

# The Implications of Aging Out of the Foster Care System PSY 4370- Psychology of Aging Capstone (Spring 2021)

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## Abstract

Aging out of the foster care system is something that happens to nearly 20,000 young adults between the ages of 18 and 21 every year. The proposed study will be conducted to examine the difficulties that these young adults face with finding steady employment, housing, and healthy relationships. Previous research has shown a higher rate in difficulty obtaining these than peers who were reunited with their families or adopted out of the foster care system. The study will include 100 young adults between the ages of 18-26 who have been a part of the foster care system will be interviewed to ask questions such as their employment status, longevity in the workplace, what their current living situation is, any experiences with abuse in relationships, etc. We expect to find that the young adults who aged out of foster care will report higher levels of unemployment, homelessness, and abusive relationships than their counterparts.



## Methods

### Participants

The population will be 100 young adults between the ages of 18 and 25, and they would be compensated \$25 for participation. As the sample is comparing two groups, the sample would ideally be equally split between those who have aged out of the foster care system versus those who were never apart of the foster care system. This age group is the most likely to be engaging in post-secondary education, finding housing, and employment. The participants would have a survey to fill out that would be completed on computers provided in a classroom setting.

### Materials and Procedure

The participants would have a survey to fill out that would be completed on computers provided in a classroom setting. The participants would be asked questions such as if they have ever been displaced from a safe living environment for more than 6 consecutive months, employment status and longevity, as well as questions about access to healthcare. These questions would be answered using a 5-point Likert scale system that would have them rate their agreeance with the questions from strongly disagree-1 to strongly agree-5. The main objective of the survey is to determine the difference in homelessness rates in those who aged out of foster care versus those who were not a part of the foster care system

Participants would sign a consent form, and be educated that their information would remain anonymous as participants will be identified by numbers on the surveys. This is in hopes that participants would be more forthcoming with information that could be deemed sensitive to them. The risk of this study is low as it does keep anonymity of participants, however there is a low risk with sensitive information being shared by the participants. While personal information will be disclosed, none of it will be revealed, as each participant will be assigned a number to the survey they complete.

The independent variables of the proposed research would be those who were a part of the foster care system and those who were not a part of the foster care system. These will not be manipulated, but rather naturally occurring. The dependent variable in the proposed research would be the answers given in the survey by the participants. The dependent variables would be measured by the Likert score accumulated during the survey. The Likert Scale will confirm the hypothesis that homelessness affects those who aged out of the foster care system more drastically than those who were not a part of the foster care system.

A shortcoming of this proposed research is that those who are experiencing homelessness and unemployment could have a harder time finding the information needed in order to participate in the study. There could also be an issue with participants being willing to disclose personal information about their past and current living situations. While this is something to take into consideration, it is imperative to conduct this proposed study as a way to open up the research to broader horizons in the future.

## Introduction

The object of the proposed study is to examine the rates of homelessness in those who have aged out of the foster care system versus those who have never been in the foster care system. Previous research completed on this topic has shown that young adults who aged out of the foster care system have a higher chance of becoming homeless than young adults who were not a part of the foster care system. The aim of this study is to examine the amount of homelessness seen between these two groups. There is some research that suggests these two groups have an equal opportunity at homelessness, and it is believed that further research comparing the two groups could allow for any necessary resources that may be needed for those who have aged out of foster care to not face homelessness at such disproportionate reintroduction. A study conducted by Rosenberg and Kim in 2018 used secondary data from the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) and The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) in order to investigate whether homelessness was negatively correlated with post-secondary education and employment for young adults who aged out of the foster care system (Rosenberg & Kim, 2018). The results of this study showed that about one third of the participants were enrolled in post-secondary education by the age of 21. 27 % of the participants reported homelessness between the ages of 19 and 21. Additionally, 43.3. % of the participants were diagnosed with a disability (Rosenberg & Kim, 2018). The chances of the foster care youth having post-secondary education or employment while experiencing was .39 times lower than those who did not experience homelessness (Rosenberg & Kim, 2018). Rosenberg and Kim claim that this research shows the significance of homelessness in foster care youth and shows the need for stable housing. The previous research on homelessness in young adults who have aged out of the foster care system, shows that there are significant factors to take into consideration when deciding what kind of measures need to be taken in order to help these young adults succeed. While there have been some resources put into place, it is important to continue the research in order to make the most individualized change that can have broader effects on the rates of homelessness in foster care youth. More studies could be beneficial to these young adults who are struggling after aging out of the foster care system.using opportunities to those who are close to aging out of the system (Rosenberg & Kim, 2018).

## References

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## Discussion

Aging out of the foster care system is a sad reality for nearly 20,000 young adults annually. This number of young adults being thrown into the world with little to no resources leads these young adults down a path of homelessness, unemployment, and even abusive relationships. Having the research to confirm that this is an ongoing issue could lead to reformation of assistance that exists for these young adults, as well as possible change in the actual foster care system. Studies such as this can educate people on the shortcomings that exist for these young adults in the foster care system, and can expand the knowledge and resources needed in order to make opportunities available to this demographic.



## Predicted Results

The proposed research study will use a chi-square to test the hypothesis that those who aged out of foster care experience homelessness at higher rates than those who were not in foster care. This analysis would determine the significance in the difference of responses given between the two groups of the sample being studied. Using the Likert scales allows for the data to be measured and a score given that can be averaged between groups. The scores would then be compared on the chi-square test to determine expected versus observed results. The expected results of the study would show that those who aged out of the foster care system were more likely to report experience homelessness than those who were not a part of the foster care system. However, homelessness rates could be seen in the group who was not a part of the foster care system more frequently than expected. This could lead to the study failing to reject the null hypothesis.