

Literature Review: The American Foster Care System

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Abstract

This paper reviews eight different sources regarding the topic of the American foster care system. The system itself was created to give children a temporary home if their parents or guardians, for whatever reason, cannot provide for them. While this may sound like a great idea, it is poorly executed and puts many innocent children into potentially harmful situations. Authors from all around the globe have written their concerns about the foster care system, whether American or not. Although the authors of the sources come from a slew of different backgrounds and education levels, they all seem to agree on a few key problems with the foster care system; aging out, child abuse and neglect, and the psychological effects on children. These are the main topics that will be discussed in this review, and author Manuel Edrozo hopes to highlight some of the main talking points of each source.

Literature Review

It is a common belief that the United States' foster care system is broken. Although there is much debate over the benefits and downsides to the American foster care system, the following review will cover primarily its downfalls. This essay's main purpose is to analyze the common themes and topics that are discussed in various sources, and to discover the hidden pitfalls of the American foster care system. This paper will review a few of the prevalent topics discussed throughout the analyzed sources regarding "aging out", child neglect and abuse, and the psychological effects of children in the system.

When one thinks of foster care, they mostly think about the many young children involved in the system. What most people, and the government, fail to realize is that teenagers are also in the system; more specifically, teenagers on the brink of adulthood. In most places, one's 18th birthday is a joyous occasion from childhood to adulthood; for foster care kids, turning 18 is a different story. "Aging out" is when a child turns 18 and gets kicked out of their foster or group home. (Eskin, 2012, p. 2) Thousands of new adults every year struggle to make the transition, and many of them end up either homeless or incarcerated within the first year of aging out. ("What", 2014, p. 5) To make things worse, over 20% of the new adult women will become pregnant within 12 months of aging out, and well over half will suffer from some sort of mental illness. (Squires, 2019, p.2) These kids have nowhere to go, and are forced to make it on their own; neglected by their former families and the government alike.

One of the most common talking points amongst the authors was the glaring problem of child abuse and neglect. While the system was put in place to protect America's children, it may be doing more harm than help. According to Sue Carlton's (2016) article, "We should not

neglect children in foster care”, almost 1,700 cases of child neglect or abuse were reported to the police, and that is just in the city of Hillsborough, Florida. (p. 1) These children have no one to stand up for them, and are shipped from home to home without a say of what is best for them. When a child is transferred from one home to another, it is usually not because the child’s safety is in question; it is because the state must comply with federal and local mandates. (“The hidden”, 2020, p. 2) These unprompted and unnecessary moves leave the children vulnerable and without security, which can harm their development.

Lastly, many of the papers touched on the subject of psychological damage to children in the system. For example, indigenous children in Canada that cannot be taken care of are literally thrown in prison because they have no place else to put them. The state does not have enough available foster homes or parents to provide safe housing, so many children are taken to another part of the country and detained. (“Jailing”, 2016, p. 14) These children sit in abject misery, rejected and forlorn; they believe that it is their fault for not having parents, and that they should be punished. This kind of thinking leads to self-destructive thoughts and behavior, which can have a toll on one's psyche. In “Reporters reveal deep faults in Arizona’s swollen foster care system”, authors Machelor and Trevizo (2020) highlight the 52% increase in mental health challenges in the court system. (p. 2) These numbers are terrifying considering the large amount of children in foster care. Over 415,000 children were in the United States’ foster care system (“The AFCARS report”, 2014, p. 1), and a majority of those children have lasting psychological damage from their time in the foster care system.

The sources analyzed in this paper cover many topics regarding the American foster care system, but there are a few main issues that are covered in most of them. A few of the sources

mention the problem of aging out, which is when a child turns 18 and is kicked out as a result of their newly found adulthood. This is a huge problem for teens that are near their 18th birthday who may not have the chance of being adopted. Another problem is the widespread abuse and neglect of children in foster care. Tens of thousands of children are left to slowly decay in abusive homes, never getting the help they need. Lastly, mental health is a huge problem in foster care, as many children go through trauma of being ripped from their families. Although some return to their families, many children do not have that luxury. The foster care system tries its best to protect its children, but it is not enough. Security measures need to be put in place to protect the child in the home, and out of the home once they have aged out. The foster care system is broken, but it is not too late to fix it.

References

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The AFCARS report. (2020). Retrieved 19 February 2020, from

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/afcarsreport22.pdf>

The hidden harms of the US foster-care system. (2020). Retrieved 19 February 2020, from

<http://theconversation.com/the-hidden-harms-of-the-us-foster-care-system-49700>

What is foster care? - The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2014). Retrieved 19 February 2020,

from <https://www.aecf.org/blog/what-is-foster-care/>

Appendix

Reporters reveal deep faults in Arizona's swollen foster care system

Website Evaluation Checklist

Title of the Website: URL: Reporters reveal deep faults in Arizona's swollen foster care system
www.azcentral.com/story/news/education/2015/03/02/arizona-foster-care-system/2301111001/

Authority
 Tips: To help determine the author's expertise, look at the links: "About us," "FAQ," "Background," or "Biography."
 Is it clear who the Author of the website is? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Has the author provided contact information (name, email, phone number or address)? ☐ Y ☐ N
 If there is no personal author, is a publisher or institution provided along with contact information? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Does the individual or organization list all of their qualifications, or credentials? ☐ Y ☐ N

Purpose
 Tips: Looking at the URL of the site will help you determine its purpose. Judge whether the website is geared to a scholarly or non-professional audience.
 Does the website have an edu, org, or .gov ending in its URL? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Does the website avoid trying to persuade or sell something? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Is the information on the site relevant to your needs? ☐ Y ☐ N

Objectivity
 Tips: Look for objective sites that present information with a minimum of bias and without the intention to persuade. Determine the aim of the author or organization publishing the site.

Accuracy
 Does the website avoid advertising that may be a conflict of interest with the content? ☐ Y ☐ N
 If an issue is covered, are both sides presented? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Do you trust the author or organization that has created the website? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Tips: Since anyone can publish a website you need to be able to identify the author and access contact information. Make sure that the information in the website is accurate and verifiable.
 Based on the reading you have already done on the subject, does the information on the site seem accurate? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Is factual information referenced in footnotes or a bibliography? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Are there few grammar and spelling mistakes? ☐ Y ☐ N
 If there are links to other pages, are they to reliable sources? ☐ Y ☐ N

Currency
 Tips: Keep in mind that factual or statistical information that is not dated is no better than anonymous information. Check the top or bottom of a web page to look for the creation date or revision date.
 Is the date the site was created provided? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Is there a date that shows when the site has last been updated? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Does the site contain "broken" links? ☐ Y ☐ N

Evaluation Summary:
 Date covers a lot about the history of the Arizona foster care system, as well as the system in a few other states for comparison. It also suggests ways to help the children in bad situations.

The AFCARS report

Website Evaluation Checklist

Title of the Website: URL: The AFCARS Report
www.aafthis.gov

Authority
 Tips: To help determine the author's expertise, look at the links: "About us," "FAQ," "Background," or "Biography."
 Is it clear who the Author of the website is? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Has the author provided contact information (name, email, phone number or address)? ☐ Y ☐ N
 If there is no personal author, is a publisher or institution provided along with contact information? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Does the individual or organization list all of their qualifications, or credentials? ☐ Y ☐ N

Purpose
 Tips: Looking at the URL of the site will help you determine its purpose. Judge whether the website is geared to a scholarly or non-professional audience.
 Does the website have an edu, org, or .gov ending in its URL? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Does the website avoid trying to persuade or sell something? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Is the information on the site relevant to your needs? ☐ Y ☐ N

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 Based on the reading you have already done on the subject, does the information on the site seem accurate? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Is factual information referenced in footnotes or a bibliography? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Are there few grammar and spelling mistakes? ☐ Y ☐ N
 If there are links to other pages, are they to reliable sources? ☐ Y ☐ N

Currency
 Tips: Keep in mind that factual or statistical information that is not dated is no better than anonymous information. Check the top or bottom of a web page to look for the creation date or revision date.
 Is the date the site was created provided? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Is there a date that shows when the site has last been updated? ☐ Y ☐ N
 Does the site contain "broken" links? ☐ Y ☐ N

Evaluation Summary:
 Infograph shares data covering adoption statistics as of 2015. There is much information about the children adopted as well as the parents/families they go to. Also lots of 'total' amounts.

The hidden harms of the US foster-care system

Website Evaluation Checklist	
Title of the Website: URL:	The hidden harms of the US foster-care system http://theconversation.com
Authority <i>Tips:</i> To help determine the author's expertise, look at the links: "About us," "FAQ," "Background," or "Biography."	
Is it clear who the Author of the website is?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Has the author provided contact information (name, email, phone number or address)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
If there is no personal author, is a publisher or institution provided along with contact information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Does the individual or organization list all of their qualifications, or credentials?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Purpose <i>Tips:</i> Looking at the URL of the site will help you determine its purpose. Judge whether the website is geared to a scholarly or non-professional audience.	
Does the website have an .edu, .org, or .gov ending in its URL?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Does the website avoid trying to persuade or sell something?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Is the information on the site relevant to your needs?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Objectivity <i>Tips:</i> Look for objective sites that present information with a minimum of bias and without the intention to persuade. Determine the aim of the author or organization publishing the site.	

Does the website avoid advertising that may be a conflict of interest with the content?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
If an issue is covered, are both sides presented?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Do you trust the author or organization that has created the website?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Accuracy <i>Tips:</i> Since anyone can publish a website you need to be able to identify the author and access contact information. Make sure that the information in the website is accurate and verifiable.	
Based on the reading you have already done on the subject, does the information on the site seem accurate?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Is factual information referenced in footnotes or a bibliography?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Are there few grammar and spelling mistakes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
If there are links to other pages, are they to reliable sources?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Currency <i>Tips:</i> Keep in mind that factual or statistical information that is not dated is no better than anonymous information. Check the top or bottom of a web page to look for the creation date or revision date.	
Is the date the site was created provided?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Is there a date that shows when the site has last been updated?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Does the site contain "broken" links?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Evaluation Summary: Website contains relevant and useful information about the Foster Care system in the US and a lot of its problems. Although there is no clear author, it comes from an organization's web page.	

What is foster care?

Website Evaluation Checklist	
Title of the Website: URL:	What is foster care? http://www.fostercare.org
Authority <i>Tips:</i> To help determine the author's expertise, look at the links: "About us," "FAQ," "Background," or "Biography."	
Is it clear who the Author of the website is?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Has the author provided contact information (name, email, phone number or address)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
If there is no personal author, is a publisher or institution provided along with contact information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Does the individual or organization list all of their qualifications, or credentials?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Purpose <i>Tips:</i> Looking at the URL of the site will help you determine its purpose. Judge whether the website is geared to a scholarly or non-professional audience.	
Does the website have an .edu, .org, or .gov ending in its URL?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Does the website avoid trying to persuade or sell something?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Is the information on the site relevant to your needs?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Objectivity <i>Tips:</i> Look for objective sites that present information with a minimum of bias and without the intention to persuade. Determine the aim of the author or organization publishing the site.	

Does the website avoid advertising that may be a conflict of interest with the content?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
If an issue is covered, are both sides presented?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Do you trust the author or organization that has created the website?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Accuracy <i>Tips:</i> Since anyone can publish a website you need to be able to identify the author and access contact information. Make sure that the information in the website is accurate and verifiable.	
Based on the reading you have already done on the subject, does the information on the site seem accurate?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Is factual information referenced in footnotes or a bibliography?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Are there few grammar and spelling mistakes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
If there are links to other pages, are they to reliable sources?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Currency <i>Tips:</i> Keep in mind that factual or statistical information that is not dated is no better than anonymous information. Check the top or bottom of a web page to look for the creation date or revision date.	
Is the date the site was created provided?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Is there a date that shows when the site has last been updated?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Does the site contain "broken" links?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Evaluation Summary: Article covers the basis of what foster care is, how it works, and some of the short comings of the system. It is also is from an actual adoption/foster care website that provides adoption services.	