

Kinship Placement

- Deborah Cromer, Through No Fault of Their Own: Reasserting a Child's Right to Family Connectedness in the Child Welfare System, 41 Family L. Quarterly 181 (2007).

This essay explores “the statutory and public policy frameworks that guide state intervention in the parent-child relationship, and the negative outcomes resulting from removal of at-risk children from the family. Cromer suggests that even when families are dangerous or unhealthy, children “often experience[] separation from a primary caregiver as a threat to survival.” As an alternative, the essay proposes that “public policy should demand a refocus of the child welfare system on family connectedness.” Detailing the success of relative-care initiatives across the United States (e.g. Alameda County's StepUp Project), the essay notes several benefits of relative care:

- connecting with a person the child knows and trusts;
 - creating a network of connected, caring support from family even if the child cannot be reunited with biological parents;
 - reinforcing the child's personal and cultural identity;
 - encouraging families to cultivate and rely their own resources and strengths; and
 - saving the state significant costs.
- Atalia Mosek & Leah Adler, The Self-Concept of Adolescent Girls in Non-Relative versus Kin Foster Care, 44 Int'l Soc. Work 149 (2011)

In an effort to determine the “least detrimental placement” for maltreated children, this study collected data on the “self-concept” of adolescent girls cared for by kin versus non-relative foster parents in Israel. The study defines “self-concept” as “an organizing system of traits and ambitions that a person relates to [herself], and according to which [she] manages [her] life.” The study included adolescent girls (aged 12-18) placed in foster care for four years or more in the north of Israel. Of this sample, 18 girls were with non-relative foster care and 20 were with kinship foster parents. Using a questionnaire that measured 5 dimensions of the self (i.e. psychological self, social self, sexual self, family self, and coping self), the study found that adolescents who grow up in kinship care have a more positive self-concept than those adolescents growing up in non-relative foster care. According to the study, “[i]t is the feeling of stability and permanency perceived by adolescents who stay with kin that contribute to their inner self-assurance, in comparison with adolescents staying with non-relative families.” Adolescents placed with kin report greater closeness with the foster family and fewer tensions between the foster family and biological family.

- Femke Vanschoonlandt et al., Kinship and Non-Kinship Foster Care: Differences in Contact with Parents and Foster Child's Mental Health Problems, 34 Child. & Youth Servs. Rev. 1533 (2012).

This study compares two aspects of out-of-home kinship placements and out-of-home non-kinship placements: contact with and attitude of parents and mental health of the foster children. Following 186 foster children (aged 3-18) in the Flemish child welfare system, the study found that while non-kinship placements fare better on aspects of contact with and attitudes of parents, children in kinship placements had significantly fewer behavioral problems and lower levels of mental health problems. The study found that in non-kinship foster placements there was a 50% chance of severe behavioral problems compared to only a 35% chance in kinship placements. According to the study, the better psychosocial functioning of kinship foster children is usually explained by “the protective effect of cultural and family preservation” because “*living with relative may reinforce the sense of identity and self-esteem that flows from knowing the family history and culture*” (emphasis in original). Notably, the study found that the number of previous out-of-home placements played a greater role in behavioral problems than the type of placement. In this regard, the results confirm the importance of stability for foster child well-being.