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## EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF THE PLACEMENT DISCONTINUITY IN FOSTER CARE

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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF THE PLACEMENT DISCONTINUITY IN  
FOSTER CARE

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

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by  
Michelle Sepulveda  
Angela Williams  
May 2023

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## ABSTRACT

Background and purpose: Over the past ten years, there have been more foster parents. Still, foster parents find it difficult to fulfill their obligations. It is crucial to conduct research into the variables that affect foster parents' effectiveness. Method: The Aim of this study was to gather quantitative data utilizing a cross-sectional study from foster parents to determine whether there is a correlation between their level of preparedness to be foster parents and the number of placement changes. The target sample included foster parents who had fostered children within the last twelve months. Although the nonprobability sampling technique was practical, the researchers did not reach their optimum sample size. The participants' demographic characteristics were gathered empathy and behavior. A 16-item scale was used to gather this information. In addition, a correlation between foster parents' level of preparedness and placement changes were examined. Results: An ethnically diverse sample of participants who were mostly African American and educated decided to participate in this study. 11 individuals whose average age was 45, mostly female with a bachelor's degree or above. Conclusion: The study revealed that foster parents' level of preparedness did not have an impact on placement changes. As much as foster parents felt prepared, the number of placement changes still increased.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
CHAPTER ONE: PROBLEM FORMULATION .....	1
Problem Formulation.....	1
The Situation: Foster Children.....	1
The Problem Shortage of Placement .....	4
Placement Stability .....	7
The Cause of Multiple Placements.....	7
The Effects of Multiple Placements .....	8
The Solutions.....	8
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	11
Introduction .....	11
Factors that Contribute to Multiple Placements.....	11
Age at Entry .....	11
Sex.....	12
Race and Ethnicity .....	12
Behavioral Challenges .....	13
Placement Outcomes.....	13
Gaps .....	14
The Human Capital Theory.....	14
Research Question .....	15
Hypothesis .....	15

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS .....	16
Study Design .....	16
Participants .....	16
Settings .....	16
Recruitment.....	17
Study Procedure .....	17
Measures .....	18
Sociodemographic Characteristics.....	18
Foster Parents' Preparedness .....	18
Placement Changes.....	19
Statistical Analysis .....	19
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS.....	20
Introduction.....	20
Descriptive Statistics.....	20
Demographic Characteristics .....	20
Foster Parents' Level of Preparedness .....	21
Correlation Analysis.....	22
Behavior Management.....	22
Empathize with Youths.....	22
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION .....	26
Limitations.....	27
Conclusion .....	28
APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT .....	29
APPENDIX B: QUALTRICS SURVEY .....	32

APPENDIX C: SURVEY FLYER.....	37
APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL LETTER.....	39
REFERENCES .....	41
ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES .....	48



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics on Participants' Demographic Characteristics, Level of Preparedness to be Foster Parents, and Placement Changes Experienced (N = 11) .....	22
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## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Demographics .....	3
Figure 2. Children in Foster Care .....	5
Figure 3: Scatterplot of Levels of Preparedness with Behavioral Management and Number of Placement Changes (N = 11).....	24
Figure 4: Scatterplot of Levels of Preparedness with Empathy and Number of Placement Changes (N = 11) .....	25

## CHAPTER ONE:

### PROBLEM FORMULATION

#### Problem Formulation

In 2020, more than 58,000 children were in the child welfare system in the United States (Administration for Children & Family [ACF], 2021), and the pandemic has not slowed down the need for the placement of children.

#### The Situation: Foster Children

Foster care is intended to provide temporary, safe living arrangements as well as therapeutic services to children and youth who are unable to remain safely at home due to the risk of maltreatment or inadequate care. The goal of the foster care system in the United States is to safely reunify children with their parents or to find them another permanent home. However, this goal is not always met, particularly for older children and those with disabilities. Instead, many children spend years in foster care or group homes, frequently moving. Foster children are defined as a child raised by someone not considered their biological parents or adoptive parents who are supported by the state. These children are inducted into the foster care system due to child neglect or harm, familial or parental mental issues, substance abuse problems, or lack of proper care.

Each year, California has the highest number of children entering the system (Casey, 2020). American Indian or Alaska Native, African American, and Latino children continue to be overrepresented in the foster care system (Brown,

2020). For example, in California, African American children account for 19% of foster children but only 5% of the general child population. The study completed by Casey (2020) on out-of-home care included children of multi ethnicities that were removed from their homes and placed with non-relatives: The medium age of youth within this study is approximately 13 years of age. Almost 50% were boys. Less than 22% were Caucasian, and almost 19% were African Americans (figure 1). Most of the youth who entered Casey's care were not placed with relatives. Approximately 50% of these youth were Spanish-speaking youth. (Casey 2020).

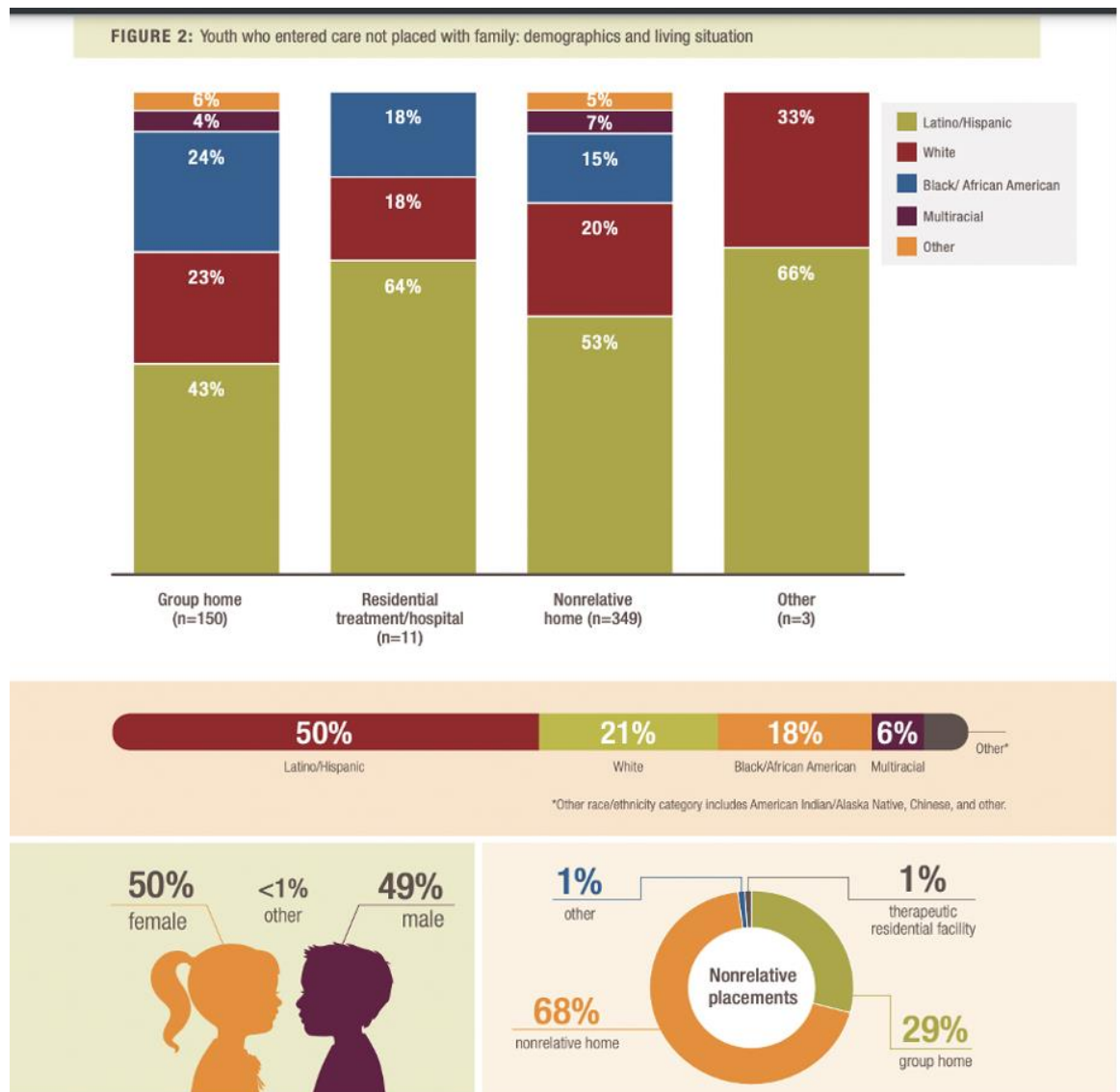


Figure 1. Demographics

The placement of some children upon their removal is a very complicated process. Often youth in the foster care system have lived through multiple traumas and disruptive events by the time of their removal. These events of

abuse and or neglect, multiple foster home placements, lack of continuity in education, and an array of losses of relationships with family, friends, and siblings result in a certain urgency to place them.

When a child is suddenly uprooted from their permanent dwelling and placed in the custody of the foster care system, society takes over the obligation for that child's well-being and improvement. Should the system fail to supply the child with a sustaining childhood, it may present negative results for the child as well as society (Brännström et al. 2020). The ultimate goal of the removal of children from their homes is to keep them safe from harm. Undoubtedly, the system inevitably creates trauma and emotional harm to children every time one is removed from their parents. Child protective services must find a secure suitable place with caregivers who are equipped to handle the array of needs and present behaviors of children (Winokur et al. 2014).

#### The Problem Shortage of Placement

Over the past decade, the number of children in foster care has steadily declined. Figure 1 presents the number of children in foster care across San Francisco between 2015 and 2021. The number of active cases in the foster care system dropped to 638 in 2021 from 1,043 in 2015 (San Francisco Government, n.d.) (figure 2). Nonetheless, the foster care system still deals with many children in need of placement. Sankaran (2006) wrote that it is important to find and maintain the placement for children to maintain their mental health.

This measure represents the number of children up to 21 years old with an open case in the foster care system. The Human Services Agency (HSA) aims to help stabilize home situations and return children to their homes. A smaller caseload is one indication of the effectiveness of the agency's intervention strategies.

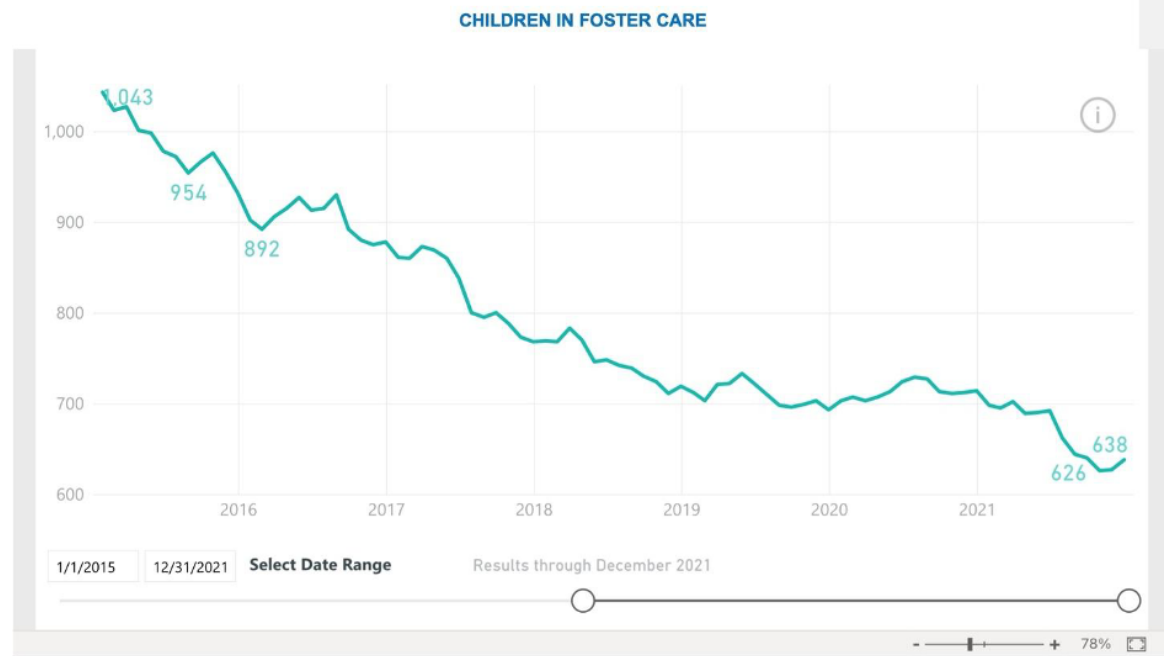


Figure 2. Children in Foster Care

Making consistent and effective placement decisions for children and families presents significant challenges for child welfare workers (Crea, 2010). With close to 60,000 children in the child welfare system in the state of California alone, the frustration not only lies with the department not having adequate living quarters but also insufficient stable housing for these minors. The child welfare agencies are faced with having to let children sit or often spend the night in the social worker's office because of the unavailability of a feasible location to house

children upon removal from their homes. There is an undiscovered challenge of immediate placement for foster youth nationwide.

The problem we are having is the lack of placement options in the foster care system. The lack of placement options leads to constant moving for the minors. Placement change can abruptly disrupt the behavior of a child such as mood changes, lashing out, and tantrums. Price et al. (2008) also wrote that these intervention groups were made up of foster parents to try to train foster parents in behavior management for the foster kids they will be caring for. In order for the interventions to work, we need to give proper training to foster parents to be able to handle these types of children, to eliminate placement problems. When interventions are addressed sooner than later, we can locate permanent placement from childhood to last into their teenage years. According to Konijn et al. (2019), the risk of instability for foster youth when they are older is at a higher risk of not obtaining a placement immediately. Therefore, it is important to equip foster parents with the tools for intervention to decrease multiple placements.

The shortage of immediate placements in California was aggravated by the passing of an assembly bill, which will lead to the elimination of group homes. In October of 2015, Governor Jerry Brown signed Assembly Bill 403 (AB 403), which requires that children be directly placed with foster families instead of group homes. The bill took effect in January 2017.



## Placement Stability

Multiple placement stability, is defined by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) as 2 or fewer different placements within a foster care removal period ([Children's Bureau, 2016a](#)), is an important resolve of child welfare. Placement stability supports the development of attachments with caregivers and reduces child stress and behavioral and academic achievement problems ([Carnochan et al., \(2013\[CL1\]\)](#)). In contrast, placement instability is associated with attachment disorders and behavior problems ([Carnochan et al., 2013, Rubin et al., 2007](#)), creating additional barriers to successful placements. Placement instability can exacerbate existing behavioral problems and lead to new behavior problems according to [Carnochan et al., \(2013\[CL2\]\)](#).

### The Cause of Multiple Placements

The goal of placement stability for foster care children is to develop a strong foundation that will increase the likelihood of a permanent placement. However, 15% of foster care children experience multiple placements (Impact, 2021), although the extent is grossly underreported.

One salient contributing factor of multiple placements is caregivers' proficiency. Caregivers' lack of preparedness and the succeeding challenges in fostering and finding housing per the system's requirements, cause many resourced parents to leave their roles and responsibilities or request changes in placements arrangements, contributing to the growing challenge of establishing sufficient placement options for foster care children and youth (Vanderwill et al.,

2021). In efforts to develop prospective foster parents' proficiency in becoming caregivers, agencies have developed processes to improve the recruitment and retention of suitable caregivers (Vanderwill et al., 2021).

### The Effects of Multiple Placements

Child health professionals, the child welfare community, and the US government highly value improving stability and permanency (Children's Bureau, 2016a; Szilagyi et al., 2015). This is because research has found an association between placement instability and behavioral problems in foster care children ([Carnochan et al., 2013](#)). Research has also found that multiple placements are linked to delayed permanent outcomes, academic difficulties, and difficulties forming meaningful attachments with others outside of their placement (Sattler et al., 2018).

### The Solutions

The interventions needed for children and youth to have immediate placement upon removal from their homes are urgently needed. Some possibilities could include a program operated by trained professionals that would house a 1000-bed facility to house children and youth located in each county. This facility would be a 24-hour facility with onsite medical, mental, and behavioral health staff to accommodate minors between the ages of newborn to 17 years of age. There would need to be social workers, daycare providers, teachers, and overnight facilitators to be a part of this 1000-bed facility staff. The facility would need to be equipped with dorm-style accommodations, classrooms,

a gymnasium, a recreation center, computer labs, and a library. All staff would meet bi-weekly to ensure the continuity of the program is working well and meeting the needs of the children.

Foster youth that have behavioral problems tend to risk not getting placed in a stable home or even a home at all. Some suggestions of intervention with this high-risk group of foster children are described by Konijn et al. (2019). One possible intervention involves assessing foster youth for behavioral problems, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or any kind of maltreatment. This assessment would benefit not only the child getting placed in a foster home, but also the foster parents [CL1] [CL2] so that these types of issues can be addressed and handled in a timely and appropriate manner. It would benefit the foster parents because they have an obligation to protect these children and becoming aware of any mental health issues could prevent many behavioral issues in the home.

Other solutions include a matching practice when placing children and more training with foster parents to be able to take in children with behavioral problems. Another more preventative solution is to support families before the children are sent to foster care to allow social workers more time to find an appropriate placement. For example, a 24-hour hotline can be developed so that parents can call for assistance with their children without placing their children in jeopardy of being institutionalized. If a parent or guardian had access to be able to contact a state-operated hotline without the fear of being in trouble, it is a good

possibility that more parents would reach out and request help. When parents acknowledge the need for help to prevent harm, this would help eliminate children being brought to sit in a county agency's office until placement is found.

An alternative placement is still better than no placement at all. If a child must be placed outside of their home, then a good secondary placement should be with a qualifying relative known as a kinship placement. A child would then be with family and able to adapt to their family where relationships have already been established and developed. Indeed, research shows that children do considerably better emotionally, and psychologically when placed with a family member according to Sanchez et al. (2020). An intervention for kinship placement is child and family team meetings (CFTM), and a support staff that would also help facilitate the financial aspect of taking care of the children or youth placed in their care.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature that explains the dissimilarity in the placement of foster care children upon removal from their homes. The subsections include a summary of research on the factors that impact the placement stability of foster care children and the perspective of placement instability.

#### Factors that Contribute to Multiple Placements

Children with multiple placements are differentiated from those with placement stability on demographic and placement characteristics. Children who experience multiple placements are more likely to be older on foster care entry, male, African American, and not of Hispanic descent. They are also more likely to have a history of placement in a group home or institution, evidence behavioral challenges, and experience poor placement outcomes (Children's Bureau, 2016a).

#### Age at Entry

Children who enter into foster care can range in age from infant to 18 years of age. In some states the age is up to 21 years old (AdoptUSKids, n.d.). Disparitely, between 2011 and 2018 infant foster care rates were on the uprise

(Crouse et al, n.d.). However, the average age of a child in foster care is more than 8 years, and there are slightly more boys than girls (AdoptUSKids, n.d.).

In contrast, infants and toddlers are much more likely than older children to enter foster care as a result of neglect (68 percent vs. 59 percent) or parental drug use, according to Child Trends, 2017. (46 percent vs. 30 percent ).

### Sex

In 2018, there were more than 51% of males and close to 48% females nationwide in the foster care system according to Child Trends (kids count, 2020). The differences by gender in the presence of risk factors, for male youth vs. female male youth placed in foster care is notable. As stated in the article Age and gender characteristics, male youth are more likely to be placed in foster care above females due to delinquency and behavioral issues. Female youth are reported to have fewer problem behaviors(Casey, 2020).

### Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity can affect the placement of children and impact their placement stability. According to Brown, (n.d.), children of color are at higher risk of multiple placements. Subsequently, race and ethnic disparity exist because of influences which exist both internally and externally within the foster care agencies (Dettlaff, 2020).

### Behavioral Challenges

Research has found that the number of group home placements has a lot to do with behaviors. According to Perry et al. (2017), children with behavioral problems are more likely to jump from placement to placement. One factor that comes into play when it comes to these behavior problems is the type of maltreatment these children have experienced in the past (Perry, et al, 2017). According to Marquis et al, 2008, The two types of maltreatment researched were physical abuse and general neglect. Out of 79 kids who had experienced neglect, about 13.99 months were expected of them to remain in placement and out of the 31 children who experienced abuse, 18.95 months were expected in placement. But when it came to critical incidents in the home only 7.9% of children who experience neglect had these incidents as to those that were abused was 19.4% of the children. Critical incidents consisted of behavioral issues towards caregivers or other children in the home.

### Placement Outcomes

Placement outcomes have many options, there is kinship placement, foster home, permanent placement, reunification, and adoption. One placement outcome that could possibly reduce the behavioral challenge is kinship. Research shows that the kinship outcome proves that children will have a less traumatic experience with the transition away from home and less likely to have behavioral problems (Wu et. al. (2015). Which in turn reduces the risk for multiple placements. According to Cross et al, 2013, 68% of foster children got moved at

least once due to behavioral problems. 42% experience at least 3 months due to behavioral problems. And, 30% were moved 3 or more times due behavioral problems. Thus, resulting in multiple placement changes due to behavioral problems.

### Gaps

Research has focused on understanding characteristics of the children who experience multiple placements. While this information is needed, it inevitably places the “blame” on the child. Moreover, many of the factors are not amenable to interventions. You can’t change a child’s age nor their race/ethnicity. What has been less investigated are characteristics of foster parents who are less proficient, resulting in frequent requests for placement changes.

There is a dearth of research studies addressing the issue of children being placed in foster care after being removed from their homes. Children are frequently required to sit and wait at the prospective Department of Social Service (DPSS) office until an immediate placement is found. In addition, there were gaps that were unfounded or had minimal research which proved to be the complexity of the process to placement, there is an extensive process to foster a child, and some might find that to be a hurdle to jump over.

### The Human Capital Theory

Workers have abilities, skills, knowledge, competence, or expertise to improve their proficiency at work through proper training and education. Human



capital theory emphasizes the importance of investment for long-term benefits to individuals and society (Henry, 2018). An illustration of benefits include incorporating programs and educating the parents of how to remain safe and keep their children from harm. The expansion of the program would result in foster parents being less discriminatory by accepting children of all ages into immediate placement. Professional training on a granular level would produce interpersonal relationships and adaptability between the child and the foster parent. The investment would also cultivate a versatile relationship between the agency and the foster parent.

#### Research Question

Guided by the human capital theory, this study aims to investigate whether foster parents who were less equipped (i.e., received lower levels of proper training) to foster children would experience multiple placement changes. This study is important because this research could open many doors for agencies across the country to better serve the youth in foster care and reduce multiple placements. It is essential to bring the issue to the forefront so that social workers can advocate for better placement outcomes.

#### Hypothesis

We hypothesize that foster parents who have higher levels of proper training and education are less likely to experience multiple placement changes..

## CHAPTER THREE:

### METHODS

#### Study Design

The study investigated whether foster parents who were less equipped to foster children would experience multiple placement changes. This was a descriptive study using a cross-sectional design to gather quantitative data from up to 150 foster parent(s). The study was not suited for drawing causality between the independent and dependent variables. However, the cross-sectional design was chosen over other quantitative research designs because it did not require follow-up of the participants over time and thus was more expedient and suited for accomplishing the aim of the study.

#### Participants

The participants must be 18 years and older and must be able to read and write in English. The participants must also be a current or previous foster parent(s) through a Foster Family Agency (FFA) or the county in which they lived and have fostered. The participants must be current or foster parents to obtain a true account of their experiences.

#### Settings

The survey was shared with individuals within the general population. A survey link was posted to social media platforms which included Facebook and Instagram.

## Recruitment

The targeted sample size was 150 participants. Participants were recruited using non-random sampling methods, specifically convenience and snowball sampling. Individuals who received the invitation to participate were eligible to participate and self-enroll in the study by utilizing the QR code and link provided to access the survey. Each participant was provided the opportunity to access the survey link through the social media websites which were posted by the study authors. Participants were invited to recruit other prospective participants.

Before enrollment, each prospective participant obtained the invitation to participate in the project from Facebook, Evite, email, and text message. Each participant was invited to respond to a short questionnaire to determine their eligibility by clicking on a link. If the participant was eligible, they were invited to read the informed consent document and then provide their consent to participate by checking a box.

## Study Procedure

The project was approved by the University's Institutional Review (IRB). The IRB is an administrative body that was established to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects who participate in research activities. Before enrollment, prospective participants were invited to respond to a short questionnaire to determine their eligibility. If the participants were eligible, they were invited to read the informed consent document (attached), and then provide their consent to participate by checking a box at the bottom of the informed

consent document that reads, “I have read and understood the consent document and agree to participate in your study.” After giving consent, participants were invited to complete a survey, which took between 10 to 12 minutes. Participants need only to complete the survey once. Participants did not receive monetary compensation.

### Measures

Participants responded to questions on their sociodemographic characteristics, level of preparedness to be foster parents, and the number of placement changes they had experienced since becoming foster parents.

#### Sociodemographic Characteristics

The sociodemographic variables are: age, gender, ethnicity, marital status and level of education.

#### Foster Parents’ Preparedness

We used a measure developed by Educational Parenting Inventory for Foster Parents Scaler to assess the level of preparedness of foster parents. The self-report measure consists of six subsections, but we are only using two: empathy towards youth and behavioral management. The response option for each question is *1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree)*. The (study or scale) has great face and content validity based on our assessment and limited knowledge of foster parents. It has high face validity because the items appear to measure preparedness well (e.g., I know what to do if a child throws a temper tantrum in public). It has high content validity because it assesses foster parents’

preparedness in different tasks (e.g., Empathy towards youth and behavioral management). The response options were summed to derive a total score. If the score is higher, it would mean there would be less placement changes as higher levels represent higher levels of preparedness. Should the outcome project a lower score, then the lower levels represent lower levels of preparedness.

### Placement Changes

The placement changes were measured by the level of preparedness of the foster parents.

### Statistical Analysis

Descriptive analyses will be performed to yield summary statistics of participants' demographics, foster parents' level of preparedness, and the number of placement changes. Bivariate analysis (e.g., correlation analysis, two independent-samples tests, and Pearson's chi-square test of independence) will be performed to examine the relationship between the level of preparedness and empathy with placement changes. Statistical significance will be determined at  $p\text{-value} < .05$ . Analyses were performed with SPSS using data from participants with complete information.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study. Data were collected from individuals who are fostering children or who have fostered within the past 12 months during the recruitment period ( $N = 11$ ). It was hypothesized that foster parents who have higher levels of preparedness (measured by their perceived ability to manage behavioral challenges and empathize with foster youths) and education would positively correlate with less placements. In the following sections of this chapter, the researchers present the participants' demographics characteristics, their level of preparedness to be foster parents, the number of placement changes experienced, and the correlation between participants' level of preparedness and the number of placement changes experienced.

#### Descriptive Statistics

##### Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 presents the sample's demographic characteristics. Females were the majority in this sample ( $n = 8$ , 72.73%). The average age of the sample was 45.8 ( $SD = 15.5$ ). More than half of the participants were African American ( $n = 7$ , 63.64%), about one in five were Latino/a ( $n = 2$ , 18.18%), and the remainder were Caucasian ( $n = 2$ , 18.18%). The participants reported their marital status as married ( $n = 9$ , 81.82%), single ( $n = 1$ , 9.09%), and widowed ( $n = 1$ , 9.09%).

Participants with a Bachelor's degree or above were the majority ( $n = 8$ , 72.73%), and the remainder were individuals with a high school diploma ( $n = 3$ , 27.27%)

#### Foster Parents' Experience

Participants have served as foster parents for an average of 8.4 years ( $SD = 8.8$ , range = 1–25 years). The standard deviation and range indicate that participants have varied experiences as foster parents. All participants have spent less than five years as foster parents except two, who have been foster parents for 19 years or longer.

Participants experienced an average of 3.6 placement changes in the last one year ( $SD = 4.3$ , range = 0 –13 years). Analyzing the data set, it shows that 4 participants did not experience any placement changes, two experienced two changes, another two experienced 4 changes, and another 2 had 10 or more changes.

#### Foster Parents' Level of Preparedness

In general, participants felt competent in managing the behavioral needs of foster youths, as evidenced by the mean score of the eight behavior management items ( $M = 3.3$ ,  $SD = 0.4$ , range = 1–4). In addition, the participants felt their level of empathy was on par as evidenced by the mean score of ( $M = 3.1$ ,  $SD = 0.5$ ).

## Correlation Analysis

### Behavior Management

Findings from a correlation analysis indicate a positive correlation between foster parents' perceived ability to manage behavior challenges and placement changes,  $r = .041$ ,  $n = 11$ ,  $p = .90$ , higher levels of perceived ability associated with higher number of placement changes. However, the correlation was weak and statistically insignificant.

### Empathize with Youths

The correlation analysis findings represent a positive correlation between the participants' empathy for youths, and the bearing it had on placement changes.  $r = .434$ ,  $n = 11$ ,  $p = .18$ . Higher the empathy level the lower the placement changes incurred.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics on Participants' Demographic Characteristics, Level of Preparedness to be Foster Parents, and Placement Changes Experienced (N = 11)

Variable	n (%)
Age, <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	45.8 (15.5)
Gender	
Female	8 (72.73)
Male	3 (27.27)
Race and Ethnicity	



African American	11 (63.62)
Latino	2 (18.18)
Caucasian	2 (18.18)
Marital Status	
Married	9 (81.82)
Single	1 (9.09)
Widowed	1 (9.09)
Education	
Bachelors Degree or Above	8 (72.73)
High School Graduate	3 (27.27)
Length of being a Foster Parent <i>M</i>	
( <i>SD</i> )	8.4 (8.8)
Levels of Preparedness, <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	
Behavior management	3.3 (0.4)
Empathy toward youth	3.2 (0.5)
Number of Placement Changes, <i>M</i>	
( <i>SD</i> )	3.6 (4.3)

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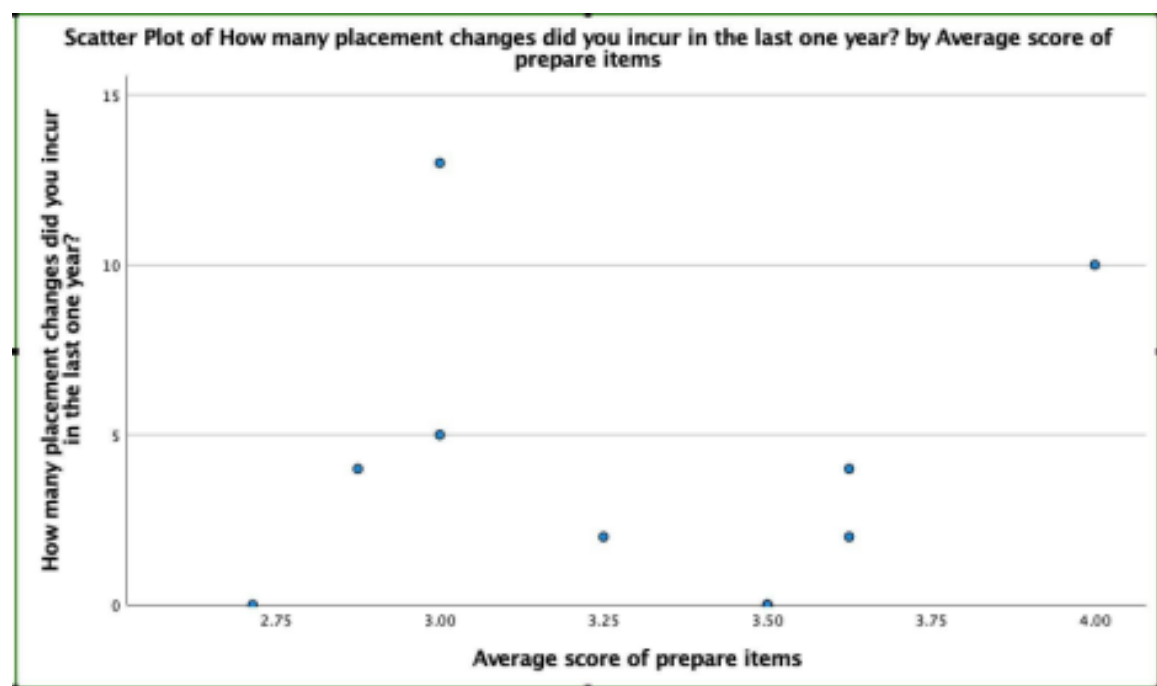


Figure 3: Scatterplot of Levels of Preparedness with Behavioral Management and Number of Placement Changes (N = 11)

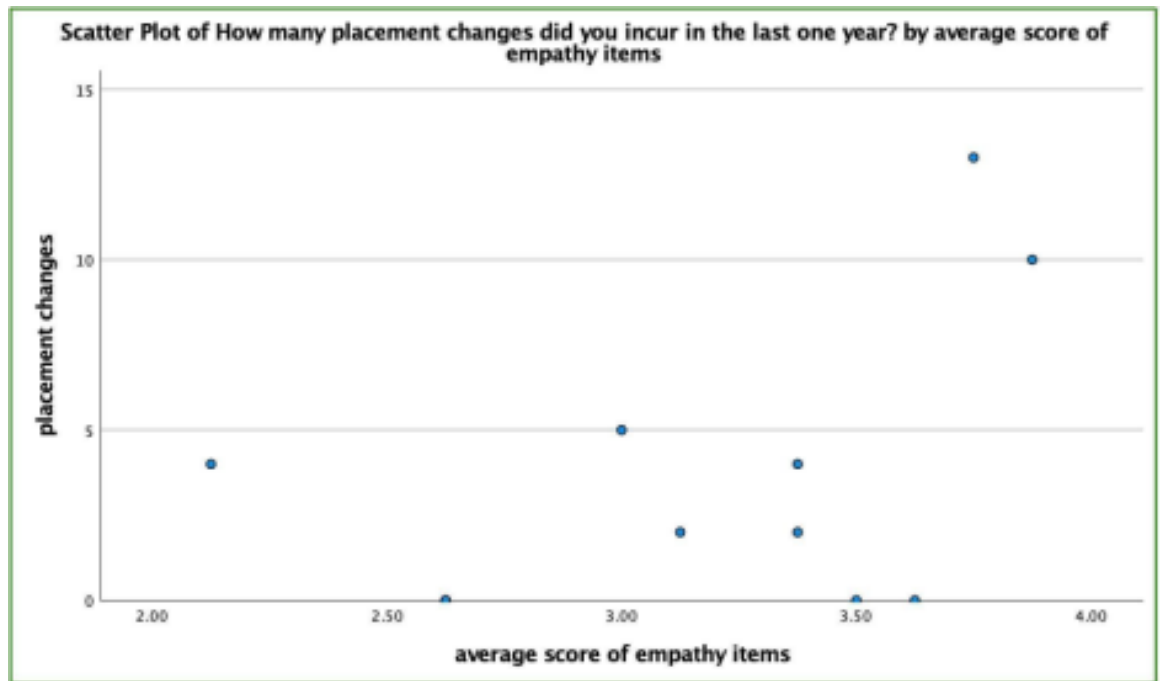


Figure 4: Scatterplot of Levels of Preparedness with Empathy and Number of Placement Changes (N = 11)

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### DISCUSSION

The aim of this cross-sectional study was to gather quantitative data from foster parents to determine whether there is a correlation between their level of preparedness to be foster parents and the number of placement changes. The level of preparedness was measured by foster parents' perception of their ability to manage empathy towards foster youth and the ability to manage behavior. The study includes some insight of a small group of foster parents, the length of experience, and their varied levels of preparedness. Findings from the descriptive cross-sectional design of this study revealed a weak to moderate positive correlation between foster parents' level of preparedness and placement changes. These findings indicate that more preparedness of the foster parent would lead to a higher number of placement changes. However, these correlations were statistically insignificant, and thus, our hypothesis was not supported by the statistically insignificant correlation.

Findings were consistent with those from past studies that have found empathy to be a crucial factor for successful fostering. Geiger et al. (2016) interviewed 20 foster families to explore how foster families overcome the challenges of fostering. The researchers found that empathy is an essential part of fostering children. The lack of a correlation between foster parents' perceived

ability to empathize and placement changes may be due to their tolerance level and or lack of training.

However, our finding of a moderate positive but statistically insignificant correlation between foster parents' perceived ability to meet the behavioral needs of foster youth is consistent with the study by Herbert and Wookey (2007). The researchers found A notable improvement was the foster parents growing confidence. The majority of personal reports indicating behavioral improvements in looked-after children were also encouraging; these changes were typically attributed to the development of new behavior control techniques. Even though some of the statistical comparisons were disappointing in that they didn't achieve significant levels (such as a decrease in placement breakdowns), they nevertheless offered helpful insights into how to enhance the training. The statistically insignificant finding may be explained by their ability to be in control of the outcomes of the children's behavior resulting in a high level of placement changes

### Limitations

One of the study's limitations is the sampling strategy used to gather the study's data. Although the reliance on the nonprobability sampling technique was practical, the researchers did not reach their optimum sample size. Also, what contributed to the limitation is the short period of time the researchers had to gather data. A small sample size resulted in statistically insignificant findings and being a foster caregiver within a twelve-month period. A second limitation was

that the researchers used a cross-sectional design. The collection of data included the participants' level of preparedness and placement changes. Therefore, the researchers cannot conclude that their level of preparedness caused the placement change as this is difficult to determine with a cross-sectional design. Lastly, a non-probability snowball sample has the drawback of yielding foster parents who may not represent the larger population of foster parents well.

### Conclusion

This research topic was to explore placement discontinuity in foster care and how foster parents' level of preparedness might be a contributing factor. This cross-sectional study's objective was to collect quantitative information from foster parents in order to assess their level of readiness and explore any correlation with placement modifications. Findings revealed that foster parents' level of preparedness did not have an impact on placement changes. As much as foster parents felt prepared, the number of placement changes still increased. Future research studies should not limit participation to current foster parents. Lifting such a limitation may yield a larger sample size.

APPENDIX A:  
INFORMED CONSENT

## INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to investigate whether there is a relationship between foster parents' preparedness and placement change. This study is being conducted by Angela Williams and Michelle Sepulveda, graduate students, under the supervision of Dr. Caroline Lim, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The study has been approved by the California State University, San Bernardino Institutional Review Board.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this research study is to assess foster parents' preparedness and its impact on placement changes.

**DESCRIPTION:** Participants will be asked brief questions on demographics. Participants will also be asked questions about their perceived preparedness to manage behavioral challenges and empathize with foster youth and the number of placement changes they incurred.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study. The alternative to participation is not to participate. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may also skip or not answer any questions. You can also freely discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences. To do so, simply exit the survey. If you choose to discontinue your participation the data entered will be discarded and destroyed.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** We will be gathering anonymous data. This means we will not collect any information that will identify you (e.g., your name, social security number, contact information, video recording). We will present findings from this study in group format only so that no results will be connected to a participant. We will protect the data against inappropriate access by restricting data access to authorized study personnel. We will store the data on computers or laptops secured with individual ID plus password protection. Additionally, the folder containing the data will be protected with a password known to authorized study personnel. We will destroy the data three years after the project has ended.

**DURATION:** This survey will take roughly 10 to 12 minutes to complete. You will be asked to complete the survey only once.

**RISKS:** Some of the questions may make you feel uneasy or embarrassed. You may also provide sensitive and personal information. You can choose to skip or stop answering any questions that make you uncomfortable. You can also withdraw from participation at any time with no consequences.

**BENEFITS:** There will not be any direct benefits monetary or otherwise provided to the participants. However, the findings from this study will contribute to the social work professions knowledge of the preparedness of foster parents. This study can also potentially bring a social awareness to the deficit in knowledge of multiple placements within foster care.

The California State University - Bakersfield - Channel Islands - Chico - Dominguez Hills - East Bay - Fresno - Fullerton - Long Beach - Los Angeles - Maritime Academy - Monterey Bay - Northridge - Pomona - Sacramento - SAN BERNARDINO - San Diego - San Francisco - San Jose - San Luis Obispo - San Marcos - Sonoma Stanislaus

UPIRB#: IRBFY2023-93



**CONTACT:** If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Angie Williams [007140647@coyote.csusb.edu](mailto:007140647@coyote.csusb.edu) or Michelle Sepulveda [006910053@coyote.csusb.edu](mailto:006910053@coyote.csusb.edu). You can also contact Dr. Caroline Lim [caroline.lim@csusb.edu](mailto:caroline.lim@csusb.edu) or 909-537-5584 or the California State University, San Bernardino, Institutional Review Board at 909-537-7588.

**RESULTS:** After the completion and publication of the study in July 2023, results can be found at California State University, San Bernardino, John M. Pfau Library (5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407; 909-537-5090/5091) ScholarWorks database (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/>).

**CONFIRMATION STATEMENT**

I have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study

APPENDIX B:  
QUALTRICS SURVEY

## Exploring the Impact of Placement Discontinuity in Foster Care

Start-of-Block:-Default-Question-Block

- Q1 Thank you for your interest in this study. This study aims to understand if foster parents' preparedness is linked to foster children placement outcomes. To determine your eligibility, please complete the following few questions.

- Q2 You are at least 18 years old.

☒ Yes (1)

- Q3 You are foster parent in the last 12 months.

☒ Yes (1)

- Q4 You are proficient in reading English.

☒ Yes (1)

End-of-Block:-Default-Question-Block

Start-of-Block:-Informed-Consent

- Q5 INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to investigate whether there is a relationship between foster parents' preparedness and placement changes. This study is being conducted by Angela Williams and Michelle Sepulveda, graduate students, under the supervision of Dr. Caroline Lim, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at California

Page 1 of 11

State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The study has been approved by the California State University, San Bernardino Institutional Review Board.

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DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked brief questions on demographics. Participants will also be asked questions about their perceived preparedness to manage behavioral challenges and empathize with foster youth and the number of placement changes they incurred.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study. The alternative to participation is not to participate. you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may also skip or not answer any questions. you can also freely discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences. to do so, simply exit the survey. If you choose to discontinue your participation the data entered will be discarded and destroyed.

CONFIDENTIALITY: We will be gathering anonymous data. This means we will not collect any information that will identify you (e.g., your name, social security number, contact information, video recording). We will present findings from this study in group format only so that no results will be connected to a participant. We will protect the data against inappropriate access by restricting data access to authorized study personnel. We will store the data on computers or laptops secured with individual ID plus password protection. Additionally, the folder containing the data will be protected with a password known to authorized study personnel. We will destroy the data three years after the project has ended.

DURATION: This survey will take roughly 10 to 12 minutes to complete. You will be asked to complete the survey only once. RISKS: Some of the questions may make you feel uneasy or embarrassed. You may also provide sensitive and personal information. You can choose to skip or stop answering any questions that make you uncomfortable. You can also withdraw from participation at any time with no consequences.

BENEFITS: There will not be any direct benefits monetary or otherwise provided to the participants. However, the findings from this study will contribute to the social work professions knowledge of the preparedness of foster parents. This study can also potentially bring a social awareness to the deficit in knowledge of multiple placements within foster care.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Angie Williams 907140647@coyoote.csusb.edu or Michelle Sepulveda 006910053@coyoote.csusb.edu. You can also contact Dr. Caroline Lim caroline.lim@csusb.edu or 909-537-5584 or the California State University, San Bernardino, Institutional Review Board at 909-537-7588.

RESULTS: After the completion and publication of the study in July 2023, results can be found

Page 2 of 11

at California State University, San Bernardino, John M. Pfau Library (5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407; 909-537-5090/5091) [ScholarWorks database](http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/) (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/>).

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT I have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

- Q6 Consent Statement

☐ I understand that I must be 18 years or older and be a foster parent to participate in your study, have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study. (1)

End-of-Block:-Informed-Consent

Start-of-Block:-Block-5

- Q12 Please complete this survey in one sitting. You may skip questions or exit the survey if you wish to not participate anymore.

End-of-Block:-Block-5

Start-of-Block:-Demographic-Characteristics

- Q7 What is your gender?

☒ Male (1)

☐ Female (2)

☐ Non-binary / third gender (3)

☐ Prefer not to say (4)

- Q9 How old are you?

11

Page 3 of 11

- Q13 Marital status

☒ Single (1)

☐ Married (2)

☐ Separated/Divorced (3)

☐ Widowed (4)

- Q14 Education Level

☐ No High School Diploma (1)

☐ High School Graduate (2)

☐ Bachelors Degree or Above (3)

- Q15 Are you Hispanic?

☒ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Page 4 of 11



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• Q17 The following questions pertain to your perceived ability to empathize with foster youth. Please choose a response from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Think back over the last year and answer these questions regarding your preparedness. ¶

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Page 9 of 11

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	Strongly Disagree (1) ¶	Disagree (2) ¶	Agree (3) ¶	Strongly Agree (4) ¶
• I understand the impact of abuse and neglect on children (1) ¶	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• I know how to demonstrate empathy and show care to a child I do not know well (2) ¶	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• I know the symptoms of trauma to look for and how to help a child who has experienced trauma (3) ¶	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• I can foster a child that harms people (4) ¶	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• I can foster a child who harms animals (5) ¶	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• I am able to remain calm when a child is acting out verbally or physically towards me (6) ¶	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• I have tools for helping a child learn to recognize other people's feelings (7) ¶	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Page 10 of 11

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- I know how to identify signs that a child might be triggered and I have ideas about how I would seek help (8) □



¶  
¶

End of Block: Foster Parents' Preparedness ¶

Start of Block: Placement changes (Outcomes) ¶

¶

- Q11 How many placement changes did you incur in the last one year? ¶

¶

End of Block: Placement changes (Outcomes) ¶

¶

¶

APPENDIX C:  
SURVEY FLYER

## Seeking Participants for A Research Study

ON FOSTER PARENTS GAINING MORE KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING

**Eligibility:** Must be 18 years or older and must be able to read and write in English. Participants must also be current or previous foster parent(s) through a Foster Family Agency (FFA) or the county in which they lived.

**Procedure:** Complete a questionnaire on your experience being a foster parent.

**Length:** Between 10-12 minutes to complete and must be taken in one sitting.

**Location:** The study will be conducted via survey online through your phone, laptop, or desktop.

**Compensation:** Participating in this study may improve foster parents and foster children's in home experience.

**Confidential:** Participation is voluntary, will not affect your care and all information you provide to us will be kept confidential.

**Participation:** If interested please scan the QR code attached or contact Michelle or Angie at 951-534-4543



[https://csusb.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_55ecELk4qJKilMi](https://csusb.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_55ecELk4qJKilMi)

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UPIRB#: IRBFY2023-93



APPENDIX D:  
IRB APPROVAL LETTER



December 8, 2022

**CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**  
Administrative/Exempt Review Determination  
Status: Determined Exempt  
**IRB-FY2023-93**

Caroline Lim Michelle Sepulveda, Angela Williams  
CSBS - Social Work  
California State University, San Bernardino  
5500 University Parkway  
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Caroline Lim Michelle Sepulveda, Angela Williams:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Exploring the Impact of Placement Discontinuity in Foster care" has been reviewed and determined exempt by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (**IRB**) of CSU, San Bernardino. An exempt determination means your study had met the federal requirements for exempt status under 45 CFR 46.104. The CSUSB **IRB** has weighed the risks and benefits of the study to ensure the protection of human participants.

This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional campus approvals which may be required including access to CSUSB campus facilities and affiliate campuses. Investigators should consider the changing COVID-19 circumstances based on current CDC, California Department of Public Health, and campus guidance and submit appropriate protocol modifications to the **IRB** as needed. CSUSB campus and affiliate health screenings should be completed for all campus human research related activities. Human research activities conducted at off-campus sites should follow CDC, California Department of Public Health, and local guidance. See CSUSB's [COVID-19 Prevention Plan](#) for more information regarding campus requirements.

You are required to notify the **IRB** of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB **IRB** policy. The forms (modification, renewal, unanticipated/adverse event, study closure) are located in the Cayuse **IRB** System with instructions provided on the **IRB** Applications, Forms, and Submission webpage. Failure to notify the **IRB** of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action. The Cayuse **IRB** system will notify you when your protocol is due for renewal. Ensure you file your protocol renewal and continuing review form through the Cayuse **IRB** system to keep your protocol current and active unless you have completed your study.

- **Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.**
- **Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the **IRB** before being implemented in your study.**
- **Notify the **IRB** within 5 days of any unanticipated or adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research.**
- **Submit a study closure through the Cayuse **IRB** submission system once your study has ended.**

If you have any questions regarding the **IRB** decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at [mgillespie@csusb.edu](mailto:mgillespie@csusb.edu). Please include your application approval number **IRB-FY2023-93** in all correspondence. Any complaints you receive from participants and/or others related to your research may be directed to Mr. Gillespie.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

*King-To Yeung*

King-To Yeung, Ph.D., **IRB** Chair  
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

KY/MG

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## ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

All chapters were completed together by research partners Angela Williams and Michelle Sepulveda. The research partners collaborated in submitting IRB applications, generating an informed consent and questionnaires for participants. The research partners divided the chapters evenly throughout.