

Foster care and adoption as a tool of superior care

[Family](#)



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The Effects of Adoption and Foster Care

Crash! A family of three, one father, one mother, and one child, gets into a car accident. The child loses both of her parents, and her relatives are all in another part of the world. What happens when a child without her parents, relatives, or guardians to care for her enters the world of adoption or foster care? How can she fathom the system that is now responsible for her and other abandoned children? How will she react? In the United States, children without families are put into orphanages to be later put into adoption or foster care (Loeb). Without doubt, growing up in adoption or foster care presents a different environment for the child to adapt to. Yet, what are the effects that change the child? Foster care is usually temporary; most foster care parents look after a child for a short period of time (e. g. 2 years) and eventually let the child go. However, the child keeps her past, meaning the child essentially keeps her last name and identity (her own family history). More importantly, foster care is generally a “ less secure” environment for the child, as the foster parents only keep the child temporarily until the child gets adopted, which can cause a negative effective on the child (Ryan). A foster care parent is tasked with taking care of the child on a day-to-day basis, providing the child with food, shelter, health care, and clothing. Although, the foster care parent is responsible for the child’s daily life, the state is undoubtedly entitled to make all the legal decisions, as foster care is intended to be a short term placement until the child can find permanent placement in another home (Loeb). From the point of view of the foster parent, the foster parent must attend several orientations to be trained on being a parent, often taking care of a varying amount of children in period of

time. Some foster parents are in it for the money; they want to be financially secure for providing “ service” back to their communities (D.). Additionally, older children are aware that their foster parents are essentially paid to look after them, as foster care can be considered a job, instilling insecurity among the children. It should be noted that the children remains in foster care until they are 18 (when they are allowed to live on their own) or until someone comes to claim them (Seifert). Adoption is permanent; the adoptive parents keep the child, bestowing their last name to the child. However, the child loses her identity – a new one is imposed upon her. The child is intrinsically persuaded forget her past, abandoning her identity for a more, hopeful one (Ryan). Nonetheless, the adoption parents actually want to have children and decided to adopt, more likely to love and nurture the child, as a parent should. Often, adoption is done by a biological family member, however, this is not always the case. Unlike foster care, when a child is adopted by a parent, the state grants all rights to that parent; therefore, the adoptive parent has the full rights over the child (Bordo).

Although the system does all it can for lost children, there are too many limitations and issues that affect its children. They are deprived of a normal childhood that is essential for social interaction and growth in the real world. In terms of foster care, young children are much more likely to be placed in foster care and spend a large proportion of their life in the foster care system than older children. In several states, the placement in foster care for children under 5 was double that of children aged 5-17. Furthermore, young children and infants in foster care spend significantly more time in the system than other age groups, highlighting the dependence they have on

the foster care system (Laws). In order to understand the reasons for placement into foster care, all possible cases must be analyzed. For example, some children are removed from their homes to protect them from physical harm, or parents who are unfit to nurture them. Substance abuse and drug culture account for the majority of young children who are placed in foster care (Laws). However, foster care placement has many implications for the emotional development of young children. Out-of-home placement is usually associated with numerous disruptions in attachment relationships; the more changes in foster care parents young children experience, the more likely they are likely to exhibit oppositional behavior, crying, and clinging (Ryan). Disruptions in these attachment relationships can lead to Reactive Attachment Disorder of Infancy or Early Childhood, a disorder in which the child exhibits extreme disturbances in relationships with her foster care parent (D.). Notably, infants who are placed in out-of-home care for several months will view the foster care parent as the attachment figure who provides for their emotional and physical needs. Therefore, reunification with the biological parent(s) will lead to attachment disruptions (Loeb). In fact, in order to reduce the amount of attachment disruptions for infants, there has been an emphasis on allowing infants to stay with their biological mothers, despite the mothers' difficulties. Ideally, these programs reduce attachment disruptions and also allow for the close supervision of the mother and the infant, allowing for the opportunity for interventions to enhance the quality of the mother-child interaction and relationship (Laws). In 1997, the Adoption Safe Families Act (ASFA), a federal act, has been passed to promote significant progress for biological parents on a reunification plan, reducing the number of attachment disruptions experienced by the young children

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who are out-of-home placements. According to the ASFA guidelines, if biological parents fail in making progress toward reunification at the end of twelve months, a petition to terminate parental rights can be filed. Such an incentive for caring parents persuades reunification (Ryan). Nonetheless, the act highlights the issue for foster care children of maintaining attachment relationships with parents while in foster care. Children and their parents need the opportunity to maintain an attachment relationship and develop positive interactions (Loeb). However, visits with parents can be very upsetting to young children in foster care and disruptive to their developmental aspects (Laws). For example, the majority of young children who visit their biological parents in the parents' home exhibit toileting problems, sleep disturbances, aggressive behavior, clinging, and crying (Ryan). From the observations made in foster care homes, it is obvious that safeguarding the physical safety of infants and young children is not enough. Their mental health needs must be addressed if they are to develop healthily to face the world when they are 18 years old. However, there are no easy solutions. Children have a need for continuity of relationships and for sensitive, responsive care that should be considered during foster care placement decisions (Loeb).

Contrary to foster care, adoption is unique, as studies have determined that, in general, adopted people go in to lead lives that are similar to that of non-adopted peers. Experts such as Dr. Patrick F. Fagan are saying that adoption is "life-alteringly beneficial for children", pointing to a study done in the United Kingdom, which sampled a group of adoptees between 23 and 33 to another group of non-adults and a group from the general population

(Seifert). Additionally, studies have shown that adopted children outperform their non-adopted siblings in math and reading, in which adopted boys even outscore the general population in the area of reading (Loeb). Furthermore, a study by Sandra Scarr, a professor of psychology at Yale University, and Richard Weinberg, a professor of psychology at the University of Minnesota, found that adopted children may struggle academically early after their initial placement in their foster homes. However, the study also found that there was eventually no difference between the IQ scores of adopted siblings and biological siblings brought up in the same household (Laws). According to "Impact of Adoption on Adopted Persons", an article published for the Child Welfare Information Gate, every adopted child experiences grief at some point in her life because of the loss of her "true", initial family. This loss can eventually lead to feelings of rejection throughout their lives, prompting harder social interactions for the adopted child (Ryan). Noticeably, adoptees sometimes question their own identity as they wonder about their background, what his parents looked like and acted like, and how much of them is a genetic result of his birth family (Laws). Although adoptive families may provide safe, secure homes that foster intelligent children, they nonetheless are not solutions to the emotional loss that the adoptees feel.

When children are placed into foster care or adoption, they may enjoy a safe environment to grow up in; nonetheless, they are faced with emotional and mental issues that may hinder them from social interactions and ultimately fitting into society. In order to counteract this possible case, foster care or adoptive homes must ensure nurture and care that a biological family would normally give to its children. As more studies and research is done on the

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effects of foster care and adoption, foster care workers and social workers can better understand how to handle “ abandoned” children, prompting superior care. Although the children may never get their biological families back, they have better chances of growing up normally under the care of foster homes and adoptive homes. It should be noted that children in adoptive homes perform better in school and fit better in society later in life, more likely to lead normal lives (Ryan). Love, care, and nurture ultimately shape children, whether they are in foster care, adoptive home, or biological families.