

Exploring the Attitudes and Perceptions of Hispanics as Caregivers for Children in Foster
Care: A Phenomenological Study

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the attitudes and perceptions of Hispanics living in Tampa Bay, Florida regarding foster parent roles. The theory guiding this study is the researcher's axiological philosophical assumption. The philosophical assumption is applied within the social constructivist interpretive framework. The researcher seeks to understand the study participants' world and develop meaning to their lived experiences, as discussed during the interviews. The participants' views are the primary source of reliance for the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher's position in this study is relative to their social position, personal, political, and professional beliefs when utilizing the axiological philosophical assumption (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study explored why Hispanics may or may not choose to become foster parents or caregivers to children in foster care. Data were collected through guided interviews and field notes including notes regarding observable body language or facial expression. The researcher conducted data analysis utilizing the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach to interpret the data drawn from participant interviews. Study results sought to understand the lived experiences of Hispanics in the United States that contribute to their perceptions about foster parent and caregiver roles for foster children.

Keywords: Hispanic, foster care, kinship care, traditional foster care, group care, foster parent, culture

Copyright Page

Dedication

This manuscript is dedicated to my mother, Buenaventura Ortiz, who went to be with the Lord in the year two thousand nine and my dear husband John Pellicer. My mother taught me to love God, love people, and love service. All my life my mother instructed me in the ways of the Lord, and I have not departed from them. I was blessed to have been her daughter and learn from her example to me and the world. To my husband John, I am grateful and blessed beyond measure for your support, hard work, and dedication to me and our family. You are my rock and I thank God for you.

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List of Abbreviations

Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA)

Multiethnic Placement ACT's (MEPA) Interethnic Adoption Provision (MEPA-IAP)

United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)

Decision Support Algorithm (DSA)

General Equivalency Diploma (GED)

Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA)

Department of Children and Families (DCF)

Chapter One: Introduction

Overview

Children in foster care are among the most vulnerable populations in the United States. Many foster care children have medical, mental, and developmental problems and conditions that make them among the most vulnerable groups in the United States (Vig et al., 2005). They are three to seven times more likely to have acute and chronic health conditions, emotional problems, and developmental delays than other children (Vig et al., 2005). Thus, while the medical, emotional, and developmental needs of foster care children are many, their resources and supports are few.

The most compelling deficit of resources and supports is the foster care system's continual lack of Hispanic foster caregivers. Hispanic foster children need Hispanic foster caregivers for several reasons. First, Hispanic and African American families are more likely than White families to be reported for child abuse and their children removed and placed into foster care (Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004). As such, there is an increased need for Hispanic caregivers to care for them. Next, through the years, studies continue to show that despite the steady growth of Hispanic children in the United States foster care system, the number of Hispanic children in foster care outnumbers the number of available or licensed Hispanic foster parents (Capello, 2006). Studies show that most foster parents are most likely to be African American or White (Barth et al., 2008). Current reports show 44% of White children are adopted from foster care, while only 22% of Hispanic and African American children are adopted from foster care (Children's Bureau, 2020). Notably, while the number of Hispanic children adopted from foster care is low, same-race adoptions among Hispanic children have increased since 2007. In 2007, over 63% of the foster care children were adopted by non-Hispanic White parents

(Malm et al., 2011). Current reports now show 51% of Hispanic children were adopted by Hispanic foster parents, a 5% increase from 2007, where 46% of Hispanic children were adopted by same race (Hispanic) foster parents ("Transracial Adoption from Foster Care in the U.S.," 2020).

Due to the number of ethnic children in foster care, culturally competent services are crucial to effectively meet the needs of foster children and advocate for them (Church, 2006). Placement with a foster parent that is culturally competent and knowledgeable of the child's cultural needs is a vital part of meeting a foster child's basic socio-emotional needs (Capello, 2006). Placement with a culturally competent foster parent also reduces the effects of childhood trauma resulting from abuse, neglect, and separation from their birth parents or primary caregivers from birth (Capello, 2006). Cultural factors such as Hispanic traditions, beliefs, values, and attitudes may promote resilience (Flores et al., 2005). Thus, placing Hispanic foster children with Hispanic caregivers provides culturally competent care, meets their basic needs, and advocates for the child.

Hispanics are often classified as one ethnic group despite their diversity. Hispanics come from various countries and have differing traditions, yet they hold similar cultural values and beliefs (Allison & Bencomo, 2015). The Hispanic culture's commonalities help Hispanic foster children preserve their ethnic identity as they share similar cultural customs, history, and values. Studies show cultural factors such as those shared by Hispanic children, particularly those who have established a positive ethnic identity, helps them develop increased self-esteem and an integrated self-system (Flores et al., 2005). Flores et al. (2005) discussed the positive effects of ethnic identity as a protective factor against psychopathology and other behavioral issues common in foster children due to the traumatic experiences they endured. Hence, it is vital to

understand Hispanics' perceptions regarding caregiver/foster parent roles to increase the recruitment of high-quality, culturally competent foster parents.

Background

Most children are removed from their primary caregivers and placed into out-of-home care due to maltreatment, sexual and physical abuse, physical neglect, or caregiver failure to care for the child willfully or unwilfully (Pecora et al., 2005). Studies show 1 in 17 children in the United States between the ages of birth and 18-years-old were placed in foster care between 2000-2111 due to substantiated allegations of maltreatment (Wildeman & Emanuel, 2014). One-third of children entered foster care due to circumstances such as parental substance use, abandonment, inadequate housing, and parental death others (Wildeman & Emanuel, 2014). More recent studies show that the number of children entering foster care declined since 2016 when 272,995 children were placed in foster care (Children's Bureau, 2019). In 2017, 269,799 children entered foster care. In 2018, of the 262,956 children entered foster care (Children's Bureau, 2019). In 2018, the total number of children in foster care was 437,283, and of those children, over 139,000 were in relative care while 198,753 were in non-relative care, 19,253 were in group homes, and 28,040 were placed in institutions (Children's Bureau, 2019). In 2019, 423,997 children in the United States were in foster care, but less than half of the children were reunified with their primary guardians (Children's Bureau, 2020).

Historically, the largest groups of children in foster care are White and African American children. Recent reports show 114,462 White children (44%) entered foster care in 2019 and continue to be the largest group of children in foster care (Children's Bureau, 2020). In 2019, 53,089 African American children (23%) entered foster care and continued to be the second-largest group of children in foster care (Children's Bureau, 2020). Notably, in 2019, 51,780

Hispanic children (21%) entered foster care, following closely behind African American children as the third-largest group of foster care and second most prominent ethnic groups of children in foster care (Children's Bureau, 2020).

Nonetheless, foster children are frequently placed in homes with caregivers with several foster children in the house who struggle with keeping up with each child's individual needs who may not know how to deal with all the systems and entities necessary to care for a child with special needs (Vig et al., 2005). As such, the needs of children in foster care are often left unmet by those in the child welfare system tasked with helping them (Vig et al., 2005). Child welfare case managers are overworked with large caseloads making it almost impossible to follow up on every need of every child on their caseload (Vig et al., 2005). The responsibilities to meet the needs of the children in foster care are often left to the foster parent.

Furthermore, though the basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing of foster care children are met, the cultural needs of ethnic minority children are frequently left unmet (Bruskas, 2008). The unmet cultural needs cause emotional distress during childhood and adolescence leading to psychopathology, emotional and behavioral issues that persist into adulthood (Bruskas, 2008). They also face significant social, mental, and educational challenges carried into adulthood (Bruskas, 2008). Cultural differences must be accounted for, embraced, encouraged, and respected by child welfare agencies while still seeking fairness and equality among all children (Badeau et al., 2004). Thus, cultural competence improvements must be related to the relationships between the foster parent and foster child, regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity.

Children in foster care are primarily sheltered in three types of out-of-home care placements: traditional foster care, group care, and kinship care (Andersen & Fallesen, 2015).

Kinship care is the most popular foster care placement as close relatives are typically the first choice for placement when their parents cannot care for the child (Cooper, 2012). However, children who are not placed with family face several challenges in the foster care system due to racial disparity and the growing number of ethnic minority children in foster care (Brown, George, Sintzel, et al., 2009). The lack of caregivers sharing similar cultural beliefs and values similar to many Hispanic foster children and other minority groups is significant as the number of children of Hispanic descent and other minority cultures in foster care continues to rise (Brown, George, Sintzel, et al., 2009).

Nevertheless, the federal government created the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) to address the disproportion between ethnic minority children and available ethnic minority caregivers. MEPA aimed to address the disproportion, which also created a need for specialized foster care recruitment models to encourage the recruitment of foster parents reflecting the racial and ethnic diversity among children in foster care (Capello, 2006). The United States Government designed the MEPA not to consider race, color, or ethnicity in the foster care placement to improve the adoption rates of minority children (Anderson & Linares, 2012). Thus, MEPA encouraged transracial adoption.

However, the stress Hispanic children endure when adjusting and acculturating to a different culture or race must be considered in transracial adoptions. Children must set aside their language, customs, and family traditions while adjusting to their new family and surroundings (Coakley & Gruber, 2015). The issues faced by most foster care children are further exacerbated by the cultural, racial, and socioeconomic concerns felt by ethnic minority children in the foster care system (Jewell et al., 2010). Studies show ethnic foster care children feel socially

unaccepted and more isolated than non-ethnic foster children when placed in culturally dissimilar homes (Jewell et al., 2010).

Conversely, the challenges ethnic minority caregivers face to become licensed caregivers must also be considered. Individuals interested in becoming foster parents must work through qualifications to become caregivers, barriers such as dealing with home studies, training, physical space requirements at home, and possible language barriers, particularly families with limited English proficiency (Ayon et al., 2013). Thus, the challenges faced by potential Hispanic caregivers must be weighed when considering the effects of MEPA on foster care and the adoption of children in foster care.

Situation to Self

This researcher is of Hispanic ethnicity whose parents were born in Puerto Rico and migrated to New York. This researcher worked closely with youth involved in the juvenile justice system and child welfare system in their professional role. Also, as a Christian, this researcher's beliefs are grounded on a Biblical worldview. Creswell and Poth (2018) discussed the axiological philosophical assumption chosen by this researcher, which leads a researcher to their choice of research, making their values evident in the study. As such, this researcher discloses that their study contains an acceptance of her presuppositions based on personal and cultural beliefs. This researcher actively reported their values and biases and those found in the information gathered while conducting fieldwork (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus, as Creswell and Poth (2018) discussed, this researcher's prior professional role working with juveniles involved in the child welfare system and their ethnic background is related to their social position, personal experiences, and professional beliefs on the subject matter of the study.

Problem Statement

Due to the researcher's interest in the current state of the foster care system in the United States, as discussed by existent literature, the researcher has discovered a considerable problem. Reports show nearly half a million children are currently in foster care, primarily in non-relative care (Children's Bureau, 2019). Hispanic children comprise the third largest group of children in foster care, at 21% of the children in foster care, just slightly behind Black (23%) and White (44%) children (Children's Bureau, 2019). The percentage of Hispanic children in foster care has grown throughout the past years, despite remaining steady last year (Children's Bureau, 2019). The problem is that despite the substantial number of Hispanic children in foster care, there is a continuous lack of Hispanic foster parents. Foster parents with similar cultural values and beliefs can provide culturally competent care to children in foster care. To fill the need for foster parents with cultures reflective of the Hispanic children currently in foster care, child welfare agencies must improve recruitment efforts targeting Hispanic families.

Children in foster care would benefit from being placed with foster parents sharing similar cultural customs, history, and values. Studies show that children who share similar cultural backgrounds with their foster parents preserve their self-identity, which is a protective factor against behavioral and emotional issues (Anderson & Linares, 2012). Current data provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services presents the number of Hispanic children in foster care (Children's Bureau, 2020). Research also addresses why the number of Hispanic children in the foster care system has increased (Capello, 2006). However, it falls short in addressing why there are not sufficient Hispanic foster care parents. Studies by Brown, George, Sintzel, et al. (2009) and Brown, St. Arnault, George, et al. (2009) discussed the benefits

of cultural matching between foster children and foster parents. However, this study aims to understand why there is a lack of qualified Hispanic foster parents.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand and describe the attitudes and perceptions of Hispanics living in the Tampa Bay area of Florida regarding foster parent and caregiver roles for Hispanic foster children through their lived experiences. The study intends to identify participants' common lived experiences that shape their perceptions and develop attitudes influencing their willingness to become caregivers for foster care children. The theory guiding this study is the social constructivist interpretive approach as the researchers seek to understand how social interactions influence behaviors and perceptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In a phenomenological study, the researcher learns from the experiences the participants share, which they have known due to adaptation, where associations lead to changes in behaviors (Adams, 2006). Thus, in exploring the perspectives of study participants regarding foster parent and caregiver roles for Hispanic children in foster care, this study intends to fill a gap in the literature that addresses issues within the foster care system and improve foster care agencies' recruitment efforts.

Significance of the Study

The current study contributes to recent literature on Hispanic foster parents' perceptions regarding caregiver roles for Hispanic children in foster care, drawing on a sample population of Hispanic adults living in the Tampa Bay area of Florida. Previous studies discuss possible obstacles in the successful recruitment and retainment of Hispanic foster parents and the familiar role that kinship care plays in foster care among Hispanic families (Ayon et al., 2013; Baum et al., 2001; Berrick & Skivenes, 2012; Capello, 2006; Coakley & Gruber, 2015; Hanna et al.,

2017). However, those studies have clustered Hispanics into a homogenous group despite the diversity within the Hispanic population. Hispanics are broadly defined as individuals of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American descent, and other Spanish origin groups whose dominant language is Spanish without regard to race (Allison & Bencomo, 2015). This study considers that Hispanics are heterogeneous, coming from many different countries, each with their customs and beliefs. Thus, Hispanics are heterogeneous concerning culture, and perception differences between groups will be acknowledged.

The present study recognizes the differences between Hispanic groups. It augments the differences by exploring the perceptions of Hispanic adults eligible to become foster parents and how their lived experiences influence their willingness to become foster parents. This study posits that the lived experiences of Hispanics may differ between groups. It amplifies the differences by exploring its participants' perceptions to understand further the factors contributing to the lack of Hispanic foster child caregivers related to the country of origin, marital status, and socioeconomic status. This study's findings will provide data and information that may help child welfare and foster care agencies identify areas of concern for prospective Hispanic foster parents. In identifying areas of concern, the study may help improve recruitment efforts and expand community education on the following: the need for quality, culturally competent foster parents; requirements for becoming foster parents; benefits of foster parenting; expectations once individuals become foster parents; and the vital role caregivers play in the lives of foster care children.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is manifested by the exploratory nature of the following research questions:

RQ1: What attitudes and perceptions do Hispanics in Tampa Bay hold regarding caregiver roles for foster care children?

RQ1a: What do they think about becoming foster parents?

RQ1b: How do they feel about becoming foster parents?

RQ2: How do the lived experiences of Hispanics in Tampa Bay influence their willingness to become foster parents?

RQ3: What are the factors that contribute to a shortage of Hispanic foster parents in Tampa Bay?

Definitions

Culture: A system of knowledge comprised of learned ways of thinking, feeling, and interacting with others, assertions, and ideas about viewpoints regarding the world. It is shared among people connected by race, ethnicity, or nationality and manifested in symbols, artifacts, and social constructs (Hong, 2009).

Foster care: An out-of-home placement deemed necessary for safety and welfare of the child as a result of child medical problems, emotional issues, caregivers with medical issues, and children placed in vulnerable positions such as neglect, inadequate housing, as well as physical, psychological, and sexual abuse (Bhatti-Sinclair & Sutcliffe, 2012).

Foster parent: Licensed, contracted individuals who provide semi-permanent, secure care to children in the foster care system as an alternative to group care or residential care when there are no appropriate family members to care for them (Maluccio & Ainsworth, 2006).

Group care: An out-of-home-placement where the child stays with a licensed caregiver who cares for other foster children (Andersen & Fallesen, 2015).

Hispanic: Individuals of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American descent, as well as other Spanish culture or origin without regard to a race whose primary language is Spanish (Allison & Bencomo, 2015).

Kinship care: An out-of-home placement where the child remains in the home of a relative, family member, or family friend (Andersen & Fallesen, 2015).

Traditional foster care: An out-of-home placement where the child stays with a licensed foster parent and their family (Andersen & Fallesen, 2015).

Summary

Learning cannot be detached from its environment as it is a product of the individual's social interactions, interpretation, and understanding of their experiences (Adams, 2006). The need to learn and understand the perspective of Hispanic individuals who are eligible to become foster parents but have not taken the steps necessary and those of prospective caregivers who have taken the steps needed is essential and fundamental to advocacy for Hispanic foster children. Hispanic foster children need foster parents that share their cultural values and beliefs to preserve their ethnic identity. The viewpoints and concerns of Hispanics regarding foster parent roles must be addressed appropriately to improve the recruitment of Hispanic caregivers for Hispanic children. Therefore, studying Hispanics' perceptions concerning foster parent roles is imperative to increasing recruitment of same-culture, high-quality, culturally competent caregivers for Hispanic foster children.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

The material presented in this literature review avails readers of the contextual knowledge necessary to understand why it is vital to understand the attitudes and perceptions of Hispanic foster caregivers and prospective caregivers for Hispanic children. The review provides background information on how Hispanic and non-Hispanic children are placed into foster care. The most recent available demographics of Hispanic children involved in the foster care system will be evaluated to provide readers with a broad view of Hispanic children's current foster care system conditions. Available placement types for children once they are removed from the homes of their primary caregivers are discussed.

The role of kinship caregivers, or relative care, specifically in Hispanic families, is also examined, as it is the foster parent role most often considered by Hispanic families (Ayon et al., 2013). Cultural values and beliefs, such as familismo or familism, a value shared within differing nationalities within the Hispanic culture, are discussed as a driving force for undertaking kinship caregiver roles among family members (Ayon et al., 2013). The advantages and disadvantages of kinship care are also evaluated. Insight on most children's experiences, including Hispanic children in foster care, is provided, offering a comprehensive scope of the problem, the need for same-race and ethnicity, and culturally competent foster caregivers. With the need for culturally competent caregivers in mind, the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) and its effect on the placement of ethnic minority foster care children with appropriate caregivers are examined. Cultural matching, a concept that child welfare experts often debate, is discussed, and its impact on the welfare of ethnic minority foster children, particularly Hispanic children, is considered.

The obstacles prospective Hispanic caregivers may face when trying to become foster parents are examined. The most common barriers Hispanics face to becoming foster parents, such as mixed-status households and language barriers, are discussed and considered. To fully understand the lack of Hispanic foster caregivers, current recruitment strategies of child welfare agencies are presented, and best recruitment practices are depicted. Lastly, considerations for improving the foster care system by addressing each foster child's individual needs are presented.

Theoretical Framework

Qualitative research posits phenomena are acclimatized by an individual's experiences which create their world in real life. Philosophical assumptions are the researcher's deeply ingrained views about the various problems worthy of study, the inquiries essential to the study, and how the data collected should be gathered (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An axiological philosophical assumption leads the researcher to choose research conducted, as the researcher makes their values evident and known in their study. The researcher admits their presuppositions and the nature of the study by reporting their values and biases in addition to the presuppositions of information gathered in the field from participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher's position in the study is related to their social position, personal experiences, political and professional beliefs when using the axiological philosophical assumption (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Moreover, the researcher's philosophical assumption is applied within the social constructivist interpretative framework. In the social constructivist framework, the researcher looks to understand the study participants' world and develop meaning to their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Individuals identify their experiences through self-reflection as they look within themselves, something a mere observer would never know, as getting to knowing

people is not observable. The activities and processes of the mind can only be observed through behaviors and interactions between people providing information about what they have learned (Adams, 2006). Assessing these behaviors afford a basis for interpreting learned processes (Adams, 2006).

Consequently, social and psychological data and information can only develop from inter experiential, active learning processes occurring among people (Mascolo & Kallio, 2019). The social constructivist researcher seeks to make sense and develop meaning to the participant's complex views and inter experiential processes as a primary source of reliance for the research conducted (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As studied in the social constructivist framework, social knowledge is verified by substantiating the various experiences of individuals against one another (Mascolo & Kallio, 2019). Thus, the participants are the primary source of study, and their experiences and learned processes are the primary focus of the research.

Related Literature

Hispanics, also referred to as Latinos, are defined as individuals of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, and other Spanish culture or origin without regard to race (Allison & Bencomo, 2015). However, many researchers and scholars do not differentiate between cultural groups. The term Hispanic in this study aims to identify and refer to individuals of Puerto Rican descent, as well as Cuban, Mexican, South, and Central American descent, in relationship to the broad essence of the culture they identify with, or for which the dominant language in the group is Spanish.

The foster care system is flooded with challenges. Among the challenges faced by the child welfare system and of great concern in the child welfare system is racial disproportion. African American and Hispanic families are more likely to be reported for child abuse and

neglect than White families despite having similar circumstances (Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004). African American and Hispanic children are also more likely to be removed from the home than white children. Overall, children of color, though only comprising approximately 33% of children in the United States, account for over 55% of children in foster care (Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004). In turn, racial disproportion, also known as ethnic disparity, creates the need for more caregivers.

Several dynamics were found to contribute to the ethnic disparity in foster care. Studies show it is associated with socioeconomic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and community characteristics such as housing and schools (Kim et al., 2011). Poverty is a significant factor as ethnic minorities are likely to have lower income levels than their White counterparts (Kim et al., 2011). While many studies have explored the relationship between poverty and child neglect and maltreatment, Kim et al. (2011) found correlations between unemployment rates, race, and child maltreatment. Notably, unemployment rates are higher among African Americans and Hispanics. They are more significant in communities with a high percentage of minorities, like urban areas where predominantly Hispanic and African American families live (Kim et al., 2011). Unemployment was considerably associated with child physical abuse and neglect (Kim et al., 2011). In addition to the correlation of child abuse and neglect with economic hardships, parenting style, parent and family characteristics were also associated with child neglect. Thus, family characteristics related to the pressures and stressors of financial hardship, such as single-parent households, take a toll on minority families, contributing to child maltreatment and substantiated abuse allegations leading to foster care placement.

The lack of cultural awareness and understanding of cultural values and beliefs contributes to the differential treatment of ethnic children and the removal of ethnic children

from their homes (Church, 2006). Cultural awareness is the understanding and acknowledgment that people can act, believe, and think differently from others even if they live and work in the same place (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997). Cultural awareness is overt, covert, and subtle (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997). Overt cultural awareness is the cognizance of recognizable differences such as language. Covert cultural awareness is the recognition of characteristics such as status and interpersonal communication styles. On the other hand, subtle cultural awareness identifies entrenched values and beliefs particular to the individual's culture, which are often taken for granted and thought to be familiar to everyone, not just the individual's culture (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997). Hence, lack of cultural awareness makes room for racist assumptions of parental inadequacy and family instability.

Additionally, lack of cultural awareness discounts the strengths of the family, such as family functioning. Inaccurate assessments of the difficulties of ethnic families based on the worker's views regarding family member's values and personality also contribute to the removal of ethnic children from their families and primary caregivers (Church, 2006). Child welfare workers' beliefs that the family acquired a culture of poverty discount environmental stressors. As a result, ethnic children are brought into the child welfare system faster than White children under similar circumstances. Studies show their parents are assessed more punitively, spend more time in foster placements as parental rights appear to be terminated faster, and are also less likely to be adopted than White children (Church, 2006). The family's ability to take advantage of treatment and services made available to them also weighs heavily on child welfare agencies' decision to remove children from home. Thus, ethnic children tend to linger in foster care longer than White children.

Furthermore, the odds of foster care placement after investigation are higher for Hispanic children under 5-years-old than their non-Hispanic counterparts. Hispanic children 5-years-old are equally as likely to be placed in foster care as their non-Hispanic counterparts. Hispanic children older than five are at lower odds for successful foster care placement than non-Hispanic children. Still, the odds for a successful foster care placement for Hispanic children decreases as their age increases (Alzate & Rosenthal, 2009). To add to the problem, studies show ethnic children are treated differently during essential points in the child welfare system as they receive fewer family visits, less contact with caseworkers, fewer case plans, and fewer developmental and psychological assessments (Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004).

Nonetheless, while the odds of Hispanic males experiencing a child welfare investigation for neglect or other maltreatment (not physical abuse) is lower than those of other non-Hispanic males, the odds of Hispanic females experiencing a similar investigation for neglect or other maltreatment (not physical abuse) is about equal to their non-Hispanic counterparts (Alzate & Rosenthal, 2009). Notably, child welfare investigations are lower in Hispanic populations due to fear and stigma associated with reporting abuse, neglect, and maltreatment. The effects of maltreatment are significant. Studies show maltreated Hispanic children were significantly more antisocial, aggressive, and had more internalizing and externalizing symptoms than their non-maltreated Hispanic counterparts (Flores et al., 2005). Maltreated Hispanic children are less resilient and have lower adaptive functioning when compared to non-maltreated Hispanic children.

Additionally, maltreated children also have a hard time forming interpersonal relationships. They are more conflicted than non-maltreated children and have difficulties warming up to people and developing positive relationships (Flores et al., 2005). However, non-

maltreated Hispanic children demonstrate higher resilience rates, are warmer, and are more open with communication, allowing for forming positive interpersonal relationships with adults (Flores et al., 2005). Flores et al. (2005) found maltreated Hispanic children do not have the same traits non-maltreated Hispanic children demonstrate, as they tend to function maladaptively due to their lack of resilience.

Consequently, maltreated children cannot form the positive interpersonal relationships associated with resilience functioning and adaptive functioning. Cultural factors such as Hispanic traditions, beliefs, values, and attitudes may promote resilience in all Hispanic children, particularly those who have established a positive ethnic identity helping them develop increased self-esteem and an integrated self-system (Flores et al., 2005). However, the challenges maltreated children face in forming positive interpersonal relationships make it harder for them to overcome some of the hardships they face in their environment.

For instance, Sledjeski et al. (2009) studied migrant and non-migrant Puerto Rican children ages 5 to 13-years-old, migrant children living in Bronx, New York, and non-migrant children living in San Juan and Caguas, Puerto Rico. Sledjeski et al. (2009) aimed to describe the prevalence of maltreatment among the two groups and identify the socio-demographic and cultural predictors of abuse among individuals who identified as Puerto Rican. Researchers found that cultural factors, such as familismo or acculturation, were not related to maltreatment due to the strong identification with the Puerto Rican culture despite significant acculturation in non-migrant and migrant groups (Sledjeski et al., 2009). The impact of cultural factors on maltreatment was masked by the groups' deep-seated Puerto Rican values. Poverty, however, was identified as a risk factor for maltreatment as families living in the Bronx were more likely to be poor and have single-parent households than families living in Puerto Rico with two-parent

homes (Sledjeski et al., 2009). Thus, marked risk factors for maltreatment were greater among migrant Puerto Rican children. However, the prevalence of maltreatment among migrant and non-migrant Puerto Rican children is still comparable to all other children. Thus, the study indicated that the rates of physical abuse and sexual abuse were close to the national sample representative of all adolescents in the United States (Sledjeski et al., 2009).

Foster Care Placements

After an investigation is completed and the caseworker determines the child should be placed in an out-of-home placement for their safety and welfare; the caseworker must decide what type of placement the child must go. Generally, child welfare placement decision-making models guide the placement decisions (Chor et al., 2013). The two models used are the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) and the Decision Support Algorithm (DSA). The MDT pools together several different experts to help choose a proper placement. The DSA model is a set of criteria for placement based on needs and strengths-based matching of children to existing placements' profiles (Chor et al., 2013). The most significant factors determining out-of-home placement decisions are children with medical problems, children with emotional issues, caregivers with medical issues, and vulnerable positions such as inadequate housing and victims of sexual abuse (Bhatti-Sinclair & Sutcliffe, 2012).

The three most common types of out-of-home care placements, which are quite different and based on distinct childcare philosophies, are: (1) traditional foster care -the child stays with a foster parent and their family; (2) Group care -the child stays with a licensed caregiver who cares for other foster children; and (3) Kinship care -the child remains in the home of a relative, family member, or family friend (Andersen & Fallesen, 2015). Foster care and kinship care most resemble current family settings with one and two-parent households. Children placed in

traditional foster homes are more likely to live in large households with five or more children. Traditional foster homes are more likely to have two parents, a married couple, and one parent, usually the mother, is home full-time (Barth et al., 2008). Kinship care is the most common of all three placements. Children in kinship care usually live in smaller households with two working parents or single-parent households (Barth et al., 2008).

Traditional Foster Care

Foster care families offer semi-permanent, secure care to children in the foster care system as an alternative to group care or residential care (Maluccio & Ainsworth, 2006). While traditional foster caregivers who are unrelated receive more support services than kinship caregivers, studies show that foster children in traditional foster homes tend to experience frequent and excessive placement breakdowns (Maluccio & Ainsworth, 2006). Placement breakdowns can be attributed to several factors. Placing several unrelated children who come with traumatic experiences and related behavioral issues of their own undermines foster care families' goal and intention to provide a warm, intimate, stable home with a substitute family (Maluccio & Ainsworth, 2006). Though kinship care is the best way to provide a home to a foster child, conserving family life's closeness and intimacy, the opposite effect occurs when a child is placed in traditional foster care, a house with multiple unrelated children.

Furthermore, children being moved in and out of the home with frequency due to placement disruptions contribute to the foster home's destabilization. It becomes a cycle of continued family replacements. The children continuously have to adapt to new situations and form new relationships with other children that may lead to additional challenges because they need to share a room with someone new, which does not do much for an already broken child's self-worth (Maluccio & Ainsworth, 2006). While family foster care may not be as effective as it

was intended to be, it is a necessary service for foster care children who have been removed from their primary caregiver's home. Still, there must be a way to promote traditional foster homes' development into what they were intended to be, a warm, nurturing, secure place for children in need of a safe place to call home.

Group Care

Children are placed in group care when a traditional foster home is not available. The average age a child is admitted into traditional foster care or kinship care is lower than that of children who enter family-style group care or residential care specializing in mental health treatment. Children in residential care have the most severe behavioral problems. Children in family-style group care also have significant risk factors for behavioral issues and other externalizing problems (Leloux-Opmeer et al., 2017). Studies show most children who enter family-style group care have experienced several placements (Leloux-Opmeer et al., 2017). Far fewer children enter family-style group care from their birth home than children placed in traditional foster homes (Leloux-Opmeer et al., 2017). Findings propose most children entering family-style group care were previously placed in residential care due to the child's high level of externalizing behaviors and specialized treatment needs (Leloux-Opmeer et al., 2017). Once their treatment was concluded, the child was placed in group care to offer the child a long-term placement. Many of the children in group care come from failed placements in traditional foster homes and residential care.

Foster parents in family-style group care are licensed, contracted providers paid for their services. There is a general concern that paying foster parents will recruit incompetent caregivers who do not care about their foster children and are looking for a payout. Studies show that most contracted caregivers consider themselves specialized, skilled caregivers with experiences

relative to their caregiving expertise (Swartz, 2004). The foster parents stated they believed their role as paid caregivers is based on their skills and expertise, a position they were more than competent to fulfill. Most caregivers do not receive financial rewards for similar expertise as paid caregivers, particularly within family cultural systems. Paid caregivers have found opportunities to utilize their keen caretaking skills in the same manner that other skilled workers use their experience in other work environments (Swartz, 2004). Paid caregivers use their caregiving skills to do work that they felt was valuable as compassionate, people-centered individuals who gain satisfaction in the positive changes and differences they make in their foster children (Swartz, 2004). Group care foster parents attribute the positive changes to the quality of care they provided the children as high-quality caregivers.

Kinship Care

As the most popular and best-practice placement arrangement, kinship care traditionally involves an arrangement with an individual the child has a family relationship, such as grandparents, other relatives, and family-like relationships such as godparents or close family friends, who provide primary care (Bramlett et al., 2017; Farmer, 2009). There are also two types of kinship arrangements, informal an arrangement made by a private agreement, and formal, an arrangement approved by the legal system, such as adoption or kinship foster care. Children in kinship foster care are placed with a relative caregiver who provides for the child's primary care. However, the child is still in the legal custody of the state.

Grandparents are usually the first source of kinship care when their parents cannot care for the child. Studies show grandparents are the largest group of kinship providers, followed closely by aunts and uncles, most of which were maternal relatives (Farmer, 2009). Formal kinship care arrangements can be emotionally complicated, especially arrangements with

grandparents. Informal kinship care can also prove difficult as it is nearly impossible to obtain health services, enroll the child in school, receive financial assistance, support services, and affordable housing (Cooper, 2012). Due to the lack of financial assistance and support services involved in kinship care, most children in kinship care are more likely to come from low-income families than children in other foster care placements (Farmer, 2009). Kinship providers are also at a more significant disadvantage than other foster caregivers. Thus, many kinship caregivers prefer to make temporary guardianship arrangements rather than permanent, life-altering arrangements (Cooper, 2012). They prefer to preserve family relationships while still having a legal relationship that will avail them of the opportunity to receive the services and support they so desperately need (Cooper, 2012).

Unfortunately, kinship care does not lead to more stable placements, as the parent and child can withdraw their participation at any time. However, studies show that children in kinship care with a high-quality caregiver who is attentive, dutiful, affectionate, nurturing, and empathic will experience fewer disruptions due to breakdowns (Andersen, & Fallesen, 2015). Family is critical to kinship care, as central to kinship care is the concept of familismo, or familism, the importance of family unity, and contributive to the family's welfare as a unit, including extended family members as godparents (Ayon et al., 2013).

Familism, or the culture-specific attitudes, behaviors, and family structure within the extended family systems of Hispanics emphasize the value of maintaining a robust, vast kinship network, ensuring everyone in the family receives the support they need, particularly during challenging times (Coohey, 2001). Familism has several dimensions. The dimensions of familism are (a) attitudinal, a belief that a relative is more reliable, nurturing, and has more and greater positive characteristics than non-relatives; (b) behavioral, receiving material or emotional

support from relatives; and (c) structural, large kinship networks with kin living close by (Coohey, 2001). When studying the differences between Anglo-American mothers and Hispanic mothers, Coohey (2001) found that Hispanics were less comfortable discussing negative information than their White counterparts, which can be attributed to attitudinal familism. Hispanic mothers also had more kin in their social networks than their White counterparts, attributing to structural familism's importance. While fewer kin lived closer to the Hispanic mothers, most family members likely lived in their country of origin, Hispanic mothers tended to receive more emotional support from their kin than their White counterparts (Coohey, 2001).

Because relative care is a vital part of the safety net for foster children who do not have parents who can care for them, child welfare agencies seek their relatives as the primary resources for placement (Bramlett et al., 2017). However, children placed with relative caregivers in kinship care may not see permanence as caregivers do not expect the situation to go throughout childhood, hoping for reunification. Studies show that children in kinship care are visited by their biological parents, particularly their mothers, more than children in other placements (Metzger, 2008). The continued visitation from the foster child's natural parents mitigates the effects of the separation between them, promoting overall well-being (Metzger, 2008). The greater the mother's number of visitations, the stronger the child's coping and resiliency, demonstrating a positive link between maternal visitation and the child's self-concept (Metzger, 2008). Due to the child's natural parents' continuous visitation and the familial bond between all the parties, kinship caregivers may not find permanence, particularly legal custody, necessary (Bramlett et al., 2017). Kinship care is marked by the benefits of a multigenerational link and mutual exchange of values allowing the child to benefit from family members' interactions and whole family functioning (Metzger, 2008). Thus, the family bond between

themselves and the child is often enough to continue with long-term care and greater than the need for legal permanence.

Kinship care offers the child an opportunity to benefit from supportive networks that provide resources for coping with current and future adversity (Metzger, 2008). Kinship networks provide children in foster care long-term protective networks as they are more salient than non-kin relationships as they are protective against child abuse, particularly sexual abuse (Blakely et al., 2017). Kinship networks also indirectly support foster children by supporting their caregivers and reducing stress at home (Blakely et al., 2017). Kinship care allows children to have more individuals in their lives, a network that is adaptable and flexible to the child's evolving needs and its foster family.

Given that there is reduced social support among children who enter foster care, and their admission into foster care includes social separation, the involvement of kin optimizes the individual strengths of the child, supporting resilience (Leon & Dickson, 2019). Notably, ethnic minority cultures tend to include extended family members in child-rearing practices. Although the child is still in foster care, kinship foster care provides a sense of normalcy, security, and stability (Metzger, 2008). They positively experience themselves because everything is just as it would or should be among family members, lessening the severity of foster care's reality among ethnic minority foster children (Metzger, 2008). The connections developed with their relative caregivers improve the child's ability to handle the hardships they face.

To many kinship foster parents, taking care of extended family members and keeping the child out of non-kinship foster care is essential to their commitment to family preservation (Coakley et al., 2007). However, plans for reunification and the need for continued fostering can be stressful to kinship foster parents. Kinship caregivers usually have no forewarning of the

initial need for placement, learn to adjust quickly, changes that can cause a great deal of emotional, interfamily, and financial stress, among others. Kinship caregivers also receive fewer support services than non-kinship foster caregivers, often deemed ineligible for financial support despite needing support services (Cooper, 2012). However, the kinship caregiver's commitment to family and their spiritual and moral values were positive factors in successful fostering (Coakley et al., 2007). The kinship foster parent's perception of the family's responsibility to take care of the family, specifically a commitment to the children, facilitated kinship foster parenting as caregivers wanted to offer the children continuity (Coakley et al., 2007).

Experiences of Hispanic Children in Foster Care

Hispanic children experience many of the same issues that other non-Hispanic children in foster care experience. After being removed from their homes, children under age 11 are more likely to be placed in a foster home or kinship care, and children between 1 and 2-years-old are more likely to be placed in a traditional foster home over kinship care or group care (Barth et al., 2008). However, Black non-Hispanic and Hispanic children are less likely to be placed in group homes than White non-Hispanic and other race counterparts. Most foster care and kinship care providers are non-Hispanic blacks or non-Hispanic Whites. Thus, most caregivers are most likely to be African American or White (Barth et al., 2008).

Nevertheless, while there is an overrepresentation of ethnic children in the child welfare system, it is also true that these ethnic populations have experienced discriminatory delivery of services. The history of social services' institutionalization, such as child welfare out-of-home foster care placements, reflects historical oppression. When out-of-home placement is deemed necessary for an ethnic child, the need for culturally competent services is vital to adequately meet the child's needs and advocate for them (Church, 2006). Little regard is given to the child's

needs when it comes to an appropriate placement solution. The most appropriate placement would be to place a child with a family who shares the same or similar cultural background as the child (Church, 2006).

The disparity in the number of colored children in foster care is problematic. Ethnic children face specific developmental issues, as ethnicity and culture play an essential role in easing the healthy development of children of color (Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004). As they progress during early childhood, ethnic children become aware of the differences in skin color, culture, and racial and ethnic labeling (Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004). Then, as the children progress through to middle childhood, they become aware that the differences in skin color, culture, and racial and ethnic labeling have a social meaning. The children discover the social significance of their skin color. During middle childhood, most ethnic children contend with their first experiences with prejudice, becoming aware of social unfairness based on race, putting them at risk for developing a negative self-image (Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004). As such, children must go into adolescence, acquiring a positive sense of self and identity to combat feelings of anxiety, hopelessness, and despair when faced with racial barriers that seem overwhelming (Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004).

Unfortunately, like most foster care children, Hispanic children are likely to experience behavioral problems during their time in foster care, and right after release, due to exposure to challenging situations (Ackerman & Dozier, 2005). Problematic behaviors usually begin soon after placement in out-of-home care, particularly when placed with unfamiliar families, putting the child at risk for placement disruptions as separation from primary caregivers or biological families is particularly hard for young children (Lawrence et al., 2006). Notably, studies show higher internalizing behaviors in children placed with unfamiliar foster caregivers, marking

significant differences in foster care outcomes for children with familiar foster caregivers. The dynamic of the separation experience differs with the ease of allowable ongoing contact with biological parents (Lawrence et al., 2006).

Additionally, many times, foster children do not receive the comprehensive psychological services they need. They are often unaware of any reunification goals, the purpose of the placements, or the proposed end of the placement, contributing to the child's emotional distress. Often, caregivers are not trained to deal with problematic behaviors, nor are they equipped to support children with mental health needs. Studies show that the foster care experience, exposure to risk factors, and placement impact may contribute to long-term behavioral problems (Lawrence et al., 2006). The very experience of being placed in foster care may also bear long-term effects on foster children extending into adulthood.

Foster children who spend an extended amount of time in vulnerable situations, such as while experiencing physical or sexual abuse, with their primary caregivers are more likely to have a greater amount of placement breakdowns due to behavioral issues (Montserrat et al., 2020). A study of foster care children in Spain found only 10% of children placed in foster care within a year of their abusive experiences with their biological family experienced placement breakdowns (Montserrat et al., 2020). Conversely, 32% of children who had to wait over three years to be placed in foster care after experiencing neglect or sexual abuse with their biological families experienced placement breakdowns (Montserrat et al., 2020). As such, children who spent less time in vulnerable situations as they were removed from the home, protected, and placed in foster care, were less likely to experience placement breakdowns due to behavioral issues than their counterparts who spent a greater amount of time. Unfortunately, placement

disruptions and breakdowns were more frequent among children who were victims of neglect, sexual abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, or gender violence (Montserrat et al., 2020).

Even after being placed in foster care for their protection, children also experience challenging situations when separated from their primary caregivers and placed with unfamiliar individuals. The placement change also changes the child's social life, such as a different school, friends, and family changes. Sadly, in their short lifetimes, foster children experience multiple losses. They experience the loss due to the separation from their biological parents, family, friends, and other essential community members like teachers and neighbors they have grown to know and love. Foster children also experience the loss of their temporary caregiver when reunified with their biological families, which is the ultimate goal of foster care, putting them at risk for social, emotional, behavioral, and psychological difficulties (Ackerman & Dozier, 2005). Thus, reunification plans can be foiled by institutional barriers adding to the challenges the children face.

Contributing to Hispanic children's ill experiences in foster care are the institutional barriers the children and their families face once involved in the foster care system. The lack of culturally sensitive services, such as Spanish-speaking therapists and Spanish language parenting classes, can impact the outcome of cases (Garcia et al., 2012). Due to the inaccessibility of culturally competent resources and support services, parents who only speak and understand Spanish cannot complete their case plans, forcing them into long-term foster care or adoption. Hispanic families often feel disrespected, belittled, misjudged, and mistreated by their English-speaking (non-Spanish speaking) therapists and service providers (Hackethal et al., 2013). Respect and trust, fundamental values of Hispanic cultures, play critical roles in the relationship between Hispanic families and community providers. Mistrust of service providers stemming

from the disrespect families feels stands in the way of building a rapport and relationship with providers contributing to unsuccessful treatment outcomes and uncompleted case plans. Sadly, Hispanic children will lose their families due to the inaccessibility of Spanish-language culturally competent services.

After being permanently separated from their biological families, Hispanic children are often placed in homes that cannot fulfill their cultural needs or ensure their cultural and language needs are met (Garcia et al., 2012). Children are placed in non-Hispanic homes as there are not enough Hispanic caregivers available. Hence, the lack of culturally appropriate services and placements contributes to the growing number of Hispanic children in foster care.

The Importance of Foster Parents and the Need for Foster Parents

Foster parents serve unique needs in the child welfare system providing children with no families a safe home and nurturing environment to grow. Unfortunately, as the number of foster care children increases or remains stable from time to time, the number of foster parents decreases (Randle et al., 2012). Studies show that many eligible to become foster parents have never considered fostering (62% of respondents) because they were not asked. Still, others (59%) say the opportunity was not provided (Randle et al., 2012). An equal amount of eligible foster caregivers (62%) said they believed the commitment to fostering a child was too big to make. Few respondents said they never considered fostering because they have no experience with children (30%) or were already too busy with children of their own (30%) showing no interest in fostering (Randle et al., 2012). While most individuals who have no interest in fostering do not become caregivers, some individuals with little interest do become foster parents who are not fully emotionally invested in their foster children's lives.

Foster children placed with caregivers not fully emotionally invested in their foster children's lives may develop maladaptive self-presentations and poor coping strategies (Ackerman & Dozier, 2005). Conversely, foster children placed with high-quality caregivers who are highly accepting and emotionally invested may have an enhanced emerging sense of self in relation to other foster children. The children can also cope with challenges within and outside their personal life in constructive ways that will not jeopardize their relationships with loved ones (Ackerman & Dozier, 2005). Thus, the children will thrive with high-quality caregivers.

High-quality caregivers are individuals who facilitate the loving, nurturing, healthy development of a child (Berrick et al., 2011). They accept the child as a family member, advocate for their foster child's needs, strengthen the child's connection with their original birth family, and value working as a team (Berrick et al., 2011). Effective parenting skills exemplify high-quality foster care and caregiver responses that go further than standard parenting (Berrick & Skivenes, 2012). High-quality caregivers include experiences that are attentive to the child's integration into the new family, are considerate and encouraging of the relationship between the child, their biological family, and the foster family; as well as responsive to the development and specific needs of the foster child (Berrick & Skivenes, 2012).

Notwithstanding the adversities foster children have faced, particularly the hardships that caused them to be placed in foster care, children placed with high-quality caregivers will, as adults, consider their foster families like their own families. The bonds they form with their foster parents significantly impact them regardless of the age they were placed in foster care or the amount of time spent in foster care (Gardner, 2004). High-quality foster parents invested in their foster children offer their foster children opportunities to form relationships with them forever. Remarkably, when provided the opportunity to develop relationships, children can form

bonds throughout childhood and into adulthood as experiences and interactions between personal and environmental factors contribute to psychosocial development and changes throughout their lifetime (Gardner, 2004). Thus, children who form positive relationships with invested, high-quality foster caregivers as adults will continue to view their foster parents as their family, even if they have relationships with their biological parents.

Hispanic Foster Caregivers

As the largest growing ethnic population in the United States, Hispanics are heterogeneous regarding country of origin, acculturation, socioeconomic status, and language preference and proficiency. Cultural beliefs and values associated with Hispanic cultures carry one common theme, the importance of family ties and supportive relationships, as many take pride in their roles as caretakers and their responsibility towards their families, including extended family (Hackethal et al., 2013). The Hispanic culture's focus on trust, family systems, family relationships, and commitment to family known as familism (Hackethal et al., 2013). Familism is vital to the way children are raised, cared for, supported, nurtured, and educated.

Because the Hispanic culture is so different from other ethnic cultures and their non-ethnic counterparts, there is a distinct need to increase culturally appropriate services to fill the population's growing demand (Barker et al., 2010). The number of children of Hispanic descent and other minority cultures in foster care continues to rise. So does a need to recruit foster parents that reflect the cultural diversity of those children. However, a lack of caregivers shares similar cultural beliefs and values as those of the minority children in foster, specifically Hispanic foster children (Brown, Sinzel, St. Arnault, et al., 2009).

Although Hispanics come from various heterogeneous countries to categorize into a group, there are many shared beliefs, practices, family values, and cultural norms associated with the Hispanic culture (Allison & Bencomo, 2015). Allison and Bencomo (2015) specified 10 characteristics that reflected the Hispanic culture, explaining the differences between Hispanic and other groups' cultures. First, the family is the most valuable unit in Hispanic culture and the most significant influence in most Hispanics' lives. The Hispanic family, composed of extended family members, also includes kinship ties based on marriage, as well as godparents.

Familism and the family support network, primarily made up of extended family, provide social, emotional, and financial support helping the family adapt to changes and overcome challenges. The second characteristic associated with the Hispanic culture is that there is a strong orientation towards a collective society where the family's needs take precedence over individual needs. Members are expected to care for one another, and personal ambitions are sacrificed for the group's betterment, a practice considered honorable. Children are also raised having a strong identity with their cultural group.

The third characteristic associated with the Hispanic culture is that family structures are patriarchal, and mothers generally assume the role of primary caregivers and homemakers. However, when a female is the head of the household, support is provided by the extended family members. The fourth characteristic is that the primary focus is on the children as they play a principal role in the marriage and family. Members are expected to marry and have children to carry the family name, and children are expected to help care for younger children and aging parents. Parents take pride in their children. Children tend to receive a great deal of parental love and affection. Families place an immense value on respect for parents and grandparents.

Hispanics aspire to have successful careers in whatever vocation they choose. The fifth characteristic associated with the Hispanic culture is that education is an essential value of familismo (familism) as parents have high expectations for their children, believing that education is vital for success in life. Educated children are the pride of their parents, who assist their children by providing nurture and support. The sixth characteristic is that religious beliefs, celebrations, and rituals are vital in the Hispanic culture. Spirituality, spiritual values, and spiritual role models are highly respected. The seventh characteristic is that Hispanics have a strong work ethic and willingness to work to provide for their families. They are firm believers in the rewards reaped with hard work and the importance of working hard to move forward in life.

Hispanics are proud of their culture. As such, the eighth characteristic associated with the Hispanic culture is that they find great satisfaction in instilling traditional values in their children and feel it is of importance to teach them about the history of their culture. The ninth characteristic associated with the Hispanic culture is the Spanish language, the primary language, unites the group and bonds the family generations. They desire to preserve it by speaking it in the home, and children are encouraged to speak it at home rather than in English. Lastly, the tenth characteristic, acculturation, causes stress within the family, particularly with the children, as they are often caught between trying to fit into society with Anglo-Saxon values and their own. Acculturation can produce significant changes in the family structure of Hispanic families. It often brings intergenerational conflicts and disagreements as parents try to control and monitor their children (Allison & Bencomo, 2015).

Nevertheless, the disproportion between the number of Hispanic children in foster care and the number of Hispanic foster homes available has created a need for specialized foster care

recruitment models. Recruitment models, such as the Hispanic Foster Care Recruitment and Retention Project, were designed to comply with Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) regulations to recruit prospective resource parents reflective of the racial and ethnic diversity of the children in under state care. The project's focus was to increase outreach efforts in communities with large populations of Hispanics by implementing a strengths-based model of cultural values, traditions, customs (Capello, 2006).

Unfortunately, many of the same cultural values that are strengths for Hispanic families can also be significant drawbacks. Studies show that Hispanic mothers were more likely to assess maltreatment if the incidents included drug use among parents or caregivers, educational neglect, emotional abuse, failure to provide for the child, lack of supervision, or physical punishment (Ferrari, 2002). The same studies show that fathers were least likely to assess physical punishment as maltreatment unless severe. The differences between the sexes were accounted for in the Machismo and Nurturance Scales. Men scored significantly higher than women in measures of machismo, and women scored significantly higher in measures of nurturance than men (Ferrari, 2002). For Hispanic mothers, a history of maltreatment was a predictor of verbal punishment toward their children; however, for Hispanic fathers, ethnicity and familism, or the valuing of children, were predictive of verbal punishment (Ferrari, 2002). Severe childhood trauma was predictive of the use of reasoning as a disciplinary tool with Hispanic fathers. However, Hispanic fathers with higher levels of familism, who valued children more, tended to use verbal punishment more often than fathers with lower levels of familism who valued their children less (Ferrari, 2002).

For Hispanic parents, familism and the value placed on children is associated with intolerance for abusive behaviors, particularly parental drug abuse, sexual abuse, emotional

maltreatment, and severe physical abuse (Ferrari, 2002). Ferrari (2002) posited that ethnic groups (Hispanic and African American) and Caucasians did not differ on how child abuse and neglect were defined. The study did not find any ethnic difference in how child abuse and neglect were rated in seriousness among ethnic groups, except when it concerned the promotion of delinquency. Contrary to their hypothesis and the belief of most, Caucasian parents were more tolerant of parental behaviors portraying abuse and neglect than Hispanic and African American parents (Ferrari, 2002). Thus, if there is no difference in the way ethnic minority groups perceive child abuse and neglect, and no culturally specific meaning or explanation for child maltreatment, then it is feasible that disparity in the numbers of ethnic minority children of color involved in child welfare may have more to do with biases among mandated reporters and child welfare professionals than actual maltreatment.

Obstacles to Hispanics Becoming Foster Caregivers

Misconceptions and stereotypes related to the Hispanic culture, religious affiliation, and language, contributing to the disparity in numbers of ethnic minority children in foster care, are often based on foster care professionals' general assumptions. While not all Hispanics are undocumented immigrants, many also face obstacles based on their appearance, accent, and proficiency in English (Rivera, 2006). Assumptions on prospective caregivers' immigration status, residency, or citizenship status are common and erroneous and based on their appearance, accent, and proficiency in the English language (Rivera, 2006). Thus, the assumptions are discriminatory.

Additionally, mixed documentation families, which comprise many Hispanic households, cannot become licensed foster care families (Ayon et al., 2013). Mixed documentation families steer away from becoming licensed foster parents or kinship care providers because they risk the

deportation of significant others after requirements such as background checks, fingerprints, and state-issued photo identifications (Ayon et al., 2013). To become a licensed caregiver, individuals must also navigate a lengthy, complicated process involving home studies, training, home physical space requirements, and qualifications to become a caregiver. Further complicating the process are language barriers. Families may be limited in English language proficiency and receive little to no help from child welfare agencies and their caseworkers working through these barriers (Ayon et al., 2013).

Of particular concern are language barriers that make becoming a resource parent difficult for many Hispanic families. Families may be limited in their English language proficiency and receive little to no help from child welfare agencies and their caseworkers working through these barriers (Ayon et al., 2013). While forms may be translated, it does not ameliorate the inconsistency in exchanging information and the development of services in child welfare agencies nationwide. The lack of interpreters available during the recruitment, certification and retention process of Hispanic families jeopardizes the family's ability to remain compliant with service requirements. Also, the lack of resources available to provide both children and families services in a language they can comprehend also creates feelings of distrust against state child welfare agencies among Hispanic resource families and the children they serve (Capello, 2006).

Correspondingly, documented Hispanic families' unwillingness to become foster caregivers may also be attributed to historical trauma. Minority communities comprised of Americans of color have experienced discriminatory traumatic events of broad experience, a fusing of collective traumas, thus forming a trauma narrative that has become a part of their community and history known as historical trauma. Historical trauma is the combined complex

trauma upon a group of people sharing the same identity, such as ethnicity, nationality, or religion. Historical trauma is the legacy of several traumatic events experienced by a community over generations and the psychological and social reactions (Hanna et al., 2017). For Hispanics, historical trauma encompasses the loss of culture, loss of self, and internal racism that relegates the whole community and is brought on by assimilation and the community's pathologizing (Hanna et al., 2017). The effects of past traumas experienced are observed in ongoing systemic oppression and mistrust of the community (Hanna et al., 2017). Past traumas affect the daily lives of its members.

Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA)

The Multiethnic Placement ACT's (MEPA) Interethnic Adoption Provision (also known as MEPA-IAP) of 1996 was designed by the United States Government to disallow race, color, and ethnicity in foster care placement to prevent the adoption of minority children. MEPA intended to improve the adoption rates of minority children and encourages the continuous, persistent recruitment of foster parents and adoptive parents of various backgrounds reflective of foster care children's diversity for whom homes are direly needed (Anderson & Linares, 2012). However, the placement must also reflect and respond to the specific child's culture, religion, and background (Anderson & Linares, 2012).

To remain in compliance with MEPA and meet its requirements for the diligent recruitment of potential foster parents and adoptive parents, states must have a comprehensive plan that has (a) a complete and accurate description of children awaiting placement; (b) strategies specific to reaching all of the community; (c) several ways of getting out general and child-specific information to potential caregivers; (d) plans making sure all prospective caregivers/parents have equal access to home studies by facilitating access to the community

with flexibility in hours of service and location; (e) strategies for training staff members to work with individuals of different cultures, races, and socioeconomic communities; (f) strategies for dealing with language barriers; (g) fee structures that are non-discriminatory; and (h) measures such as exchanges and interagency assistance, that ensure a sensible amount of time for finding prospective parents with an appropriate household regardless of race or ethnicity for a child awaiting placement (Child Welfare Information Gateway, n.d.).

The United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) introduced a publication named *Policy Guidance on the Use of Race, Color, or National Origin as Considerations in Adoption and Fostering* (also known and referred to as *Guidance* in the Federal Register) to assist state agencies with MEPA compliance. The publication clarifies the consideration of race, which states that child welfare agencies may take it as necessary to move forward with the adoptive or foster child's best interests. The child's best interest is determined by considering if the child has lived in one particular racial, ethnic, or cultural community has developed a strong sense of identity based on their community. *Guidance* states that race, culture, or national origin, must only be considered when the child welfare agency has decided that based on the individual needs of the child and the facts and circumstances of the child's case, adoption or placement requires a consideration of race, culture, and ethnicity to advance the best interest of the child (Brooks et al., 1999). *Guidance* also stressed the importance of creating pools of potentially available foster and adoptive parents and families willing and able to take in a child that needed placement regardless of race, ethnicity, or color (Brooks et al., 1999).

Nonetheless, transracial adoption and fostering may not be the first choice of the adoptive parents or foster parents with whom many foster children find homes. Many White families turn to transracial adoption or fostering after failing to adopt a White child (Jennings, 2006). Studies

show that White foster and adoptive parents cited concerns for the racial discrimination that the children might encounter from individuals in their community as a significant reason for steering away from transracial adoption (Jennings, 2006). However, if participants could not adopt a White child, they preferred to adopt a Hispanic child as they may blend in with the adoptive family and perhaps avoid racial discrimination. Participants also cited concerns for genetic traits such as alcoholism and mental illness as a deterrent to transracial adoption, believing that the characteristics were more common in specific ethnic minority groups than Whites (Jennings, 2006). Hence, White children were viewed as healthy, while ethnic children were considered as having a greater possibility of being unhealthy. As much as MEPA helped open the doors for children of color to find forever homes, it is not a comprehensive solution to resolving the scarcity of appropriate placements with culturally competent parents for foster care children.

Cultural Matching

Zweijlmans et al. (2018) identified three themes that influenced foster care placement decisions:

1. Matching as planned;
2. Matching being tailored; and
3. Matching being compromised.

Based on empirical evidence, rationalization, and work experience, matching as planned is when practitioners (caseworkers) look at the cultural background and qualities best suited for children. Matching being tailored describes an adjustment of matching, taking a different approach as it is tailored to the wishes, needs, circumstances, and characteristics of the people involved differing from case to case. Matching being compromised describes caseworkers' obstacles when there is a lack of placement options or missing information (Zweijlmans et al., 2018). Also, caseworkers

lowered matching standards to find placements for children as soon as possible, despite the obstacles they faced, while also safeguarding ways to decrease placement risk with caregiver families that would handle problematic behaviors and not be easily overwhelmed (Zweijlmans et al., 2018). Thus, caseworkers look at several factors when making placement decisions.

Notably, matching as planned as Zweijlmans et al. (2018) described would also consider the child's biological parents' input. The parents of children placed in foster care are more likely to be satisfied with foster care services if they felt the assigned caseworker worked with them toward reunification by setting clear expectations and respecting their cultural background (Alpert & Britner, 2009). While many studies contend for the advantages and disadvantages of transracial adoption and cultural matching, studies also show that children placed in transracial placements were required by peers to choose a racial identity and loyalty, though not forced to choose by their caregivers (de Haymes & Simon, 2003). Children of color also expressed ambivalence about their racial identity, demonstrating negative perceptions of African Americans and distance, stating they felt more connected to White persons than Black (de Haymes & Simon, 2003).

Additionally, children of color indicated that their White parents did not recognize or refuse to acknowledge racism toward their children by avoiding or minimizing their experiences (de Haymes & Simon, 2003). Study participants stated that their parents' denial of attention to culture and race limited their information regarding individuals of the same culture and ethnicity. On the other hand, the participants noted that their parents developed a greater appreciation for individuals of different cultures and races (de Haymes & Simon, 2003).

Nevertheless, several public policy perspectives regarding the placement of ethnic minority children with foster caregivers would better serve their interests and address racial

disparities in the foster care system. All views delineate the need to find formidable solutions to a longstanding problem, the overrepresentation of ethnic minority children in foster care. Anyon (2011) stated that policy perspectives include the need for accelerated permanency, where finding children a stable placement is paramount to their well-being and best interest.

Unfortunately, because there are not enough ethnic minority families willing to foster or adopt, proponents of accelerated permanency options believe that transracial adoptions and placement are the only ways to achieve permanency (Anyon, 2011).

On the other hand, proponents of cultural continuity contend that placing a foster child in a home connected to their racial identity is in the child's best interest. It increases their connection to their racial and ethnic community (Anyon, 2011). The need for family preservation, another perspective, highlights the importance of children to continue contact and ties with their natural family and prioritizes the conservancy of the child's biological family for possible reunification as the best outcome possible for children in foster care in achieving permanency (Anyon, 2011). Lastly, the social advantage policy perspective emphasizes the social or environmental circumstances that a foster child would require to become useful, independent, self-supporting, lawful citizens that thrive despite the unfavorable conditions there were subjected to during childhood (Anyon, 2011). Thus, it would be in the foster child's best interest to be given the opportunity to flourish by increasing their accessibility to social capital and palpable resources (Anyon, 2011).

Ethnic Foster Child Placement with Non-Ethnic Caregivers

In addition to the impact of abuse, maltreatment, and neglect before foster care placement, the experiences of foster care, losses encountered from various placements, and the trauma incurred from a combination of all these factors can contribute to adverse outcomes for

foster care children, adding to the impact foster care has on a child's overall well-being. The impact of foster care on a child's mental health, social-emotional well-being, academic performance, and physical health are well-documented. Studies show that individuals who experienced foster care meet significant struggles in attaining a high school diploma, a milestone usually achieved by way of a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) rather than a traditional high school diploma (Villegas et al., 2014). Foster care children are also less likely to achieve higher education, receive career or vocational counseling, and have diminished access to educational programs for employment and personal advancement (Villegas et al., 2014). Sadly, lack of academic preparation was a significant factor in low college completion rates in foster care children. Lack of academic preparation, mainly due to the continuous placement and school changes, is linked to poor educational outcomes (Villegas et al., 2014). On the other hand, fewer placement changes and school changes, fewer reunification failures with parents, and greater preparation for independent living were associated with better, enriched educational outcomes (Villegas et al., 2014).

Unfortunately, the issues faced by most foster care children are further exacerbated by the cultural, racial, and socioeconomic concerns felt by ethnic minority children also in the foster care system (Jewell et al., 2010). The concerns make foster care children feel socially unaccepted and more isolated than non-ethnic foster children (Jewell et al., 2010). Ethnic minority children placed with White families may not experience or be exposed to aspects of their culture, leading to healthy identity development and racial socialization. Their lack of experience with racial socialization may lead to a lack of preparedness for addressing and coping with racial hostilities the child may face in the future (Jewell et al., 2010).

Furthermore, unlike White foster parents, Hispanic foster parents identify with Hispanic foster children. Hispanic foster parents share the same language, many of the same cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and some of the same experiences coping with racial hostilities, discrimination, and economic adversities (Swartz, 2004). Hispanic foster parents advised they spoke to their Hispanic foster children in Spanish and taught them how to cook meals specific to their culture to help the children preserve cultural ties to their biological families and the ethnic community (Swartz, 2004). As a result, the children felt comfortable with their foster families as they shared many of the same cultural beliefs, values, and cultural patterns as their foster parents. Hispanic foster parents also recognize the importance of supporting the foster child's relationship with their biological families. They believe in the value of extended and surrogate family systems, often allowing the children to later refer to them as uncles and aunts once reunified (Swartz, 2004). Extended family members are an integral part of the Hispanic family system.

Furthermore, the role perceptions of ethnic minority foster parents differ from those of their White counterparts (Nasuti et al., 2004). Ethnic minority foster parents see their responsibility to facilitate the relationship between their foster child and the child's primary caregiver and family of origin, promote their foster child's social-emotional development, help foster care agencies operate efficiently, fill the role of a traditional parent, and enable spiritual growth (Nasuti et al., 2004). Nasuti et al. (2004) found that 48.1% of African American foster parents felt responsible for facilitating a relationship between their foster child and their birth family, while only 32.9% of White foster parents felt the same responsibility. There was also a significant difference in the perception of foster parent partnership with foster care agencies as 40.2% of African American families felt responsible for helping the agencies run efficiently (Nasuti et al., 2004). Study results found the differences were based on what the individuals

believed was the foster care agency's responsibility versus what they thought was the foster parent's responsibility. Results also indicated that foster parent perceptions in the study were related to race and not variables such as age, education, type of community, or foster care experiences as caregivers or foster children (Nasuti et al., 2004).

Notably, transracial foster care placements address the growing need for caregivers due to the increase of ethnic minority children versus the availability of ethnic minority individuals qualified to be caregivers. However, placing ethnic minority children in the home of non-ethnic, white families puts the children at risk of addressing their racial identity and coping with their ethnicity in a predominantly White culture (Jewell et al., 2010). Studies show ethnic minority children placed with transracial foster parents exhibited more externalizing behavioral issues than those placed with same race, foster parents. The children had higher incidents of externalized aggression and problems in school (Jewell et al., 2010).

On the other hand, ethnic minority children placed with foster parents of a similar culture will have a much more different experience than those placed in foster homes with differing cultures. Families have a strong influence in forming a child's ethnic identity (Umana-Taylor et al., 2006). Ethnic identity is an orientation towards an individual's native culture relative to the developmental processes of exploring and resolving how individuals identify themselves (Umana-Taylor et al., 2009). Across ethnic cultures, the family is critical in forming a healthy ethnic identity (Umana-Taylor et al., 2006). The interaction between a child and their family, such as the ethnic socialization occurring in their environment, is vital to their developmental outcomes (Umana-Taylor et al., 2006).

Furthermore, the individual development of Hispanic children is dependent and informed by what happens within the family, the ethnic socialization practices of Hispanic parents, the

behaviors, perceptions, values, and attitudes of an ethnic group, and how they see themselves as a member of their ethnic group (Umana-Taylor et al., 2009). Parents accomplish familial ethnic socialization by exposing their children to their native culture by beginning discussions about their country of origin, decorating their homes with symbols and objects representing their country of origin (Umana-Taylor et al., 2009). Thus, the child's experiences in their home environment and family characteristics play a significant role in cultural adaptation and development of ethnic identity through ethnic socialization practices.

Culture, Ethnicity, and Race in Foster Care

Individuals bring with them different experiences central to their distinctive cultural appearance, experience, and expression as everyone has features, characteristics, and social realities often connected to the group to which they belong. Individuals' experiences within a group influence the beliefs the group holds about what being part of that ethnic minority group means (Harrison et al., 1990). As a result, this review defines ethnicity as a deeply rooted sense of who one is within a group, including differences and similarities to other group members. The group members' beliefs also help shape the group's survival and developmental approaches or adaptive strategies (Harrison et al., 1990). Adaptive strategies are cultural patterns, values, attitudes, and behaviors members of specific ethnic minority groups have in common that encourage the welfare of families and individuals in the group (Harrison et al., 1990). Examples of adaptive strategies that are common among ethnic minority groups are the establishing of extended families and role flexibility that prioritizes interdependence among family members, biculturalism or the presence of two cultures (ethnic and dominant culture) within the group, and the prominence of ancestral worldviews as reflected in the group's spirituality, religiosity, and

philosophical orientation providing a context where group members to find significance, purpose, and self-actualization (Harrison et al., 1990).

Culture is shared among people connected by race, ethnicity, or nationality. Hong (2009) defines culture as a complex system of knowledge comprised of learned ways of thinking, feeling, interacting with others, as well as assertions and ideas about viewpoints regarding the world. Culture is more than ethnicity, race, and geographical attributes. Culture is an individual's view of the world and helps them decipher what they know about the world (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997). Culture is externalized in symbols, artifacts, and social constructs and utilized as a common ground for communication among members (Hong, 2009). Culture comprises an individual's unique values, norms, institutions, and artifacts that collectively represent a being and appreciation in the world (Brown, George, Sintzel, et al., 2009). Culture is unique to geography, people, and groups.

As culture is a network of emergent knowledge, experts posit that foster care children must be socialized and given time to acculturate into a new culture (Coakley & Gruber, 2015). Acculturation is particularly important if the child is placed in a home with caregivers of a different culture or race (Coakley & Gruber, 2015). Unfortunately, adjusting to and acculturating to a different culture or race can be stressful for the child. They need to set aside their language, customs, and family traditions while adjusting to their new family and surroundings. However, when foster parents are receptive to their foster child's values, beliefs, race, ethnicity, and culture, emphasizing cultural pride, the children show higher self-esteem (Coakley & Gruber, 2015). Understanding one's racial identity facilitates a greater, more profound perception of racial information and assists in responses to racial information experiences in the individual's

internal and external environments (Desai et al., 2020). Thus, racial socialization buffers racial information experiences.

Racial Socialization. Racial socialization allows parents to protect their ethnic children from negative racial messages by promoting positive racial messages that emphasize cultural pride (Coakley & Gruber, 2015). Racial socialization is defined as the developmental process children use to learn the behaviors, perceptions, values, and attitudes of a particular ethnic group (Chavez & French, 2007). Parents use it to develop adaptive and protective factors that promote their child's functioning in a world categorized by individuals' race and ethnicity. In this form, racial socialization helps cultivate pride, strength, and coping abilities that enable children to deal with racism effectively.

Children in homes were both parents of ethnic cultures, and those who have only one parent of ethnic culture benefit from racial, social socialization and its proactive, positive racial messages. Studies indicate that children in mixed families can also develop a positive racial identity and claim dual classification. Children of mixed ethnicity reported receiving proactive racial socialization messages and positive messages (Fatimilehin, 1999). The messages were mainly received during a developmental stage where the child was discovering their racial identity. During their time of racial discovery, children, usually during adolescence, have attitudes of contention and immersion, and racial socialization messages increase their self-esteem (Fatimilehin, 1999). Thus, children of mixed families will develop a racial identity based on the influence of their parents.

Racial socialization also works to instill cultural pride and educate the child about their cultural history and practices. Studies show proactive racial socialization messages significantly influence self-esteem and ethnic identity. Self-esteem and ethnic identity can increase resiliency

and protect and strengthen people of color (Chavez & French, 2007). Studies also show racial socialization messages about cultural pride are positively correlated with the self-esteem of minorities, specifically ethnic (Black) adolescents. Studies suggest that various racial values and customs taught by ethnic parents or caregivers are articulated and authenticated by the adolescent's ethnic (Black) peer groups (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002). The role the adolescents play within their peer groups also helps them gain skills that will help them develop healthy perceptions of themselves and cope with racial prejudice and discrimination (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002).

Racial prejudice and discrimination are experienced by many ethnic minority children, putting them at risk for poor self-image, following negative peer influences, and involvement in problematic attitudes and behaviors that can lead to delinquency (Eccles et al., 2006). Racial discrimination can also lead to low academic performance. Racial discrimination can contribute to declined school motivation undermining school engagement, further increasing the likelihood of adverse developmental outcomes during adolescence (Eccles et al., 2006). However, studies show racial and cultural connectedness can buffer racial discrimination on the youth's racial identities (Eccles et al., 2006). Eccles et al. (2006) found that culturally connected racial identities buffer the effects of racial discrimination by promoting protective factors that compensate for the impact of racial discrimination. Thus, ethnic minority parents often use racial socialization to talk about racism and prejudice with their children as they intertwine the discussions with a connection to their heritage and culture, which helps them develop a bond with their cultural group (Eccles et al., 2006).

Ethnic Compatibility. Ethnic compatibility in foster care placements helps the child form a positive ethnic identity, knowledge of their membership of a social group, and the value

and emotional significance ascribed to that membership (Anderson & Linares, 2012). Studies show examining one's ethnic and racial background helps develop self-awareness by accentuating the individual's foundational beliefs, biases, and differences. Studies have also found that ethnicity is difficult for individuals to grasp. However, examining the intentional and unintentional loss of the individual's ethnic culture due to assimilation and adoption of the mainstream American culture contributes to the individual's understanding of ethnic identity within themselves (Desai et al., 2020). Notably, ethnic identity emerges during early childhood serving as a protective factor that enables individuals to become resilient against social adversity and discrimination. Individuals who develop secure, positive connections to their ethnic group are more likely to have higher self-esteem, academic achievement, psychological adjustment, and greater coping abilities, as well as lower levels of depression and loneliness (Anderson & Linares, 2012).

Ethnic Dissimilarity. Conversely, ethnic dissimilarity in foster care placements contributes to less ethnically compatible social networks for the child, leaving them unprotected and defenseless against feelings of loneliness, social isolation, and symptoms of depression (Anderson & Linares, 2012). When placed with caregivers with dissimilar ethnic backgrounds, the child may also struggle with loyalties. They want to develop a sense of belonging with their foster family, interfering with their positive ethnic identity (Anderson & Linares, 2012). Ethnic dissimilarity contributes to child symptoms of depression, loneliness, and social dissatisfaction outcomes. It creates a lack of belongingness and reduces the child's ethnic identity and social connectedness to the foster family (Anderson & Linares, 2012). Additionally, as ethnic foster care children navigate their interpersonal relationships within a majority culture, they must also cope with their minority status (Anderson & Linares, 2012).

Cultural Dissimilarity. Conceptually similar to ethnic dissimilarity, cultural dissimilarity puts a child at risk for child conduct issues due to cooperation between biological parents and foster caregivers when they do not share the same ethnicity and language and are unknown to each other before placement. Cultural dissimilarity has a significant impact on children and has a negative effect on children internalizing and externalizing problems (Anderson & Linares, 2012). Foster care children are at increased risk of developmental delays, behavioral dysregulation and suffer from higher rates of internalizing and disruptive behaviors. They are also likely to continue experiencing social isolation and family instability even after placement (Anderson & Linares, 2012).

Benefits of Cultural Matching. Both foster children and their caregivers benefit from the cultural matching of children and families with similar values, beliefs, and traditions. Foster parents continue to develop essential values similar to those of the child's family origin. Children also felt safe, comfortable, and secure when matched with a family with shared beliefs. Shared cultural values and beliefs eased the children's transition into the foster family. Both the caregiver and child exhibited lower stress due to connections made based on a shared culture. The commonalities eased and enhanced communication between the child and caregiver (Brown, St. Arnault, George, et al., 2009). A longitudinal study conducted by Feigelman (2000) of transracially adopted children found that Hispanic adoptees tended to have seen a counselor or doctor for emotional problems at some point in their lifetime than all other racial subgroups (Asian, White, and Black) but were least likely to have been expelled or suspended from school for behavioral problems. Notably, in the study, Hispanic children with Anglo facial features were usually able to evade blatant demonstrations of racism despite living in predominantly White communities (Feigelman, 2000). However, Black and Asian adoptees were not as fortunate, as

the study showed they were more likely to face discrimination. Thus, blending in with their White family helped Hispanic children avoid outright discrimination.

Surprisingly, caregiver and child races generally match, as Black non-Hispanic caregivers, 83% of the sample are likely to have a child of the same race, and White children are more likely to live with a White, non-Hispanic caregiver, 78% of the sample, while only 47% of the sample of Hispanic children were living with a Hispanic caregiver (Barth et al., 2008).

Sadly, if foster children are not placed with caregivers with a similar ethnic or cultural background will find it hard to develop their ethnic identity (White et al., 2008). Studies also show that ethnic minority children preferred having a foster parent of the same race or ethnic background, which was significant (White et al., 2008). Many of the children (51%) studied also reported that they learned about their foster parents' cultural and ethnic traditions. Yet many more foster children (69%) had a strong desire to learn more about their cultural and ethnic traditions (White et al., 2008). Unfortunately, ethnic minority foster care children are more likely to be placed in a transracial home than their White counterparts due to the lack of available ethnic minority caregivers.

Challenges Faced by All Foster Parents

Foster parents are considered the frontline workers of child welfare. Foster parents rely on child welfare agencies to provide them with the resources and support needed to overcome the challenges they face with the foster care children they care for daily. Foster care children struggle with the repercussions of neglect, sexual, emotional, and physical abuse, as well as a plethora of mental health, social, emotional, and behavioral issues (Cooley & Petren, 2011). Despite their importance, foster parents often describe struggling with child welfare agencies to receive the help they need. Foster parents state they do not receive adequate assistance, support,

information, or respect they need and deserve (Cooley & Petren, 2011). While many foster parents are informed of what is going on in the life of their foster children, such as important meetings and information about reunification or placement changes, court hearings, and visitations, but still may report that they are not kept abreast of many important events in the lives of their foster children (Geiger et al., 2017).

Despite the challenges they face, most foster parents feel they are a vital part of a team that cares for the children in their home and wants to be treated by being more involved. Foster parents report they feel valued and appreciated when furnished with sufficient information about the children placed in their home and are included in meetings and appointments vital to their foster child (Geiger et al., 2017). Foster parents also feel valued, respected, and supported when child welfare workers do things as simple as returning their phone calls promptly.

Additionally, foster parents are faced with demands and challenges that include caring for children they may not have expected or were prepared, as they did not receive proper notice, training, support, or assistance, putting the caregiver and children at risk for adverse outcomes. In addition to the children's added stress, they also have to balance their personal and family lives. Many foster parents report having problems with their biological children due to integrating other children into the family has on their biological children. In a study conducted by Younes and Harp (2007), foster parents informed that their biological children appeared quieter, withdrawn, angrier, jealous, and temperamental. Some foster parents reported severe behavioral issues related to familial stress, such as anger, resentment, defiance, and other negative behaviors.

Many foster parents/participants also indicated that their children's adjustment seemed easier when the foster children were younger than their children or of the same age. Many

reported positive behaviors associated with fostering, as their children also learned to be more outgoing, responsible, and caring (Younes & Harp, 2007). Notably, despite some of the challenges faced, the foster parents in Younes and Harp's study reported that fostering had an overall positive impact on their families. Thus, both caregivers and their biological children felt a general sense of fulfillment in fostering.

In addition to helping their biological children deal with the adjustments necessary as they integrate the new foster child into their family, foster parents also try to establish a relationship with them. To add to the pressures they face, they must also deal with the foster agency that placed the child in their care. Many foster parents state they were not given any information about the children placed in their care (Cooley et al., 2017). Foster parents report they did not know their foster children's background when placed and were not allowed to participate in child behavior training as many of the child agency staff members had (Cooley et al., 2017). Foster parents lack the support of the foster care agencies that full disclosure of the child's background and proper training to deal with a child with problematic behaviors brings. The lack of support by the foster care agencies after placing the child can negatively influence the relationship foster parents form with their foster child due to missed opportunities for positive engagement.

Studies suggest that lack of support, lack of positive recognition, and the poor public image of foster care are just some of the issues contributing to a lack of foster care parents (Baum et al., 2001). Changes in society such as dual-working families, high cost of living, increasing divorce rates, and trouble meeting the complex needs of foster children today are among the many other issues contributing to the lack of caregivers in foster care (Baum et al., 2001). Yet, for most foster parents, intrinsic rewards received from helping children by fulfilling

the need for foster homes in their community, enjoying children, providing companionship for only children, substituting for a child who died or grown, religious reasons, or income supplementation are just a few of the motivations commonly discussed. However, motivations differ based on the age of the foster children the family desires, the foster parent's ethnicity, where the individual lives in their state, affiliated agencies, and length of time licensed, and the number of children in placement the caregivers already have in their home (Baum et al., 2001). Every foster parent has their reasons for wanting to foster a child.

Perceived Rewards of Foster Parenting

Despite the issues contributing to the lack of foster care providers, some individuals still choose to become caregivers. For most foster parents, intrinsic rewards received from helping children by fulfilling the need for foster homes in their community, enjoying children, providing companionship for only children, substituting for a child who died or grown, religious reasons, or income supplementation are just a few of the motivations (Baum et al., 2001). Intrinsic rewards are strong value-laden feelings inside the individual. The inherent rewards foster most caregivers associate with foster parenting are making a difference by nurturing and providing hope and providing opportunities to a child at a social, developmental, and emotional disadvantage.

Foster parents also find providing a sense of normalcy and belongingness to positively affect the child by providing them with a safe, healthy environment to grow (Buehler et al., 2003). Foster parents also enjoy giving love and receiving affection. Extrinsic rewards, or outside expectations, for foster parents are generally related to job sustainability and the desire to supplement their family income (Rodger et al., 2006). However, extrinsic motivations usually take a back seat to intrinsic motivations and are generally not the primary reason individuals

become and remain foster parents. Studies show foster parents list supplementing family income as the reason listed the least for fostering (Rodger et al., 2006). Thus, understanding the concepts that provide intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to individuals may prove vital for recruiting and retaining resource parents.

Foster parents have a strong desire to protect children from harm and provide a loving, nurturing home, all internal motivators for fostering (Rodger et al., 2006). Foster parents understand the troubles that plague the foster care system. They know that child welfare workers are swamped with large caseloads due to an overwhelmed foster care system (Geiger et al., 2017). Yet, simple things, like a timely return call from their child's case manager, would significantly improve foster parent's satisfaction with their role as caregivers for foster children. Studies show the three reasons that motivate individuals to become foster caregivers include rescuing abused and neglected children, increasing their family size, and other social concerns, such as the number of children who need a safe home and care (Cole, 2005). However, rescuing abused or neglected children and social concern was the greatest motivator for non-kin caregivers. The greatest motivator for kin caregivers was keeping the family out of the foster care system (Cole, 2005). Owing to the feelings of concern and desire to help children in foster care, focusing on positive interactions with children through training in therapeutic techniques may help resource parents achieve greater success fostering children with emotional and behavioral problems (Buehler et al., 2006).

Furthermore, internal motivators for foster caregivers, such as social concern for the community, specifically children, facilitate the secure attachment between foster parents and infants in foster care. The caregivers convert internal motivations into a positive, caring, affective relationship with the child, leading to secure attachment relationships. Foster parents

who were committed to caring for specific infants for the good of the community also successfully established secure attachment relationships with their foster children (Cole, 2005). Caregiver motivations for fostering children help develop secure attachments supporting the child's best possible development and reach their greatest potential despite their situation (Cole, 2005). However, the ambiguity of the ultimate dependency disposition and lack of control over the outcomes prevent some caregivers from investing in themselves emotionally to develop secure attachment relationships with the infants in their care.

Training Foster Parents for Successful Outcomes

To become successful foster parents, caregivers require specialized training. Caring for children with problematic behaviors would help prevent parenting stress and lack of sensitivity over time toward their foster children (Gabler et al., 2018). Studies support the importance of foster parent training in behavioral intervention and prevention strategies as foster children's problematic behaviors are associated with parenting and caregiver stress (Gabler et al., 2018). The foster children's problematic behaviors also contribute to placement disruptions, significantly impacting the successful long-term placements and adoption of foster care children. Foster parent training in handling behavioral problems, coping strategies, and sensitivity in difficult parenting circumstances with foster care children. Training in prevention and intervention will help foster parents understand the child's behavioral signals and improve the foster parents' coping strategies (Gabler et al., 2018). Training the foster family along with the primary caregiver reinforces a holistic approach to foster family support.

Foster caregivers can also be trained in filial therapeutic techniques. A promising, specialized training called filial therapy could help foster parents achieve successful outcomes. Filial therapy, a psychoeducational intervention used in family therapy, trains caregivers to

engage their children through play. The therapist facilitates the sessions and teaches the parent the basics of play therapy and how to conduct a session, providing supervision until the caregiver becomes proficient (Foley et al., 2006). During play therapy, caregivers can teach the children social skills and allow the children to express feelings and emotions. Thus, caregivers are the primary agents of change by forming healthy bonds and understanding with their children.

Throughout several studies, foster parents have continuously reported that their foster children's behavioral and mental health needs were the greatest challenges they faced as foster parents (Barnett et al., 2018). Studies also show that access to mental health services is lacking, and the outpatient services available are ineffective for children in the foster care system (Barnett et al., 2018). As such, filial therapy may prove a valuable tool to teach foster parents as foster children can pose parenting challenges that frequently serve as hindrances to forming positive affective attachments with their foster parents (Buehler et al., 2006). Child welfare agencies should provide foster caregivers incentives for obtaining specialized training in filial therapy, which will reduce placement breakdowns.

In addition to parenting challenges, foster care's transitory nature impedes building positive affective attachments. It is challenging for foster parents to develop affective attachments with their foster children when considering that the first goal of any case is to achieve permanency by reunifying the child with their family of origin (Buehler et al., 2006). The wait time in foster care for reunification can leave children who are already hurting from their parents' separation feeling worried and anxious in anticipation, affecting their ability to form positive attachments with their foster parents (Buehler et al., 2006). The children often

struggle with bonding with their foster parents as they feel a sense of loyalty to their parents and anticipate reunification with them.

Also contributing to the forming of positive attachments and attachment security are unremitting placement interruptions and displacement. Reasons like child behavioral issues are the primary reason listed for placement interruptions. Foster parents play a significant role in placement disruptions as children are often removed from the foster home at the foster parent's request (Leathers et al., 2019). Foster parents caring for children in long-term foster care that experienced a more significant number of positive interactions, good times together, good communication, and closer relationships with their foster children were less likely to experience placement disruptions with their foster children (Leathers et al., 2019).

Conversely, parents who reported more difficult parenting and less rewarding experiences as foster parents were more likely to experience placement disruptions with their foster children. Difficult parenting experiences were related to receiving little support as they struggled to care for a child with behavioral issues contributing to parenting stress (Leathers et al., 2019). While a child's behavioral problems can be a factor in placement disruption, parenting experiences were more strongly associated with placement disruptions than the child's behavioral issues. Foster children should be placed in an environment that promotes the child's rights and allows them to get care and treatment that promotes spiritual, emotional, physical growth, and shows respect to the child while also setting clear limits, the mark of effective foster parents (Baum et al., 2001). Placing the children in an environment that promotes holistic growth and development will reduce placement breakdowns.

Nevertheless, foster children's internalizing problems were associated with foster parent stress and negatively associated with their supportive presence (Gabler et al., 2014). Studies

show that foster children were more securely attached to foster parents that experienced less parenting stress (Gabler et al., 2014). Instability and dysregulation of the foster family caused by the continual movement of foster children in and out of the home, particularly in group homes, also affect the foster parent's experience with stress and attachment development (Gabler et al., 2014). It takes time for foster children to develop the social-emotional capacity and adaptive behavioral tactics that will supplant the maladaptive behavioral tactics (Gabler et al., 2014). It is vital to provide the child with a stable, supportive environment with long-term caregivers to improve foster children's mental health. Though secure attachments with their caregiver may not be a protective factor buffering against behavioral issues in short-term placements, it is a considerable factor in longer-term placements buffering against internalizing mental health issues (Gabler et al., 2014). Thus, caregivers need to form attachments with their foster children to facilitate longer-term placements to see overall improvements in their mental health.

Sadly, negative experiences with foster children contribute to low retention rates among foster parents and a shortage of appropriate placements for foster children. However, if foster parents were better educated on the challenges they might encounter as foster parents, such as when current foster parents share their experiences with prospective foster parents, it may help promote retention and boost satisfaction among new foster parents (Brown, St. Arnault, George, et al., 2009). As such, foster parent training and education are an integral part of providing caregivers with the support they need to overcome some of the challenges faced by foster parents. Foster parent education would be beneficial as many foster parents no longer want to be caregivers to foster children due to the lack of support from child welfare agencies.

Studies also show caregivers who receive and complete training find more satisfaction in their role as foster parents, have an enriched sense of well-being, and are more willing to assist in

reunifying their foster children with their biological parents (Cooley & Petren, 2011). Dorsey et al. (2014) studied foster caregivers of various cultural backgrounds and caregiver roles (i.e., kinship, traditional, etc.) who prioritized their concerns regarding behavior management skills, support and education regarding foster parent roles, and the desire to know about their foster children, such as trauma history and social background. All the participants wanted to learn how to redirect problematic behaviors and understand uncommon behaviors effectively. The caregivers expressed wanting to learn how to work with their child within their role as a foster parent to support their child during stressful times, such as the child's biological parents missed visits with their child. Like many high-quality caregivers, the participants were interested in supporting the foster child by knowing their trauma history and social background to understand some problematic issues and solve them.

Nonetheless, successful foster parents can be made through foster parent training. Foster parents need the proper training to prepare them for their roles with the foster children they will care for, support, and mentor. Having realistic expectations about fostering is vital to successful fostering outcomes (Barnett et al., 2018). Successful foster parent training must be comprehensive, including 12 competencies that are best practices in foster parent training. The competency domains in foster parent training should discuss providing a safe, secure, and nurturing environment; promoting educational achievement and success in their foster children; supporting the child's cultural needs and permanency planning, handling the demands of fostering on the caregiver's personal and family life; dealing with ambiguity and loss for both the foster child and foster family, and developing as a foster parent while also working as a team member (Cooley & Petren, 2011).

Recruiting High-Quality Foster Parents

The lack of available caregivers for foster children is not exclusive to the United States or among the Hispanic culture but is heterogeneous among different countries and cultures. Randle et al. (2012) found that not becoming foster parents among study participants was similar among cultural groups. Randle et al. (2012) found most individuals are not familiar with foster care or how it works. Other reasons listed by study participants were being too busy with their own families, children, work, responsibilities, and commitments to become foster parents (Randle et al., 2012). Concerns regarding the availability of time required to nurture and care for another child, as well the effect of adding another child to the family would affect the family's members, relationships, finances, and overall way of life, also negatively influence the participation of prospective caregivers (Helm et al., 2008). Helm et al. (2008) found that future caregivers are easily frustrated by the application process, the arduous scrutiny household members must undergo, and are chary of all the private, confidential information that must be furnished to child welfare agencies to participate in foster parent programs. Yet, the most troubling reason behind the lack of caregivers is never being asked, which along with not knowing anything about foster care, is evidentiary of a lack of proper recruitment strategies and lack of commitment to finding suitable families for foster children on the part of child welfare agencies.

Nonetheless, not all individuals can or should be foster caregivers. Specific characteristics and attitudes make individuals more acquiescent, flexible, sympathetic to the needs and struggles of children in foster care, and willing to work with the child welfare professionals involved in foster children's care. Assessing prospective parents' attitudes toward parenting and coping with problems and potential problems can significantly reduce finding high-quality caregivers. Assessments help differentiate between prospective caregivers who are

task-oriented, emotional, avoidant, valuation, covert, or overt, helping to distinguish potential low-quality caregivers from high-quality caregivers (De Maeyer et al., 2015). Generally, emotion-focused coping styles are less effective than problem or task-oriented coping styles. However, effective coping styles are determined by past experiences (De Maeyer et al., 2015). If the copying style worked for the individual in the past, they would continue to use it.

Notably, current coping styles for prospective parents may not be suitable for parenting foster children. De Maeyer et al. (2015) found that half of the study participants were at medium risk for negative parenting. The assessment showed a lack of empathy that could be categorized as high-risk for about 8% of the participants (De Maeyer et al., 2015). Thus, an assessment measuring parenting attitudes and coping skills would be beneficial in recruiting high-quality caregivers.

The recruitment of high-quality caregivers is essential to satisfy the many needs of foster care children. High-quality caregivers are sensitive to the needs of their foster children. Sensitive caregivers fulfill their children's need for belongingness, mollify their psychological and emotional needs, prevent mental health issues, and provide them with learning opportunities (Steenbakkens et al., 2018). The way the needs of foster children are met with high-quality foster parents is what makes the greatest difference in the outcomes of foster children's lives. Conversely, when foster children's needs are left unmet, one unmet will interfere with others, causing further decline, such as when unmet mental health needs impact learning and educational outcomes. As discussed in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, higher-order needs cannot be met unless lower-order needs are met (Steenbakkens et al., 2018). Thus, understanding how the needs of foster care children can be satisfied is essential to permanency.

Permanency is essential to foster care. When children cannot be reunified with their biological families, children will transition to adoption in a quest for permanency. Children who find stability in a foster home placement will find permanency there, making the placement a success. Studies show children view a foster care placement as successful only if they wanted to be with the caregiver, whether they only wanted to be fostered, adopted, or merely living with a family member (Sinclair & Wilson, 2003). The children reported they wanted to be with their caregivers because they felt loved, respected, and treated as part of the foster parent's family without choosing between their foster parent and their biological parents and families (Sinclair & Wilson, 2003).

Permanency is determined by caregiver stability. Factors such as placement type, father figure involvement, and child characteristics such as intellectual functioning and externalizing and internalizing behaviors were the most significant predictors of caregiver stability (Proctor et al., 2011). Proctor et al. (2011) found that 20% of children not adopted by age six experienced instability in their permanent placement. However, studies suggest that several factors such as high-functioning caregivers, child characteristics like having a child with above-average intelligence, or caregiver characteristics like highly involved father figures might facilitate caregiver stability as they interact with the placement environment (Proctor et al., 2011). Hence, the child and caregiver characteristics act like moderators increasing the likelihood of caregiver stability.

Studies also show caregivers view placement as successful if the child yearning for stability and security, reciprocated love, affection, and respect even in difficult times (Sinclair & Wilson, 2003). Thus, successful placements achieve permanency for foster care children that cannot be reunited with their biological families and promote qualities needed for success. The

qualities caregivers need for successful placement, and permanency outcomes are caregivers' ability to care for, nurture, and offer love and stability to the foster child.

Nevertheless, caregiver recruitment is a colossal barrier to achieving permanency for children in the foster care system. Barriers identified include finding approved foster caregivers willing to take care of children who have special needs or characteristics that make them difficult to place long term, as well as the inability to find prospective caregivers with the maximum potentiality to take care of the children that are hard to place and have special needs (Sullivan et al., 2015). However, strategies were identified that would alleviate the problem. Participants suggested obtaining specialized staff to focus on diligent recruitment and increased use of data to identify, understand, implement practices based on regional needs (Sullivan et al., 2015).

Foster parent recruitment strategies include word of mouth referrals, compensation for referrals, and advertisements (Berrick et al., 2011). However, the most common ways individuals discover fostering are by knowing foster families (34.7%), knowing foster children personally (12.8%), growing up in a foster family household with parents who were also foster parents (11%), hearing about it on the radio (6.5%), seeing an advertisement on a billboard (2.3%), newspaper (10.9%), television (1.2%), or internet (0.2%), and formerly being foster children (3.6%), are common recruitment efforts used by foster care agencies (MacGregor et al., 2006). While these strategies appeal to some, referrals from other foster parents are the most critical for recruitment as foster parents are vital messengers to prospective caregivers.

Nonetheless, the intrinsic motivations of adults interested in making a difference in a foster child's life can be used as marketing strategies to target individuals who share the same life perspectives—targeting individuals who share the same life perspectives as the referring foster parents will yield the recruitment of high-quality caregivers (Berrick et al., 2011). As such, to

effectively recruit high-quality foster parents, child welfare agencies should begin with educating their communities about the importance of becoming a foster parent while providing realistic expectations of the complexities of foster parenting as it will help to recruit foster parents, as well as aid in the retention of caregivers. Improving retention will also contribute to recruitment as caregivers share their successful experiences and satisfaction with others who can also become foster parents (Baum et al., 2001).

Collaboration with existent agencies and organizations within the Hispanic community that already provide goods and services would also prove helpful. Community organizations such as local businesses, community clubs, restaurants, youth and adult sports leagues, recreation centers, and churches that already provide them with services specific to the Hispanic population will better serve collaborative efforts between child welfare agencies and the community in the recruitment of prospective caregivers (Rivera, 2006). Engaging the Hispanic community through trusted organizations that play a role in their everyday lives opens the door to a broader community perspective for child welfare organizations and prospective Hispanic caregivers (Rivera, 2006). The organization's standing in the community and its access to the target population can be of considerable assistance to the foster care agency's outreach efforts.

Concerns of Foster Care

Nonetheless, of significant concern for child welfare agencies is placement stability. Studies show that caregiver characteristics, such as income, education, and marital status, do not impact placement stability. However, caregiver race had the most significant impact on placement stability, showing that ethnic children placed with families of the same race were more likely to achieve placement stability than ethnic children placed with White families (O'Neill et al., 2012). Placement stability and the risk of unsuccessful placement concerning

foster home breakdowns can further traumatize the child and interfere with forming intimate relationships in the child's future (Baum et al., 2001). Studies show that over 25% of children in care have experienced previous placement as the mean number of placements for children in care is 2-3 since being referred to care. However, studies also show that children in family-style group care experienced fewer placements than foster children (i.e., placed with relatives).

In comparison, children in residential care experienced significantly more placements than foster children (Leloux-Opmeer et al., 2016). While family-based placements such as traditional foster homes, kinship caregivers, or family-style group care settings are preferred by child welfare agencies when out-of-home care is necessary, children in family-style settings more often experienced serious placement disruptions (Leloux-Opmeer et al., 2016). Placement disruptions for foster care children are a continuous obstacle to proper mental health treatment and other services needed to obtain the stability necessary to become happy adults eventually.

Unfortunately, due to constant placement disruptions, children in foster care struggle throughout developmental stages without the help needed to meet essential life milestones that enable them to become successful, healthy, well-adjusted individuals. Because they are not given the aid required, foster care children experience systemic oppression, as they are prevented from communicating their opinions, desires, and emotions (Bruskas, 2008). Children in foster care meet all five conditions that determine if a group of people is genuinely experiencing oppression: (a) exploitation, (b) marginalization, (c) powerlessness, (d) cultural imperialism, and (e) violence. Exploitation can be explained as big businesses taking advantage of people on a whim. Children in foster care can be considered exploited as they are unintentionally dominated and oppressed by a collective group, specifically child welfare organizations (Bruskas, 2008). The organizations do not question the policies or procedures they implement and do not address

foster care children's feelings and experiences (Bruskas, 2008). Marginalization occurs when a group of people without a source of income cannot afford basic needs struggling in society.

Children in foster care experience marginalization as they struggle to participate in society and rarely find permanency or well-being. Powerlessness is defined as a loss of authority or power over oneself (Bruskas, 2008). Placement decisions for foster care children are made without

regard to the child's desire, and foster care children are rarely involved in placement decisions, leaving them powerless. Cultural imperialism is the normalization of a dominant group's culture

and experiences, making other groups' experiences insignificant and not visible (Bruskas, 2008). The dominant group cannot understand the non-dominant groups' perspectives. Children in foster

care are not the dominant group. They experience exclusion from the dominant group, children living with their families, children without family, and their own biological family. Finally,

violence as a form of oppression is experienced when a social practice or injustice is accepted and allowed to continue despite knowledge of its occurrence (Bruskas, 2008).

and allowed to continue despite knowledge of its occurrence (Bruskas, 2008).

Furthermore, children in foster care experience trauma when they are removed from their homes due to physical, emotional, sexual abuse, neglect, and separation from their biological parents or caregivers. They receive no help in adjusting to their new life or environment. They are not aware that they may never be reunited with their parents, an experience attributed to social injustice. Child welfare agencies should educate foster care children on why they were removed from their homes. Educating the child will help them understand the function of child welfare and the intentions of the individuals who removed them from their biological parent(s) or guardians. Education for foster children can be offered as an orientation based on their academic level to ensure appropriateness and understanding of the material by the children (Bruskas,

2008). Education should teach the child welfare agency's role, foster caregiver's role, and draw clear expectations to facilitate the foster home's adjustments.

Addressing the Individual Needs of Foster Care Children

To improve the foster care system, child welfare agencies must also consider each child's individual needs. While the foster parent is not the first choice for a child, foster parents have a long-lasting impact on the children they care for. As such, no child placed in foster care should be worse off than they were before child welfare agency intervention. Foster children should also maintain connectedness with their family of origin and feel a sense of belonging to thrive. While many foster children are content with their foster placements, many still lack a feeling of belongingness with their foster families from their foster caregivers' emotional connections (Storer et al., 2014). Forming genuine relationships and making connections with their foster caregivers are critical factors for the overall feeling of well-being in foster care children (Storer et al., 2014). Studies show meaningful, emotional connections with caregivers can play an essential role in staying away from risky behaviors, developing future attainable goals, and progressing past the survival mode that is a byproduct of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorders. Attachments and bonds formed between the foster parent and the child are protective factors for foster care children.

Studies also show that parental sensitivity, or the way caregivers perceive and interpret the signals their child gives, is vital to the child's psychological development and the forming of secure attachments (Gabler et al., 2018). Conversely, foster parents also stated that meaningful bonds with their foster children improved and reinforced their parenting practices (Storer et al., 2014). However, parenting stress can interfere with parenting sensitivity, specifically in caregivers who have been foster parents for an extended period. Caregiver stress levels impact

parental sensitivity causing a diminished supporting presence and leading to maladaptive parenting practices (Gabler et al., 2018). Thus, when compounded with a foster child's problematic behaviors, parenting stress will significantly weaken the parent's ability to be there for their foster child emotionally.

Furthermore, although equal treatment in addressing disparity is essential, it is equally important that child welfare agencies have culturally respectful approaches regarding the child's family, kin, and community. Many child welfare agencies are aware that their approach to cultural competence is barely acceptable as child welfare workers express their desire to know more about the culture of the children and families they served (Nybell & Gray, 2004). They specifically wanted to know how their clients' extended families work and what to look for when conducting family assessments. The significance of racial, ethnic, and religious factors attributable to the child's race and ethnicity cannot be ignored in a child's development. Thus, cultural differences must be accounted for, embraced, encouraged, and respected by child welfare agencies while still seeking fairness and equality among all children (Badeau et al., 2004). Besides providing foster children with basic needs of food and shelter, caseworkers are tasked with finding someone who will provide care specific to their cultural needs and keenly aware of the cultural dynamics that influence their behaviors.

To truly satisfy MEPA guidelines calling for the best interest of the child regardless of the race of the parent and child, at the very least, there must be an improvement in cultural competence. Improvements in cultural competence must be related to cross-cultural relationships between the foster parent and foster child, where foster parents are educated on the children's culture and its differences. Fortunately, many foster parents acknowledge the need for a

culturally sensitive foster care system that could help bridge the gap in knowledge, experience, and practice between them and the foster children for who they care.

Typically, foster parents are amenable to learning about their foster child's culture. Studies indicate that foster parents expressed the desire for more support and resources to care for the child when cultural differences between their family, the child, and the child's family were present (Brown, Sinzel, St. Arnault, et al., 2009). Thus, foster parents are aware of the need for culturally sensitive community services, such as counseling from a minority approach and resources staffed by individuals with a similar culture as that of the child or with individuals that were highly knowledgeable of the child's unique culture (Brown, Sinzel, St. Arnault, et al., 2009). When foster parents familiarize themselves with the children's culture, they are equipped with the tools necessary to construct opportunities to engage and make connections with their culture. Understanding their culture and world reinforces a strong, healthy cultural identity in the foster child (Brown et al., 2013). Thus, inaccessibility to culture-based resources is a considerable barrier to a culturally sensitive foster care system that includes all resource parents.

Summary

Race and ethnicity will always be significant factors in social work and child welfare practices in the United States due to continuous demographic changes. As minority populations continue to grow, it will be increasingly important to learn to recognize and interpret the differences and commonalities among different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups in the United States. Training all foster parents to understand the diverse groups and recruiting ethnic minority foster parents immersed in their group's cultural practices, especially in the child's community, will help reduce out-of-home placements and facilitate successful outcomes (Carter-Black, 2002). If improvements cannot be made in recruiting Hispanic foster parents who are willing to

care for Hispanic foster children, all prospective parents recruited must be culturally receptive to their foster children of ethnic minority groups.

Cultural receptivity is described as the foster parent's willingness to promote their foster children's cultural development (Coakley & Orme, 2006). Foster parents who are culturally receptive participate in activities that promote the child's cultural development, support relationships with others that share the child's culture, and find resources where the children can get their cultural needs met. They also learn parenting strategies of the child's culture and glean information from others who successfully parent ethnic children (Coakley & Orme, 2006). Hence, the key to successful foster care outcomes is addressing the child's needs, including the need for belongingness, love, and nurturing, which can be achieved through cultural matching with ethnic minority foster caregivers and cultural competence training non-ethnic foster caregivers.

Despite the disproportionate number of ethnic, minority foster care children compared to the number of available ethnic minority caregivers, little is done to improve recruitment efforts for caregivers sharing the same culture and ethnicity as the children in foster care. Foster care agencies and child welfare agencies must figure out why so few Hispanic families are unwilling to become caregivers to foster children of similar cultural backgrounds who direly need them. They must explore the perceptions of suitable Hispanic individuals who can become prospective caregivers. The study will be valuable to understanding changes that must be made in recruitment efforts and community education about foster parenting to help future caregivers become amenable to providing culturally competent care to children who share their culture and ethnicity.

Chapter Three: Methods

Overview

A qualitative study was conducted to explore the attitudes and perceptions of Hispanics regarding their willingness or unwillingness to take on caregiver roles for children in foster care, specifically Hispanic children. A qualitative study is clear and specific about what it intends to explore based on a significance identified as relevant, substantive, and worth understanding (Cypress, 2018). Current literature addresses the challenges faced by foster care and child welfare agencies with placing foster care children with suitable families, mainly ethnic minority children, and the lack of ethnic minority caregivers. Current literature also discusses the benefits of cultural matching of foster children with caregivers who share the same culture. However, research does not address why there is a shortage of ethnic minority caregivers. Literature also does not discuss possible factors related to a lack of Hispanic caregivers or their opinions and views on foster parent roles. The gap in the literature, a phenomenon that must be fully explored, commits the researcher to the study and its word, having the potential to achieve the study's goals (Cypress, 2018). In the future, the study may assist foster care and child welfare agencies in upcoming endeavors with prospective Hispanic foster caregivers.

Design

A phenomenological design was used for this qualitative study. A phenomenological research design was the most appropriate choice for the study as it sought to understand the human experience (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenology is directed toward the places where meanings and understandings begin as it encounters things and events in the world (van Manen, 2014). van Manen (2014) described phenomenological research as a reflective study of pre-reflective human experiences. The purpose of the phenomenological design was to describe

several individuals' commonalities in the meaning of their lived experiences of a phenomenon or concept (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phenomenological design is rooted in philosophy and is frequently used in sociological and psychological research. Moustakas (1994) stated the participant's perceptions in phenomenological studies are considered the primary source of knowledge that cannot be doubted. Phenomenological studies acknowledge that there will always be a relationship between what one perceives externally, memories, judgments, and perceived internally (Moustakas, 1994). The research conducted is essential for understanding several individuals' common perceptions or shared experiences of a phenomenon and used to develop practices, policies, or a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Questions

To explore Hispanic's attitudes as caregivers and understand their perceptions, the researcher posited the following questions to participants to identify the common factors in their lived experiences:

RQ1: What attitudes and perceptions do Hispanics in Tampa Bay hold regarding caregiver roles for foster care children?

RQ1a: What do they think about becoming foster parents?

RQ1b: How do they feel about becoming foster parents?

RQ2: How do the lived experiences of Hispanics in Tampa Bay influence their willingness to become foster parents?

RQ3: What are the factors that contribute to a shortage of Hispanic foster parents in Tampa Bay?

The research questions helped to identify and understand the attitudes and perceptions that contribute to the disparity in Hispanic caregivers and promulgate the phenomena made up of the lived experiences of the participants in the study.

Procedures

The researcher posted an invitation to participate in the study on social media, specifically Facebook. Interested individuals who believed they met the study criteria messaged the researcher to link to the criteria survey on www.polleverywhere.com. Recruits completed the survey to determine if they met the criteria. The survey was found on and accessed directly via a link provided to the participants. The participant selection criteria for the study was the following:

1. Participants were of Hispanic ethnicity.
2. Participants must live in the Tampa Bay Area -Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, or Hernando Counties.
3. Participants must be adults ages 24-65 who are eligible for caregiver recruitment through child welfare agencies.
4. Participants must have no criminal record or substantiated abuse/neglect child welfare cases.

The survey included the following questions:

1. Are you Hispanic or of Hispanic descent?
2. Do you live in Hillsborough, Pasco, Hernando, or Pinellas counties?
3. Are you between the ages of 24 and 65?
4. Have you or anyone in your household ever been convicted of a crime that would make you ineligible to become a foster parent?

5. Have you or anyone in your household ever been involved in substantiated child abuse allegations?
6. If selected for the study, would you be willing to participate in a 60-minute interview, as well as a shorter follow-up interview to elicit participant feedback?

The questions presented in the criteria survey intended to facilitate study participants' purposeful selection to further the researcher's study. Question one determined if the individual is of Hispanic ethnicity and is crucial in determining qualification for the study. Question two verified the individual's county of residence in Tampa Bay, Florida. Question three aimed to learn if the participants meet the age requirement for the study as only individuals of legal adult age in their state may become foster parents. Questions four and five meant to uncover any criminal or child abuse history to determine if the participant and household members are eligible to become foster parents. Question six served to gauge the participant's willingness to participate in a follow-up interview for member checking. The feedback obtained validated the themes discovered in the interviews during the open coding process. Once the study reached six eligible recruits, the survey closed. The study utilized six participants. The researcher informed the recruits of their selection via email or direct contact and briefed the participants of the study's purpose. An email with consent forms were sent to the participants. The rights and responsibilities of the researcher and participants were included. The signed consent forms were returned and received by the researcher before the interviews begin.

Setting and Participants

In a phenomenological study, samples are purposefully chosen. Determining and assessing the sample size of a qualitative research design is extracted from the methodology, epistemology, and ideological characteristics of qualitative researcher inquiry (Vasileiou et al.,

2018). A criterion-based sampling method was used to ensure participants were chosen based on the criteria needed for inclusion in the study sample (Durdella, 2019). The study sample was comprised of six Hispanic participants from the Tampa Bay area of Florida. The Tampa Bay area includes Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, and Hernando counties. Smaller sample sizes are commonly used in applied social science research, such as phenomenological studies (Durdella, 2019). Phenomenological studies necessitate fewer participants as thorough sequential interviews collect the data (Durdella, 2019). Small sample sizes in qualitative research support the depth and breadth of the analysis needed for qualitative inquiry and are sufficient to capture a range of data issues (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a form of analysis widely used in phenomenological research studies and social constructivist theory, was used to interpret and analyze the data. IPA researchers recommend three to six participants. For this study, six participants were chosen for a more robust sample, just as Rygg and Loras (2019) executed in their qualitative study of foster parent experiences regarding child-oriented family therapy. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and advised of their right to stop their participation in the study at any time. The participant's right to privacy was also be discussed, and participants were assured that their personal information were safeguarded.

Participants were interviewed via Zoom video conferencing and audio recorded. The recorded responses were transcribed using the transcription service Otter.ai, and the researcher reviewed the transcription for accuracy. Study participants were interviewed via video from a place of their choosing. A virtual setting was chosen due to convenience, comfortability, and researcher/participant safety due to the COVID-19 precautions necessary to prevent the spread of

the coronavirus. Once the primary interview was conducted, participants were reminded of the subsequent follow-up for feedback and verification of the data gathered.

Role of the Researcher

As the study's human instrument, the researcher makes known that she is Hispanic, of Puerto Rican ethnicity, and some cultural attributes may contribute to the researcher's philosophical assumptions or biases. The researcher also spent a significant amount of time working closely with youth involved in the child welfare system within a professional role. The researcher's professional role in working with youth involved in the child welfare system and her ethnic background is related to her social position, personal experiences, and professional beliefs (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Throughout the interviews with participants, the researcher analyzed her professional beliefs and personal experiences that might influence the data as an individual of Hispanic ethnicity and minority background. Notably, the researcher's position formulated the values and beliefs shaping the interest in the research subject and the focus of the study (Clancy, 2002). Thus, in this study, the researcher, who shares the participants' Hispanic ethnicity, develops meaning to the participants' complex views as a primary source of reliance for the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Collection

This study's phenomenological approach sought to understand the perceptions that influence Hispanics' willingness to become foster caregivers and the perceptions that act as deterrents to becoming foster caregivers to foster care children. To understand their perceptions and attitudes, the data in this study were collected in two ways, the demographic questionnaire and guided interview. First, a basic demographics questionnaire was provided to participants to collect information such as age, gender, education level, relationship status, and socioeconomic

status. Unlike the criterion survey used for participant selection, the demographics questionnaire allowed the researcher to determine if the participant's answers to the interview questions are related to their age, gender, marital/relationship status, educational level, or household income. Demographic data collected is essential to learn about the characteristics of potential foster parents (Rodger et al., 2006). Selected participants completed a general demographics questionnaire with the following questions:

1. What is your age? (a) 24-34, (b) 35-45, (c) 46-56, or (d) 57-65
2. What is your gender? (a) Male, (b) Female, or (c) Other
3. Are you married, single, in a domestic partnership, or widowed? (a) Married, (b) Single, (c) Domestic Partnership, or (d) Widowed
4. What is your highest level of education? (a) No High School Diploma, (b) High School Diploma, (c) Some College, or (d) College or above
5. What is your average yearly household income? (a) 30k or less, (b) 31k - 41k, (c) 42k - 52k, or (d) 53k or above
6. Is your household dual/multi-income? (a) Yes, or (b) No

The demographics questionnaire permitted the researcher to determine if the participant's answers to the interview questions are related to their age, gender, marital/relationship status, educational level, or household income. The questions in the demographic questionnaire were vital to the study as studies indicate living in a household with married foster parents and living in a home with economic security where one of the parents works outside the home (usually the father) and the other was the primary caretaker and homemaker (usually the mother) were significant contributors to successful fostering outcomes (Orme & Combs-Orme, 2014). Thus,

having two parents and one who stayed at home as the primary caretaker is vital to a foster child's stability.

Next, the guided or semi-structured interviews were conducted and observations made during the interview to obtain details on the experiences of six participants of Hispanic descent. The guided interview provides a framework for the discussion between the researcher and the participants and allows for follow-up questions based on the participant's responses to pre-constructed questions (Turner, 2010). Though the guided interview questions are structured, the researcher can adapt the questions and explore a more personal approach to the interview (Turner, 2010). In addition to recording the participants' responses during the interview for transcription, the researcher also made note of the participants' body language and displays of emotions.

Interviews

Max van Manen (2014) described phenomenology as a quest to discover “the origin, presentation, and meaning of a meaning” (p. 26). The semi-structured interview is the most widely used method for data collection in qualitative studies. Phenomenological research collects experiential information from participants through interviews, the most common form of data collection method of researchers in the human sciences, to bring the original meaning of the participants' lived experiences to the study's audience (Adams & van Manen, 2017).

Phenomenological interviews are semi-structured yet mostly informal, interactive processes utilizing open-ended questions and comments intended to elicit complete descriptions of an individual's experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). While there are various interview design forms, a semi-structured interview approach was used for the study. As the keystone interview approach for Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) to data

analysis, the study's semi-structured interview questions are open-ended, prompting and facilitating participant disclosure (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). Thus, the semi-structured interview approach or guided interview is more structured than informal conversation while allowing flexibility for the interviewer to ask questions that flow naturally.

Although the researcher developed some advanced questions, the guided interview or semi-structured interview takes a comprehensive approach to learn more about the participants' profound experiences, allowing them to adopt a more personal, flexible style despite the structured questions (Turner, 2010). The interviews were relaxed and began with basic introductions. The goal of the informal social conversation was to create a trusting, comfortable atmosphere as the researcher and participant built a rapport to help the participant respond honestly and comprehensively (Moustakas, 1994). Before the interview, referred to as the Epoch, the rapport-building process allows biases to be set aside so that past associations and understandings do not interfere with the discussion (Moustakas, 1994).

Interview Questions. The questions in the interviews of a phenomenological study investigate what is specified by the participant in moments of day-to-day experiences as they are lived (van Manen, 2014). The researcher captured participant experiences by asking the following questions:

1. Are you familiar with the foster care system?
2. How do you learn what you know about the foster care system?
3. Do you understand how and why some children enter the foster care system?
4. Are you familiar with the different caregiver roles in the foster care system?
5. Would you become a foster parent or caregiver to a foster child?
6. Why or why not?

7. Are you or have you ever been a foster parent or caregiver to a child in the foster care system?
8. If so, were or are you a relative or non-relative caregiver or foster parent, and why?
9. If not, have you ever been recruited or applied to be a foster parent or been asked to be a non-relative or relative caregiver by a child welfare agency/Department of Children and Families?
10. Do you believe there are benefits to becoming a foster parent or caregiver to a foster child?
11. If so, what are the benefits?
12. If none, why do you believe there are no benefits to becoming a foster parent?
13. If not currently a foster parent and not interested, what would change your mind about becoming a foster parent/caregiver to a foster child?

Broad questions are used to make fundamental descriptions containing valuable information, meaning, and vigor (Moustakas, 1994). The questions in a phenomenological study are critical to its success and must produce the experiential information necessary for human science research (Adams & van Manen, 2017). Questions one through three of the study aimed to assess the participant's general knowledge of the foster care system. The questions are used to determine if participants know foster care's role in the child welfare system and the community. Question four was utilized to ascertain their knowledge and understanding of different caregiver roles within the foster care system. Questions five through eight intended to explore the participant's perceptions and opinions of why they would or would not become caregivers to a foster child. Participant answers allowed the researcher to inquire about specified caregiver roles. Caregiver roles for children as traditional family-style foster parents, kinship caregivers, and

group care foster parents were explored with each participant. Questions nine was meant to identify any recruitment efforts made by local foster care agencies. Questions ten through twelve sought to discover if the participants believe there are many benefits to becoming foster parents and their views and opinions regarding caregiver roles. Finally, question thirteen helped identify factors that may sway individuals to become foster parents or kinship caregivers to foster children and increase the pool of prospective Hispanic caregivers for Hispanic children.

Notably, the way questions are presented, particularly the timing and language used, were critical to facilitating participants' exposition of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The study's questions served a specific purpose in the order they are presented, holding a systematic concentration on collecting the descriptions of lived experiences systematically instead of compiling the participants' interpretations of the experiences (Adams & van Manen, 2017). The interview itself was not just a verbal interaction between the researcher and the participant; it was also an experience. The interview is an experience as the characteristics and suggestions depend on how the phenomenon is given, received, and interpreted by both the talker and the listener (van Manen, 2014). The interview is a gift from the participant to the researcher, adding to both the interviewer and interviewee's experiences.

Data Analysis

The researcher utilized two techniques for data analysis, the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) and summarizing researcher notes. IPA is an approach to qualitative research analysis that offers a guide with procedures that set a foundation for exploring the participants' experiences, perceptions, and understanding through self-reflection (Brocki & Wearden, 2004). Interviews were transcribed verbatim by Otter ai, a web-based transcription service and reviewed by the researcher for accuracy. The IPA process consists of

six stages that include (a) the initial encounter with the transcribed interviews where the researcher reads the text several times; (b) the initial analysis of the transcription; (c) researcher reflections; (d) the discovery of early themes and connections during the reading of the text; (e) that themes are grouped in clusters and identified by primary features, concerns, and findings are developed by the researcher; and (f) the main findings are categorized and named (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Rygg & Loras, 2019). The researcher reads the transcripts thoroughly, making notes of thoughts and reflections, including repeating ideas or phrases, research questions, emotions, and the language used by the participant (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). Next, significant words, sentences, or phrases are identified. Expressions, meaningful words, and sentences are clustered into main themes and concepts (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). Then the main themes are clustered to develop the descriptions of the participant's experiences. Finally, a list of the themes is generated of the main characteristics and concerns the researcher has identified in the interviews (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008).

The second technique the researcher used was summarizing researcher notes. Researcher field notes consisting of observations, thoughts, reflections while conducting the interview or reading interview transcriptions helped interpret the data derived from the interviews (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). Researcher notes help give meaning to significant words, sentences, or phrases discovered during the interview process, increase verification and validation of the codes, and add validity to the data. Data saturation is essential in qualitative research as it is a criterion for the cessation of data collection and analysis (Saunders et al., 2018). IPA sampling is purposeful and homogenous (Brocki & Wearden, 2004). Thus, a small sample of participants is sufficient to achieve the goals of data analysis and provide ample perspective in the context of the study as the goal is to obtain a complete interpretation of the

data and its agreements and disagreements of participant perspectives within smaller samples (Brocki & Wearden, 2004). A combination of the four models of saturation was used to provide data saturation. Saunders et al. (2018) discussed the four models of saturation as follows:

1. Theoretical saturation is related to the development of theoretic categories within the sample;
2. Inductive thematic saturation is associated with the development of new codes or themes during analysis;
3. A priori thematic saturation is related to the point in which the codes or themes are typical in the data of the sampling, and
4. Data saturation is related to the point in which new data repeats data that was previously expressed during data collection.

Using all four methods combined, the researcher has achieved saturation when all the theoretic categories within the sample have been developed (Saunders et al., 2018). Thus, saturation is achieved when no new or additional themes are identified (Saunders et al., 2018).

Trustworthiness

A phenomenological study's validity and trustworthiness are based on the truth as perceived by the participant (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The researcher used member checking to obtain participant feedback to verify the data obtained. During member checking, participants are interviewed a second time to confirm the data analysis descriptions and solicit their views of the findings' credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checking required the data to be verified and validity and trustworthiness supported by going back to the participants, sharing the meanings and essences found during reflection and analysis of the interviews, and seeking their valuation for accuracy and breadth (Moustakas, 1994). During

Member checking participants reflect on the analysis of the interviews and offer the responses required for rigorous coding. The reflection method occurring throughout the phenomenological research approach is essential to providing the researcher logical, systematic, and clear resources for executing the coding and analysis necessary to arrive at the essence of descriptions in the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

The researcher also used reflexivity. Reflexivity is the way in which researchers recognize and consider how they can influence and impact the results of their study (Clancy, 2002). Reflexivity is accomplished when the researcher takes an introspective approach by commenting on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations likely to shape the study enabling a holistic approach vital to addressing the implications based on the similarities between the researcher and the researched (Shaw, 2010). Opportunities for discussing connections with the researcher's past experiences and perspectives were embedded throughout the study. Using reflexivity, the researcher reports the personal biases, values, understandings, and experiences they bring to the study allowing the readers to understand their position on the subject from the study's onset (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Because interpreting phenomenological research requires a reflective mindset, the use of reflexivity during data analysis, particularly during note taking, allows researchers to follow and understand the participants' descriptions and the way the researcher responds to their descriptions (Shaw, 2010).

Ethical Considerations

The researcher made several ethical considerations for the study. First, the protection of participant's information was considered. The researcher avoided the inclusion of identifiable information by assigning the participant's pseudonyms and creating a composite profile of the participant (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Next, data protection was also considered, and data

management techniques were utilized for data organization. The data were converted to digital files, a file naming system established, and a passcode created to protect the files. Lastly, the disclosure of comprehensive findings is also considered as the researcher reported multiple perspectives reflective of the big picture of the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary

A qualitative study was conducted to explore the attitudes and perceptions of Hispanics regarding their willingness or unwillingness to take on caregiver roles for Hispanic children in foster care. A phenomenological design was used for this qualitative study. The study consisted of six participants. The study revealed themes related concerns for behavioral issues children with trauma demonstrate, feelings of inadequacy to care for foster children, socioeconomic factors such as finances, and living arrangements. Based on previous literature, the researcher hypothesized results would show that participants interested in foster caregiver roles would prefer kinship caregiver roles due to cultural values and beliefs, such as familismo or familism. The researcher also hypothesized results would report the lived experiences of individuals, such as lack of support and services from government agencies, past experiences with foster children, family composition, and family finances as significant contributors to the willingness to become foster parents.

Study reports also shed light on the lack of Hispanic foster parents' recruitment with strategies specific to the Hispanic population. Strategies include recruitment of eligible caregivers in Hispanic communities or with Spanish-language advertisements placed in on television and billboards in predominantly Hispanic communities. Themes related to a poor view of child welfare agencies as discussed by prospective Hispanic foster parents were discovered as another deterrent to becoming foster parents. As in most qualitative research, interviews were

used as a method for data collection. The techniques utilized two techniques for data analysis: open coding and researcher notes. Validity was established using member checking and reflexivity. However, limitations for validity included the study sample's size, familiarity with the researcher, and the study sample's demographics.

Chapter Four: Findings

Overview

Chapter Four presents the discoveries made by the researcher during the study regarding the attitudes and perceptions of Hispanics as caregivers for children in foster care. It will familiarize readers with the interview process, the research analysis form used and introduce the participants. Findings from the interviews are analyzed via the development of themes and discussion of the themes discovered. The findings' validity is revealed through member checking with participants. Participants' perceived benefits to foster parenting are examined. Finally, a summary of the chapter is offered.

Interpretative Phenomenological Approach

The study results follow the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) for qualitative research. The IPA form of analysis, completed in six stages, aims to identify, explore, and decode the common lived experiences of participants (Rygg & Loras, 2019). Study results will uncover factors influencing participants' willingness to become foster parents or caregivers to children in foster care. In the IPA analysis form, the researcher begins by denoting their familiarity with the phenomena to refrain from interjecting their subjective experiences in the study (Creswell, 2013). The researcher shares the same ethnicity as the study participants and is familiar with the presented phenomenon.

In the first stage of the IPA form of research analysis, the interview transcriptions were read, reviewed, and compared to the audio recording for accuracy. Any errors in transcription, such as misheard or misunderstood words by the transcription software, were corrected to match the audio recordings. In the second stage, the transcription was read in its entirety. The text was analyzed to focus on emerging trending and connections. In the third stage, after reflecting on the

text, the researcher summarized participant interviews line by line. During the fourth stage, early themes capturing the essence of the interviews were discovered (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). Early themes were extracted as meaningful words, expressions, and concepts from the summaries and analyzed side-by-side.

In the fifth stage, the most significant early themes were clustered. The focus of the fifth stage is to group early themes, identify categories in ordinal classifications, and find words, expressions, or concepts that might be related or connected (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). In the sixth stage, a table was developed to list the themes that describe participant experiences. As suggested by Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008), the table listing the themes, presented in the following section, was created to note the commonalities in participants' perceptions, concerns, and characteristics. Lastly, member checking was conducted to ensure the accuracy of the researcher's findings. Participants were asked to discuss the accuracy of the researcher's conclusions by answering two questions, "Do you agree with the researcher's findings?" Why or why not?" Participant responded verifying the researcher's conclusions which are discussed further in the section under member checking.

Participants

Six participants were recruited and assigned pseudonyms to preserve anonymity. The demographics of the participants are provided in Table 1 and Table 2 for reference. The participants were provided the following aliases: Maria, Carmen, Yolanda, Isabel, Jose, and Lucia. Participants selected for the study are residents of the Tampa Bay area of Florida and were recruited via Facebook, a social media website. Eligible individuals were limited to Hernando, Pasco, Hillsborough, and Pinellas Counties. There were no interested participants from Pinellas or Pasco Counties. Participants recruited were of Hispanic ethnicity and identified

as individuals with origins from Latin American countries in South America, Central America, or the Caribbean. Most participants identified as Puerto Rican based on their family's country of origin. Three of the six participants were married and the other three identified as single.

Table 1

Participant Primary Demographics

Participant	Gender	Hispanic Identification	County of Residence	Marital Status
Maria	Female	Puerto Rican	Hernando	Married
Carmen	Female	Puerto Rican	Hernando	Single
Yolanda	Female	Cuban	Hernando	Single
Isabel	Female	Puerto Rican	Hillsborough	Married
Jose	Male	Puerto Rican	Hernando	Married
Lucia	Female	Puerto Rican	Hillsborough	Single

This study posited that the lived experiences of Hispanics differ between groups by exploring its participants' perceptions to further understand the factors contributing to the lack of Hispanic foster child caregivers. Participant demographics described in Table 2 were collected to understand how they might influence the participants' views and responses. Participants completed a screening survey and were contacted via email if they met the study criteria requirements (Appendix A). Other individuals completed the screening questionnaire but were excluded as they did not meet the study's criteria or did not follow through with interviews. Participants recruited were familiar with the researcher based on prior contact. All participants in the study were ages 34 through 56-years-old. Three of six participants reported being from dual-income families. Participant's income levels varied as reported household annual incomes were

primarily between \$31,000 and \$52,000. Participant's education levels also differed. Most participants reported having completed some college.

Table 2

Participant Secondary Demographics Data

Age	24-34-years-old	34-45-years-old	45-56-years-old	57-65-years-old
	0%	67%	33%	—
Education	High School	Some College	College +	
	27%	34%	17%	—
Income	30K or less	31k -41K	42K-52K	52K+
	17%	33%	33%	17%

Participant interviews were conducted between February and April, 2022. The researcher's role as an information gatherer was explained to each participant before the interview. Interviews were recorded using Zoom, a video-conferencing application. Participants were sent a Zoom meeting invitation link to begin the interview process. Participants clicked on the link to join the interview, and the researcher informed the participants of the start of the audio recording. Before the interviews began, consent to audio record the participants was requested. Conducting the research via video conferencing was instrumental in assisting the researcher to remain objective. Interactions were limited to the questions, discussions around the questions, and observation of facial expressions during the video interview. Otter.ai, a recording and transcription web-based application, was utilized to transcribe the interviews.

The purpose of the study was explained to each participant. The interviews began with guided interview questions. Additional questions were asked if clarification was needed or if there was a need to expand on the participant's answers. The researcher utilized reflective listening skills by using the phrase "I heard you say" and then summarizing the participant's

response to elicit clarification and ensure comprehension. After the interview, participants were advised they would be emailed a link to access the demographic questionnaire (Appendix B) or provided a hard copy of the questionnaire for ease of access. All participants utilized the link to complete the demographics questionnaire.

Interviews

The interviews conducted in the study aimed to discover, interpret, and report the attitudes and perceptions of Hispanics living in the Tampa Bay area of Florida regarding foster parent or caregiver roles for children in foster care. The data were collected via participants' interviews. The questions in the study were not limited to fostering solely Hispanic children but discussed the willingness of participants to become foster parents for children regardless of race or ethnicity. The data were gathered from participants as they described their intrapersonal knowledge of the subject and the effect of their experiences on their perceptions. The study refers to the word "community" as the participants' geographical area of residence within Tampa Bay.

At the conclusion of the interviews, participants were reminded that their feedback would be requested to ensure the accuracy of their responses, a process called member checking. The researcher then reviewed the transcription for inaccuracies. Any words misheard or misunderstood by the transcription application were corrected before being provided to participants for corroboration. During member checking, the themes discovered during the data analysis process were shared with the participants to gain additional insight into the participants' experiences and confirm the accuracy of the emerging themes.

Results

This study aimed to discover the attitudes and perceptions that influenced the willingness of Hispanics in the Tampa Bay area to become foster parents. It intended to identify shared ideas and perspectives among the participants by exploring their lived experiences. Research questions sought to understand how the participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences affected their disposition to become foster parents.

Interviews revealed all the children of the participants were biological, and none had any adopted children. All participants were employed at the time of their interview. Interviews also revealed all participants, except Lucia, had children under the age of twelve in the home. Only one participant, Jose, disclosed being a church member. No church denomination was mentioned. No participants discussed religion or affiliation to any religion.

Although the presented study recognized the differences between participant country of origin among Hispanic groups, no differences were noted as all participants, except Yolanda, were of Puerto Rican ethnicity. Maria informed she identified most as Puerto Rican but "took pride in her multiracial ethnicity." All the participants informed being proud of their Hispanic ethnicity. During the interview, they discussed the keeping of traditional Hispanic values and beliefs, such as living with extended family, familiarity with traditional foods, as well as terms and colloquialisms in the Spanish language that are frequently used.

The researcher asked questions to assess the participants' familiarity with the foster care system. The graphs presented in this section provide visual representations of the participants' familiarity with foster care and caregiver roles in foster care (Figure 1). Identifying the participants' familiarity with the foster care system was valuable to the study as it was essential to understanding participants' perceptions and experiences. All the participants were familiar

with the foster care system (Figure 1). Maria, Carmen, Jose, and Lucia were familiar with the foster care system as they had family members who were licensed foster parents. Yolanda informed she became familiar with the foster care system through exposure at work. Isabel and Carmen were familiarized with the foster care system via interactions in their community. All the participants were acquainted with the reasons why children would go into foster care.

Participants' responses for reasons for children to enter foster care were dysfunctional families, substance abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and no one available to care for the child. Interviews also revealed participants were most familiar with relative (kinship) caregiver roles (Figure 2). Only one participant, Carmen, was familiar with the non-relative caregiver role, the placement of a child in a home with individuals who are not relatives of the child but are known to the child or their family.

Figure 1

Participant Familiarity with Foster Care

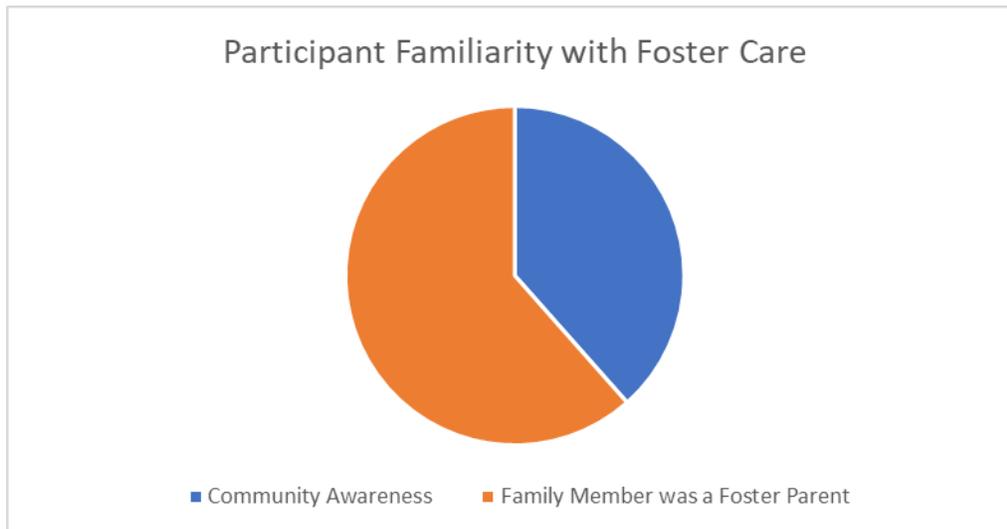
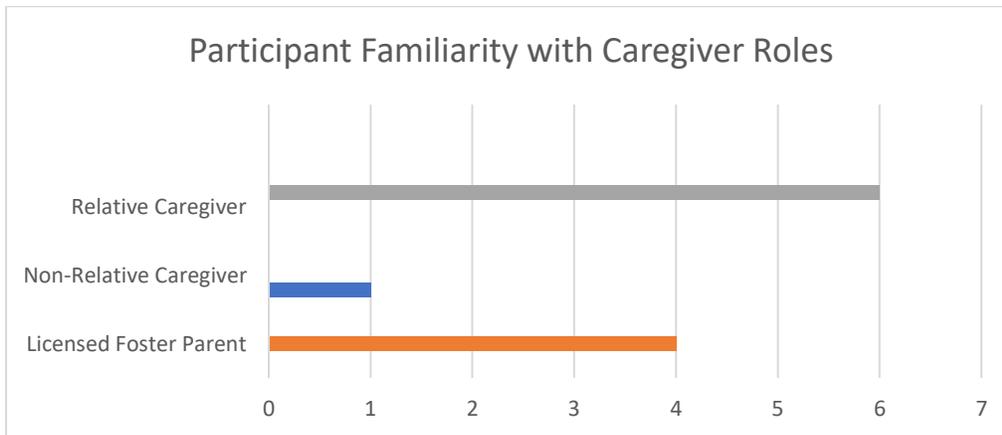


Figure 2*Participant Familiarity with Caregiver Roles****Theme Development***

Participants' responses were hand-coded by following the steps taken in the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA). Adherence to the steps in IPA was vital for preciseness during the development of themes. After reviewing the documents for errors, the transcripts were reread to identify emergent themes. The transcripts, consisting of participant responses, were summarized line-by-line in a side-by-side analysis. Repetitive words or phrases were highlighted and grouped into relevant clusters. Emergent theme clusters were identified by the researcher and noted.

Four significant clusters emerged that appraised participant perceptions on becoming foster parents. The first significant cluster was "Would the participant become a foster parent?" The cluster was based on Research Question 1 as discovered by interview question five. The second major cluster was "Reasons the participant would or would not become a foster parent or caregiver." The cluster was based on Research Question 2 and revealed by interview questions five and six. The third major cluster was "Caregiver roles likely to be undertaken." The cluster was based on research questions two and three, as determined by interview questions seven,

eight, and nine. The fourth and final emerging cluster was “What would change the participants’ minds about becoming a foster parent or caregiver to a child in foster care?” The cluster was based on Research Question 3 and uncovered by interview question thirteen. The emergent themes were then coded and grouped into clusters. The clusters were placed in a table with similar words, phrases, concepts, and ideas among participants listed (Appendix C).

The coding structure was spread through two tables, and the final themes were presented in outline form. The first table contained the line-by-line summarizing of the transcription where early themes were discovered and noted. The second table grouped significant words, phrases, expressions, concepts, and colloquialisms from which early themes were derived based on the research questions. Finally, the themes were placed in an outline form (Appendix D) for ease of comprehension and interpretation.

Themes

Following the initial encounter, the transcripts were reread and analyzed. During analysis, early themes were discovered disclosing participant perspectives. Early themes revealed that most participants were hesitant but were open to becoming foster parents. The hesitancy exposed resulted in the discovery of four major themes. The four major themes explained their ambivalence toward becoming foster parents. The following section of the chapter presents the themes, as well as the expressions, words, and phrases commonly used by participants to describe the themes. The themes are presented beginning with those having the most recurrent participant responses to those themes having the least recurrent participant responses.

Theme One: In the Future. Five of six participants agreed that although they were not interested in becoming foster parents or caregivers for a child in foster care at the time of the interview, they would contemplate becoming foster parents in the future. Participants informed

they would consider becoming foster parents when their children are older. When asked if they would consider being a foster parent, Carmen responded, "I'm not opposed to it." Isabel and Lucia said, "not right now." Lucia, who has an adult daughter still living at home while in college, stated she would wait for her daughter to leave home to consider becoming a foster parent. Lucia said,

Right now, I don't think I would be able to. I know we'd have to be able to have space. I know it [child welfare agencies] requires you to have a certain amount of space for these children, and my daughter living with me and in her bedroom, I'd have to be like, they're coming. Get out!

Jose replied, "I'm not going to say I wouldn't." Carmen described feeling apprehensive about becoming a foster parent while her children were still young. Carmen, with children under thirteen, informed me she would wait for her children to get older. Carmen stated, "Maybe once my kids get a little bit older? Right now, I have so much on my hands that I feel like I'm stressed."

One participant, Yolanda, informed she would become a foster parent in the future if she were financially stable. Yolanda responded,

Right now I'm not in the position to provide a place for others who are also struggling and show them the same kind of instability. What would change my mind and put me in a position to possibly help out will be once I was in a more stable place of income.

Yolanda informed she would be open to fostering a child if she were financially stable and had the finances to care for another child.

Participants with young children, Maria, Carmen, Jose, and Isabel that expressed they would become foster parents in the future also spoke about concerns regarding exposing their

children to stressors. Concerns about the negative stressors that might surface when bringing children with trauma who have “problems” into their home lead to Theme Three. In the context used by the participants, “problems” refers to mental health disorders, behavioral, and emotional issues. All the participants had their children or extended family members living with them in their homes at the time of the interviews. Two of the five participants, Isabel and Lucia, stated they would become foster parents in the future if they had space in their homes, leading to the emergence of other themes.

Theme Two: If the Child Were a Family Member or Familiar to Me. Participants also indicated if a family member or a child they were familiar with were going into foster care, they would step in as a foster parent or caregiver. Jose, Maria, Isabel, and Carmen reported they would become a relative caregiver for any child in their family that was in danger of going into foster care. They discussed formidable ties and loyalty to family, a key trait of familismo (familism) as the primary reasons for stepping up to take care of one of their own in need. Isabel stated, “I’ve never been [a foster parent or caregiver], but if I had to be in for anybody in my family, I would definitely do it.” Participants discussed keeping the child out of foster care as a reason for stepping up if no one else in the family would. Maria stated, “I would never want one of my family members to ever be in the system.” Four of six participants reported that they would become foster parents or caregivers to a family member regardless of their financial situation. Jose responded, “Finances are always gonna be a thing. But you know, I’m Puerto Rican, so you know, ‘Donde comen tres comen quatro.’... if there needs to be some adjustment [then], there’s an adjustment made.” The literal translation for the Spanish colloquialism, ‘Donde comen tres comen quatro,’ is ‘where three eat four eat.’ The phrase is commonly used to express

the sharing of staple Hispanic foods, like rice and beans, made in substantial quantities for dinner at home and at most family gatherings among Hispanic families.

Additionally, Jose reported he would be a foster parent, but he would have to be familiar with the child or connected to them in some way. Jose stated he would step in as a caregiver or foster parent at any time, but the child would have to be connected to him somehow. Participants stated they felt it would be easier to step into a parental role for a child with who they were already familiar. Jose said,

It becomes easier to transition into that role because I'm not going in blind. You know, I have some idea. Here's what's going on, and if they're familiar to me in some way, and there's some common ground, [like] if it's with my kid, then it's because they have similar tastes or whatever. They are connected somehow. If it's from church, it's because of activities that we share, and because of whatever our religious beliefs are, so there's something to build on.

Jose informed that it was imperative the child had something in common with him and his immediate family, such as being a friend of their children, attending the same church, or a child they had regular interactions with and about whom they knew something.

Carmen talked about going through the home study and application process to become a non-relative caregiver to a child in her daughter's daycare who was in a temporary foster home. Carmen stated she became familiar with the child and grew fond of her after spending time with her. She informed having lunch with her daughter and the little girl occasionally at the daycare. Carmen explained that the child was moved into a permanent foster home in another county within the state during the application process. She reported after the child was moved; she stopped the application process as she had no interest in fostering another child. Carmen said, "I

was gonna just figure it out for this little girl. So, my heart was in it, but it was for the little girl, not for another income or whatever they may give or not.”

Theme Three: Concerns About the Negative Effects of Trauma. Participants voiced concerns about the impact of foster children’s trauma on their small children. Participants with children under the age of thirteen, Maria, Carmen, and Jose, reported they were not foster parents because they were concerned that their young children would be negatively affected by a child with trauma. Participants discussed trepidations regarding the indirect effect of trauma on their children due to foster children’s traumatic backgrounds. Participants identified concerns with negative behaviors associated with neglect, emotional, psychological, physical, or sexual trauma the child may have endured, and the reasons they were removed from their primary caregivers. One participant, Jose, divulged feeling unprepared to care for a traumatized child as they would not know precisely how to care for the child, fearing they could retraumatize the child at any time. Another participant, Maria, whose mother was a foster parent, reported concerns about “being put in a bad situation while doing something good.” During the interview, Maria recalled an incident in her mother’s home that occurred when she was a child. Maria disclosed that child protective services came to her home. She stated the child her mother was fostering yelled and screamed so loudly that neighbors reported the screaming to law enforcement, believing the child was being abused. She informed the incident caused familial distress due to extensive investigations and intrusive child welfare visits. She also recalled the trauma of being questioned by child protective investigators.

Participants discussed concerns that exposure to the foster children’s learned negative behaviors produced by trauma responses would also adversely affect their children, causing stress in the home. Carmen responded, “some of them [foster children] come with so much

baggage that it brings on a bigger issue in your home. And I wouldn't want it to affect our children." Participants stated they did not want to expose their children to the detrimental behaviors, expressing concerns that their children be negatively affected by the behaviors. Participants with small children also noted that because their children were still small, they required a great deal of attention, and it would be unfair of them as parents to take attention away from their children to give to a foster child. Carmen stated, "I feel like my kids are so young that I want to give them the attention they need. I don't think it would be fair to bring another child on, and then they feel the wrath of that child." The participant informed she worried her children would resent her for bringing the foster child into the home.

Theme Four: If I Had Room in My Home. Participants also stated they would become foster parents if they had room in their home. All the participants discussed the lack of space in their homes as they all had their children or extended family members living with them. Isabel and Lucia addressed the lack of space in their home as a current obstacle to becoming foster parents. Isabel had displaced extended family members living in her home with her family at the time of the interview. Isabel informed she lacked the space needed to foster a child saying,

The reason I wouldn't do it at this moment [is because] right now, I have not only my children, but I have my niece and my grandniece here. So, right now, I don't have the space to provide a room for a child, but that's the only reason why I wouldn't do it at this moment. I would do it just because there's so many kids that need love, and nurturing, and a safe place to be.

Lucia conveyed the importance of appropriate accommodations in the home for foster children.

When asked what would make her change her mind about becoming a foster parent, Lucia

responded, “I guess, [having] a healthier place where I know that everyone will be comfortable, that you know, everybody’s happy.”

Member Checking

Member checking was conducted after examining the transcripts and discovering the themes found during the coding process. During member checking, participants were contacted individually to validate the accuracy of the findings. Participants were emailed a copy of the transcription, a table with the clusters discovered, and an outline of the themes found during the interview process. Participants were asked to review the findings, identify any inaccuracies, and discuss their agreement or disagreement with the findings. All the participants agreed with the findings. The researcher conducted a follow-up call with each participant. Participants informed the clusters were accurate and aligned with the dialogue based on the questions asked by the researcher. Participants advised the themes derived from the clusters support the analysis of their respective experiences with the phenomena.

Response to Research Questions

Research questions in the study addressed Hispanic participants’ perspectives about being foster parents or caregivers to children in foster care. The research questions in qualitative studies unearth the essence of the research and help reveal the participants’ values, beliefs, and worldviews (Alase, 2017). All participants knew why children were removed from the home and placed in foster care. Participants were aware that children removed from their parents or caregivers experience trauma in several ways.

Children in foster care enter the child welfare system as they have experienced neglect, sexual, emotional, or physical abuse to warrant the intervention of state child welfare agencies. Children in foster care are separated from their primary caregivers after confirmed abuse or

neglect, adding to their trauma. As a result of the traumatic experiences endured, psychopathology, behavioral, and emotional issues are common among foster care children (Flores et al., 2005). The externalizing negative behaviors of foster children are familiar to many individuals. To fully understand the phenomenon, the researcher posited the following research questions. The questions were answered by the themes discovered during participant interviews.

Research Question 1: “What attitudes and perceptions do Hispanics in Tampa Bay hold regarding caregiver roles for foster care children?”

Research Question 1 sought to describe the attitudes and perceptions of participants regarding caregiver roles for children in foster care. The question was followed by questions 1a: “What do they think about becoming foster parents?” and 1b: “How do they feel about becoming foster parents?” The first theme answered the question and its sub-questions, “*In the future,*” as well as the third most common theme, “*Concerns about the Negative Effects of Trauma.*” The themes depicted participants’ concerns with exposing their children to the deleterious behaviors associated with trauma and foster children while they were still young. Maria addressed the question by saying,

I hope to be a foster care parent later in the future, but I think right now being a mom....

Sometimes those children come with such a traumatic background that it can be a risk to almost bringing them into your home with your children. So, at this time, still having young children in my home, I don’t feel comfortable with bringing a foster child into my home.

Research Question 1 was also answered by the second theme, “*If the Child were a family member or familiar to me.*” Participants informed the researcher of a willingness to take in children they were familiar with or with whom they had commonalities. Participants expressed a

readiness to help children they knew or had a connection with regardless of their financial status or trepidations about becoming foster parents. Jose replied,

If this is a child I've had some sort of contact with one of my daughter's friends, or some kid that we happen to know from church or something like that, they're in a situation where they wind up going in the system, and no one else can help them. I think in that case, and I believe if I can help.

Participants found that commonalities such as religion, values, beliefs, and community were strong enough to overcome fears of bad experiences due to the manifestation of maladjusted behaviors resulting from the children's traumatic experiences. Jose described factors bridging the gap between the child, saying,

If they're familiar to me in some way, and there's some common ground, if it's with my kid, then it's because they have similar tastes or whatever, or they are connected somehow. If it's from church, it's because of activities that we share and because of whatever our religious beliefs are. So, there's some connection; then there's something to build on.

All the participants informed the researcher they would step in as foster parents or relative caregivers for members of their family who were in or at risk of going into the foster care system. For example, Isabel responded, "if I had to be in for anybody in my family, I would definitely do it." Participants shared that familiarity with the child needing a foster home was a determinant factor in whether they wanted to take on the responsibility of caring for another child. Participants informed that they would currently take in a child with whom they were acquainted but would likely not foster a child with whom they were not acquainted.

Research Question 2: “How do the lived experiences of Hispanics in Tampa Bay influence their willingness to become foster parents?”

Research Question 2 describes how participants’ experiences influence their willingness to become foster parents. The question was answered by Theme Three, “*Concerns about the Negative Effect of Trauma.*” Participants were informed of the negative behaviors associated with childhood trauma via direct exposure to foster children through family members who were foster parents, their work, or foster children and parents they knew in their community. Notably, four of six participants were familiar with the foster care system through interactions with family members that were foster parents at some point in the participants’ lifetime. Unfamiliarity with the foster children entering their home and uneasiness with exposing their small children to foster children exhibiting behavioral and emotional issues, psychosis, or maladjusted behaviors associated with trauma was a significant concern of participants.

The study presented patterns of concern described as apprehensiveness, trepidation, and a need to protect their children contributing to attitudes regarding caregiver roles for children in foster care among participants. Participants believed their children would be adversely affected by the negative behaviors of any foster children they took into their home while their children were still young. Participants felt the foster children’s deleterious behaviors could cause distress and contribute to stressors in the family dynamic, triggering conflict among family members. Carmen responded,

You don’t know what they’ve [foster children] been through, the trauma. And I know that some of these kids either it’s a good thing that you do it. Regardless, it’s a good thing, but some of them come with so much baggage that it brings on a bigger issue in your home. And I wouldn’t want it to affect our children.

Participant responses to interview questions that answered Research Question 2 also revealed that the participants' childhood experiences influenced their willingness to become foster parents. An example of the effect of past experiences on participants' cognitions was Maria's perception that having foster children in the home exhibiting negative behaviors while her children were still young might affect her children adversely. Maria recounted in detail her experience as the biological child of a former foster parent, saying,

We had a little girl, and she obviously had a traumatic background. So, she would just cry all night long. Nothing could console her. It sounded like somebody was killing her. So, the neighbors called DCF [Department of Children and Families] on my parents. It became an open investigation. So, sometimes you're trying to do something good, and while doing something good, you can be put into a bad situation. So that's kind of where my 'no' is.

Additionally, Maria, who in the past began the process of becoming a foster parent, halted the process stating it was too lengthy and intrusive. Maria said she had to take parenting courses, undergo a background, and credit check, for which she furnished state and federal identification and fingerprints. Maria replied,

I think it was kind of [like] being put under a microscope. I had to do parenting classes, which I didn't mind because nobody's great at everything, and then I had to show bank statements. I had to open my home to them being able to come in whenever they wanted.

So, I didn't. I didn't like that. I didn't like that they would have access to my accounts.

The participant informed she had to provide financial documents, including bank records, the deed to her home, and other personal documents.

Research Question 3: “What are the factors that contribute to a shortage of Hispanic foster parents in Tampa Bay?”

Research Question 3 aimed to discover reasons or issues impacting the scarcity of Hispanic foster parents in Tampa Bay. Research Question 3 was answered by the first major theme, “*In the future.*” Participants informed they would become foster parents in the future when they were financially stable. For example, Yolanda replied,

What would change my mind and will put me in a position to possibly help out will be once I was in a more stable place of income, because especially now I just started real estate like I’m struggling here. So, you know, I’m struggling financially.

The single-parent participant stated she struggled to make ends meet and had to move in with a family member to provide her children with a good home. Yolanda informed did not believe she could care for a foster child currently lacking the finances to maintain a home.

Research Question 3 was also answered by the fourth major theme, “*If I had room in my Home.*” Participant responses to interview questions answering Research Question 2 revealed participants’ willingness to become foster parents or caregivers to children if they had room in their home. Participants’ small homes or lack of finances to care for another person contribute to a lack of Hispanic foster parents. Isabel stated,

The reason I wouldn’t do it at this moment, right now I have, you know, not only my children, but I have my niece and my grandniece here. So right now, I don’t have the space. You know, to provide a room for a child, but that’s the only reason why I wouldn’t do it at this moment.

The theme depicted participants’ trepidations about sufficient room to take in another individual with an already full home.

All participants informed they had extended family members or children living in the home at the time of their interview and had no room for anyone else. Participants stated that child welfare required prospective foster parents to have a bedroom for the foster child. Lucia informed,

Right now, I don't [have space]. I wouldn't be able to. I know we'll need space, okay. I know it [child welfare agencies] requires you to have a certain amount of space for these children, and my daughter living with me in a two-bedroom.

Participants expressed that having rooms available for foster children to occupy is a significant obstacle to becoming a foster parent. Assisting extended family members with a place to live during times of need and allowing older children to live at home with their parents until they can live independently is a common practice among Hispanic families.

Perceived Benefits of Fostering

All participants stated it was rewarding to know they were doing something good for someone in need. Seeing they helped someone, realizing they made a difference in a child's life, and recognizing they provided a nurturing, stable home to a child in need produced feelings of satisfaction. Participants discussed the fulfilling feeling of adopting and nurturing a child that needs a home. Although participants were apprehensive about becoming foster parents, they all found benefits to fostering. Participants believed benefits for foster children are extrinsic, and the rewards are intrinsic for the individuals willing to take on the responsibilities of foster parenting.

Participants also informed that the intrinsic benefits of fostering a child in need are one of the reasons they would become a foster parent or caregiver to a child in foster care. Jose stated, "The rewards are moral and spiritual. There's a sense of achievement when the child becomes successful." Jose also discussed the rewarding feeling of being involved in "shaping someone's

mind and passing along family values, beliefs, and legacy,' as well as 'teaching the child skills and ethics to help integrate them into society in a positive manner.'" All participants expressed the most significant benefit of becoming a foster parent is the rewarding feeling of doing good.

Summary

Chapter Four presented the experiences of individuals living in the Tampa Bay area of Florida. The participants' individual experiences were examined through their interviews, and their perceptions were presented through the words, expressions, and ideas that described those themes. The first major theme was "I would become a foster parent in the future when my children are older," answering the following research questions: RQ1: What attitudes and perceptions do Hispanics in Tampa Bay hold regarding caregiver roles for foster care children? and RQ3: What are the factors that contribute to a shortage of Hispanic foster parents in Tampa Bay?

The second major theme discovered was "I would become a foster parent if I had room in my home, if I knew the child, or if I were financially stable" in response to the following research questions: RQ2: How do the lived experiences of Hispanics in Tampa Bay influence their willingness to become foster parents?; And RQ3: What are the factors that contribute to a shortage of Hispanic foster parents in Tampa Bay?

The third major theme was "I am not a foster parent because I am concerned that my small children will be negatively affected by a child with trauma" answering research questions RQ1a: What do they think about becoming foster parents?, RQ1b: How do they feel about becoming foster parents?, And RQ3: What are the factors that contribute to a shortage of Hispanic foster parents in Tampa Bay?

Finally, the fourth theme that emerged was “If a family member or child I am familiar with were going into foster care, I would step in to be their foster parent or caregiver.” The theme satisfied the following research questions: RQ1: What attitudes and perceptions do Hispanics in Tampa Bay hold regarding caregiver roles for foster care children? And RQ2: How do the lived experiences of Hispanics in Tampa Bay influence their willingness to become foster parents?

The demographic questionnaire divulged that all but one of the participants identified as female. Most participants were between 35 and 45-years-old, and the average yearly household income was between \$31,000 and \$52,000. Half of the participants were married with dual/multi-income households. The highest level of education of most participants identified most had some college. While the information provided in the demographic questionnaire is not indicative of national averages, it is indicative of the median socio-economic status of Hispanics, particularly those identifying as Puerto Rican, in Hernando County, Florida, where most of the participants reside.

The information from participant interviews revealed participants would consider fostering if their children were older and out of the home. Trepidations with exposing their small children to perceived negative behaviors commonly associated with the effects of exposure to physical, emotional, and sexual trauma were the primary reasons for concern among participants with young children. Participants also mentioned apprehension with preparedness to care for children with trauma.

Information gathered also showed participants viewed their lack of additional living space in the home, such as an unoccupied bedroom, as an obstacle to becoming foster parents or caregivers to a child in foster care. All participants informed they did not have any bedrooms

available. They reported their children or extended family members currently occupied all the bedrooms in their homes. Most participants also stated they were not concerned with the added monetary responsibility a foster child would bring to the household. Participants not concerned with the financial obligation of bringing another child into their home assured that their household finances would not be severely impacted as “where two eat, three eat,” an expression denoting the convergent, cooperative attributes of Hispanic values, such as familismo (familism) the concept of “family above all.” Characteristics of familism were evident in participants, particularly those with adult children and extended family members living in their homes.

Participant interviews revealed that participants are likely to become caregivers or foster parents to children in their respective families, despite any financial hardship that an additional member to their household could bring. During the interview, most participants informed they would not hesitate to step in to care for children in their extended families. Additionally, interviews suggested loyalty and a sense of responsibility to children with who they made connections within their community are determinant factors in their willingness to become foster parents or caregivers to children in foster care.

Additionally, participants noted that commonalities between the child and the individual also play a significant role in their amenability to becoming foster parents or caregivers. Participants discussed the importance of having something in common with the child, such as biological connections, shared religious beliefs and values, or community ties. Participants reported feelings of achievement, pride, and happiness in knowing they did something good for someone else. They reported fostering children they were familiar with and needing a home was a motivating factor.

Finally, all participants agreed that while they were not currently foster parents or caregivers to children in foster care, there are benefits to becoming foster parents. Participants stated that they perceived the benefits of fostering are the rewarding feeling of helping others, doing good, and providing a stable, nurturing home to a child in need. Participants believed foster children received direct benefits from the assistance and support of the foster parent, while the foster parent primarily received indirect benefits. Member checking of participants verified the researcher's conclusions regarding the themes discovered. Participants were informed that the themes aligned with their responses, perceptions, and descriptions of experiences they lived.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Overview

The purpose of the study was to understand and describe the attitudes and perceptions of Hispanics living in the Tampa Bay area regarding foster parent and caregiver roles for foster children through their lived experiences. The presented study describes the participants and their opinions, views, and insight to understand how their life experiences influence their willingness to become foster parents or caregivers to children in foster care. Chapter Five provides a summary of the study's findings and a discussion. The discussion examines the way the study may support or refute current literature. Implications, delimitations, and limitations of the study are also offered. Finally, recommendations for future research based on the study's findings are offered to readers, areas of concern for organizations and entities in child welfare are discussed, and a summary of the chapter is presented.

Summary of Findings

The research presented a phenomenological analysis of the lived experiences of participants, residents of Tampa Bay, Florida. The study revealed four major themes. The four major themes discovered during participant interviews were: (a) in the future, (b) if the child were a family member or familiar to me, (c) concerns about the negative effect of trauma, and (d) if I had room in my home. The themes revealed key concerns and shed significant light on participants' perspectives regarding why Hispanics may or may not want to take on foster parent or caretaker roles for children in foster care. Participant responses addressed the research questions and revealed opportunities for future research.

The themes discovered answered the research questions comprehensively. Research Question 1 was "What attitudes and perceptions do Hispanics in Tampa Bay hold regarding

caregiver roles for foster care children?” The question was followed by associated questions 1a: “What do they think about becoming foster parents?” and 1b: ‘How do they feel about becoming foster parents?’” Answering research questions one and 1a, participants informed they would consider becoming foster parents “in the future,’ the first theme to emerge, and ‘if the child the child were a family member or familiar to them’” the second theme to emerge. Participants discussed that familiarity with the foster child was vital. They believed the shared traits, values, beliefs, and community with foster children were strong enough to overcome the challenges they might face with the children related to trauma. Theme Three, “concerns with the negative effects of trauma,” also emerged in response to questions one, 1a, and 1b. Participants voiced concerns about exposing their children to the maladaptive externalizing behaviors of foster children. Expressing her trepidation, one participant with small children reported taking in foster children, particularly ones unfamiliar to them, as risky. Participant perspectives were also based on childhood experiences that influenced their willingness to become foster parents.

Research Question 2, “How do the lived experiences of Hispanics in Tampa Bay influence their willingness to become foster parents?” was answered by Theme Three as well, “concerns with the negative effects of trauma’ and ‘If I had room in my home.” Participants discussed the negative behaviors associated with childhood trauma. Participants told of their experiences via direct exposure to foster children through family members (parents and extended family members) who were foster parents, work, or former foster parents and foster children in their community. One participant discussed how the negative behaviors of their parent’s foster children affected them adversely, recalling uncomfortable moments in her life as the biological child of a foster parent.

Research Question 3, “What are the factors that contribute to a shortage of Hispanic foster parents in Tampa Bay?” was answered by the first major theme, “In the future’ and the fourth major theme, ‘If I had room in my Home.’” Participants voiced concerns about finances and economic preparedness, stating they would become foster parents in the future when they were financially stable. Participants also expressed a willingness to become foster parents in the future if they had room in their home, as all the participants had children or extended family members living with them. Participants noted that having available space and a bedroom was a considerable barrier to providing a suitable home and fostering a child.

Discussion

The discussion section describes how this study supports and contributes to existing literature. This section discusses the experiences participants disclosed during the interview process in relationship to other studies. It examines how the lived experiences of participants determine their motivation, preparedness, or reluctance to be foster parents or caregivers to children in foster care.

Corroboration of Existent Literature

This study supports existing literature regarding the experiences of Hispanics relating to roles as foster parents or caregivers for foster children. It contributes to existing literature regarding why individuals may or may not be agreeable to caring for children in foster care. It supports current works pertaining to participant concerns about the impact children with a trauma history may have on their families, particularly young children. It also confirms that cultural beliefs, values, traits, and prevailing views among Hispanic populations affect the individual’s motivation to foster children in their family or those they know. Lastly, the study

corroborates the impact of family finances on willingness to become foster parents and the lack of space in their homes.

Effects of Trauma on Foster Children and Others. This study informed of participant concerns of the negative effects of foster children's trauma on their small children. The concerns were listed as a reason declining to be foster parent, leading to Theme Three, "*Concerns over the Negative Effects of Trauma.*" Current literature discusses the effect of psychopathy and the externalizing behaviors of foster children due to trauma on the foster parent, their children, and immediate family members. Lawrence et al. (2006) informed that negative behaviors and psychopathy usually begin after the child is removed from the home and placed in out-of-home care. Children in foster care must deal with the consequences of the abuses they endured, and the aftereffects created by trauma, including mental health and behavioral issues (Cooley & Petren, 2011). Foster parents indicate that their foster children's behavioral and mental health needs were the most significant challenges they faced as foster parents (Barnett et al., 2018). The trepidations voiced by Maria, Carmen, and Jose about exposing their young children to the negative behaviors associated with the trauma of foster children were substantiated by current studies by Barnett et al. (2018), Cooley and Petren (2011), Flores et al. (2005), and Lawrence et al. (2006). The studies denoted the validity in the concerns of the participants in this study about challenges they might face as foster parents.

Notably, like many children in foster care, Flores et al. (2005) found that Hispanic children in foster care have difficulties forming interpersonal relationships. As a result, they are more aggressive, antisocial, and exhibit more internalizing and externalizing symptoms than non-maltreated Hispanic children. Non-maltreated Hispanic children develop resiliency and a positive ethnic identity through positive cultural factors, but maltreated Hispanic children lack

resiliency lending them to maladaptive functioning throughout life (Flores et al., 2005). Children in foster care develop negative externalizing behaviors, but children placed with unfamiliar families develop higher internalizing behaviors (Lawrence et al., 2006). On the other hand, Lawrence et al.'s study also found that children placed with familiar families developed lower internalizing behaviors. Participants in this study informed they were more likely to foster a member of their family or a child they were familiar with. Participant responses lead to theme Two, "*if the child were a family member or familiar to me.*" Jose informed, "if they're familiar to me in some way, and there's some common ground.... there's some connection then there's something to build on."

Unfortunately, foster children also do not receive the comprehensive psychological services needed to support them through their emotional distress. The child's overall experience with foster care contributes to long-term behavioral problems and long-term adverse effects lasting into adulthood (Lawrence et al., 2006). Notably, foster children who are victims of neglect, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, or gender violence frequently experience placement disruptions and breakdowns due to the prominence of negative, externalizing behaviors (Montserrat et al., 2020). Foster children's internalizing problems were associated with foster parent stress and negatively associated with their supportive presence (Gabler et al., 2014). The characteristics of foster children, such as intellectual functioning and their externalizing and internalizing behaviors, were the most significant predictors of caregiver stability and permanency (Proctor et al., 2011).

Furthermore, many foster parents report having problems with their biological children. The integration of other children into the family has an adverse effect on their biological children, a concern of participant Carmen. Carmen informed of concerns for her children if she

integrated foster children into the home saying, “my kids are so young that I want to give them the attention they need. I don't think it would be fair to bring another child on and then, you know, they feel the wrath of that child.” Carmen’s uneasiness is valid as in a study by Younes and Harp (2007), foster parents informed their biological children appeared quieter, withdrawn, angrier, jealous, and temperamental. Foster parents found their children exhibited severe negative behavioral issues related to familial stress, such as resentment and defiance (Younes & Harp, 2007). Cooley et al. (2017) informed foster parents deal with the stress a foster child with trauma brings into the home while helping their biological children deal with the necessary adjustments. They try to help their biological children adjust while also trying to integrate the new foster child into their family and establish a relationship with them (Cooley et al., 2017).

Hispanic Cultural Traits and Values: Familismo. This study also supported existing studies discussing the impact of Hispanic beliefs, values, and cultural traits. Cultural traits such as familismo, or familism, and the prevailing views of Hispanics regarding extended family systems, considerably influence Hispanics’ willingness to become foster parents. This study found that participants were willing to foster a family member at any time leading to Theme Two, “*if the child were a family member or someone familiar to me.*” The Hispanic culture’s focus on trust, family systems, family relationships, and commitment to family is known as familism (Hackethal et al., 2013). This study substantiated prevailing views on Hispanic familism as Isabel stated, “I've never been [a foster parent] but if I had to be in for anybody in my family, I would definitely do it to it.” Cultural beliefs and values associated with Hispanic cultures carry one common theme, the importance of family ties and supportive relationships. Many Hispanics take pride in their roles as caretakers and their responsibility towards their families, including extended family (Hackethal et al., 2013).

The family unit is valuable in the Hispanic culture and the most significant influence in Hispanics' life, providing financial, social, and emotional support to its members and helping them overcome challenges (Allison & Bencomo, 2015). The prevalence of familism in Hispanic families is also denoted in Isabel's response leading to Theme Four "*If I had room in my home.*" Isabel stated, "I have my niece and my grandniece [living] here. So, I right now don't have the space." As a collective society, the family takes precedence over individual needs as members are expected to care for each other and sacrifice personal ambitions for the good of the family (Allison & Bencomo, 2015).

For Hispanic parents, familism and the value placed on children are associated with intolerance for abusive behaviors (Ferrari, 2002). As such, familism, coupled with general intolerance for parental drug abuse, and sexual, emotional, and physical abuse, influences their willingness to take in family members' children or children with whom they are familiar. Jose remarked, "I think culturally, as Puerto Rican and Latino, you see it as our responsibility to take care of our children and to help with other children." Thus, the general intolerances listed coupled with a general desire to take care of family and those familiar to them are a driving force for the upholding of cultural values like familism.

Pressures and Stressors of Finances on Hispanics. Current studies also discuss the effect of family finances on individual willingness to become foster parents. Similarly, Yolanda informed that finances were a significant factor as to why she could not be a foster parent now but might consider it in later, such as denoted in theme number one, "*in the future.*" Studies show ethnic minority families are likelier to have lower incomes than White families (Kim et al., 2011). Like Yolanda, the pressures and stressors of financial hardships due to single-parent households are common concerns of ethnic minorities (Kim et al., 2011). Existent studies discuss

concerns regarding the economic effect of adding another child to the family (Helm et al., 2008). Just as discussed in this study by Yolanda, the impact of finances on family members, relationships, and overall way of life negatively influences the participation of prospective caregivers (Helm et al., 2008).

Benefits of Fostering

Participants in this study stated it was rewarding to know they were doing something good for someone in need. Correspondingly, studies by Baum et al. (2001), Buehler et al. (2003), and Rodgers et al. (2006) discussed the rewarding feeling individuals felt while serving as foster parents. Baum et al., informed individuals believed the benefits of fostering a child came from intrinsic rewards. Similarly, Jose discussed the satisfying feeling he might experience as a foster parent saying,

you're involved in the literal shaping of this person's mind, you know, and there's also that role and nurturing role that comes with a lot of people. And to some people, it takes a little bit of digging, you know, but there's the nurturing their sense of achievement, watching [them] grow up knowing that you had a hand in that, being able to pass along your beliefs and your legacy, but then there's this other whole myriad of things along the way where you get to watch them succeed, and you're there to applaud them.

Just as in other studies before it, participants in this study perceived the benefits of fostering were helping someone, making a difference in someone's life, and providing a nurturing, stable home to a foster child in need. Jose, Maria, and Isabel discussed the intrinsic gratifying feelings they would receive from fostering a child in need. Participants stated the rewarding feeling of doing good was one of the reasons they would become a foster parent or caregiver to a child in foster care. They believed that providing foster children with a safe,

nurturing home environment would be beneficial to the children in meeting their social-emotional needs and providing them with a safe, nurturing home. Equally, participants in the study conducted by Buehler et al. (2003) identified the rewarding feeling of doing good as the most significant benefit of becoming a foster parent. Participants believed offering foster children a safe, healthy home environment positively affected them by providing a sense of normalcy and belongingness.

Contribution to Existing Literature

Previous studies, such as that of Barth et al. (2008), address the shortage of foster parents in the foster care system and confirm that most foster parents are African American or White. Studies also analyze the number of children in foster care and available foster parents (Randle et al., 2012). Randle et al.'s study examined the disparity between the number of children in foster care awaiting a foster home and the number of eligible foster parents. Reasons for the discrepancy between the number of foster children and foster parents include not being asked, the opportunity never presented to them, believing the commitment was too great, or simply because they were already busy with children of their own (Randle et al., 2012). However, the study by Randle et al. (2012) did not address differences in responses from participants based on race or ethnicity as addressed by this study. Notably, there are no studies that consider participant perspectives based on race or ethnicity.

Studies also address reasons why individuals might accept or reject foster parent roles. Studies suggest societal changes, cost of living, divorce rates, and difficulties meeting the needs of foster children contribute to the lack of available foster parents (Baum et al., 2001). However, no studies consider how changes in ethnic populations might contribute to their reasons for rejecting or accepting roles as foster parents as addressed by this study. Instead, Baum et al.'s

(2001) study considered the motivation of most individuals to become foster parents and informs individuals' motivations by stating that some individuals become foster parents solely for the rewarding feeling of helping someone, substituting children who have left home or died, religious motives, or the added income.

As informed by Baum et al. (2001), individual motivations to become foster parents differ due to the age of the children, the foster parents' desire, the foster parent's ethnic background, States, affiliation with agencies, and the number of children already in the caregiver's home. However, Baum et al.'s study does not address the motivation or willingness to become foster parents based on the individual's specific race, ethnicity, state, or region as addressed by this study. Motivation is addressed by Baum et al. at the macro level and not at the necessary micro-level needed to understand the perspective of individuals within communities based on their lived experiences within their respective ethnicities, regions, and states.

This study contributes to existing literature and fills the informational gap by examining the perspectives of Hispanics as prospective foster parents or caregivers to foster children. The study examines participant perceptions based on their ethnicity, respective countries of origin, and lived experiences within their region, state, county, and community. The current study includes the participants' viewpoints as Hispanics, primarily of Puerto Rican descent, regarding why they would or would not become foster parents. Participants in the current study (Maria, Carmen, Yolanda, Isabel, Jose, and Lucia) informed that the primary reason for becoming foster parents in the future was wanting to step in and help family or someone familiar to them. Other reasons for becoming foster parents in the future included children and extended family members moving out of the home, making space available, and the rewarding feeling of helping a child in need.

Implications

The current study was based on theoretical, empirical, and practical applications of qualitative research. The study's implications are grounded in the social constructivist theory from which it was founded. The empirical findings provide the groundwork for practical applications with community stakeholders and child welfare agencies.

Theoretical Implications

Based on the social constructivist theory, the preceding study aimed to understand the participant's worldview and develop meaning from the description of their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The experiences identified by the participants were self-reflections and the sharing of information by individuals about the things they learned throughout their lifetime (Adams, 2006). As posited by the social constructivist framework, social knowledge can only be obtained by corroborating the experiences of various individuals, one against the other (Mascolo & Kallio, 2019). As such, future research should consider the experiences of Hispanics as foster parents and prospective foster parents against those of their non-Hispanic counterparts. Consideration should also be given to the influence of Hispanic values and beliefs on individual willingness to become foster parents to maximize recruitment of prospective Hispanic foster parents for Hispanic children in predominantly Hispanic communities. Future research should also examine the influence of spirituality on Hispanic individuals' amenability to becoming foster parents.

Empirical Implications

The empirical findings for the existent study, centered on the four themes discovered and presented in Chapter Four, are pertinent to disciplines within sociology, anthropology, psychology, behavioral science, human services, and spiritual care. Other fields of relevance

include Hispanic and Latin American studies and family science. The foreseeable ways the study's implications might influence the areas of study mentioned include equipping professionals in those fields with the tools necessary to identify, discuss, address, react to and resolve the attrition of culturally relevant services for Hispanic children and in foster care and potential Hispanic foster parents.

Practical Implications

The practical implications for the current study are influential factors in the field of child welfare. Professionals working in child welfare, specifically foster care, benefit most from the study's findings. The implications for the study's findings are anticipated to impact the recruitment of Hispanic foster parents by child welfare organizations. The opportunity to engage and educate the Hispanic community for recruitment will affect child welfare stakeholders at the national level. The study's implications will also widen the scope for entities in child welfare to address the lack of Hispanic foster parents.

Recruitment of Hispanic Foster Parents. When a family member is at risk of going into foster care, other family members are willing to step in and become the child's relative caregiver without hesitation, as discussed by the participants in the previous study. Child welfare agencies quickly reach out to family members to request assistance and discuss the child's temporary placement with the family member. The family member, now a kinship caregiver, is given a home study to ensure the family and their living condition is suitable for receiving the child. The agency confirms the home is safe, in good living condition, and the family is appropriate for the child.

Notably, Hispanic individuals are otherwise not enlisted to assist with providing a stable, nurturing home to children in foster care. Recruitment efforts by foster care agencies primarily

target general populations, most of whom are Caucasian. Social media advertisements, television advertising on English-language television stations, and occasional face-to-face recruitment events also target mainly White prospective families. All the participants in the preceding study indicated they had never been recruited or asked to be a foster parent despite working in various fields heavy laden with services for children. Despite being familiar with individuals in foster care agencies as adults as relatives of then-current foster parents, Maria, Carmen, Jose, and Lucia stated they were never asked to consider being a foster parent. The current study appraises individuals within child welfare organizations and their respective foster care agencies of the need to increase recruitment efforts focusing on Hispanic caregivers and their families.

Nevertheless, as depicted in this study, Hispanic individuals are hesitant to step into parental roles for children in foster care, particularly children unknown to them, as described in the participants' responses. Participants were informed they would become foster parents for family members or children familiar to them but were hesitant to do the same for children unfamiliar to them. Participants were not fully aware of the current needs in the foster care system, particularly for Hispanic caregivers. Based on the existing study's information, foster care agencies would benefit from educating the Hispanic community about the foster care system, its current needs, and the requirements for becoming foster parents.

Delimitations and Limitations

Uncovering the delimitations and limitations of the study helps attain a comprehensive understanding of the findings of the study's validity. Most importantly, the delimitations and limitations of the study present an opportunity for further research of otherwise latent matters.

Delimitations

Delimitations are intentional choices made by the researcher to control or outline the boundaries of their study. Weaknesses of the study, based on the delimitations, consist of the recruitment of participants that were only between 24 and 64 years of age and living in specific Florida counties. The age range of the participants was chosen in consideration of the age of maturity of most individuals, based on typical completion of academic achievements such as completing college or trade school after high school, maintaining employment, financial stability, and obtaining a home of one's own. The participants were all high school graduates or above, had a stable career, and their own homes, though this was not a requirement of the study. No controls were implemented for gender, level of education, income, number of children, marital status, religion, or history of family migration to the United States from Latin American countries of origin. The mentioned demographics were not regulated as they would be too restrictive, limiting the sample size further and unnecessarily complicating the study.

Limitations

On the other hand, limitations are the possible faults of a study that cannot be controlled. Limitations of this study consist of the study's sample size, the gender of most participants, and the number of participants from a specified geographical location. The sample size was limited to six participants following the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) research studies. IPA suggests the recruitment of three to six participants. The researcher chose the higher end of the scope to saturate the study with participant responses within the approach. Another limitation was the gender of most of the participants, as five of six participants were heterosexual females. In the future, research should include an equal representation of genders or a homogenous representation of genders. An equal representation in the study sample of

participants will provide the proper evaluation of responses and results that are gender-specific or gender-related. Lastly, a considerable limitation of the study was the number of participants from a specific geographical area. Four of the six participants were residents of Hernando County, a rural county in the Tampa Bay area. Notably, due to the county's rural nature, community resources are limited, which may include exposure to foster care agencies and other child welfare organizations.

Recommendations for Future Research

The recommendations for direction of future research considers the study's findings. This study presented the views and perceptions of study participants all who were of Hispanic ethnicity, the majority being of Puerto Rican descent. Recommendations for future research expands this study exploring the attitudes and perceptions of Hispanics as caregivers for foster care children to include other Hispanic populations. Future research should survey between groups differences in willingness to become foster parents, and their beliefs and perspectives regarding foster parenting. Future studies should also include differences in way of thinking about foster parenting within each group of individuals of Hispanic descent.

Future research should also consider the part spirituality plays in desire to become a foster parent with church members. Future research should consider the part spirituality plays when appealing to church members in predominantly Hispanic churches as prospective caregivers for foster children, specifically Hispanic foster children. Finally, future research should also examine differences between regional populations in the Midwest, South, and Northern parts of the United States.

The limitations and delimitations of the study afford suggestions that can increase the acquisition of Hispanic foster parents and significantly impact the number of children that

remain in foster care. The recommendations can also improve the adoption rates of children in foster care. Successful placement of children in homes with high-quality caregivers who are also culturally matched can have systemic benefits, such as improving adoption and foster parent retention rates.

Recommendations for Recruiting Hispanic Foster Parents

Foster parents are integral to child welfare. Without appropriate caregivers, children in foster care can go without the proper medical and mental health care they so desperately need. Children in foster care, often the victims of multiple abuses, neglect, and cyclical poverty, are fated to repeat the mistakes of their parents. Recommendations for acquiring Hispanic foster parents include educating Hispanics about the need for foster parents using Spanish language television and radio stations. Using Spanish language media to disseminate information would prove helpful in recruiting high-quality caregivers that would be amenable to becoming foster parents. Targeted recruitment via Spanish-language radio or television may reach individuals willing and able to foster a child but may not be aware of the opportunity to become a foster parent due to language barriers, lack of knowledge, and misinformation about becoming foster parents. Future research should identify effective ways to recruit Hispanic foster parents and evaluate the viability of targeted recruitment of Hispanic foster parents utilizing Spanish media.

Recommendations to Address Prospective Hispanic Foster Parents' Concerns

The current study uncovered concerns representative of other Hispanics regarding caregiver roles for children in foster care. Findings indicate prospective foster parents worry about how the adverse effects of trauma will affect their foster children and their children. As a result, they would consider being a foster parent in the future when their children are no longer at home. Foster care agencies should substantially educate prospective caregivers about the

importance of mental health treatment for children with trauma histories. Children in foster care should receive mental health treatment and therapy immediately following removal from their primary caregivers to build resiliency and reduce trauma-related behavioral and emotional issues. Foster children should be introduced to therapy whether they exhibit behaviors, providing proactive, holistic care. Future research in this area should evaluate the effectiveness of pre-emptive mental health care for all foster children regardless of demonstrating externalizing behaviors.

Findings also indicated prospective Hispanic foster parents might worry about having room in their home for a child due to having large families or extended family members living with them. Foster care entities should normalize extended family systems by encouraging large families to foster children and integrate them into their families. Large and extended family systems can also help counter the harmful effects of trauma. Extended families offer foster parents the support necessary when feeling overwhelmed and provided foster children with a sense of belongingness. Extended families also help pass on essential Hispanic values and cultural beliefs, such as familism, that build mental toughness and improve overall functioning and stabilize symptoms related to trauma. Recommendations for research in this area include assessing the effectiveness of extended family systems for foster parent support and child resiliency.

Summary

The existent study of the attitudes and perceptions of Hispanics as caregivers for foster children was based on the lived experiences of Hispanics living in the Tampa Bay area of Florida. The study presented phenomena that provide a meaningful look at the perspective of Hispanics regarding foster parenting. First, the study uncovered all the participants were

amenable to becoming foster parents “In the Future” (Theme One). They considered becoming foster parents when their small children were older, when they had space in their home, or when they were financially stable. The study also uncovered most participants were willing to be foster parents “If the Child Were a Family Member or Familiar to Me” (Theme Two), reflecting their willingness to step in to care for someone they loved or felt a sense of loyalty and affection.

Next, the study revealed several participants had “Concerns about the Negative Effects of Trauma (Theme Three), discussing the apprehensiveness they shared regarding how the trauma history of the foster children would affect their children emotionally, psychologically, and physically. Participant trepidations regarding the consequences of externalizing behaviors of foster children on their children were best expressed by Maria, who said she was concerned with “being put in a bad situation while doing something good.” Finally, the study discovered some participants were willing to become foster parents right away if they had space in their home for another individual, revealing the last theme, Theme Four, “If I had Room in my Home.”

Participants with extended family members or older children still living at home informed they would be foster parents now if they had space in their current home to provide a child their room.

The implications of the study provide two key points. The first key point is the need to identify, discuss, address, react to and resolve the attrition of culturally relevant services for Hispanic children and in foster care and potential Hispanic foster parents. Scientist-practitioners must identify problems to make formidable changes in social service areas. The issues must be discussed with stakeholders and addressed with community leaders. Community and government leaders at the state and local levels must react to and resolve the problems found in quick, efficient ways. Changes and improvements cannot occur if a need for change and improvement is not identified or ignored.

The second key point provided by the study's implications is the need to recruit high-quality Hispanic caregivers within their communities, in their language, with the tools necessary to improve efficacy. Efficacy of recruitment is enhanced when foster care agencies start marketing their agencies and recruiting Hispanic caregivers through television and radio in the same way businesses pursue customers by appealing to them.

The value of recruiting Hispanic caregivers through Spanish language television and radio and outreach in Hispanic communities is that its effectiveness can be measured easily by evaluating viewer engagement in active recruitment campaigns. For example, an advertisement for foster parent recruitment runs on Spanish-language television at 8 p.m. every day for six months. During the six months, several hundred Hispanic individuals reached out to the foster care agency interested in becoming foster parents. In response to the ads, several hundred foster parents are successfully recruited. The response of several hundred individuals to the advertisement has made the campaign successful. However, suppose the ad only receives under one hundred responses in six months. In that case, the campaign may be considered unsuccessful as it did not reach enough interested individuals in its target audience. Thus, the campaign's effectiveness is measured by the number of participant responses and the successful recruitment of Hispanic foster parents.

Finally, the implications of this study also posit an opportunity for Hispanic clergy to get involved in recruiting church members to become foster parents. Assisting community organizations in recruiting foster parents is vital to growing the church and fulfilling the Great Commission. Separating the church from the community segregates members from real-world, communal problems and their responsibility to facilitate change by contributing to resolving those problems.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Hispanic Caregiver Study

Criteria Survey

Are you Hispanic or of Hispanic descent?

Yes No

Do you live in Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, or Hernando counties?

Yes No

Are you between the ages of 24 and 65?

Yes No

Have you or anyone in your household ever been convicted of a crime that would make you ineligible to become a foster parent?

Yes No

Have you or anyone in your household ever been involved in substantiated child abuse allegations?

Yes No

If selected for the study, would you be willing to participate in a 60-minute interview, as well as a shorter follow-up interview to elicit participant feedback?

Yes No

Appendix B: Demographics Questionnaire**Exploring the Attitudes and Perceptions of Hispanics as Caregivers for Children in****Foster Care: A Phenomenological Study**

Instructions: Please circle the answer that best answers the question.

1. What is your age?
(a) 24-34 (b) 35-45 (c) 46-56 (d) 57-65
2. What is your gender?
(a) Male (b) Female (c) Other
3. Are you married, single, in a domestic partnership, or widowed?
(a) Married (b) Single (c) Domestic Partnership (d) Widowed
4. What is your highest level of education?
(a) No High School Diploma (b) High School Diploma (c) Some College
(d) College or above
5. What is your average yearly household income?
(a) 30k or less (b) 31k - 41k (c) 42k -52k (d) 53k or above
6. Is your household dual/multi-income?
(a) Yes (b) No

Appendix C: Theme Clusters

Participants	Cluster 1: Would participant become a foster parent?	Cluster 2: Reasons why participant would become a foster parent	Cluster 2b: Reasons why participants would not become a foster parent	Cluster 3: Caregiver roles likely to be taken on	Cluster 4: What would change participants' mind about becoming a foster parent?
Maria	Yes, but apprehensive “Yes. Um, again, because my mother was a foster care parent. And I seen her help other, other families. But I think there's also a no in there for me too.”	Parent was a foster parent and saw her help people. “...because my mother was a foster care parent. And I seen her help other, other families.”	Concerns with being put in a bad situation. Process is too lengthy. “So sometimes you're trying to do something good. And while doing something good, you can be put into a bad situation. So the that's kind of where my no is.” Process is too lengthy, and the agency wanted their whole background like income and home deed “But the process was so lengthy. And they asked my whole background, like my income and my home and I just kind of felt like I'm	Would foster a family member (relative caregiver). “I think I would be more of a relative [caregiver] because I would never want one of my family members to ever be in the system.”	No, still has small children in the home. “So, at this time, still having young children in my home, I don't feel comfortable with bringing a foster child into my home.”

			trying to do something good. But my whole world has to be told in order to do something good. So, I stopped.”		
Carmen	Not opposed (Ambivalent). “I wouldn't be opposed to it. Maybe once my kids get a little bit older.”	Would if it were they were familiar with the child. “My daughter had a friend who her foster mom was not taking care of her properly. So, I took it upon myself for an entire year to take lunches and stuff like that for the for the overall but when I asked for them to do a non, to do a non-relative placement in my home. So my heart was in it, but it was for the little girl....”	Not opposed (ambivalent) - but apprehensive and has concerns about foster children. “The only concerns I have regarding fostering kids. You don't know what they've been through the trauma. And I know that some of these kids,..some of them come with so much baggage that it brings on a bigger issue in your home. And I wouldn't want it to affect our children.”	Would foster a child they were familiar with (including family). “My daughter had a friend who her foster mom was not taking care of her properly. My heart was in it, but it was for the little girl....”	No, concerns for small children in the home. “I just right now, I feel like my kids are so young that I want to give them the attention they need. I don't think it would be fair to bring another child on and then, you know, they feel the wrath of that child.”
Yolanda	Would probably become a foster parent when they were financially stable.	Would become a foster parent to a child they were familiar with	Limited finances - struggling financially. “I would, I would love to	Would foster a child if they were financially stable.	Stable place of income. “What would change my mind and will put me in a

	<p>“I would change my mind about being a foster parent once I was in a more stable place of income. I’m struggling financially. Not in the position to provide a place for others that are also struggling and showing them the same kind of instability.”</p>		<p>do that, but I don't think I'm in a position to do so. Which is why I've never opened up myself for something like that.”</p>	<p>“What would change my mind and will put me in a position to possibly help out will be on once I wasn't like in a more stable place of income.”</p>	<p>position to possibly help out will be on once I wasn't like in a more stable place of income, because especially now I just started real estate like I'm struggling here.” “I would not become a foster parent want to bring foster children or children in need when I'm still struggling.”</p>
<p>Lucia</p>	<p>May foster a child in the future. “No, it wouldn't be a hard pass. I you know, seen what my mother-in-law did was inspiring. So no, definitely not be hard pass. I mean, if I did, -in the later years, you know, help children.”</p>	<p>Would become a foster parent if they had availability in their home. “Right now, I don't I wouldn't be able to. My daughter [being in the] bedroom.</p>	<p>No space in the home for fostering a child right now. “Right now, I don't I wouldn't be able to. I know we'll need available space. I know it requires you to have certain amount of space for these children....”</p>	<p>Would foster a child in the future (Any) “...if I did, -in, in the later years, you know, help children.”</p>	<p>Something that would help me change my mind is if I had a bigger home where everyone would be comfortable, and in turn happy. “I guess a healthier place where I know that that everyone will be comfortable, that you know,</p>

					everybody's happy.”
Jose	Yes, but would have to be familiar with the child and their situation. “I'm not gonna say it has to be a perfect storm, but if I have passing knowledge of what's going on. If this a child I've had some sort of contact with one of my daughter's friends, or some kid that we happen to know from church or something like that, they're in a situation where they wind up going in the system, and no one else can help them. I believe I can help.”	Would have to be familiar with the child and their situation. “If this a child I've had some sort of contact with one of my daughter's friends, or some kid that we happen to know from church or something like that, they're in a situation where they wind up going in the system, and no one else can help them. I believe I can help.”	Child is coming with their own preset “things” (customs) and trauma. Does not know that they would be able to jump all in with a child they don't already know something about. “...this child coming in with their own preset thing that in some cases trauma. I would be a little more resistant, because I'm not sure that I'm properly equipped to provide the kind of care that a child with trauma would need.”	Would become a nonrelative caregiver to a child they were family with or a relative caregiver for a family member (Relative and nonrelative caregiver). “...if I have passing knowledge of what's going on. If this a child I've had some sort of contact... they're in a situation where they wind up going in the system, and no one else can help them. I believe I can help.”	Undecided. Would need to have intimate knowledge of what is going on in the dynamic prior to fostering the child “...I have to be a little more intimate knowledge regarding what's going on, the dynamic and also was [going on] prior to me having to take care of the child with becoming their caregiver.”
Isabel	May foster a child in the future. “No, it wouldn't be a hard pass. I you know, seen what my mother-in-law	Would become a foster parent if they had availability in their home.	No space in the home for fostering a child right now. “Right now, I don't I wouldn't be	Would foster a child in the future (Any). “...if I did, - in, in the later years,	Would foster if they had a bigger home. “I guess a healthier place where I know that that everyone

	did was inspiring. So no, definitely not be hard pass. I mean, if I did, -in the later years, you know, help children.”	“Right now, I don't I wouldn't be able to. My daughter [being in the] bedroom.”	able to. I know we'll need available space. I know it requires you to have certain amount of space for these children....”	you know, help children.”	will be comfortable, that you know, everybody's happy.”
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Appendix D: Themes

Themes	Support 1	Support 2	Support 3
In the Future	Five of six participants (Maria, Carmen, Isabel, and Jose, Lucia) stated they would not become foster parents now but would consider or do it in the future.	Participants (Maria, Carmen, Isabel, and Jose) with small children stated they would become foster parents when their children were older.	One participant (Yolanda) reported concerns over current financial stressors informing if they were financially stable, they would become a foster parent in the future.
Concerns about the Negative Effects of Trauma	Concerns for being put in a bad situation by foster care children while doing something good (Maria).	Concerns for their small children's welfare due to the foster child's traumatic background. (Maria, Carmen, Jose)	Concerns for preparedness to deal with children with trauma. (Jose)
If the Child were a Family Member or Familiar to Me	The caregiver roles likely to be taken on by participants were relative caregiver and non-relative caregiver. (Maria, Carmen, Isabel, and Jose)	Participants stated they would become caregivers for children in their family because they would not want their family member to go into the foster care system. (Maria and Isabel)	Participants stated they foster children with whom they were familiar or connected to in some way (Maria, Carmen, Isabel, and Jose)
If I had Room in my Home	All participants currently have children or extended family members living in their home.	All participants stated they have no space in their home for another individual	Two participants stated they would be foster parents if they currently had room in their home. (Isabel and Lucia)

Appendix E: IRB Approval

IRB #: IRB-FY21-22-46

Title: Exploring the Attitudes and Perceptions of Hispanics as Caregivers for Children in Foster
Care: A Phenomenological Study

Creation Date: 7-12-2021

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Erica Ortiz

Review Board: Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type: Initial

Review Type: Expedited

Decision: **Approved**

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