. As described above, youth reported that they were either: (1) uninvolved in or unaware of their TILP ("uninvolved/unaware"), (2) involved in their TILP but did not lead it ("involved"), or (3) involved in their TILP and led the development ("led"). In this analysis, we compared all possible pairs of outcomes. In Table 2, the first comparison is between involved vs. uninvolved/unaware, the second comparison is between led vs. uninvolved/unaware, and the third comparison is between led vs. involved.

For each of the three TILP role comparisons, Table 2 displays factors that increased (blue box) and decreased (pink box) the likelihood of the outcome. The parentheses next to each factor present the relative risk ratio (RRR), which compares the "risk" (or likelihood) of an outcome for two groups.[4] For example, in Comparison 1, we see that youth who were documented as having a disability were more likely than youth without a disability to be involved in their TILP planning than to be uninvolved/unaware. Conversely, as seen in the adjacent pink

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[4] This footnote provides a brief explanation about how to interpret RRRs. An RRR of 1.0 indicates that the likelihood of the outcome is similar between groups; an RRR above 1.0 means that the outcome is more likely for the group of interest; and an RRR less than 1.0 means that the outcome is less likely for the group of interest. For example, in Comparison 1 in Table 2, the group of interest is youth with physical, vision, or hearing disabilities and the RRR is 1.60. This means that the likelihood of being involved versus uninvolved/unaware in planning is greater for youth with a disability than for youth without a disability, by a magnitude of about 1.6. In other words, the likelihood of being involved vs. being uninvolved/unaware for youth with a disability is about 1.6 times the likelihood for youth without a disability. Having a substantiated case of emotional abuse was found to go in the opposite direction. With an RRR of 0.39, the likelihood of being involved in planning versus being uninvolved/unaware was about 61% lower (1.0 - 0.39 = 0.61) for youth with an emotional abuse history than for youth who had not been emotionally abused.

box, youth with a substantiated emotional abuse history were less likely than youth without this history to be involved in their planning than to be uninvolved/unaware.

Several other factors were also found to increase youths' involvement compared to being uninvolved or unaware (see blue box in Comparison 1 in Table 2). Youth higher in the personality traits agreeableness (i.e., compassionate and friendly) and conscientiousness (i.e., organized and efficient) had greater relative odds of being involved in their TILP development than youth who were higher in the uninvolved/unaware category. Youth who rated their caseworkers as being helpful were more likely to be involved in their TILP. U.S.-born youth had a greater likelihood of being involved in the TILP process than youth who were not born in the United States.

Comparison 2 in Table 2 presents the factors found to predict youths' likelihood of leading their TILP development versus being uninvolved/unaware. The left side (blue box), shows that youths' age at the time of their interview is a strong predictor of leading the TILP process. Youth who were older when they were first interviewed were more likely to report leading their TILP compared to their younger peers. We also see two predictors that were listed in Comparison 1 in Table 2: conscientiousness and substantiated emotional abuse history. Youth higher in conscientiousness were more likely than their peers to lead their TILP than to be uninvolved/unaware. Youth with a substantiated emotional abuse history, listed on the right (pink box), were less likely to lead their TILP development than to be uninvolved/unaware.

The last comparison in Table 2, Comparison 3, displays the factors that increase (blue box) and decrease (pink box) youths' likelihood of leading their TILP development versus being involved but not leading. Compared to youth who spent most of their time in congregate care settings while in foster care, youth who spent most of their time in "other" settings (i.e., guardian homes, court-specified homes, medical facilities, and tribe-specified homes) were more likely to lead their TILP development than to be involved (but not lead). Youth who entered foster care at an older age were more likely to lead their TILP compared to youth who entered care earlier in their lives. We again see two factors that were significant predictors in Comparison 1 in Table 2: having a physical, vision, or hearing disability and being U.S.-born. Youth who were born in the United States and youth who had a vision, hearing, or physical disability were both less likely than their peers to lead the development of their TILP than to be involved (but not lead).

Table 2. Factors Associated with Youth's Level of Engagement in Their TILP Planning (*n* = 704)

Comparison 1: Being Involved vs. Uninvolved/Unaware	
Factors that <u>increase</u> the likelihood of being Involved vs. Uninvolved/Unaware (RRR)	**Factors that <u>decrease</u> the likelihood of being Involved vs. Uninvolved/Unaware (RRR)**
Any physical, vision, or hearing disability (1.60*) Agreeableness (1.38**) Conscientiousness (1.37**) Caseworker helpfulness (1.22*) U.S.-born (3.82*)	Substantiated emotional abuse history (0.57*)
Comparison 2: Leading vs. Being Uninvolved/Unaware	
Factors that <u>increase</u> the likelihood of Leading vs. being Uninvolved/Unaware (RRR)	**Factors that <u>decrease</u> the likelihood of Leading vs. being Uninvolved/Unaware (RRR)**
Age at the time of W1 youth survey (2.94*) Conscientiousness (1.28*)	Substantiated emotional abuse history (0.39**)
Comparison 3: Leading vs. Being Involved	
Factors that <u>increase</u> the likelihood of Leading vs. being Involved (RRR)	**Factors that <u>decrease</u> the likelihood of Leading vs. being Involved (RRR)**
"Other" main placement type before age 18 (4.80*) Age first entered foster care (1.07*)	Any physical, vision, or hearing disability (0.54*) U.S.-born (0.29*)

Table note. RRR = Relative Risk Ratio. * *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01.

Table note. All three models included the following groups of predictors:

<u>Demographic characteristics</u>: Age at the time of youth survey; gender; race/ethnicity; U.S.-born; sexuality.

<u>Youth personality traits and perceptions</u>: Personality traits (the Big 5); openness to new experiences; optimism about the future; adultification (youth's adoption of an adult role of providing vs. receiving care).

<u>Youth experiences with foster care</u>: Caseworker contact frequency per month; attorney contact frequency per month; feeling lucky to be in foster care; helpfulness of caseworker.

<u>Youth educational background</u>: Ever put in a special education classroom; ever repeated a grade; reading proficiency (standardized score); college degree aspirations.

<u>Youth risk and protective factors</u>: Positive screen for a mental health disorder; positive screen for a substance use disorder; any physical, vision, or hearing disability; number of social supports who provide guidance or advice; ever worked at a paid job; being a parent; ever incarcerated; ever physically assaulted.

Youth foster care history characteristics: Main placement type before age 18; average number of placement changes per year in care; age first entered foster care; substantiated maltreatment history (sexual abuse, physical abuse, severe neglect, neglect, emotional abuse, and "other" abuse).

County-level characteristics: County size/urbanicity; caseworkers' average perception of service/training availability for transition-age youth; caseworkers' average perception of court personnel support for extended foster care; caseworkers' average satisfaction with inter-service system collaboration; proportion of caseworkers specialized in serving older foster youth.

Next, we examined predictors of youths' satisfaction with the team meetings in which decisions were made about their care, futures, and transitions to adulthood. Similar to the TILP development analyses, Table 3 presents all possible comparisons of the outcome's three categories: (1) not involved in team meetings ("uninvolved"), (2) dissatisfied or very dissatisfied ("dissatisfied"), and (3) satisfied or very satisfied ("satisfied"). Similar to Table 2, Table 3 displays factors that significantly increased (blue box) and decreased (pink box) the likelihood of each outcome category relative to one another.

Comparison 1 in Table 3 displays the factors found to predict youths' likelihood of being dissatisfied with team meetings versus being uninvolved. There were no predictors found to significantly increase youths' likelihood of being dissatisfied versus uninvolved. However, several factors were found to decrease the likelihood of youth being dissatisfied versus uninvolved. Youths' chances of being dissatisfied (vs. uninvolved) were lowered by each of the following: aspiring to earn a college degree or more than a college degree, being a parent, experiencing substantiated emotional abuse, and having higher ratings of how helpful their caseworker was. Lastly, youth from counties with greater proportions of specialized caseworkers serving older youth were less likely to be dissatisfied than to be uninvolved.

The second comparison in Table 3 displays factors that are significantly related to youth being satisfied versus uninvolved. Youth who were relatively older at their first interview were more likely to be satisfied with their planning meetings than to be uninvolved. We also see that youth with a history of substantiated physical abuse were more likely to be satisfied than uninvolved. On the right (pink box), three types of substantiated maltreatment histories were found to decrease the likelihood of youth being satisfied versus uninvolved: severe neglect, emotional abuse, and "other" abuse.[5] Similar to Comparison 1 in Table 3, the proportion of county caseworkers specialized in services for older youth was also found to reduce youths' likelihood of being satisfied with meetings (vs. being uninvolved). Taken together, youth residing in counties with greater proportions of caseworkers who specialize in working with transition-age youth were more likely to be uninvolved in their team meetings than they were to be dissatisfied or satisfied with the meetings.

Finally, Comparison 3 in Table 3 shows the factors related to youths' likelihood of being satisfied versus dissatisfied with their planning meetings. On the left (blue box) we see that being a parent and youth perception of caseworkers' helpfulness were both associated with meeting satisfaction. Youth who reported their caseworker as being more helpful and youth who were parents at the time of their interview were each more likely than their counterparts to be satisfied with the team meetings. A county urbanicity difference also emerged. Compared to youth in Los Angeles (LA) County, youth residing in more rural counties were less likely

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[5] "Other" abuse includes exploitation, at-risk sibling abuse, and substantial risk.

to have satisfactory experiences with the meetings. That is, youth in LA County were more likely than youth in rural counties to report being satisfied (vs. dissatisfied) with their team meetings.

Table 3. Factors Associated with Youths' Level of Satisfaction with their Planning Meetings (*n* = 727)

Comparison 1: Being Dissatisfied vs. Not involved	
Factors that <u>increase</u> the likelihood of being Dissatisfied vs. Not involved (RRR)	**Factors that <u>decrease</u> the likelihood of being Dissatisfied vs. Not involved (RRR)**
	Aspires to college degree or more (0.25**)
	Being a parent (0.05**)
	Substantiated emotional abuse history (0.31*)
	Caseworker helpfulness (0.64**)
	Proportions of county caseworkers specialized in services for older youth (0.97*)
Comparison 2: Being Satisfied vs. Not involved	
Factors that <u>increase</u> the likelihood of being Satisfied vs. Not involved (RRR)	**Factors that <u>decrease</u> the likelihood of being Satisfied vs. Not involved (RRR)**
Age at the time of youth interview (4.29***)	Substantiated severe neglect history (0.28**)
Substantiated physical abuse history (2.20**)	Substantiated emotional abuse history (0.58*)
	Substantiated other abuse history (0.56*)
	Proportions of county caseworkers specialized in services for older youth (0.97**)
Comparison 3: Being Satisfied vs. Dissatisfied	
Factors that <u>increase</u> the likelihood of being Satisfied vs. Dissatisfied (RRR)	**Factors that <u>decrease</u> the likelihood of being Satisfied vs. Dissatisfied (RRR)**
Caseworker helpfulness (1.75***)	Rural/Mostly rural county (0.15*)
Being a parent (12.86*)	

Table note. RRR = Relative Risk Ratio. * *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .001.

Table note. The same groups of predictors used in the first analysis were used in this analysis. Please refer to the note beneath Table 2 for a complete list of predictors.

Study Limitations

Our findings should be interpreted carefully due to some study limitations. First, the outcome variables likely do not capture the depth and complexity of youth participation in transition-planning processes. Second, most of the measures are based on self-reports, which may result in some youths' and caseworkers' responses being

inaccurate (e.g., due to social desirability or recall bias). It is also possible that youth who were involved in their TILP development reported being uninvolved because they did not know that this planning was referred to as a TILP. Additionally, a team meeting format was not yet standardized throughout California at the time of the interviews, which may have resulted in some youths' one-on-one meetings with caseworkers not being captured by this measure. Third, some of the predictors are measured at the same time as the outcome variables, so the time ordering cannot be determined. For example, it is unclear whether a youth's perceived helpfulness of their caseworker causes them to be involved in their transition planning, or if the youth's involvement might have led to them to perceive their caseworker as being more helpful. Fourth, this study is based on an early cohort of youth shortly after California adopted extended foster care, and their experiences might differ from more recent cohorts. Lastly, the study's findings may not be generalizable to foster youth in states other than California.

Discussion

This memo investigated two aspects of foster youths' transition planning: their level of involvement in their TILP development and their satisfaction with their team planning meetings. Nearly a third of youth reported that they were unaware of (about 27%) or uninvolved with (about 5%) the development of their TILP. Additionally, when asked about their satisfaction with their planning meetings, more than a quarter of the youth said they were not involved in these meetings (and, therefore, could not report being satisfied nor dissatisfied with the meetings). There are many reasons that youth may not be aware of or not be involved in these planning processes, such as characteristics of the youth (e.g., how old they are, their level of interest in being involved), characteristics of the relationship with their caseworker, and local and regional differences in how child welfare services are structured. Given that federal policy mandates that foster youth be engaged in these transition-planning processes, these findings deserve further attention from future studies. This study provides one of the first looks into understanding factors that are related to these outcomes. Some insights for practice are offered below.

Results from analyses of both outcomes point to the critical role of the youth–caseworker relationship. Aspects of this relationship were found to shape youths' opportunities to be involved in the decision-making processes around their TILP development. Youth who reported their caseworker being more helpful were more likely to participate in their TILP development than to be uninvolved/unaware. Additionally, youth who rated their caseworkers as being more helpful were both less likely to be dissatisfied (vs. uninvolved) and more likely to be satisfied (vs. dissatisfied) with the meetings. This may reflect a process of co-production (e.g., collaborative case decision-making processes between clients and professionals; see Park, 2020), which involves mutuality between the youth and the worker in the creation of a TILP. In other words, it may be more preferable to the youth to be involved (but not lead)—to colead their planning with the support of the worker—than to be in charge of leading their TILP development on their own.

We also found some youth characteristics play a role in youths' involvement in TILP planning and satisfaction with team meetings. Some aspects of their personality traits predicted their involvement. Being higher in agreeableness and conscientiousness increased the likelihood that youth were involved in planning their futures. Youth higher in conscientiousness also had a greater likelihood of leading their TILP development. These findings about personality traits can be understood both in terms of the youth themselves and in terms

of how others react to the youth. First, it makes sense that young people who are cooperative (agreeableness) and organized (conscientiousness) would be more likely to engage in the planning for their futures. In this case, these qualities make youth more likely to initiate involvement in planning. Second, youths' personality traits may shape their caseworkers' expectations of their interests and capabilities related to planning. Consequently, compared to youth who are perceived as being uncooperative or unorganized, caseworkers may be more likely to engage youth who are more agreeable and conscientious in the planning processes.

Other youth characteristics were also found to predict their involvement in and satisfaction with planning. Compared to youth born outside of the United States, U.S.-born youth were more likely to be involved in their TILP-development process (vs. being uninvolved/unaware). However, when U.S.-born youth were involved in the process, they were less likely to lead compared to youth who were not U.S.-born. This finding calls for more research to flesh out why these differences may exist. However, it is worth noting that only a small portion of the sample (less than 5%) was born outside of the United States, and this small percentage hinders conclusions that can be reached. Youths' disability status was found to have similar associations. Youth with a disability were more likely to be involved in TILP planning (vs. being uninvolved/unaware), but when they were involved they were less likely to lead the process. It could be that for youth with a documented disability, their caseworkers take a more active role in the planning. Park's (2020) conceptual framework describing co-production suggests another plausible explanation for these findings. Youth involvement in (but not leading of) planning decisions can be understood as youth coproducing their plan with people with expertise (e.g., youth and caseworkers sharing decision-making authority) to better navigate the welfare systems (Park, 2020).

Relatedly, youths' ages predicted their likelihood of leading their TILP development. Youth who were older when they completed the interview were more likely than their younger peers to lead their TILP development than to be involved. Older youth were also more likely to be satisfied with their team meetings than to be uninvolved. These findings make sense, as youth might have increased interest in planning for their transitions, as well as opportunities for increased TILP awareness and engagement, as they approach their 18th birthdays. Parental status was not found to be associated with youths' engagement in TILP planning, but it was associated with satisfaction with team meetings. Youth who had children were less likely to be dissatisfied (vs. being uninvolved/unaware) and more likely to be satisfied (vs. being uninvolved/unaware) than their peers without children. This is promising because these youth face a particular set of challenges around caring for their little ones, and it is all the more important for them to feel that the meetings are satisfactory and helpful.

There were also several less intuitive findings, many around youths' histories of substantiated maltreatment. While a history of physical abuse was found to increase youths' likelihood of being satisfied (vs. uninvolved), other forms of maltreatment (i.e., severe neglect, emotional abuse, and "other" types of abuse) decreased their likelihood of being satisfied. Youth with histories of sexual abuse were more likely to be dissatisfied (vs. uninvolved), whereas youth with substantiated emotional abuse were less likely than their peers to be dissatisfied with meetings (vs. uninvolved). Youth with substantiated cases of emotional abuse were also less likely to either be involved in or to lead the TILP process than to be uninvolved/unaware. Youth who spent most of their time in "other" placement settings (i.e., guardian homes, court-specified homes, medical facilities, and tribe-specified homes) were found to be more likely to lead their TILP planning than to be uninvolved/unaware. It is unclear why certain types of maltreatment and placements were associated with TILP involvement and satisfaction with team meetings. Given the large number of predictors used, these

associations may have occurred by chance. Further research is needed with additional populations of youth in care to see if these associations are replicated.

Residing in a county with higher percentages of caseworkers who specialize in working with transition-age youth (rather than working in multiple areas) was a significant predictor both of youths' satisfaction *and* dissatisfaction with team meetings. Youth with specialized caseworkers were less likely to be satisfied (vs. uninvolved) and dissatisfied (vs. uninvolved).[6] In other words, having a specialized caseworker increased youths' likelihood of being uninvolved; when youth were involved in the meetings, they had mixed experiences in terms of (dis)satisfaction. It was surprising to find that caseworkers specializing in transition-age youth did not predict youths' involvement in or satisfaction with their team meetings. Another interesting finding is that youth from more rural or suburban counties were more likely than youth in LA County to be dissatisfied with their team meetings. Youths' involvement in transition planning may be influenced by their perceptions of the availability of resources to support their transitions from care (Abrams et al., 2017). Given this, one possible explanation for this finding might be related to the perceptions of youth from more rural counties that they have fewer resources available to them compared to those residing in more urban counties. Both of these factors, specialized caseworkers and county urbanicity, warrant further research to better understand the role of county-level characteristics and youth participation in transition-planning processes.

In an era in which there is a strong push to prepare youth for self-sufficiency after leaving care, this study aligns with past work that argues for the importance of interdependence and collaboration between youth and professionals (Antle, Johnson, Barbee, & Sullivan, 2009; Park, 2020). This may require a child welfare culture and systems where service providers have the capacity and competency to cultivate collaborative and satisfactory decision-making processes with all of their youth (Havlicek et al., 2018), which might be cocreated by foster youth and alumni, caseworkers, and stakeholders.

References

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[6] It is important to acknowledge that the relative likelihood of satisfaction and dissatisfaction (vs. uninvolved) for youth with specialized caseworkers (0.97) is very small. In other words, this suggests little to no difference in the odds of these youth being satisfied or dissatisfied compared to their counterparts without specialized caseworkers.

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