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## Foster Parents' Views Regarding Lack of Attachment in Children in Foster Care

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Ronease Yvette Thompson

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University

2024

Abstract

Foster Parents' Views Regarding Lack of Attachment in Children in Foster Care

by

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MSW, Clark Atlanta University, 2015

BS, Jacksonville University, 2012

Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Social Work

Walden University

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## Abstract

Lack of attachment is important to address within the social work practice because it can affect the wellbeing and development of children in foster care who have experienced insecure attachment relationships. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how a lack of attachment impacts foster children while they are in the foster care system. This study involved using the attachment theory and Oregon model as well as trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy and attachment-based family therapy. Ten foster parents shared their experiences through interviews. Analytical strategies that were used in the doctoral project were open coding and narrative analysis. Findings were that many foster parents reported feeling disconnected from their children. Foster children, according to participants, do not exhibit empathic feelings and do not trust their foster parents. Visiting biological family was also a factor when it came to attachment issues in foster homes. Several participants did not develop attachments with foster youth who were in their homes. One recommendation was to focus on the concept of mentorship to help build stronger human relationships. Positive social change starts with improving quality of services that are provided to clients on a practical level.

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## Dedication

This Capstone project is dedicated to my husband, Abdoul and my children Avery and Alexander, who have been a constant source of support and encouragement during the challenges of my doctoral program. I am truly thankful for having my family in my life. This work is also dedicated to my parents, Roderick, and Garnetta Thompson, who have always loved me unconditionally and whose good examples have taught me to work hard for the things that I aspire to achieve.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study and Literature Review

Foster care workers' main goal is to identify permanent connections for children in the child welfare system. The purpose of the foster care system is to reunify birth families with their birth children after they complete a case plan. According to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2021):

approximately 24,000 young people transition out of foster care each year without permanent family. These young adults have limited life skills and additional support, they are also more likely to experience unhealthy outcomes such as poverty, homelessness, incarceration, and poor health. ( p. 1)

Attachment plays an important role in the development of foster children not only in terms of care but also after they have aged out of care. Attachment affects their physical, social, behavior, and mental wellbeing. It is ideal for foster children to form strong attachments with their foster families for their futures to be successful. The social work problem lack of attachment impacts children in foster care and challenges that foster parents face when these children are placed in their homes. I used individual interviews via Google Meet and Microsoft Teams. This study will fill a gap in understanding by focusing on attachments of foster children through their experiences in foster care and raise awareness of reasons why they lack attachment. Section 1 includes an introduction, problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, a description of the nature of the doctoral project, significance of the study, theoretical framework, values and ethics, literature review, and a summary.

### **Problem Statement**

The social work practice problem that was the focus of this doctoral study involves views of foster parents regarding lack of attachment of children in foster care. I focused on foster care within the state of Georgia. Lack of attachment can affect foster children's social, emotional, and mental development. According to Kerns and Brumariu (2015):

The social and emotional development of children is influenced by parent-child connections. Research on parent-child attachment is one example: Youngsters structure their behavior to use a parent as a solid basis throughout the first year of life, when all children build bonds to caregivers who offer them security and care. (p. 177).

Children who are in foster care may lack attachments with their foster families due to lack of trust which was not developed from birth. The problem that prompted me to search literature was challenges that foster parents face when these children are placed in their homes.

### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the process by which lack of attachment impacts foster children while they are in and out of the foster care system. The practice-focused research questions for the study were:

RQ1: What are the experiences regarding lack of attachment foster parents perceived that impacted foster children?

RQ2: What interventions and strategies were used to ensure attachment issues were addressed in the foster care system?

RQ3: What were the outcomes of these interventions?

Results of this study should aid child placing agencies in terms of helping foster children succeed while in care and afterwards. This will result in advancing professional social work practice by examining foster parents' experiences and viewpoints regarding this topic.

### **Nature of the Doctoral Project**

I used a qualitative research design. Data in this doctoral project were used to address research questions through individual interviews with foster parents. Participant interview protocols were developed to address research questions. I collected data from participants regarding positive and negative experiences pertaining to attachment with foster children who have been placed in their homes. I also collected data on types of strategies and interventions that were successful or unsuccessful.

### **Significance of the Study**

The project will advance social work practice knowledge and fill the gap by focusing specifically on experiences of foster parents and lack of attachment displayed by foster children. This doctoral study is significant for the field of social work and should aid child placing agencies in terms of helping foster children succeed while in care and afterwards. Positive strategies and interventions can lead them to a more successful adult life. Potential implications for positive social change include foster parent recruitment and placement matches between foster parents and children. Both potential implications can hinder foster child growth and attachment.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework I used for this study was the attachment theory.

According to Baumeister and Leary (2017):

Common interactions within an ongoing personal bond are required. People easily create social relationships and are reluctant to let go of old ties, which is in line with the belongingness idea. Belongingness has numerous and significant impacts on thought processes as well as emotional patterns. Lack of attachments is associated with several negative effects on wellbeing, resilience, and health. (p. 497).

The attachment theory has been used to emphasize the importance of relationships between infants and their primary caregivers, implying that infants have a natural urge to seek safety and comfort from their primary caregiver.

Secure, anxious-ambivalent, disorganized, and avoidant attachment styles were defined by John Bowlby. Insecurely connected people demonstrate a variety of dysfunctional beliefs and feelings about themselves and others, whereas securely attached people show independence and comfort with closeness. Secure and anxious attachment have been consistently linked with withdrawal strategies such as refusing to discuss issues further and ignoring partners, as well as conflict engagement behaviors, such as personal attacks and losing control. Anxiously attached people appear to oscillate between withdrawal and active involvement in intrusive behaviors and criticisms; the former technique is motivated by a fear of rejection, while the latter is motivated by a desire for intimacy, support, and affection. Furthermore, people who support conflict

engagement reactions are more likely to see their relationships in negative terms and interpret their partners' behavior negatively, especially if they have an elevated level of attachment anxiety. As a result, anxiously connected people may misinterpret their partners' actions as either animosity or disengagement. According to Bonache et al., (2019), "conflict aggression has also been connected to lower levels of attachment anxiety" (p. 305). As a result, avoidantly-attached people remain silent or use prolonged approaches and participate in conflict.

### **Values and Ethics**

The NASW Code of Ethics includes the principles of service, social justice, respect for the inherent dignity and worth of persons, and the importance of human relationships. This code includes broad ethical principles that reflect the profession's core values and establishes a set of specific ethical standards that guide social work practice. The code provides ethical standards by which the public can hold the social work profession accountable. I upheld ethical standards throughout this study.

### **Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

Children require help from those who are accountable for their protection as they grow from childhood to adulthood. Their attachment experience is vital as they progress through the stages of this developmental process. This cycle advances from complete reliance on others to adult independence and autonomy. Viewpoints of foster parents regarding lack of attachment among children in foster care is important to the social work field because foster parents face many challenges that are not easily addressed relating to foster children who are placed in their homes. I researched attachment, foster child

adjustments, foster parent adjustments, and gaps in research. I used the following databases: APA PsycNet, Oxford Academic, PubMed Central, SAGE Journals, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, Wiley Online Library, Google Scholar, Walden University Library. I used the following key terms: *sibling relationships*, *attachment theory*, *challenges*, *changes*, and *youth*. All sources were published between 2016 and 2021. Sources were primarily from scholarly publications and journals.

Malik et al. (2021) mentioned attachment plays a critical role in laying the groundwork for positive social, cognitive, and emotional development. Attachment disturbances in infants and toddlers increase the likelihood of mental health problems throughout childhood and adolescence. This leads to sensitivity to oppositional defiant disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and conduct disorder, as well as mood and anxiety disorders. Poor early attachment can have an impact on personality development, while strong attachment can lower mental health risks. Bosmansa et al. (2020) claimed “One of the most crucial aspects of child development is the growth of children's confidence in their parents' ability to help and protect them in times of need (Bowlby, 1969, p. ###?). Lack of attachment in foster children has led to a range of behavior issues. When children’s growth is troubled by unstable family environments, they require special attention.

### **Parenting Management Training Oregon Model**

The PMTO model promotes healthy child adjustment by preventing internalizing and externalizing conduct behaviors and issues. Akin et al. (2017), stated “the PMTO program focuses on educating parents on new approaches to communicating with and



correcting their kids. The PMTO focuses on five parenting techniques: skill development, positive engagement, problem solving, communication/monitoring, and limit setting” (p. 182).

### **Types of Parenting Styles**

Chodura, et al. (2021) discussed three different categories of parenting: parenting goals, parenting style, and parenting practices or behaviors. Functional parenting includes providing warmth and setting limits. This entails setting appropriate boundaries and while supporting their abilities. Disruptive parenting involves being either extremely strict or inflexible. Parenting goals include socialization goals such as gaining specific skills and behaviors and curiosity as well as critical thinking. Parenting style is a “constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and create a specific emotional climate” (Chodura et al., 2021, p. 327). Authoritative parents are very responsive to their children and use appropriate control to promote their children’s adaptive growth. To affect their children, parents with an authoritarian style use a l appropriate and inappropriate controls. They lack reactivity. Neglectful parents are unresponsive and uncontrollable.

### **Adjustments in Foster Parents**

Foster parents’ adjustments to foster children in their homes can be stressful. As a result of increased behavior issues, they are more likely to experience placement disruptions. Foster parents are more likely to experience parenting stress than other parents. A mismatch between resources and expectations of foster parents may develop depending on their abilities to deal with these issues. According to Gabler et al. (2018),

“parental stress and behavioral issues in kids can interact to predict how supportive a parent would be. Foster parents' abilities to emotionally support children's efforts may be hindered by parenting stress in addition to behavioral issues with the children” (p. 336). Increased parental stress in foster parents was found to be positively associated with partners' stress, not only in the short term but also in the long term. Main caregiver stress levels are more accurately predicted by partners' initial stress levels than child behavior issues, indicating that internal conditions are crucial and actively contribute to effective adjustment. Lohaus et al. (2018) found foster mothers with behavioral difficulties in their foster children had higher levels of parental stress. The most difficult role demand for foster caregivers is confronting child behavior, which is also the strongest predictor of stress levels. Foster parents experience heightened mother and paternal stress. Foster mothers and fathers reported high stress levels over time, depending on mental health concerns of their foster children.

Foster parents also have emotional investments involving fostering their children and bringing them into their home. Emotional investment is the “understanding of the ability to affect the child's development as well as preparedness to embrace and commit to a child” (Jacobsen et al., 2018, p. 201). There is limited research in this area, but it has demonstrated that dedication is linked to foster children's socioemotional functioning.

Unless their parenting is severely damaged and they are unable to safeguard their infants from harm, most parents form deep attachments with their children. Given that foster care is not necessarily intended to be long-term, being emotionally invested in children while placed in short-term foster home can be difficult as well as harmful for

both foster children and parents. Having an emotionally invested and committed caregiver is essential for survival as well as development. Maternal emotional investment is defined as the degree to which female caregivers are motivated to form a long-term bond with their foster children. Emotional involvement is especially vital in foster caregiving situations because long-term ties are unlikely. It is at the heart of attentive caregiving. Foster parents' levels of emotional commitment differs. Although some foster mothers see their duty as only providing temporary support to the children, others speak of their foster children as if they were their own children and express a desire to adopt them if the opportunity arises. Insightfulness and emotional investment enable sensitive parenting and promote healthy child outcomes.

If caregivers have high levels of emotional investment in their least-challenging children, they are more likely to have high levels of emotional investment in their most-challenging children as well; conversely, if they have a low level of emotional investment in their least-challenging children, they are more likely to have a low level of emotional investment in their most-challenging children if their needs are not met.

### **Placement Disruptions**

Lack of emotional investment can lead to placement disruptions for foster children. Placement disruptions can be more preventive when positive interventions and better support of children and foster parents can be applied (Leathers et al., 2019; Vreeland et al., 2020). Vreeland et al. (2020) discussed identifying potential sources of placement interruptions and potential intervention targets to improve placement stability. With a greater emphasis on placement stability comes difficulties in terms of determining

how to effectively identify children and adolescents who are at risk of having their placements disrupted and require the most assistance. Funding for additional services to identify these adolescents is a major issue, as employees are often overburdened with cases and lack the time to complete comprehensive needs assessments and identify necessary programs. Rather than behavior problems, parenting attributes were found to be predictive of disruption (Fuente et al., 2016). It is necessary to provide support to families who foster older children, thus helping them adapt and avoid placement disruption. Quality of emotional interactions between children and foster parents was also linked with placement disruption (Fuente et al., 2016).

Foster children have attachment difficulties and psychological issues, which place additional demands on their parents' talents and competence, thereby increasing the chance of placement disruption. The physical health of children is also a consideration; complex health needs and physical handicap have been linked to placement disruption. Amount of problem behaviors that are experienced per day is proportional to likelihood of placement disruption. The age at which children enter the child welfare system appears to be a factor as well, and there is a higher risk of disruption when children are younger. Foster parents are people who help children who are in need (Tomheim & Iverson, 2019). Attachment and follow up are primary to avoid placement disruptions. Since little is known about matching, there is not enough data from studies to back up a link between matching and placement stability. The term matching is used in both literature and practice of child welfare to describe the process of finding a substitute home for a child who needs to be removed from the care of his or her birth parents. Matching is most

frequently understood as a process in which the child's needs are matched to a specific foster or adoptive family (Pösö & Laakso, 2016; Zeijlmans et al., 2017).

Characteristics of foster children, quality of foster parents, and interactions between foster parents and foster children influence differences between positive and negative foster care arrangements. As a result, anticipating positive relationships between child and caregiver qualities can help to mitigate negative effects of out-of-home placements.

### **Challenges and Barriers in Fostering**

Although many foster caregivers report the joys of fostering, they also report experiencing barriers and challenges related to their foster caregiving role (Richardson & Futris 2019; Richardson et. al. 2021), both agree that increased financial strain, problem behaviors due to the child's traumatic background, balancing family needs with the additional demands of the foster child, frequent transitions, and feelings of loss after the child leaves the home (e.g., reunification, adoption by another family) are all common stressors for foster caregivers (Piel et. al. 2017). Despite these difficulties, many foster parents create a stable and loving environment for the children they care for. Some of the competencies that can encourage high-quality foster caregiving include growing as a foster caregiver, skill development, and role clarification, as well as managing the demands of fostering on personal and familial well-being (Malette, et al., 2020). Current attempts have been assumed to investigate foster parents interparental relationships (Richardson & Futris, 2019) and provide resources, such as couple relationship education (CRE), to assist foster parents in establishing or maintaining good couple and coparenting

relationships. CRE's mission is to improve intimate relationships and prevent relationship misery. One year after participating in a CRE program, Adler-Baeder et al. (2018) discovered that moms in their sample improved their coparenting practices and positive parenting behaviors, while their child's preschool teacher reported significant gains in social competence. The authors Lanigan & Burleson explore foster parents' perspectives on the initial transition time, to have a better understanding of the family formation process that occurs when a new placement is transferred into the home. A model of the foster family transition process was developed using a constant comparative analysis of interview transcripts guided by grounded theory approaches, which identified three main tasks: establishing trust and a sense of belonging, re-establishing family homeostasis, and working with external stakeholders. Caregivers indicated that responsive and trauma-informed; realistic expectations; parenting skills; and access to resources are necessary for the child to be successful in the transitional process (Lanigan & Burleson, 2016).

Foster parents' ability to focus on both positive and negative family changes related to an approaching placement and to address the consequences on existing family members is linked to placement success (Thompson et al. 2016). Foster parents who are motivated by a desire to help a damaged child or give back to their community have been proven to have better attachments.

### **Effects of Foster Parents' Involvement with Schools**

Foster Parents' involvement in school has a positive effect on foster care children. According to Gumapac et al. (2021), they talk about the significant role parents have in a foster child's education. In their child's general development and education, parents play

a critical role. Apart from meeting their basic requirements and educating their children, parents also nurture their children by providing love, attention, support, and information. The proper guidance they offer develops their child's character until they become independent and ready to face the challenges of the society in which they live. Authors Wolpert-Gawron (2019) as well as Kelt & Wakabayashi (2020) disclosed that students are more engaged in their education when their parents are actively involved. They attend school for longer periods of time and perform better academically. Children are more engaged with their academics and stay in school longer when their parents are interested in their children's education. Children's educational expectations are increasing in a variety of settings, and parents are in a unique position to ensure that these settings best suit their children's particular learning needs (Wolpert-Gawron, 2019; Kelt & Wakabayashi 2020).

Parental involvement in school has long been recognized as a key and positive factor in children's academic and socio-emotional development on a global scale (Gumapac et al. 2021). Berlin et al. (2020) all found that theoretical relationships between education and overall life chances include mechanisms that contribute to behaviors that allow people to function in modern cultures while also having options about the type of life they wish to live. The role of norm internalization and forward-looking judgments under limits posed by available and perceived resources are among the proposed mechanisms. The foster child, like the foster parents, has no idea how long he or she will be in the foster family when they are placed. This may affect foster families' motivation as well as their capacity to support and guide the child through the school

system. According to research, caregiver involvement in foster families is lower than in birth families, and numerous variables contribute to this, including a lack of information about the child's previous schooling (Munford & Sanders, 2016). Children's school ambition and aspirations for higher education may also be affected by the uncertainty about permanence. Other authors, such as Meeto, et al. (2020), talk about the everyday lives of foster caregivers and foster children. The following were commonalities within the study: (1) what foster parents do in their daily lives and education; (2) foster parents' meanings and perspectives on early education; and (3) foster parents as "everyday experts" in satisfying complex needs.

The findings show how foster parents play multiple roles while navigating the complexities of everyday living with their young children. Foster parents can help in a variety of ways. The research study points out that "given that learning, and brain development are most important during the first few weeks and months of life we believe there is a pressing need to learn more about the educational experiences of young children in foster care" (Jackson and Hollingworth, 2017, page 19). Jackson and his associates (Hollingworth, 2017) term 'stimulating environment' refers to resources such as basic welfare needs (such as health, safety, and suitable supervision) as well as experiences such as caring and nurturing relationships, and it reflects how the social and educational are interconnected such as how early learning is rooted in. The lateness of the 'habitual' (Phoenix, et al., 2017) has been noted by researchers of everyday life, and researching the habitual in family homes, which is often a private space where the normative or routine is mostly unarticulated (Phoenix, et al., 2017) is particularly



problematic. Relationships with adults and peers, and the worth of social connections and care. The research study concludes that foster parents' time spent on caring responsibilities for their extended families, as well as the help they receive from other family members in providing care and education for foster children, are both understudied.

Furthermore, foster parents are portrayed as a primarily female, non-professionalized group of caregivers who lack advantages such as pensions and sick leave (Narey and Owens, 2018). Moyer & Goldberg elaborate on the educational challenges as well as support for foster children. Foster children are more likely than their non-foster care peers to miss school, have special education needs, and have traumatic life experiences. As a result, they are less likely to complete high school and attend/complete college (Moyer & Goldberg, 2019). Clemens et al. (2017) as well as Kim et al. (2019) both discuss education attainment in foster youth. Clemens et al. (2017), talk about a lack of coordination, communication, and placement between the foster care system and the education systems. Both systems can multiply the everyday issues connected with student's experiences of trauma and mobility. Students who have experienced trauma may appear disinterested in school or not focused on studying in the classroom. Maltreated foster children also appear to have weaker social-emotional capability which includes, compared to their counterparts who were not mistreated, they had worse emotional regulation and inhibitory control, per a study on school adjustment" (Clemens et al. 2017, p.66). Youth frequently enter foster care after experiencing chronic trauma at the hands of trusted caregivers as children, culminating in complex trauma. It is no

surprise that maltreated children have difficulty in school since, as Buckley et al. (2016) states, "children who face on-going trauma over time... are too busy surviving" (p. 36). When a student is in foster care during high school, he or she is likely to change schools three or more times (Clemens et al. 2017). These rapid changes present a distinct set of problems. When students switch schools, for example, they may face differing graduation requirements or lose course credit because of an incomplete or delayed transfer of school records. Students who switch schools throughout the school year may miss opportunities to obtain imperative topics, resulting in knowledge gaps, particularly in math.

Kim et al. (2019) discusses educational attainment but with foster youth in the independent living services. Foster youth are driven into adulthood sooner than their non-foster-care-involved peers due to a lack of resources and support. Homelessness, low educational achievement, unemployment, substance misuse, and incarceration are all common among transition-aged youth.

### **Transitioning Out of Foster Care**

Rome & Raskin; Cheatham et al. (2020) discussed the transition out of foster care and into adulthood after care. Rome & Raskin concluded that adverse events happened almost immediately, and many young people were unaware of how to receive help. However, adolescents who excelled in one area were more likely to excel in others. Having four or more foster care placements, being on probation, accruing fines, and losing government aid were all risk factors. Living with an adult who shares the rent was one of the most protective variables. Despite severe challenges, the youth has shown perseverance and hope as they considered their lives for the future. Another researcher,

Hedin (2016) concluded that the value of stability in foster care, the utility of Facebook in maintaining supportive informal contacts, and the resiliency and maturity gained from overcoming obstacles were among the themes identified (Hedin, 2016). Cheatham et al. (2020) talks about transitioning out of foster care while being disabled. "Youth leaving the foster care system are portrayed as youth with challenges" (Slayter, 2016, p. 157). Former foster adolescents with mental health diagnoses had more unmet needs than other youth when they left care, according to the study.

Furthermore, few young people have only one impairment diagnosis. According to estimates, two-thirds of disabled adolescents in foster care acquire multiple diagnoses, further complicating our knowledge of how disability diagnoses may affect an individual. Researchers Trejos-Castillo et al. (2015) finds that the study provides new insights into the complex dynamics of successfully transitioning out of foster care, as well as the importance of supporting foster youth's economic well-being to better prepare them to live independently and develop coping skills for the challenges they may face once they leave the system. One challenge for foster youth transitioning out of care is the financial hardships they are more prone to facing. Opening a bank account, obtaining a credit card, learning to drive, and obtaining a driver's license are all significantly more difficult for foster adolescents than they are for ordinary youth. Furthermore, legal document processing and financial records are more difficult to manage, thus putting foster youngsters at danger of financial fraud, theft detection, and weak financial decisions. The perspective of foster parents is also an important aspect in foster youth aging out of care.

It is important because this bridges the gap for improvement in training and better preparation for caregiving of older foster youth.

The authors Greeno, et al. (2017) talk about the perspective of foster parents. Foster parents' impressions of the resources that transition-age adolescents require, as well as the training that foster parents of youth transitioning to adulthood require more improvements (Greeno, et al 2017). Huscroft-D'Angelo, et al. 2021 states that; "to improve existing services and identify necessary supports that promote positive outcomes for children who have been involved in foster care, there is a need to understand foster parent perspectives" (Huscroft-D'Angelo, et al. 2021, p.840). This becomes particularly important in addressing the transition from foster care to permanency settings such as reunification with biological parents, guardianship, and adoption. (AFCARS, 2019) as relatively little is known about necessary services and support for departing children and their permanent families during this crucial time (Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2019). The little-known necessary services and support for departing children is just one critical gap in the foster care system. Steenbakkers et al. (2017) talk about many gaps associated with the lack of attachment in foster care children. They reported, "more research is necessary about children's physiological needs besides medical health, psychological needs besides mental health and self-actualization needs besides education" (Steenbakkers et al. (2017). Air, food, drink, shelter, clothes, warmth, sex, and sleep are biological necessities for human survival. The human body cannot function effortlessly if these requirements are not met. Physiological needs are the most important, according to Maslow, because all other wants are secondary until these are addressed (McLeod, 2020). One physiological

need that can be further discussed besides medical health is the idea of sex/intimacy. The idea of sex/intimacy can affect the lack of attachment in a foster child. One psychological need that can be further discussed besides mental health is identity and autonomy.

Furthermore, while children's educational needs are imperative, self-actualization includes more than simply schooling and can be attained through leisure and hobbies.

Another gap associated with the lack of attachment in foster care children is "most articles do not mention children's own possibilities of meeting their needs (e.g., seeking distraction, using coping skills)" (Steenbakkens et al. (2017, p. 1332). This divide undervalues children's agency and ability, and it may prevent foster parents and experts from exploring the potential of adolescents assisting in meeting their own needs.

Assisting in meeting their own needs can better set them up for the future when they age out of the foster care system. Another gap is the lack of attachment regarding foster youth's departure out of the foster care system. Foster youth may need someone to help advocate for their educational needs during the transition to postsecondary education, but they also need to feel empowered and that they have a voice in decision-making (Piel & Lacasse, 2017). Poor preparedness for postsecondary job, economic insecurity due to a lack of a financial safety net or family support, insecure housing, and chronic mental health concerns are among the obstacles noted. Foster alumni also have trouble navigating the application process and obtaining financial aid to cover fees not covered by tuition waivers or other state-provided aid. According to another study, many previous foster adolescents are required to take corrective action courses that do not count toward

their degree objectives, slowing their academic progress and degree completion time (Tobolowsk et al. 2019).

### **Gaps**

There is little current research, and/or few doctoral studies/dissertations and/or conference proceedings on the Lack of Attachment in Foster Care Children. However, to our best knowledge no previous study has examined the relationship between client resistance and attachment with the therapist in terms of real aspects of the therapeutic relationship, especially from the viewpoint of the therapist (Mallinckrodt and Jeong 2015). This existing gap in literature is even more profound, given that resistance in psychotherapy is not a static condition, but rather a dynamic process (Schlesinger 2003). Researchers have addressed the lack of attachment in foster care children in more ways than one. One way that researchers have addressed the lack of attachment in foster care children is by creating a stronger client-therapist relationship in their research. One study addresses the supportive therapeutic approach produces less resistance than directive methods, demonstrating the interconnectedness of resistance and security in the therapist-client bond. Clients see security in the therapeutic connection as a major mediator for therapeutic change, according to other authors. Westra et al. (2012) found that the higher therapists early positive reactions to their clients, particularly like, enjoyment, and attachment, the lower the levels of client resistance in mid-treatment and the bigger the decreases in client resistance from early to mid-treatment. One strength in this work is the theme, client resistance, which is a key component of clinical practice. It was found to be highly linked to the clients' attachment relationship with their therapists, according to the

findings of this study. The main weakness in the work would be the sample size and its ineffectiveness. According to the authors, “which may have resulted in loss of power and increased likelihood of Type II error” (Yotsidi et al. 2018, p.107).

### **Interventions Associated With Lack of Attachment**

One intervention/approach researcher suggesting addressing the lack of attachment in foster care children is Trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT). According to Pleines (2019), “a commonly used evidence-based method of treating kids who show signs of trauma. The paradigm includes a safe caregiver during treatment and is theoretically based on the principles of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)” (Pleines, 2019, p.343). The technique is based on the idea of continuous exposure to trauma triggers, and it has been shown to be successful in reducing distressing behaviors associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in school- aged children. As treatment progresses, this short-term approach entails more numerous joint parent–child sessions. While the approach was originally created to help children who had been through a challenging time, it is now being used to help children who have been through all different types of traumas. The TF-CBT approach offers significant value when viewed from the perspective of attachment, as it directly supports the parent-child bond and strengthens a caregiver’s role as a stable environment. Families who received an additional participation intervention (consisting of a phone call assessing barriers and a follow-up on this call during the first session) were more likely to stay in treatment longer than those who received TF-CBT with additional commitment approaches. “Relaxation, mood regulation, cognitive coping, trauma story construction and

processing, psychoeducation and parenting” (Pleines, 2019, p. 345), run alongside sessions with parent and child, and supporting safety and future development are among the elements incorporated. Another intervention/approach researcher suggest addressing the lack of attachment in foster care children is Attachment Based Family Therapy (ABFT).

ABFT is a scientifically proven treatment that makes use of the biological yearning for meaningful and secure connections. ABFT is a trauma-informed, interpersonal method to treating adolescent depression, suicidality, and trauma that is based on attachment theory. Although its strategy, ABFT provides therapists with a clear structure and road map to enable them quickly to address the attachment ruptures at the root of family conflict. Behavioral management does not begin therapy. Instead, we strive to identify the events (such as abuse) and relational processes (such as severe conflict, low warmth) that hinder teenagers from seeking help from their parents when they are distressed. One major goal of ABFT is to improve parenting for biological parents, foster parents, and even adoptive parents. A researcher described that when caregivers heard their adolescents’ sadness about feeling detached and alone, and how the break in their relationship with their caretakers was linked to their depression, they were moved. Caregiver’s hearts were opened by adolescents’ expressions of vulnerability, motivating them to commit to mending the connection between child and parent. One strength of TF-CBT is that this approach is used by caregivers throughout treatment. According to the authors, “The therapist provides the identical TF-CBT component to both the caregiver and the kid during the second half of each session. In addition, there are several sessions



with parents present. As a result, the entire TF-CBT approach includes caregivers which are an essential component in TF-CBT” (Brown et al. 2020, p.41). One weakness of TF-CBT should be, “recommend that TF-CBT be compared to dual and family therapy approaches that purport of change caregivers and caregiver-child relationships to examine the differential impact on caregiver and child PTSD” (Brown et al. 2020, p.44). One strength of Attachment Based Family therapy is that there is extensive research with the association of ABFT and decrease in attachment avoidance. Another strength in ABFT is that a strong therapeutic alliance is distinguished by a strong bond between each family member and the therapist and agreement on the goals and tasks of treatment (Diamond et al. 2021). A stronger therapeutic alliance can be a key factor in establishing a more secure attachment with each party of the family. One weakness in ABFT is that there are still some empirical questions about the structure, dose, and length of treatment (Diamond et al. 2021).

The rationale for section of variables and concepts studies in this project is directed to will filling the gap in understanding by focusing specifically on the experiences of foster parents and the lack of attachments displayed by the foster children. The results of this study should aid child placing agencies in helping foster children succeed while in care and the aftermath of care.

Attachment has been a force for improving social change by addressing certain individual’s experiences by supporting the emotional needs of children in foster care with positive strategies and interventions that can lead them to a better successful adult life.

The concept of contact visitations with foster youth and their birth parents remains controversial within the research study. According to the study, “social workers indicated that visits were important for a number of reasons: they allow foster children to maintain contact and attachment relationships with their biological family; they contribute to children’s sense of identity and their understanding of why they were fostered, thus enabling them to see the reality of their biological family and preventing an idealized view from developing; and they reduce uncertainty and distress in children” (Fuentes, Bernedo, Salas, & García-Martín, 2018, p.705). Foster children’s fear and confusion regarding their birth parents, as well as the pain they feel because of being separated from them, were lessened by communicating with them. This research finds the opinion that visits allow children to understand more about their birth families and the circumstances surrounding their placement in foster care. On the other hand, visitations with birth family can cause a negative effect on the foster youth. Researchers have found that more protection and safety measures are needed in the case of possible aggressive behaviors by biological family. Social workers and foster families also believed that biological parents’ s exhibit negative views about foster parents were occasionally passed on to their children. A study looking at ways of improving visits, in which the views of children are considered remain to be studied concerning contacts and visits with birth family members.

### **Summary**

When compared to peers with nonemotional disabilities and peers without disabilities, foster adolescents with emotional problems fare badly during postsecondary

transition (college and employment). These findings highlight the need for more programs and support to help children with emotional problems transition to education and jobs once they leave the foster care system. This study emphasizes the significance of addressing impairment. In this section, I addressed the social work problem. I also addressed the significance of the study and its potential contribution to the social work field, theoretical frameworks associated with lack of attachment, and gaps or unexplained areas related to lack of attachment of foster care children. Section 2 includes a description of the research design and data collection procedures.

## Section 2: Research Design and Data Collection

The overall social work practice problem lack of attachment among foster care children. Foster parents have different opinions regarding this topic. In this section, I address the research design, methodology, data analysis, and ethical procedures.

### **Research Design**

Research questions were:

RQ1: What are the experiences regarding lack of attachment foster parents perceived that impacted foster children?

RQ2: What interventions and strategies were used to ensure attachment issues were addressed in the foster care system?

RQ3: What were the outcomes of these interventions?

I used a qualitative research design. I used this design to address viewpoints of foster parents regarding lack of attachments of foster children. Data were descriptive. Sources of data were individual interviews. Participant interview protocols were developed to address the study. TI addressed positive and negative experiences pertaining to attachment with participants. I collected data on types of strategies and interventions that were successful or unsuccessful. Foster parents are experts in fostering.

### **Methodology**

I used individual interviews via Google Meet and Microsoft Teams. The most common qualitative data gathering approach is interviews. Approaches for facilitating dialogue, as well as transcription strategies are explained. Video conference interviewing is less expensive and more convenient. Some participants were not able to meet in

person, which affected the sample size. Another reason for conferencing is because free-flowing conversations between myself and parents yielded more truthful results. Video interviews are an effective way to record and preserve for later use. Independent variables in this study were age, gender, income, educational attainment, and childhood maltreatment.

### **Participants**

Participants were foster parents who had at least one year of experience with fostering. Participants received informed consent forms with an explanation of the research topic. Participants were both male and female and between 21 and 65. They were high school graduates who shared positive and negative viewpoints regarding lack of attachment among foster children. The strategy for identifying and recruiting participants involved using recruitment flyers. I recruited a minimum of 10 foster parents to share their experiences regarding this topic. I also included a \$5.00 gift card as a participant incentive. The type of sampling strategy that was used in this doctoral project was purposive sampling. Participants lived in both single and two person households. I conducted research on primary caregivers only. A small sample size was appropriate because it was time and cost efficient.

### **Instrumentation**

I used the following search engines: Google Scholar, the Walden University Library, APA PsycNet, Oxford Academic, PubMed Central, SAGE Journals, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, and Wiley Online Library. The primary technique that was used to collect data was individual participant interviews. The

measurement instrument I used to categorize themes was MAXQDA. MAXQDA supports a wide variety of data formats, including text documents, Excel tables, PDFs, photos, website data, audio and video recordings, SPSS files, bibliographic records, and focus group conversations. Udo Kuckartz developed MAXQDA and created the software in the mid 1980s. It is used to code data, add notes, and paraphrases transcriptions.

### **Data Analysis**

The source of data collection of participant interviews was analyzed through narrative analysis. Narrative analysis involves decoding the personal stories of the participants. This strategy emphasized essential themes in data collection to answer the research questions in this doctoral project. Most of the scientific study produces data scientific data analysis aids in the creation of latest information or a deeper understanding of natural events. Data analysis is where statistical software comes in handy. The researcher used the NVivo software to further analyze the data collection. With NVivo, “the researcher was able to manage, search, and use visualization tools to examine data collection. NVivo helped the researcher to find themes and arrive at certain conclusions from data and present difficult issues” (Qsrinternational, 2022 p.1).

Through the interpretation of participants' experiences, credibility helps others to acknowledge the experiences contained within the study. A researcher must evaluate individual transcripts to establish trustworthiness, looking for similarities between and across all participants. One method the researcher used to address the rigor issue of credibility is to engage in peer debriefing. Peer debriefing involves professional peers in data analysis and interpretation. The next rigor issue of the study was dependability.

When another researcher can follow the researcher's decision path, this is known as dependability. Describing the precise objective of the study, for example, is an example of how subsequent researchers can follow. Discussing how and why the volunteers for the study were chosen, Describe the data collection process and how long it took. One method used to address the rigor issue of dependability is participating in the analyzing process with peers. Another rigor issue is of the study is with transferability.

Transferability is the capacity to transfer study findings or approaches from one group to another. A thorough description of the population investigated, as well as the demographics and geographic bounds of the study, is one technique to prove transferability. One method used to address the rigor issue of transferability is to “Using the same data collection methods with different demographic groups or geographical locations” (Queens University, 2022 p. 2). The fourth rigor issue of the study was confirmability. Once credibility, transferability, dependability and have been established, confirmability appears. One method used to address the rigor issue of confirmability is “taking notes regarding personal feelings, biases and insights immediately after an interview” (Queens University, 2022, p. 3). The last rigor issue of the study is trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is how certain the qualitative researcher is that the findings of the research study are accurate. One method used to address the rigor issue of trustworthiness is member checking. Member checking attests for the validation of the participant in the research study. In this doctoral study, the researcher will make use of peer debriefing to establish credibility.

### **Ethical Procedures**

When requesting consent, potential participants must be informed about the project's goals and methods. The information should include a discussion of the potential benefits and risks of intervention and control conditions. The informed consent procedures consisted of a written informed consent document. The written informed consent document advised participants of the subject matter of the lack of attachment in foster children and their free will to participate in the research study. Before research is conducted, the researcher sent an email with the informed consent document so the participants could review and sign before the day of the individual interview. The researcher followed procedures to ensure ethical protection of participants by encrypting computer-based files such as with the informed consent documents from all participants. The researcher avoided deceptive practices when conducting the research study. The data was anonymous or confidential at any point in the study. The researcher gave each participant a chance for review after the interviews are transcribed. This information was made available to each participant and researcher, not participant to participant. The protection of data consisted of data storage procedures, data dissemination, access to data, and data being destroyed. The most important procedure when storing data is to store one's data in a long-term archive. The researcher for this doctoral study stored all sensitive information in a restricted archive and required time delays or ethics approval before allowing others to view it. Only the researcher had access to the data.



### **Summary**

Data collection and analysis was conducted after participant interviews. I used Zoom and Microsoft Teams. After the data collection was finalized, I categorized themes using MAXQDA. I used narrative analysis. For data collection, SPSS was used. Section 3 includes data analysis techniques and findings.

### Section 3: Presentation of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the process by which attachment impacts foster children while they are in and out of the foster care system.

Practice-focused research questions in the study were:

RQ1: What are the experiences regarding lack of attachment foster parents perceived that impacted foster children?

RQ2: What interventions and strategies were used to ensure attachment issues were addressed in the foster care system?

RQ3: What were the outcomes of these interventions?

I used individual participant interviews.. Section 3 includes an introduction, data analysis techniques, findings, and a summary.

#### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The time frame for data collection took 1 month and actual recruitment took 1 month as well. I contacted a total of 15 participants; only 10 participants followed through with participation in the study.

During data analysis, I used open coding. Open coding involves separating complicated data into more manageable and specialized groups. I went over the data several times to find themes and relationships. I used narrative analysis. This process entails interpreting participants' individual statements. To further evaluate data, I used NVivo. NVivo was used to identify themes, draw specific inferences from data, and present challenging problems. I used member-checking with participants. Overall, each

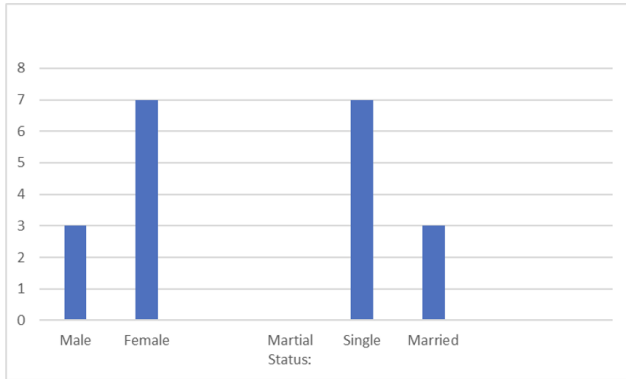
participant was satisfied with the process of this study and did not have any questions for me. One limitation I encountered when conducting the study was inclusive bias due to choosing a sample out of convenience.

A second limitation was that each participant was from the same foster care agency. Future research should address this topic outside of the state of GA. Different state agencies have different rules and regulations associated with foster care. One problem I encountered when conducting the study was interviewer bias. I presented interviewer bias by nodding or smiling in agreement with their responses.

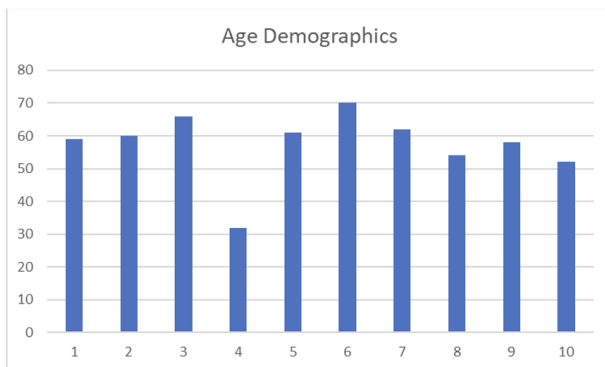
### **Findings**

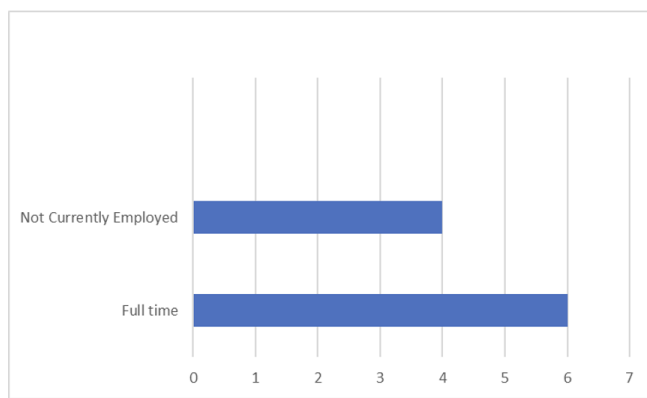
Descriptive statistics were used to describe and summarize the data set before making conclusions. mean age of participants was 57. The median was 59.5 and the mode was 60. The range was 38. The standard deviation of the data set was  $\sigma$ : 9.7780366127357. Figures 2-4 includes results of descriptive statistics of the study data set. Figure includes demographic information such as marital status, age demographics, and employment status.

**Figure 1**  
*Marital Demographics*



**Figure 2**  
*Age Demographics*



**Figure 3***Employment Demographics***RQ1**

Many of the foster parents experienced a lack of attachment in their home. Two foster parents described the foster children as not showing certain empathic emotions and not trusting the foster parent. For example, “My experience with foster youth is they do not hug and show affection. They did not do any of their social cues such as smiling” while another foster parent’s experiences were the same. “He didn’t feel empathy or show emotion, he would spend time with me because he loved me, but he would not hug me. One of the other foster child mothers passed and the child just didn’t show empathy or even cry”. A lack of attachment can also affect their behavior in the foster home. One foster parent disclosed, “To prevent attachment, foster youth will lie and act out. Sometimes the attachment can be turned off and on depending on what they need. It is a survival mode for fostering youth. We must remember where they came from. The past can affect the lack of attachment with these foster youth”. Many participants reported that the foster youth would come back rude, combative, and disrespectful after visiting with

their birth family. Many of the foster parent participants said that the children think they would go come back home if they are defiant in their foster homes. On the other hand, a few of the participants developed a lack of attachment to these foster youth who were in their homes as well. One participant reported, “The children were not a right fit for my home and I developed a lack of attachment with the girls. The girls were disrespectful” and another participant reported, “I am not attached to any of my foster children. I don’t do special privileges. I treat them like visitors, but I do show the kids another way of living while they are in my home. I feel like I am a teacher to them.”

## **RQ2**

The results of the interventions/strategies were used to ensure the attachment issues were addressed in the foster care system were through talking with the foster youth and holding meaningful conversations to understand the lack of attachment issues they were demonstrating. One participant disclosed, “Talking to them and explaining that the world is not against you. I explain to them that I am on your side.” Another foster parent participant stated, “Conversations and allow the child emotions display then to talk about it (let them cry and give them break then talk about it. Talking through emotions really does help in my home”. Many foster parents stated that therapy was also an essential part of addressing the lack of attachment in the foster youth. Foster parents would also show affection to see if that strategy would build attachment in the foster home. One participant stated, “I hugged them sometimes to see if they would hug me back and talk to them to engage to get them to open up.”

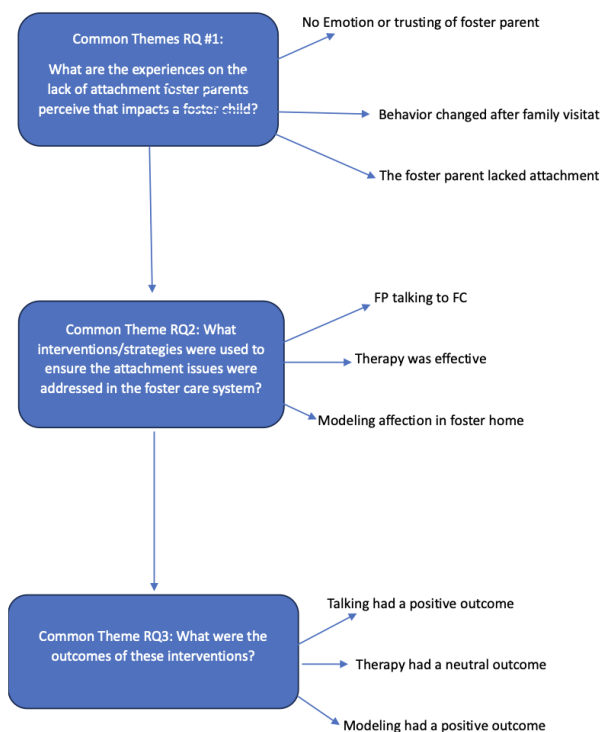
**RQ3**

Many of the foster parent participants stated that their interventions or strategy had a positive impact on the foster youth. Talking and working through their attachment issues helped the youth, “talking changes their behavior after they realize they are accepted as part of the family. Realizing will help with the lack of attachment.” Another participant that agreed that talking helps stated, “Talking helped my foster child to improve on social skills. He doesn’t pull away when you hug him and makes eye contact with me.” The outcomes of therapy services also had both a positive and negative impact on the lack of attachment in the foster youth. One participant reported, “Therapy helped to open to new perspectives between the youth me foster parents. It also helped for the youth to be emotionally vulnerable.” Therapy also had a negative impact on youth. For example, “Therapy was not effective because the foster youth I had in my home did not want to open to therapist about their trauma. Some of the foster children would tell me the therapist is only there for a check.” While another participant said, “there was not a therapist available for them to address the lack of attachment in the foster youth.”

Findings answer the research questions by interpreting the foster parents’ lived experiences and the narratives connected to the issues examined in the research study. The only finding that was unexpected and/or different was that foster parents were the ones who do not get attached to their foster children. It was assumed that foster parents get attached if they welcome the foster youth in their homes.

**Figure 4**

*Common Themes*



## Summary

Findings were that many foster parents reported feeling detached from their children. Foster children, according to participants, do not exhibit certain empathic feelings and do not trust their foster parents. Visiting biological family was also a factor when it came to attachment issues in foster homes. Several participants did not develop attachments with foster youth who were in their homes. Talking and therapy both impacted foster youths negatively and positively. Participants reported that talking and therapy positively affected them by leading them to become more emotionally vulnerable.

In Section 4, , I address applications to professional practice and implications for social change..



#### Section 4: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Social Change

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to understand the process by which attachment impacts foster children while they are in and out of the foster care system. I used a qualitative research design. Sources of data were individual interviews. Key findings in this study suggested that children in foster care often struggle with issues involving trust, attachment, and emotions. They also face significant emotional difficulties such as lack of empathy, which can make it hard to establish healthy and loving relationships. Social workers should focus on building healthy attachments between foster children and their caregivers. Social workers should also be aware of emotional difficulties faced by foster children and provide them with appropriate support to help them establish healthy relationships. This study highlighted this problem because when a child experiences trauma such as abuse or neglect from their main caregivers, this results in the absence of forming healthy attachments in early childhood. Disruptions having a profound and long-lasting effect on children's wellbeing. Recommended solutions findings include continued therapy. Therapy helps children learn how to interact better with others in schools and social settings. It can also help them develop social skills that equip them to manage relationships. Family therapy may also help children, caregivers, and family members learn new ways of interacting and responding.

#### **Application for Professional Ethics in Social Work Practice**

Social worker behaviors are guided by values, concepts, and standards that are defined in the NASW Code of Ethics. All social workers and social work students should be aware of the code, regardless of their roles in the profession, environments in which

they function, or populations they serve. Two values from the NASW Code of Ethics related to lack of attachment in foster care children are service and importance of human relationships. According to the NASW (2023), “social workers’ primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems” (para. 5). Foster care social workers have the obligation to strengthen families and identify permanent connections for children in the child welfare system. Foster care social workers serve as advocates for these children and ensure their safety and stability in their new homes. Their goal is to reunite them with their biological families or find them permanent placement somewhere else. Foster care social workers oversee services to foster youth, foster families, and biological families such as counseling, education, and medical care. According to the NASW, “social workers seek to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities” (para. 5). Service and importance of human relationships both relate to lack of attachment in foster children who have experienced disrupted care

Findings will impact social work practice, particularly in terms of professional ethics by ensuring that social workers put the needs of others before their own. To assist those in need and deal with social issues, social workers rely on their expertise, values, and abilities, and are aware that interpersonal relationships are a key catalyst for transformation.

### **Recommendations for Social Work Practice**

Based on findings, one action step for social work practitioners who work in this area is mentorship to help build long lasting relationships. Children between 14 and 16 whose mentoring relationships last 1 year or more have experienced benefits from mentoring. Consistent contact is another factor in effective mentoring relationships. Regular contact creates opportunities for mentors to become more directly involved in foster children's life and "offer various forms of meaningful assistance, including instruction and guidance in areas of interest and emotional and instrumental support" (Spencer et al., 2020, p. 228). Mentoring is also a chance for foster care children to have stability in their life. According to Spencer et al. (2020), "the stable presence of a caring adult may facilitate attachment-related processes, such as helping youths more effectively cope with stress and promoting positive changes in their working models of relationships" (p. 228). Mentor and mentee relationships are beneficial to children's emotional and academic wellbeing. Another action step for social work practitioners should be to make policy procedure changes regarding placement matches. Improving placement matches would improve attachment between foster children and parents. More in-depth training for foster parents would also be ideal to ensure beforehand what behaviors, diagnosis, and backgrounds they accept in their homes. Improving policy procedures would be done ideally on a national level. States can encourage other states to create or revise decision-making procedures in their agencies. These findings will impact my own social work practice as an advanced practitioner by getting more involved in state advocacy. As a social worker, I can attend lobbyist or policy stakeholder meetings

to identify social problems, analyze causes and consequences, propose solutions, and evaluate outcomes with these policymakers. As an expert social worker in the field, I can use my direct experience with clients and communities to provide evidence, stories, and insights that can persuade policymakers to act.

In social work practice, transferability of study findings is crucial. Transferability refers to how far study conclusions can be applied to different situations or environments. Findings can be useful to the broader field of social work practice in several ways. From a practice perspective, attachment-focused interventions could be an effective way to improve emotional, mental, and physical health concerns in this population. Attachment-specific therapy may help resolve attachment issues among children who face lack of attachment. According to study findings, placement instability, which is defined as repeated placement changes or reentry into out-of-home care, may indicate that the child welfare organization has failed to meet important objectives related to its mandate, such as promoting child wellbeing, preventing further maltreatment, and ensuring permanence. This demonstrates the necessity for policymakers to concentrate on enhancing foster children's chances of permanent placement.

One limitation that impacted the usefulness of this study was generalizability. Analytical generalization does not show a cause-and-effect relationship for individuals or subgroups. In addition, each situation must be evaluated individually considering the appropriate previous work to determine the allowed extent of generalization. A study's findings may not always hold true under circumstances that are not related to the study. Radical individualism and stereotyping can result from generalizations. Stereotyping

exaggerates a group's behaviors, and the behavior or characteristic is either less common or more complex than is implied. Advocating to policy makers about improving placement match procedures can lead to stereotyping. Future research needs to cover the differences in foster care children based on housing locations. Housing locations can be divided into regions such as north and south, or it would be divided by micro graphic levels such as by counties or by state. Covering the differences in housing locations may minimize generalizability and stereotyping. Two ways to disseminate the information produced in this project would be to post concerns on social media pages and by attending lobbyist meetings or conferences to talk to stakeholders directly.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The potential impact of a project for positive social change can be assessed at different levels: micro, mezzo, and macro. Micro-level impacts are those that affect individuals or small groups directly. For example, a local foster care agency can provide school supplies or free services to foster care children. Mezzo-level impacts are those that affect communities or organizations. For example, the Department of Children and Families Services can provide job training and life skills training to foster youth teenagers and have a positive impact on the local economy by reducing unemployment rates or reduce homelessness to foster youth aging out of the foster care system. Macro-level impacts are those that affect society. For example, a project that advocates for policy changes to improving placement matches can have a positive impact on the increase of positive attachment in foster youth.

## **Summary**

Positive social change must start from a practice level. Practice-level impacts are those that affect the delivery of services to clients. By improving the quality of services provided to clients, practice-level changes can lead to better outcomes for individuals. By demonstrating the effectiveness of these interventions, practice-level changes can influence policy and research at higher levels. Therefore, it is important to recognize the potential impact of practice-level changes and invest in interventions that can improve the quality of services provided to clients.

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