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Using the bridges transition framework for youth in foster care: Measurement development and preliminary outcomes

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ABSTRACT

Youth in foster care often undergo multiple transitions before reaching adulthood, and these transitions often create significant stress and can exacerbate emotional and behavioral problems. A measurement instrument (the Youth Experience of Transitions, or YET) was designed to assess foster care youths' understanding of transitions, and this instrument was tested on a group of youth undergoing an intervention program designed to assist them in coping with the stress of these transitions while in foster care. The intervention was based on the Transitions Framework by William Bridges and was implemented in multiple community agencies with funding from the Andrus Family Fund. Using factor analysis, we found that the YET contained two factors representing (1) openness and (2) determination. For youth in the participating foster care programs, growth in openness from baseline to 6 months was linked to a significant decrease in internalizing symptoms; no significant links were found for externalizing symptoms. Implications for foster care intervention programs are discussed.

1. Introduction

More than 20,000 young people exit the foster care system each year (Carroll, 2002). Unfortunately, research demonstrates that these young people are often ill-prepared for life after foster care, finding high rates of homelessness, incarceration, unemployment, and school failure among youth who age out of the foster care system (Blome, 1997; Buehler, Orme, Post, & Patterson, 2000; Burley & Halpern, 2001; Cook, 1994; Pecora et al., 2006). For example, in a three-state study, youth exiting foster care had less than a 55% employment rate and generally received wages that fell below the poverty line (Goerge et al., 2002). Further, a recent statewide study found that one in four foster youth will be incarcerated within the first two years after they leave the system, and over one-fifth will become homeless at some time after age 18. A little more than half had a high school degree at age 19, compared to 87% of a national comparison group of non-foster youth, and less than 3% of youth who aged out of foster care and who are over the age of 25 were able to earn their college degrees, compared with 28% of the general population (Nevada Kids Count, 2001). A recent multi-state study (the Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth) found that, in comparison to same age peers in the general population, youth graduating from foster care were twice as likely to have at least one child of their own and were significantly more likely to be a single parent (Courtney et al., 2005).

One of the factors contributing to more negative outcomes for youth aging out of foster care may be the stress of the transitions experienced while in care (Jonson-Reid & Barth, 2000; Pecora et al., 2006; Reilly, 2003). As part of the foster care process, children are separated from their primary caregivers, which can result in grief, anger, and a sense of loss (Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1980). This initial disruption can lead to elevated levels of behavioral problems (Lawrence, Carlson, & Egeland, 2006), which puts children at risk for placement breakdown, additional placements, and related disruptions (Chamberlain et al., 2006; for review, see Oosterman, Schuengel, Slot, Bullens, & Doreleijers, 2007).

In addition to losing connection to their birth families and the risk of multiple placements, youth in foster care often experience repeated changes in schools and a revolving set of social workers (Blome, 1997; Goerge, Wulczyn, & Fanshel, 1994). For example, between 20% and 50% of children in long-term foster care have a planned stay with a foster family that ends prematurely (Minty, 1999). In one study that assessed placements in three child welfare agencies, approximately one third (32.3%) experienced 8 or more placements while in the system (Pecora et al., 2005). A study on foster youths' school enrollment found that almost 50% of youth in care reported they had to change schools at least four times since they started their education (Courtney, Pilivin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith, 2001). In addition, studies on child welfare staff turnover reveal that nearly 20% of all public caseworkers and 40% of private caseworkers leave their positions every year (Nittoli, 2003).

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These changes have the potential to leave youth feeling overwhelmed, isolated, and ill-equipped to manage the daunting process of becoming an independent adult (Barth, 1990; Hochman, Hochman, & Miller, 2004; McMillen & Tucker, 1999). Even more critical, research has found that placement changes can lead to greater levels of internalizing and externalizing problems for foster children (Newton, Litrownik, & Landsverk, 2000; Ryan & Testa, 2005). Down the road, a high number of disruptive transitions while in foster care can lead to more negative outcomes for youth in early adulthood, including lower rates of employment and higher rates of homelessness and incarceration (Jonson-Reid & Barth, 2000; Pecora et al., 2006; Reilly, 2003).

This paper documents the development of a measurement instrument designed to assess youths' understanding of transitions. This instrument was developed with an eye toward measuring the effectiveness of a theoretically-based intervention strategy aimed at helping foster care youth make a more successful transition to adulthood by enhancing their understanding of how change impacts their attitudes, behaviors, relationships, and identities. The theoretical underpinning of the intervention was the Transitions Framework (described below). This work is critical given that (1) currently, no valid and reliable measures exist to measure youths' understanding of foster care transitions, and (2) such an instrument is necessary to understand both the nature of transitions for youth in foster care and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions like Transitions that attempt to prepare youth for such transitions.

It is important to note that a moderate amount of research has been conducted which offers recommendations (i.e., programs and policies) to practitioners aimed at reducing the number of changes for youth in foster care, essentially addressing the issues outlined above. Within the Transition program, we focused solely on helping youth to improve their ability to negotiate and cope with the changes they face.

2. Theory: the transition framework

The Transitions Framework was developed by William Bridges in the early 1970s to help individuals and organizations effectively manage change. A key concept of the Transitions Framework is differentiating between *change* and the attendant *transition*. According to theory, change is situational, event-based and often external to us, such as getting a new job, moving into a new home, starting school, or leaving foster care. Sometimes change is forced upon us and sometimes we choose it, but regardless of how it comes about, the transition is our response to change. In other words, the transition is the emotional or internal process we go through to come to terms with change that helps us re-orient ourselves (Bridges, 2003). Thus, according to the Transitions Framework, any external change a person goes through, by definition, must be accompanied by an internal transition process. Carefully paying attention to the "emotional side of change" (i.e., the transition) increases the likelihood that changes will not create or exacerbate negative feelings such as stress, isolation, and hopelessness.

According to Bridges (2003), the process of transition generally follows three phases, each of which must be managed to complete the transition and reinforce a new way of doing things. Transition begins with "Endings". In this phase, people begin the process of letting go of life before the change, of figuring out what is over and what is not, and finding ways to say goodbye to the things that must be relinquished. The second phase of transition, called the "Neutral Zone", is an in-between time where you have accepted what is ending but the new way of doing things doesn't yet feel comfortable. This state of flux can feel intensely uncomfortable, confusing, and chaotic. It can be a dark period for many, but it is also a time of creativity where people feel like they can "go for broke" and try new things. After having managed losses in Endings and made sense of the confusion of the Neutral Zone, people arrive at the third phase of transition — the "New Beginning." In this final phase a new way of doing things, a new identity, or a new opportunity of growth and progress comes into focus. People feel like they have "arrived", but it is sometimes mixed with lingering anxiety about backsliding. In this phase, it is important to reinforce new behaviors and identities.[1]

2.1. Interventions

Youth-serving agencies and organizations in this project agreed to integrate the concepts from the Transitions Framework into their programming and services in order help young people improve their skills in managing the difficult changes they face in the foster care system. Different types of agencies and settings were involved in the project, including foster family agencies, treatment foster care, group homes, transitional housing programs, shelters, drop-in centers, and mentoring programs. All agencies either served youth preparing to leave foster care or supported youth following their exit from foster care and during the transition to independent living. Youth served by these organizations ranged in age from 16 to 22. These agencies participated in the program for at least 6 months before data gathering began. The agencies are located throughout the United States.

The Andrus Family Fund initiated the project by providing a Transition Coach to train agency staff in the framework and to help identify ways to integrate the Transitions Framework into the agency's programs and practices. A variety of groups were initially trained within each of the participating agencies, including management staff, administrative staff, program staff (i.e., life coaches, case managers, social workers, residential workers, personal advisors, etc.), foster parents, group home workers, community partners, mentors, volunteers, and foster youth.

The agencies themselves used a variety of intervention programs to introduce and reinforce the Transitions Framework concepts to foster youth. For example, the agencies often hosted groups that met weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly. These could include support groups, psychosocial groups, therapy groups, recreational groups, drama groups, and life skills groups. Either new groups were developed or the transition concepts were integrated into already existing curricula. Agencies also offered formal training classes for staff, youth, and foster parents. Training classes varied in length from 2 hours up to 2 days, and included follow-up trainings or "booster" sessions as needed. There were also conferences, summits, retreats, and special events, such as ceremonies, rituals, and skits. In some cases, one-on-one training was provided, such as weekly visits by caseworkers and life coaches, relationship mentoring, academic mentoring, and peer mentoring. Finally, the Transitions Framework was also integrated into clinical settings, such as treatment teams, clinical supervision, case plans, and emancipation plans. A typical modification to existing clinical practice is described in Appendix A. Within each of these programs, the three phases of transitions were described in detail along with strategies one could use to support themselves or others during that phase of transition. The intent of each of these programs was to increase the awareness of transitions as an internal process thereby improving participant's skills in utilizing the strategies.

The goals of these intervention programs varied somewhat among the agencies that participated in this project, but all were rooted in the idea of assisting youth in developing the skills necessary to navigate the changes and transitions of foster care as well as the passage to adulthood. These goals included: (1) to complement the existing Independent Living Skills Classes; (2) to help ease the youths' transition into, out of, and between placements; (3) to assist foster families in maintaining youth in care until they age out (i.e., reduce disruptions just prior to emancipation); (4) to help develop and empower youth to train others in the Transitions Framework; (5) to

[1] For more information on how the Transition Framework applies to youth in foster care, see www.transitionandsocialchange.org.

help youth speak to their experience in foster care in order to improve systems/programs; (6) to create rituals and ceremonies to honor endings within the agency; and (7) to have a common language and vocabulary to describe change and transition between staff, youth, and volunteers. In pursuit of these goals, all agencies employed their individualized Transition Intervention for a minimum of 6 months with the intention of integrating the use of the Transition Framework into the ongoing culture of the agency.

3. Material and methods

3.1. Participants

Our sample included 569 youth receiving services from participating organizations. The youth were 50.6% male ($n=285$), 49.2% female ($n=277$), and .2% transgender ($n=1$). Six youth did not report gender. The average age of the youth was 15.93 years ($SD=4.11$). The youth experienced between 0 and 52 prior placements ($Mdn=3$).

Participating agencies had all submitted an unsolicited application to the Andrus Family Fund and received grants focused on youths' passage from foster care to independence. All agencies agreed to explicitly use the Transitions Framework with youth in foster care as a way of preparing them to live an independent life beyond the child welfare system. Other than the normal investigation (due diligence) of the applicant's fiscal health, history, staff, and ability to deliver, the Andrus Family Fund evaluated the applicant's commitment to explore whether understanding the Transitions Framework increased the chances that youth can successfully progress from foster care to independent living.

3.2. Measures

Youth completed surveys at both baseline (when they began receiving services from a participating agency) and 6 months later. Each grantee identified a test administrator who was instructed to meet individually with youth and give the following instructions prior to administering the YET survey: "This is a set of questions that ask about how YOU think and feel about things. There are no right or wrong answers. The important thing is to give your own opinions."

3.2.1. Youth Experience of Transitions (YET) Questionnaire

The YET was designed to assess the level of preparedness of the youth for major changes, such as the passage out of foster care. The YET contains 13 items which are presented in Table 1. Item development is documented in the Results section. Youth respond to each item according to a 5-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

3.2.2. Internalizing and externalizing symptoms

Youth-reported internalizing and externalizing symptoms were measured using the Young Adult Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach, 1997). The CBCL is a widely used measure that contains 112 items, rated on the extent to which each item accurately describes feelings or behavior in the past 6 months, including 0 (rarely/never), 1 (somewhat or sometimes true), and 2 (very or often true). We used the internalizing subscale of this measure, which refers to feelings of anxiety and withdrawn behavior, and the externalizing subscale, which refers to aggression and behavioral problems.

3.3. Analytic plan

Using data from 540 youth that completed the YET at baseline, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to determine whether all items from the YET loaded on the same factor. An EFA was required at this stage since we had no theoretical or empirical justification for assuming that all items would load on the same factor. We used principal axis factor analysis with Promax rotation and adhered to typical recommendations regarding the interpretation of the loadings. Specifically, we considered an item to load on a factor if the absolute value of the loading was greater than .30, although factor loadings of at least .40 are preferable (Pett, Lackey, & Sullivan, 2003; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1987). We defined cross-loading (i.e., where an item loads on more than one factor) as a situation in which the loadings are both above .30.

To confirm the initial factor structure, we then used data from the following wave of measurement (6 months after baseline, $N=216$) to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Standard indices of fit for the CFA will be reported, including the chi-square value (χ^2), the comparative fit index (CFI), the non-normed fit index or Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and the root-mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA). Typically, CFI values greater than .95, TLI values greater than .90, and a non-significant χ^2 or a ratio of χ^2 to *df* less than 3.0 are considered to be indicative of adequate fit (Bentler, 1990; Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Bollen, 1989; Cole, 1987). With regards to RMSEA, values less than .06 are typically considered indicative of good fit, while values between .06 and .10 are considered adequate fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kaplan, 2000). We will also be guided by the 90% confidence interval for the RMSEA statistic, which can be more accurate than a single "point" estimate (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). In this approach, a RMSEA confidence interval that falls *completely below* .05 is considered indicative of close fit, while a confidence interval *containing* .05 is considered adequate fit.

Our next step was to examine links between the YET measures and indices of youth adjustment. Specifically, we examined the ability of the change in the YET scores to predict change in youth-reported internalizing and externalizing symptoms on the CBCL (Achenbach,

Table 1
YET item text and factor loadings.

Item text	EFA (baseline)		CFA (6 months)	
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2
1. I am confident that I can change my life for the better	.58	−.03	.45	–
2. It is good to stay connected with old friends even if I don't think it's good for me (rev).	.03	.21	–	–
3. It is not good for me to change my ideas about my job plans (rev).	−.07	.61	–	.67
4. I feel there are periods in my life when I had to end an old way of behaving and begin a new way of behavior.	.55	−.11	.54	–
5. It is not good for me to change my ideas about my future education plans (rev).	−.02	.67	–	.91
6. It is o.k. to feel uncomfortable when learning a new way to deal with an old problem.	.45	.06	.59	–
7. It stresses me out when I feel confused about what to do in the future (rev).	−.21	.10	–	–
8. I have learned a lot about myself by reflecting about my life.	.59	−.04	.59	–
9. Once a person comes up with a plan for their future they should stick with it no matter what (rev).	−.07	.50	–	.46
10. I feel confident that someone will help me with problems in my life.	.31	−.10	–	–
11. I should break away from friends that I think are a bad influence.	.32	−.10	–	–
12. I think it is a waste of time to sit around and think about the past (rev).	−.13	.18	–	–
13. It is ok to feel confused at times and to change your mind about future plans.	.54	.21	.49	–

Note. "rev" = reverse coded.

1997). This analysis was conducted using a step-wise regression, in which scores at baseline were entered first, and scores on the YET were entered next. Although there was an amount of missing data at the 6-month measurement point, the data overall were Missing Completely at Random (MCAR); Little's test (Little, 1988) was not significant, $\chi^2(27) = 34.06$, *ns*. This suggests that the missing data did not create bias in the results.

4. Results

This section will document the various stages of the development of the Youth Experience of Transitions (YET) Questionnaire, which included (1) initial item development, (2) Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analyses to examine factor structure, and (3) the linking of YET scores to youth outcomes.

4.1. Initial item development

In 2002, various participating agencies raised the question of Transition Framework's effectiveness and asked for tools to concretely measure and articulate the usefulness of the Transitions Framework in helping their youth transition from foster care to independence. Measurement development activities were conducted from 2002 to 2005 in a collaborative working group led by Dr. Patricia Chamberlain and consisting of the Andrus Family Fund Executive Director, staff, and grantee agency representatives. Members brainstormed potential indicators that could be used to measure whether a youth had acquired an understanding of the Transitions Framework. Based on this work and on a series of questions that one agency was already using to measure the Transitions Framework, a 26-item draft version of the Youth Experience of Transitions (YET) Questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire was designed to assess how well youth understood and integrated the Transitions Framework in to their own thinking. Subsequently, the YET was subjected to three rounds of verification and modification with staff and youth before it was finally considered both accurate and reliable. First, the original 26 items were administered to 3 groups including: (1) youth who were exposed to the Transitions Framework, (2) youth who were not exposed to it, and (3) program staff knowledgeable about the Transitions Framework approach. We compared the responses from exposed and non-exposed youth ($N = 73$) and eliminated items that failed to discriminate between them. Next, we collected data from forty-eight staff from various grantee programs incorporating the Transition Framework. They were asked to fill out the questionnaire based on their knowledge of the Transitions Framework and their expectations about how an exposed versus a non-exposed youth would respond to the questions. This was considered to be our *content validity* sample. Based on this work, the measure was revised and then administered to a second group of youth, some of whom were Transitions Framework exposed ($N = 44$) and some who were not ($N = 29$). A 13-item survey resulted that did not specifically quiz the youth on the terms used in the Transitions Framework, but rather it assessed their thoughts and behavior as it related to any change or transition they were going through. The survey contained statements like "It is O.K. to feel uncomfortable learning a new way to deal with an old problem" and "You feel there are periods of your life where you had to end an old way of behaving and begin a new way of behaving." Youth were asked to select a response out of a five-point scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). The outcome of this process was the 13-item measure presented in Table 1.

4.2. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses

Although the process used to develop the YET provides a certain degree of validity, we sought to create additional validity evidence for the YET by conducting a series of analyses designed to explore (1) the factor structure of the instrument, and (2) the ability of the instrument to predict important youth-related outcomes — specifically, whether the instrument could detect differences in the youth's approach to change that were related to lower levels of internalizing and externalizing behavior. Findings from these analyses are presented below.

Our first step was to conduct the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to develop an initial factor structure, which we would then replicate via Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using data from a subsequent time point. After running the EFA, a scree plot suggested that two factors should be extracted. The initial eigenvalues indicated that the first factor explained 19% of the variance and the second factor 14% of the variance. The loadings of each YET item on the two factors are presented in Table 1. The data suggests that items 1, 4, 6, 8, and 13 clearly belong to factor 1 (as may items 10 and 11), while items 3, 5, and 9 belong to factor 2. Items 2, 7, and 12 didn't load sufficiently on either factor. There did not seem to be any significant cross-loading (i.e., an item loading on both factors) and the two factors were not correlated ($r = -.02$, *ns*). We labeled the first factor "openness" since the items seemed to suggest that youth scoring highly in this factor would be interested and open to the idea of change and be willing to reflect on their lives and learn from their experiences. This factor demonstrated a reliability figure (Cronbach's alpha) of .71 without items 10 and 11 and .65 when these items were included. Because items 10 and 11 did not load as strongly, and because reliability is higher without them, we considered only items 1, 4, 6, 8, and 13 to belong to factor 1. Higher scores on this factor indicated a greater degree of openness. We labeled the second factor "determination" since the items all dealt with the youths' reluctance (or, conversely, their willingness) to modify important goals for the future. Since these items were reverse-coded before conducting the analysis, higher scores on this factor reflect a lower degree of determination. This factor demonstrated a reliability figure (Cronbach's alpha) of .60.

We next ran a Confirmatory Factor Analysis using data from the 6-month assessment in order to test the factor structure suggested by our Exploratory Factor Analysis (i.e., "openness" contains items 1, 4, 6, 8, and 13, and "determination" contains items 3, 5, and 9). We note that this analysis did not include items 2, 7, 10, 11, and 12. The model demonstrated generally adequate fit, $\chi^2(20) = 39.15$, $p < .01$, $\chi^2/df = 1.96$, CFI = .93, TLI = .90, and RMSEA = .06 (.03|.10), confirming our initial factor structure. Factor loadings are found in Table 1. The means and standard deviations for these measures, as well as for the internalizing and externalizing data, are provided in Table 2. Overall, the test–retest stability of the "openness" factor from baseline to 6 months was .21, $p < .05$, while the stability of the "determination" factor was .33, $p < .01$, suggesting that both factors were moderately stable.

4.3. Linking YET scores to youth outcomes

Our next step was to examine links between the factors of the YET and youth adjustment (i.e., youth-report internalizing and externalizing). We conducted step-wise regression analyses in which we used change in "openness" and "determination" from baseline to 6 months to predict change in internalizing and externalizing symptoms. The results are

Table 2
Means and standard deviations.

Variable	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Openness (baseline)	540	4.17	.57
Openness (6 months)	216	4.26	.51
Determination (baseline)	540	3.16	.88
Determination (6 months)	216	3.38	.89
Internalizing (baseline)	446	51.23	11.98
Internalizing (6 months)	162	51.02	12.44
Externalizing (baseline)	446	55.08	11.50
Externalizing (6 months)	162	52.15	11.39

Table 3
Summary of regression results (N = 136).

Variable	Step 1			Step 2		
	B	*SE* (*B*)	β	*B*	*SE* (*B*)	β
Analysis 1: Predicting internalizing (6 months) using change in openness						
Internalizing (baseline)	.58	.07	.57***	.57	.07	.56***
Change in openness				−2.90	1.30	−.16*
Analysis 2: Predicting internalizing (6 months) using change in determination						
Internalizing (baseline)	.58	.07	.57***	.58	.07	.57***
Change in determination				.51	.88	.04
Analysis 3: Predicting externalizing (6 months) using change in openness						
Externalizing (baseline)	.61	.08	.60***	.62	.08	.61***
Change in openness				−1.07	1.28	−.07
Analysis 4: Predicting externalizing (6 months) using change in determination						
Externalizing (baseline)	.61	.08	.60***	.61	.08	.60***
Change in determination				.14	.88	.01

Analysis 1: R^2 (Step 1) = .32; change in R^2 = .03, p < .05.
Analysis 2: R^2 (Step 1) = .32; change in R^2 = .00, *ns*.
Analysis 3: R^2 (Step 1) = .37; change in R^2 = .00, *ns*.
Analysis 4: R^2 (Step 1) = .37; change in R^2 = .00, *ns*.
* p < .05.
*** p < .001.

reported in Table 3. Change in "openness" was able to predict significant variation in internalizing symptoms at 6 months, even when controlling for internalizing scores at baseline. The regression coefficient was negative, indicating that an increase in openness was linked to a decrease in internalizing symptoms, even when controlling for the level of symptoms at baseline. The results for "determination" were not significant, and the results for externalizing were also non-significant.

5. Discussion

This study set out to examine the usefulness of the Youth Experience of Transitions (YET) Questionnaire, which was based upon the Transitions Framework. The YET is a theoretically based measure that was developed using input from practitioners to determine an initial pool of items thought to be relevant to measuring the central concept of transitions. Following this input, the measure was subjected to three rounds of verification that resulted in a streamlined version. Using exploratory factor analysis, we found that this version contained two uncorrelated factors that seemed to correspond to "openness" (5 items) and "determination" (3 items). This factor structure was supported by a confirmatory factor analysis. In addition, we found that an increase in openness was significantly linked to a decrease in internalizing symptoms, even when controlling for the level of symptoms at baseline. This suggests that youth who became more comfortable and more open and reflective regarding change and transition were better equipped to handle the change they experienced, resulting in lower levels of internalizing symptoms such as anxiety and depression. Although this link does not provide evidence for the efficacy of the interventions described in this article, it does suggest that the theory behind the Transitions Framework was operating as intended. Specifically, bolstering the awareness of transitions as an internal process and creating increased openness to change seemed to improve youths' ability to cope with the changes they were facing. There were no links found between openness and externalizing behaviors or between determination and youth symptoms.

The results for internalizing symptoms could have significant implications for foster care programs. Most importantly, these results suggest that the outcomes of transition don't have to be uniformly negative. Though the implementation of interventions such as the Transition program, youth may be able to acquire skills and attitudes that enable them to cope more effectively with the changes and disruptions they face, which in turn can reduce levels of internalizing behavior and potentially lead to lower levels of negative outcomes such as depression, unemployment, and homelessness in adulthood.

5.1. Limitations and conclusion

This study possesses several limitations that suggest caution when interpreting our results. First, the factor structure reported in this study is only preliminary and should be replicated using other samples. Second, our measure of youth adjustment was limited to only internalizing and externalizing symptoms on the CBCL, and future research should consider additional measures of adjustment, such as success in school or employment and/or rates of delinquency or incarceration. Third, both measures used in this study (the YET and the CBCL) were both based only on youth-reports, and future research should attempt to link YET scores to non-self-reported measures of youth adjustment (e.g., caregiver report, observational, etc.). Finally, since our sample did not include a control group, we cannot be certain that the interventions described in this study were responsible for any change in YET scores; to accomplish this objective, a randomized trial must be executed.

Despite these limitations, this study adds to the youth services literature in that it provides preliminary findings related to a measurement instrument assessing youths' understanding of the transition process. This instrument, the Youth Experience of Transitions (YET) Questionnaire, was found to have two factors, one of which ("openness") appears to be linked to a reduction in internalizing symptoms. Since youth in foster care experience so many changes, both during and after their time in care, a measurement instrument that is able to assess the ability of youth to cope with these changes represents an important step forward. Future research should focus on both exploring the process of change itself as well as developing and testing interventions such as the Transitions program that help youth to cope more effectively with the transitions they face.

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Appendix A. Sample intervention

One agency utilized the Transition Framework by integrating it into their social workers' weekly visits. Social workers were encouraged to frame their conversations by focusing on transitions instead of changes when issues were being discussed with youth and foster families. The case notes were changed to include a section on transitions which would prompt the social worker to interpret change as transition. The case notes asked three questions, and the social workers filled in this section when a discussion about change took place. The three questions included: (1) What is the most significant change this youth/family is going through right now? (2) Where are they in Transition in relation to that change (Endings, Neutral Zone, or New Beginnings)? and (3) What strategies are you using to support them in this transition?

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