

What Meaning Does Adoption Carry in the Lives of Young Adults who were Adopted as Older Teenagers by their Long-Term Foster Carers?

An In-Progress PhD Study

Late Adoption by Long-Term Foster Carers: What Difference Does Adoption Make in Early Adulthood?

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What is Foster Care?

Foster care is the placing of a child in the **temporary** care of a family other than its own as the result of problems or challenges that are taking place within the birth family. The aim is reunification with their birth family.

What is Adoption?

Adoption is a legal process whereby a child becomes a full member of a family other than the family they were born into. Adoption is **permanent**. Parental rights are transferred from the birth parents to the adoptive parents.

What is Adoption from Foster Care?

Children in foster care can be adopted if it is decided that the risk to their safety is so great that they can not return to their birth families.

Research suggests that Adoption provides legal security and stability for children growing up in care. This helps them develop strong attachments and a positive sense of wellbeing. This helps care leavers in their transition to adulthood, a time that can be problematic for young adults who grew up in care.

In Ireland Adoption is Rarely Used for Children in Foster Care

Changes to Irish legislation in 2016 suggest that adoption from care may become more common in Ireland.

6,027 Children in Ireland were in Out of Home Care

5,554 of these Children were in Foster Care

25 of these Children were Adopted from Foster Care

17 of these Children were 17 years old

2018

Adoption within the Irish care system usually occurs:

1. When the young person is aged 16 years or older.
2. Within the young person's own long-term stable placement.
3. When the young person is transitioning to adulthood.
4. When the young person would be due to exit care resulting in adoption becoming part of their pathway from care to independence.

Research Question?

What is the lived experience of young adults adopted late from long term stable care?

Basing this study within the Irish system of late adoption from long-term foster care allows an investigation into **what meaning, if any, adoption holds in the lives of young adults who were adopted late by their long-term foster carers.**

This is important:

For Practice: Helping practitioners better understand the role of adoption in the lives of young people growing up in long-term foster care.

For Research: Adding to academic understanding of the potential that being adopted carries a deeper intangible meaning that goes beyond the provision of legal stability and security.

Study Design

Qualitative Study

Sample:

25-30 young adults, aged 20-25 years, adopted, when aged 16 years or older, by own long-term foster carers.

Lived Experience:

To uncover what meaning late adoption carries in early adulthood.

Thematic Analysis

Braun & Clarke, 2006

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