



A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF MULTIPLE PLACEMENT CHANGES FOR MINORS IN FOSTER CARE

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INTRODUCTION

- Child welfare systems face unique challenges.
- Children in out of home non-kinship care are 1.7 times more likely to be moved into congregate care than children placed in kinship care.¹
- One in three children experience placement instability.²

INTRODUCTION CONT.

- Placement breakdowns can occur due to a variety of issues, often occurring after culmination of multiple events.³
- This qualitative study used a hermeneutical phenomenological research design.
- Goal of this research was to examine outcomes associated with placement changes from the perspective of the children living this experience.



PURPOSE

- Research information can be used to help prevent continued trauma for children while in foster care.
- The research explores “What is the lived experience of teenagers in foster care that have had multiple placement changes?”
- Research findings can help social workers make better informed decisions when placing or moving children that are in out-of-home care.



METHODS

- Participants in this study were teenagers in foster care.
- Sample included four teenagers who were new to care and five teenagers who have been in care for at least a year.
- Participants in the study ranged from 12 to 17 years old.
- Participants were recruited through a foster family agency.

METHODS CONT.

- Data was collected through virtual interviews which were recorded.
- Questions that were asked during the interview explored concepts associated with placement instability and aging while in foster care.
- Semi-structured interview guide was used for the interviews.

RESULTS

3.

Name	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Time in Foster Care	Time in Current Placement
Kelly	Female	15	Mexican	1 Year	1 Year
Lisa	Female	12	Mexican	1 Year	1 Year
Kyle	Female	13	Hmong	1 Year	6 Months
Gina	Female	17	Hmong	1 Year	4-5 Months
Whitney	Female	14	Asian	1 Year	6 Months
Erika	Female	16	Hmong	1 Year	4-5 Months
John	Male	12	Mexican/American	3-4 Years	3-4 Years
James	Male	17	White	4 Years	2 Years
Josh	Male	14	Hispanic	4-5 Years	2 Years

RESULTS CONT.

- Kelly (15) & Lisa (12) are siblings who were initially placed with a family member for six months and have lived with their current resource parents for the last six months.
- Kyle (13) & Whitney (14) are siblings who had been in out-of-home care for six months when they were younger and were reunified are currently back in care for another six months.
- Gina (17) & Erika (16) had previously been in out-of-home care for six months and were reunified, they have now been in their current placement for four months.
- John (12) has been in foster care for about four years and has only been in his current placement during that time.
- James (17) has been in out-of-home care for four years and has had four placement changes with his most current placement being the longest at two years.
- Josh (14) has been in out-of-home care between four and five years while having four placement changes with him being in his current placement for two years.

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS ^(1/3)

Improving Education

“To begin with it was like really bad like my grades were horrible but, when I got placed into the home I'm in right now, my grades improved like really good. My foster parents pushed me to do better.” (Josh, 2022)

- Practitioners should recognize that the children do care about their education.
- Practitioners who can makes decisions regarding a child's placement should ask questions regarding the family's educational standards.
- Despite it being well documented that moving a child into out-of-home care can be devastating.⁵
- Once the participants in the current study were provided stability through their current resource parents, they were able to see positive results in their grades.

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS (2/3)

Internalized Responsibilities

*“Because, like, if I do something wrong, I’ll probably get replaced in this house. And if I don’t make good choices then I’ll get replaced in this house.”
(Kelly, 15)*

- Concerning theme that emerged was the sense of responsibility.
- The agencies and practitioners should do their best to promote the wellbeing.
- Navigating a conversation with the children allows them to take responsibility.
- One way to attempt to eliminate placement changes is to work on eliminating.

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS (3/3)

Perceptions of Placements

*“Where I'm at now. I feel like I can consider them my friends but like still like my parents.”
(Josh, 2022)*

- Youth who have had multiple placement changes had differing perceptions.
- Youth in the foster care system for a considerable amount had differing perceptions.
- Perceptions from those who have been in care multiple times.
- The findings demonstrated how detrimental placing out of county.
- All options should be considered before placing out of county.

CONCLUSION

- Research sought to explore multiple placement changes through the lens of youth currently in foster care.
- Research indicates that through new expectations and motivations, the participant's grades improved while in out-of-home care. They report a sense of responsibility to maintain their placements promoting a need to be perfect.
- Research found that the youth that had been in care before and or in care longer had an easier time distinguishing between good homes and not so good homes.
- It is important to note that often the work that resource parents put into the children in their care goes unnoticed.
- John (12) stated it well: "[Resource parents are] choosing to take care of us. They want us to stay here because..., I don't know. They just want us."



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