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## EFFECTS OF ATTACHMENT AND INTERVENTIONS ON FOSTER PARENT AND FOSTER CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

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AND FOSTER CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

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by  
Audrey Lynn Rose Saber

June 2017

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Approved by:

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## ABSTRACT

This researcher has chosen to conduct research that followed the positivist paradigm with researching effects of attachment and interventions in regards to foster parent and foster child relationships. This researcher has observed issues with attachment relationships in foster children from a foster parent's perspective. The researcher has observed the methods of interventions used by the foster family agency in order to assist with the foster parent and foster child relationship. This researcher has followed a positivist paradigm and has tested the dependent variables of the foster child's attachment and the interventions used within the agency to assist the foster parents. The independent variable measured is the foster parent in the foster family agency.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### ASSESSMENT

#### Introduction

The assessment chapter discusses the research focus, the paradigm chosen to conduct the research, a review of related research literature, and contributions that this study will have to macro and micro social work practice. This research project is going to follow the positivism paradigm. It will work towards identifying the issues and attachment patterns with regards to foster children through the eyes of their foster parents. The research will observe the effects of interventions offered by the foster family agency on the foster parent and foster child relationship.

#### Research Focus and/or Question

This research project will work to identify the issues and attachment patterns in foster children through the perceptions of their foster parents. According to Karen Zilberstein 2014, attachments between children and caregivers first form in infancy and directly affect the child's needs for nurturance, comfort, and protection. As children continue to grow they form important attachments to their caregivers and will turn to their caregivers when faced with times of distress or are in need of protection (Zilberstein, 2014). Children will become comfortable in their attachment and will be open to exploring. The more secure those children feel with the availability of their caregivers then, the more

open they are to exploring their environment (Zilberstein, 2014). The overall questions addressed were: What is the link between foster parents and foster children's difficulties in forming an attachment in foster care? The research hypothesis for this study is that foster parents influence the foster children's ability to form an attachment. The dependent variables observed are the attachment development of the foster child and the interventions offered by the foster family agency. The independent variable measured the foster parent within the foster family agency. The questions that may arise while engaging the study participants could be: What is the link between the gender and ethnicity of the foster parent that is providing care for a foster child and the attachment relationship? What is the link between interventions offered and the improvement of attachment on the foster parent and foster child relationship?

### Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm

The study has employed the positivist paradigm in order to research the subject. According to Morris (2013), the positivist researcher assumes that an objective reality exists outside of personal experience that has demonstrable and immutable laws and mechanisms. Positivist researchers suppose are able to identify mechanisms of human behavior and are able to reveal cause and effect relationships. Identifying these causes and correlations are the goal of the positivist research (Morris, 2013).

## Literature Review

The literature review focused on the following things: definition of attachment, different attachment types, adoption and attachment theory, foster parent perceptions, foster parent and foster child relationships, the role of the social worker, foster parent sensitivity towards the foster children, and foster parent intervention to improve the relationship.

### Attachment Definition

Attachment is a specific relationship between a child and caregiver that is involved with making the child safe, secure and protected (Steele, Hodges, Kaniuk, Hillman, & Henderson, 2003). The concept of attachment lies within the caregiver's ability to properly meet the child's needs. Attachment occurs when the child uses the primary caregiver as a secure base from which to test the limits and finds the caregiver as a haven of safety and comfort (Benoit, 2004). The research will review the caregivers' perception of the attachment that they feel with their foster children.

The attachments between children and caretakers are first formed in infancy from the child's need for nurturance, comfort, and protection. "In order to receive adequate care, infants and young children require closeness to caregivers and they establish various strategies for maintaining proximity and eliciting care and protection" (Zilberstein, 2014). Those strategies derive from the child's perception of the availability of the caregiver and what can help contribute to maximizing their caregiver's availability (Zilberstein, 2014). As children age and require less

closeness, they continue to turn to their attachment figures when in distress or when facing challenges. When children feel secure in the availability of attachment figures, they feel confident to explore. In this way, the attachment system regulates both exploratory and proximity needs (Zilberstein, 2014). The attachment experiences these children are exposed to assist in developing an internal representation or internal working model of care and protection. which provides a similar and self-regulating role (Zilberstein, 2014).

The purpose of the research is observing foster children's ability to form secure attachments to their foster parents. These foster children are entering foster care with various attachment styles based on their prior living arrangement to foster care. This researcher has studied the link between the length of time the child has been in the home and the attachment exhibited by the child to the foster parent.

#### Foster Parents Perception on Attachment

According to Jacobsen, Ivarsson, Wentzel-Larsen, Smith, & Moe (2014), most children in foster care haven't had an emotionally committed primary caregiver before placement, and have needed the nurturing instinct in caregivers to be able to form secure attachments. A research study done by Jacobsen, Ivarsson, Wentzel-Larsen, Smith, & Moe (2014), highlighted the need for sensitive caregivers who have the ability to provide nurturing, therapeutic care to foster children due to a variation in attachment styles foster children may not always be

able to effectively communicate the method that helps them be comforted or soothed.

Pace and Zavattini (2010), examined the attachment patterns of late in age adopted children and their adoptive mothers in the beginning 8 months after the adoption. The study resulted in the enhancement of the late adopted children's security of attachment over the course during the 8 month period after adoption. The secure attachment of the adoptive mother encouraged the change in the late adoptive child's attachment. This study proves that a foster child's attachment can be changed over the course of time by the foster parent.

#### The Effects of Abuse on a Foster Parent/ Child Relationship

Children who have been a part of the Child Welfare System are at a disadvantage forming an attachment in future relationships. The previous trauma and negative experiences that they have been exposed to reflects in their attachment. Children that face the effects of abuse, neglect, and institutionalization are likely to experience negative influences on their cognitive thinking, ability to become attached, and deficiencies in their relationships with their peers and families (Steele, Hodges, Kaniuk, Hillman, & Henderson, 2003). Along with the difficulties with forming relational attachments, foster children are likely to display behavior problems resulting from their past traumatic experiences. Researchers have reviewed attachments regardless of the child's age and the outcome can be either secure or insecure with or without the child being adopted. However, the likelihood is high that children who are fostered will

experience an insecure attachment rather than a secure attachment. Research shows that this is due to the demonstration of emotional distancing that a child will result to in order to keep from repeating the past.

### Helping Foster Parents Understand the Foster Child's Perspective

According to Kelly and Salmon (2014), toddlers have been observed to have rejecting and avoidant behavior in response to new caregivers. Toddlers essentially take longer to develop stable patterns of attachment security than infants. There is little known about older children in regard to forming attachment relationships in foster care. Despite the hurdle of having to overcome the effects of the previous familial circumstances that landed the child in foster care, younger children seem to become securely attached to their caregiver at similar rates as biological parent-child relationships, with just over half developing secure attachments (Kelly & Salmon, 2014).

The foster parent's views about the child in their care influences the outcome for the child. For example, the foster parent may think the child never listens and express that to the foster child. The foster child may believe what their foster parent has instilled in them and never listen. There is also, evidence that children's thinking and negative mental representations affect their relationship with new foster parents (Kelly & Salmon, 2014). The relational learning framework was developed as a method to help foster parents consider how their foster child's past experiences of maltreating and impermanent relationships may influence the child's ideas, expectations and behaviors in relationships (Kelly &

Salmon, 2014). The framework is derived from attachment theory and relates to the way in which hostile experiences effect children's views of themselves, others and the world (Kelly & Salmon, 2014).

The relational learning framework has been developed as a cognitive technique to help aid foster parents and practitioners to understand the psychological perspective of the child. The relational learning framework focuses not on attachment intervention but instead aims to improve foster parent sensitivity and attunement. The primary focus of the relational learning framework is to remove barriers parents may have to understanding and empathizing with their foster child (Kelly & Salmon, 2014). The purpose of this research is to assist the foster parents with improving their attachment and helping to better understand their foster children.

#### Resource Workers Relationships with Foster Parents

Brown, Anderson, Rodgers (2016) conducted a study regarding 68 resource workers in the child welfare field and they were questioned with what made for a good relationship between a resource worker and a foster parent. The resource workers had to brainstorm what made up a good relationship between foster parents and resource workers. There was clear evidence on the need for flexibility from both the foster parent and resource worker. The results indicated that opening the lines of communication in order to learn from one another in the foster parent and resource worker relationship. The reciprocal interaction between the foster parent and resource worker contributes to improvements

seen in foster children relationships. This study recognizes the importance of the relationship between the resource worker and foster parent in order to support the foster parent and foster child's relationship. The role of the resource worker plays an important role in order to strategize interventions as needed to help the foster parent with their foster children.

This researcher has reviewed research in which foster parents developed preconceived ideas about their foster child and the ability to form attachments. This researcher's hypotheses is that foster parents that are able to form secure attachment relationships with their foster children and are open to forming these relationships with them. The foster parents that are unable to form attachments to their foster children have already made the assumption that they will not be able to do so. Also, the stronger relationship between the foster parent and the foster child will result in less problematic behavior from the foster child. The weaker the relationship between the foster parent and the foster child will result in the child exhibiting behaviors frequently. This researcher looked at the correlation between the stronger the support received by the agency, the stronger the relationship between foster parent and the foster child. The focus of this study is on foster parent observations while attempting to form attachments with their foster children. The outcome of this research is important because studies that were conducted in the past provided limited information on a foster child's ability to form an attachment. This study works to build the research that is needed on foster children's attachment from a foster parent's perspective.

### Potential Contribution of Study to Micro and/or Macro Social Work Practice

This study contributed to both micro and macro social work practice. At the micro level, the information learned allows social workers to pinpoint the stance that the foster parents have regarding foster children forming attachment relationships. The interventions that have been used within the agency and the improvements that can be made when working with foster children and their foster parents. The foster parent and foster child relationships can improve with the support that social workers offer our foster families in order to make the transition through foster care, a positive experience. At a macro level, there has to be a statement regarding advocacy for policies that provide more support for foster parents, and more training and education regarding attachment of foster parents and foster children.

### Summary

This project has focused on foster parent relationships with their foster children with attachment issues. The study employed the positivist paradigm. The literature review provided definitions of attachment, attachment theory, relational learning theory, and examples of studies conducted in the past to show that foster children are still capable of forming attachments to foster parents. The literature review shed minimal light on the foster parent's perceptions in these foster children in order to improve the attachment. This study should help in the

planning and implementation of trainings tailored to serve the foster care system in San Bernardino County at the micro and macro levels.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ENGAGEMENT

#### Introduction

This research project engagement chapter discussed the engagement of this study between the researcher and the key players. It described the researcher's experience engaging the gatekeeper and the study site. This chapter described the self-preparation steps that the researcher took upon gathering the data. This research project will also, look at the diversity, ethical, and political issues involved with implementing this study.

#### Study Site

The research site for this project will be conducted at the Greater Hope Foundation and On The Rise, Inc Foster Family Agencies. The Foster Family Agencies are non-profit organizations developed to provide services which foster the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social needs of abused, neglected, and troubled youth, together with the community. The population that the foster family agencies serve is foster children between the ages of 0-21 years old. Greater Hope Foundation and On The Rise, Inc. serve San Bernardino County and Riverside County.

## Engagement Strategies for Gatekeepers at Research Site

This researcher made contact with the study sites by making an appointment with the gatekeepers. This researcher was able to gain access through a meeting with the Executive Director. The Executive Director requested the submission of a cover letter from the researcher. The researcher created a cover letter that covered the introduction of the researcher, some background on who the researcher was, the reason for the research being conducted at foster family agencies, addressing the importance of foster parents, and the reason the feedback from the survey is important. The gatekeepers are equally important regarding their decision making ability. Each Gatekeeper holds a different role such as: those that can give permission for the study, those who are respected opinion leaders for member of the study sample, and those who have credibility to facilitate or obstruct the study (Morris, 2006) The Executive Director's from both agencies have approved the research being conducted at their organizations.

## Self-Preparation

The researcher created the foster parent surveys that were sent out in electronic format. The researcher located an electronic site to be able to administer the surveys to the foster parents. The researcher took into consideration that the foster parents are time limited and created the survey to be user friendly and to the point. This researcher gathered the list of foster parent

emails from the foster family agencies to send out the surveys. The researcher gathered demographics from the foster family agency regarding foster parents that have been sent surveys. The researcher prepared questions using previously tested methods in studies to use in the foster parent surveys. The researcher prepared for limited participation from the foster parents because of the potential fear of retaliation from the agency although confidentiality was explained throughout the survey process. The researcher has gained knowledge about the attachments of children in foster care, and the foster parent perspective on how effectively they feel the attachment is accomplished.

#### Diversity Issues

The Foster Family Agencies have a very diverse foster parent population. The researcher gathered information on race and ethnicity because each foster parent may be influenced by their own culture and how they view attachment. The researcher was conscious of the fact that a diverse population would be beneficial to this study to provide more valid outcome. The issue of diversity as it relates to the attachment is important because it can be a struggle for foster parents and foster children across culture.

#### Ethical Issues

The researcher completed a Human Subjects review in order to protect participants from potential harm. The researcher had the participants sign an informed consent pertaining to their confidentiality, this informed consent ensure

participants responses remain confidential along with the survey attached in the email. The researcher honored participant's confidentiality by using the survey method from a web site and the participant information was not released to the agencies, only the results of the study. The participants were informed of the information regarding the study and the importance of the responsiveness by the foster parents. The importance of their feedback was conveyed to the participant. The level of importance of confidentiality was expressed to the foster parents. A limitation of the research was that foster parents were apprehensive in completing the survey because they feared retaliation from the agency with regards to the agency decertifying them as a foster family.

#### Political Issues

Political issues could occur in this study. The political issues that happened during the research were although, written permission was obtained there was resistance from the Executive Team. The staff members under the Executive Director expressed their concerns regarding the study when foster parent's contacted the agency regarding the electronic surveys.

#### The Role of Technology in Engagement

The use of technology was utilized in this study in the form of web based surveys. This researcher used email correspondence to notify participants of the surveys in order to complete the study. The software used was SPSS because the data measured was quantitative.

## Summary

The engagement chapter consisted of the location of the study site, and the steps the researcher took in order to make contact with the gatekeeper. The researcher briefed the gatekeeper of the study. The self-preparation steps were reviewed for the researcher by the gatekeeper. The potential diversity, political, and ethical issues were identified. The role of technology in regards to the study has been completed with the use of surveys, and the ability to access the surveys through email for the foster parents.

## CHAPTER THREE

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### Introduction

This chapter described the implementation of the study. This chapter included descriptions of the research site and study participants, selection of participants, data gathering, phases of data collection, data recording, communicating findings, termination, and follow up.

#### Research Site and Study Participant

This study approved by the Institutional Review Board Sub-committee of School of Social Work (See Attachment A). The research sites approved for this study to be conducted at the private Foster Family Agencies located in Victorville, California and Barstow, California (See Attachment B). The study participants chosen for this study are foster parents that are certified with the foster family agency. Each participant represented a diverse background in regards to their ethnicity, number of years as a foster parent, marital status, education status, and number of foster children cared for in their time as a foster parent. The foster parents demographics consisted of the following ethnic backgrounds: 33.3 percent are Caucasian, 44.4 percent are Latino, 13.89 percent are African American, and 8.33 percent are other. The characteristics of the foster parents range from working, retired, male, female, single, married, Caucasian, Hispanic,

African American background, Christian, Catholic, Non-Denominational, raised children of their own, or never had their own children

### Selection of Participants

The participants were chosen from the list of certified foster parents held at the foster family agencies. The study followed a descriptive design. The researcher looked for a correlation between the independent and dependent variable that is addressed later in this study. The foster parent participants were chosen from a random convenience sample. The design followed a stratified random sampling. "The stratified random sampling is dividing the sampling frame into groups and random sample each group. We might divide our sampling frame into three ethnic groups, and then randomly sample elements within each group (Morris, Practice Informed Research Methods for Social Workers, 2013)." The researcher divided the foster parents into three ethnic groups through Extended Reach web based database for Greater Hope Foundation and On The Rise, Inc.

The sampling for the participants looked at the private foster family agencies foster parents that represent various gender and ethical backgrounds caring for foster children between the ages of 0-21.

### Data Gathering

This researcher emailed correspondence asking participation in a survey for this research. This researcher submitted an informed consent document (See Attachment C) to each of the participants. This researcher arranged an

agreement that each foster parent's participation will be voluntary and not be harassed to complete the self-administered survey. The gatekeeper agreed to allow the researcher to follow up with an email asking them to participate in the survey. The electronic mail correspondence reviewed the education of the participants regarding the reason for the research and the process of completing the survey. This researcher informed the participants of the anonymity and confidentiality of all responses provided through the self-administered surveys. The private foster family agency and participants were informed of their ability to access the results of the study, as the private foster family agency is provided a copy of the research study upon the completion of the study. Confidentiality will be honored for the participants as the private foster families will get a copy of the results without the information of whom participated in the study.

This researcher followed the positivist methodology and the data was collected using a quantitative tool (See Attachment D). This researcher used questions previously developed by a joint research project that had previously occurred "If there is a pre-existing instrument used in a previous study then, the reliability and validity are already known since the instrument was previously used" (Morris, Social Work Research Methods Four Alternative Paradigms, 2006).

This researcher created a Likert Scale in order to gather data through self-administered surveys through electronic mail. There were 12 questions in the Likert Scale survey that were emailed to the participants through survey

monkey. The questions utilized, were used previously in a thesis study with questions regarding attachment relationships between foster and adoptive families and their foster children. These questions are valid and reliable. The questions were ranked from 1-5 with 1 being, Strongly Disagree to 5 being, Strongly Agree. The questions were ranked by the foster parents on the Likert Scale are: my foster child enjoys spending time with me, when upset my foster child comes to me for comfort, I know how my foster child will react in most situations, foster children can form attachment to their foster parents, my foster child tells me "I love you", I would do whatever is necessary to help my child form an attachment to me, foster children have a hard time becoming attached to their foster parent due to their broken past, foster children are already attached to their biological parents and can't form any attachments to their foster parents, my foster family agency provides appropriate intervention with assisting in attachment issues with my foster child (Mountjoy & Vanlandingham, 2015). Question 11 and 12 asked questions regarding gender and ethnicity. Some of the questions were modified to fit this researcher's project. This may affect the reliability and validity of those questions. The questions were asked in English to the participants. This researcher was able to control her impact on the participants by not physically seeing the participants of the study.

#### Phases of Data Collection

The researcher created the Likert scale based on the above questions being addressed. The researcher emailed the surveys to the foster parents. The

researcher received 36 surveys out of 147 surveys. This researcher started the process of data collection in summer of 2016 and surveys were emailed to foster parents in the fall quarter of 2016.

### Data Recording

The data recordings were the surveys themselves. The survey responses were input through the survey monkey website. The survey responses were exported from survey monkey in order to prepare them for the SPSS software to be analyzed.

### Data Analysis

The data was analyzed through SPSS. The dependent variables were measured by the independent variables responses to the questions on the Likert Scale. The two variables being tested are the dependent variable which is the attachment of the foster child to the foster parent. The second dependent variable tested was the intervention support from the private foster family agency. The independent variable was the foster family agency foster parent providing care for a foster child 0-21 years of age. We were testing the effect of the attachment of the foster child to the foster parent and the effect of the interventions offered by the foster family agency to the foster parent and the foster child.

## Communication Findings

The findings were presented to the staff and foster parents of the agencies. In addition, the updated findings will help agencies or other researchers help their clients or future clients be more comfortable with assisting foster parents in building a closer attachment between them and their foster child/children. Also, these findings helped the private foster family agencies modify their intervention to assist the foster parents and their foster child to build a stronger attachment.

## Termination

All information was handed to participants at the same time. The participants were not forced to participate in the study. The participation in the study was held open for an 8 month time frame. Termination was an email correspondence thanking the foster parents for being part of the study upon the ending date.

## Follow-Up

The participants were given the researcher's contact information and the agency will follow up as needed with the results of the study. The agency will decide what interventions will need to be made along with review of their intervention methods as an agency. The agency may move forward with the results to allow future trainings with regards to attachment and behaviors of foster children.

## Summary

This researcher gathered information from foster parent participants from private foster family agencies in Victorville, CA and Barstow, CA. The participants included female and male foster parents that have fostered children for a period longer than 6 months in their homes between the ages of 0 -21 years old. The surveys were self-administered to the foster parents via email. The data was gathered and recorded through the use of surveys.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EVALUATION

#### Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the study. Thirty-six questionnaires from private foster family agencies were submitted for use in this study. This chapter will discuss descriptive statistics from answers on the questionnaire. The correlation between attachment relationships between foster children and their foster parents. The bivariate analyses and two independent t-test were conducted for comparison.

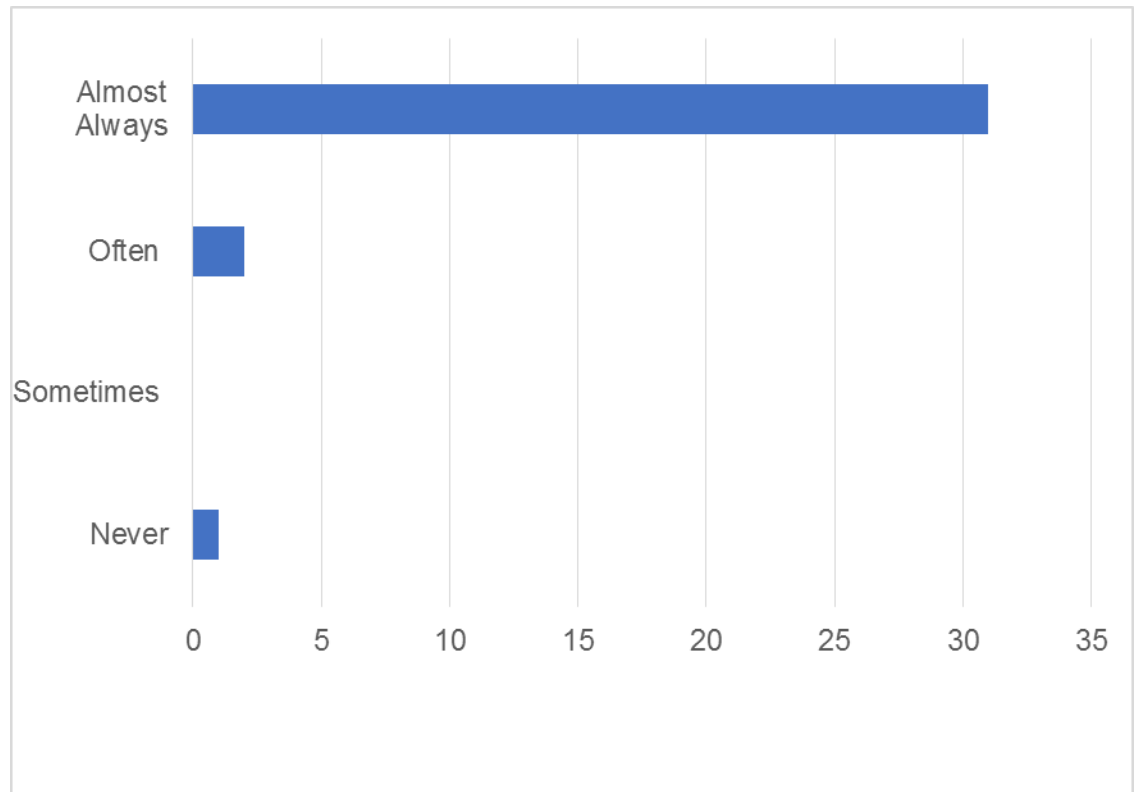
#### Data Analysis

The data was analyzed through SPSS. The dependent variables were measured by the independent variables responses to the questions on the Likert Scale. The two variables being tested are the dependent variable were the attachment of the foster child to the foster parent. The second dependent variable tested was the level of intervention support from the private foster family agency. The independent variable was the gender of the foster parent providing care for a foster child between the ages of 0-21. A bivariate test was run in order to determine a significant difference between the ability to form an attachment relationship with regard to gender of the foster parent and the foster child. This study did not ask any identifying information from foster parents whom were sent questionnaires. There were a few demographic questions the researcher had with regards to ethnicity and gender. All foster parents that were selected

had been caring for foster children longer than 6 months. Demographic information for the participants includes 30 females (83.33%) and 6 males (16.67%). Of these 36 participants, 16 were Hispanic (44.4%), 12 were Caucasian (33.33%), 5 were African American (13.89%), and 3 were other (8.33%).

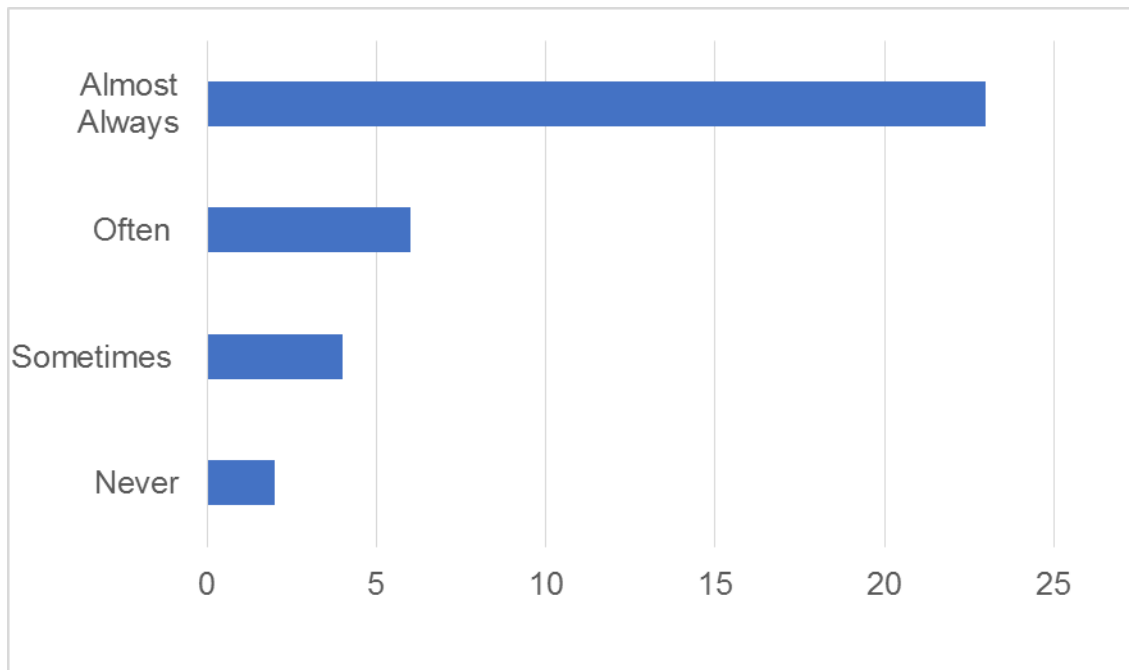
### Findings

This study reviewed the attachment between a foster child and foster parent from a foster parent's perspective. The questionnaire addressed 9 questions pertaining to attachment between a foster child and the foster parents. Foster parents in response to the first question "My foster child enjoys spending time with me" only 34 participants responded out of 36 participants.



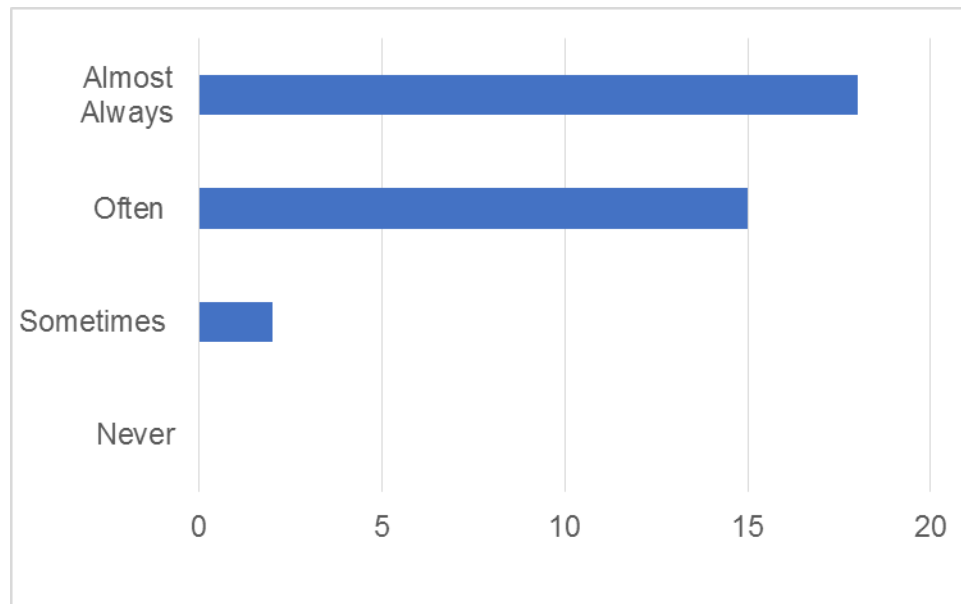
Graph 1. My foster child enjoys spending time with me.

The illustration of this graph is that majority of foster parents felt their foster children enjoyed spending time with them. The responses resulted in almost always (91.18%) 31 responses, Often (5.88%) 2 responses, and never (2.94%) 1 response. The second question “when upset my foster child comes to me for comfort” resulted in 35 responses.



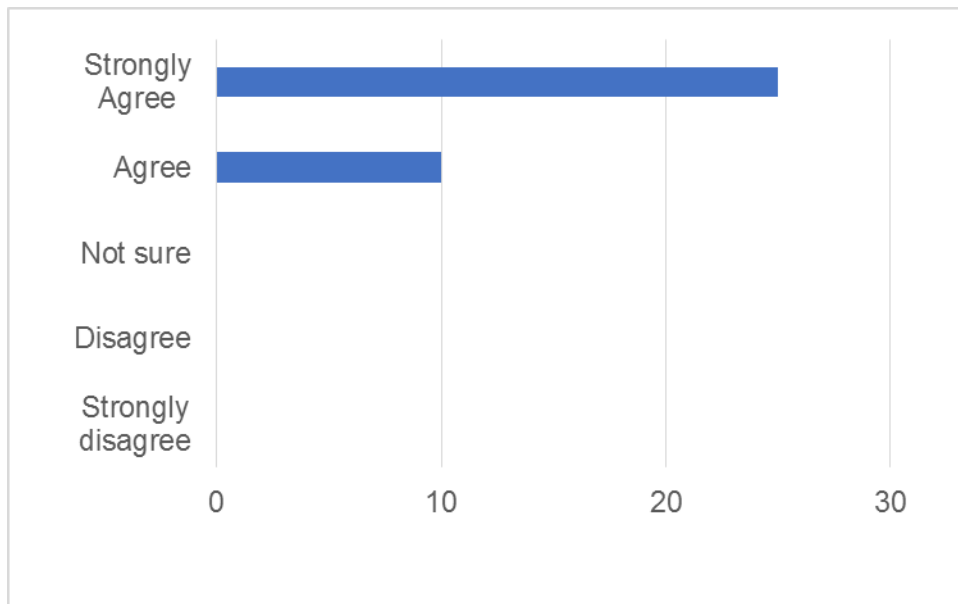
Graph 2. When upset my foster child comes to me for comfort.

The illustration in graph 2 is majority of foster parents felt their foster children came to them for comfort. The responses resulted in almost always (65.71%) 23 responses, often (17.14%) 6 responses, sometimes (11.43%) 4, and never (5.71%) 2 responses. The third question “I know how my foster child will react in most situations” resulted in 35 responses.



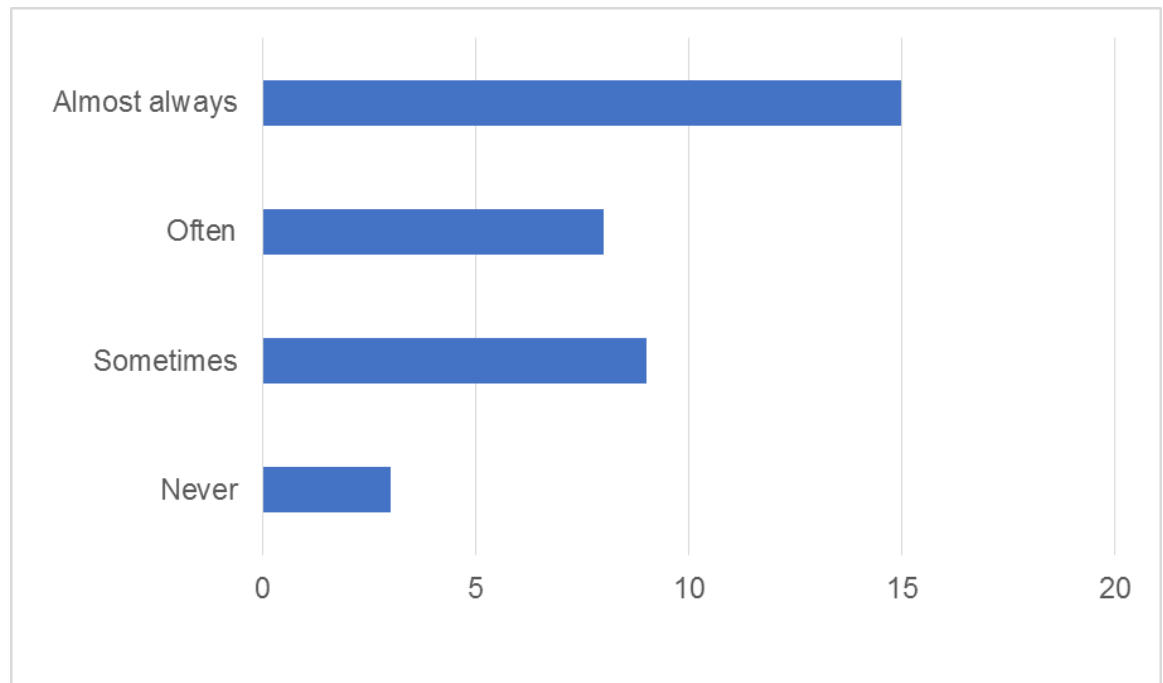
Graph 3. I know how my foster child will react in most situations.

This illustration in graph 3 shows that majority of foster parents felt that they could predict how their foster children would react in most situations. The responses resulted in almost always (51.43%) 18 responses, often (42.86%) 15 responses, sometimes (5.71%) 2 responses, never (0.00%) 0 responses. The fourth question “Foster Children can form attachments to their foster parents” resulted in 36 responses.



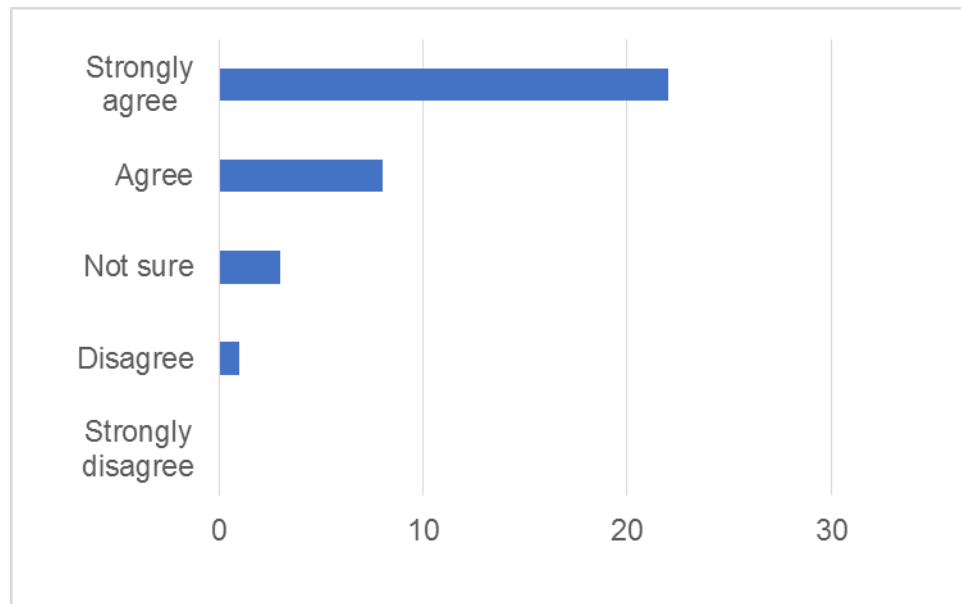
Graph 4. Foster children can form attachments to their foster parents.

The illustration in graph 4 shows that majority of foster parents felt that their foster children could form attachments to foster parents. The responses resulted in strongly agree (72.22%) 26 responses, agree (27.78%) 10 responses, not sure, disagree, and strongly disagree resulted in (0.00%) 0 responses. The fifth question “my foster child tells me I love you” resulted in 35 responses.



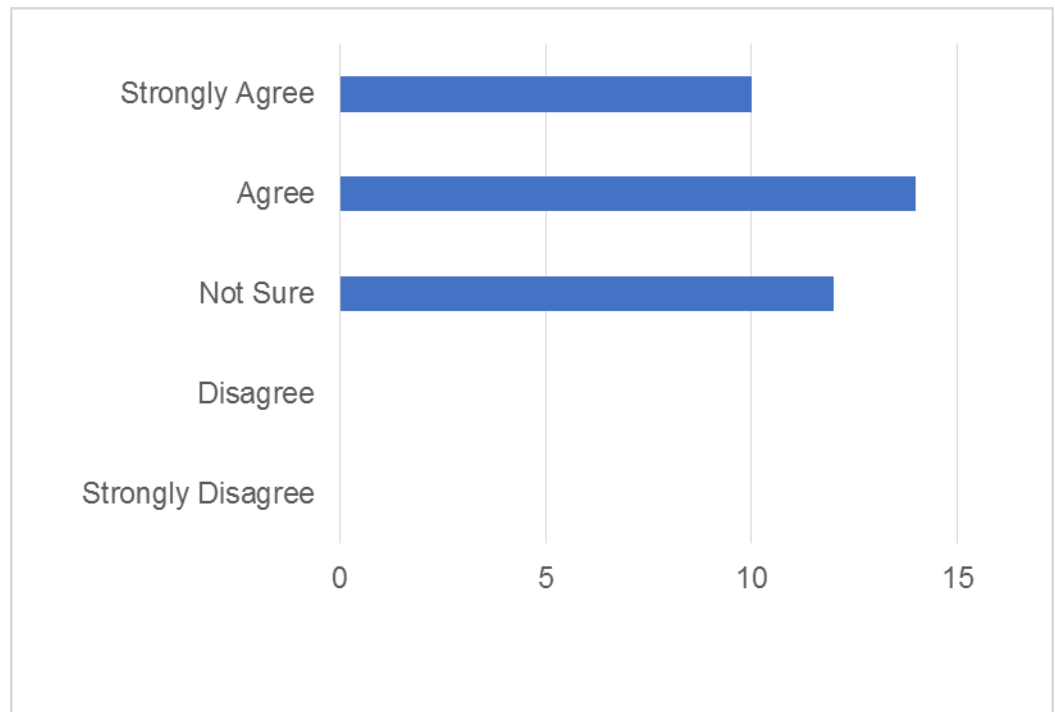
Graph 5. My foster child tells me “I love you”.

The illustration in graph 5 shows that majority of foster children told their foster parents that they loved them. The responses resulted in almost always (42.86%) 15 responses, often (22.86%) 8 responses, sometimes (25.781%) 9 responses, never (8.57%) 3 responses. The sixth question “I feel my foster child is attached to me” resulted in 34 responses.



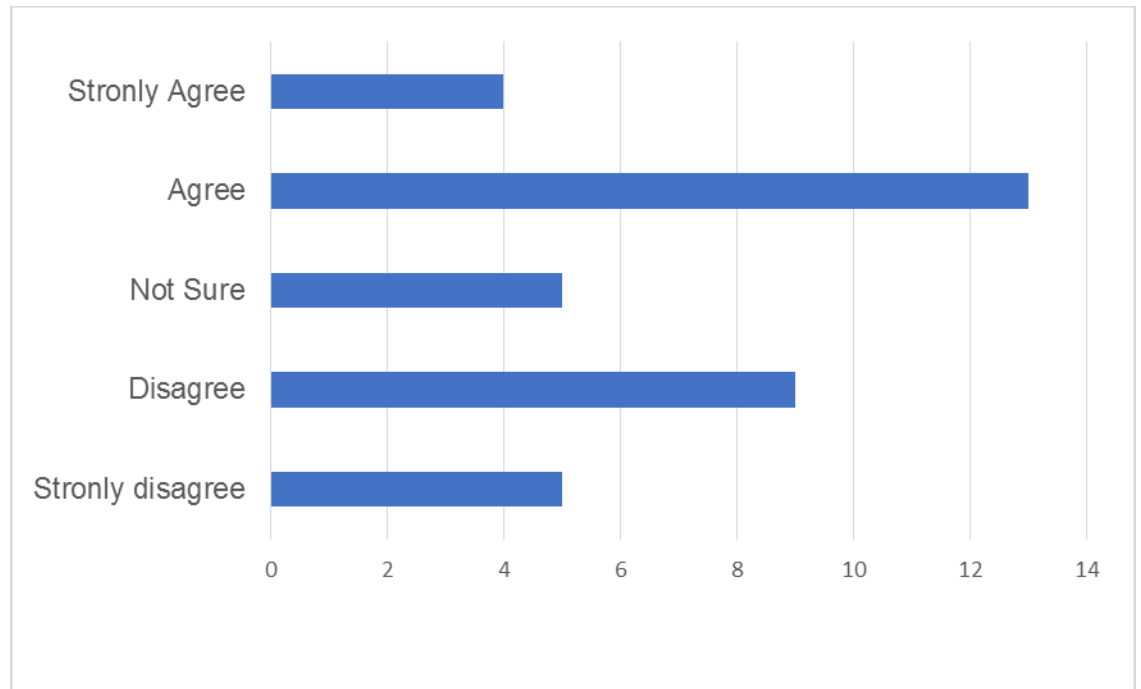
Graph 6. I feel my foster child is attached to me.

The illustration in graph 6 shows that majority of foster parents felt that their foster children were attached to them. The responses resulted in strongly agree (64.71%) 22 responses, agree (23.53%) 8 responses, not sure (8.82%) 3 responses, disagree (2.94 %) 1 response, and strongly disagree (0.00%) 0 responses. The seventh question “I would do whatever is necessary to help my foster child form an attachment to me” resulted in 36 responses.



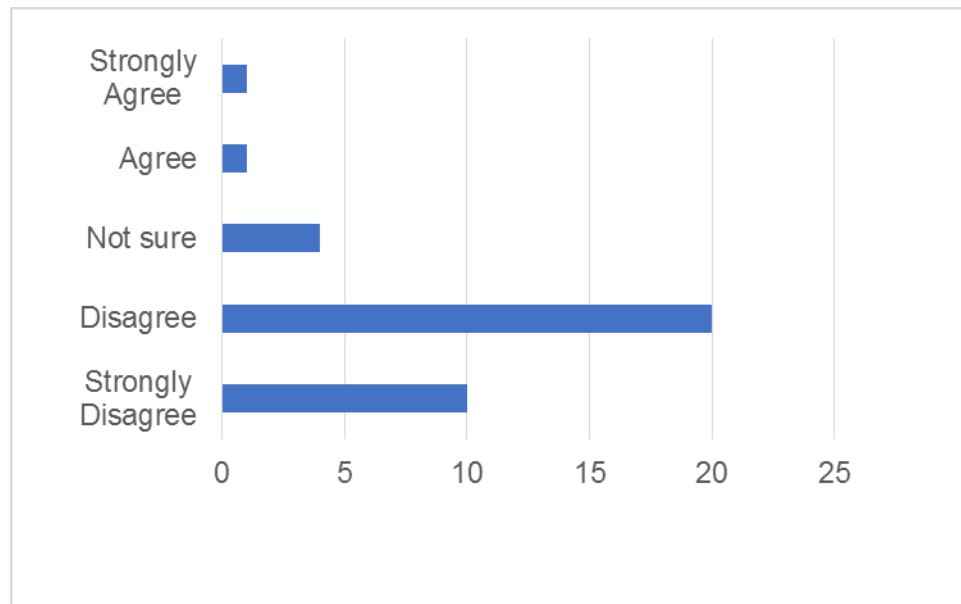
Graph 7. I would do whatever is necessary to help my foster child form an attachment to me.

The illustration in graph 7 shows that in regards to forming an attachment to their foster children, majority of foster parents would do what is necessary. The responses resulted in strongly agree (27.78%) 10 responses, agree (38.89%) 14 responses, not sure (33.33%) 12 responses, disagree (0.00%) 0 responses and strongly disagree (0.00%) 0 responses. The eighth question “Foster children have a hard time becoming attached to their foster parent due to their broken past” resulted in 36 responses.



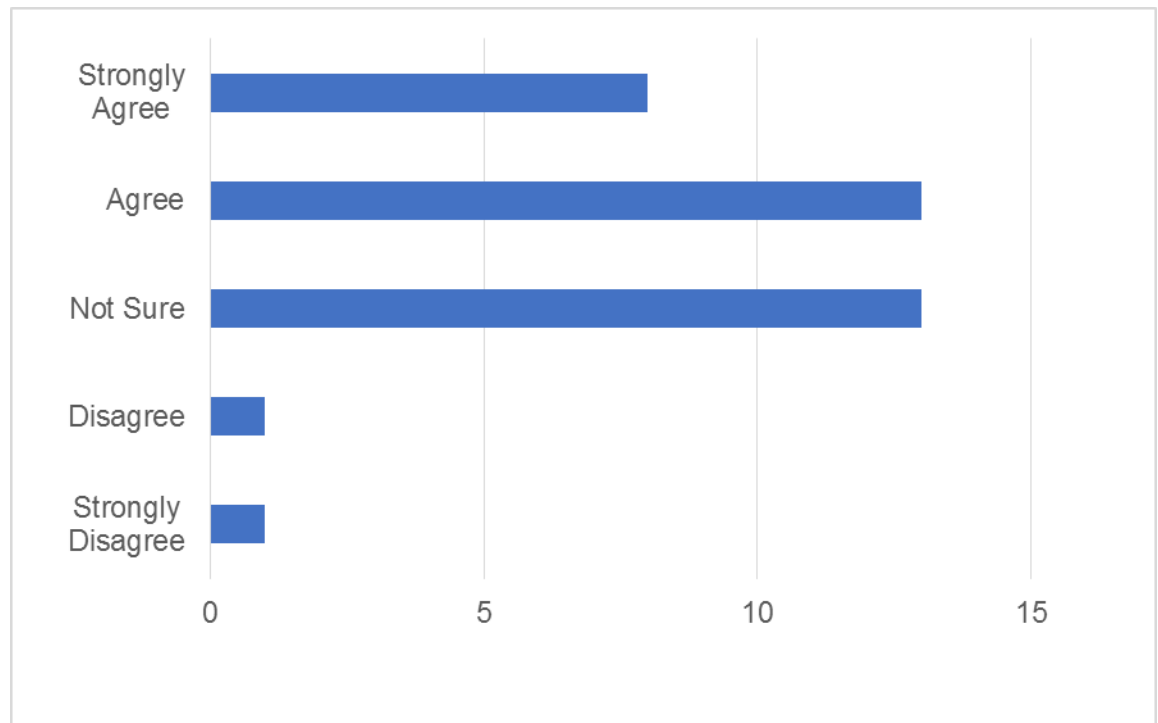
Graph 8. Foster children have a hard time becoming attached to their foster parent due to their broken past.

The illustration in graph 8 shows that majority of foster parents agreed that foster children have a hard time forming attachments due to their broken past. The responses resulted in strongly agree (11.11%) 4 responses, agree (36.11 %) 13 responses, not sure (13.89%) 5 responses, disagree (25.00 %) 9 responses, strongly disagree (13.89%) 5 responses. The ninth question “Foster children are already attached to their biological parents and can't form any attachments to foster parents” resulted in 36 responses.



Graph 9. Foster children are already attached to their biological parents.

The illustration in graph 9 shows that the majority of foster parents felt regardless of the attachment to biological parents that foster children were able to form attachments to their foster parents. The responses resulted in strongly agree (2.78%) 1 response, agree (2.78%) 1 response, not sure (11.11%) 4 responses, disagree (55.56%) 20 responses, strongly disagree (27.78%) 10 responses. The tenth question that was asked pertained to the support that the foster parents felt from the agency in terms of intervention which resulted in 36 responses.



Graph 10. My foster family agency provides appropriate intervention.

The illustration in graph 10 shows that majority of the foster parents felt supported by their foster family agencies. The responses resulted in strongly agree (22.22%) 8 responses, agree (36.11%) 13 responses, not sure (36.11%) 13 responses, disagree (2.78%) 1 response, and strongly disagree (2.78%) 1 response.

#### Data Interpretation

The bivariate analyses revealed that there was a significant difference between gender of the foster parent and the attachment of the foster child. The significant figure was 0.19. A pearson correlation coefficient found strong relationship between foster child attachment relationships and gender,  $r=0.388$ ,  $n=36$ ,  $p=0.19$  with high levels of attachment associated with gender of the foster

parent. The gender of the foster parent determined how they felt that their foster child could form attachments to them. An independent samples t-test was conducted to evaluate perspectives on foster child attachment relationships with male and female foster parents. There was significant difference in the male foster parent ( $M=4.33, SD=.516$ ) and female parent ( $M=4.80, SD=.41$ ;  $t(34)=-2.46, p=0.12$ , two-tailed). The gender of the foster parent made a difference in the perception of their foster child relationship. An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the foster family agency level of support for male and female foster parents. There was no significant difference between the level of intervention support in males ( $M=3.33, SD=.516$ ) and females ( $M=3.80, SD=.997$ ;  $t(34)=-1.11, p=.275$ , two tailed).

#### Implications of Findings for Micro and/or Macro Practice

This study was conducted in order to provide additional research to foster child attachment relationships with their foster parents. The major awareness that this study will bring with regard to the foster care population along with the social work personnel that are involved.

#### Summary

This chapter reviewed the results of the study. The study revealed a positive correlation between attachment relationships and the gender of the foster parents. The foster parents felt their foster children had formed attachment

relationships with them. Foster parents felt that they were supported from their private foster family agencies. There was no significant data with gender of the foster parent and their feelings of intervention support from the foster family agency. This chapter reviewed descriptive statistics. The results were conducted through the SPSS system and included a bivariate analyses, pearson correlation, and an independent samples t-tests.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

#### Introduction

This chapter will provide the discussion of findings in this study. The limitations to the study that was conducted were discussed in this chapter. The chapter will also, provide the termination and follow-up of the study conducted.

#### Termination of Study

The participants were informed and thanked ahead of time for their participation in the study. The debriefing statement informed the participants where they would be able to view the study once published. Termination with the participants is unnecessary due to the participants being informed upon the survey distribution through e-mail and the confidentiality of the participants.

#### Communicating Findings to Study Site and Study Participants

The purpose of this study was to discuss attachment from a foster parent's perspective with their foster child. The ability to be able to form attachment relationships in the eyes of their foster parents is important. The study reviewed the foster parent's feelings on the level of support that they felt from the foster family agency with their foster child. There was some significant data found with regard to the gender of the foster parent and their perspective on their

attachment relationship with their foster child. The findings will be communicated through the publication of this study and made available to the private foster family agencies directly while maintaining confidentiality of the participants. The dissemination plan is to participate in the poster day at CSUSB in order to answer any questions regarding the study.

### Limitations

This researcher was aware of the limitations with data collection, distribution of surveys, and content of survey responses. The data collection was a voluntary basis so, although surveys were sent out to all foster parents that had children in foster care for longer than 6 months' time frame. There was a minimal response from the sample size. The agency didn't allow for explanation to the foster parents with regards to the study although the agencies did provide approval of the study to be conducted. The foster parents were able to skip questions on the survey without providing specific answers to the reasons if the behavior didn't apply to their foster children. The researcher was also, unable to control the trauma that children had experienced in their previous placements or with their biological family which could hinder the attachment style to their foster parent.

### Summary

This study was able to bring awareness to the need for more research with regards to foster children and their attachment relationships to their foster

parents. Despite the variables measured there is still minimal information regarding foster parents perceptions on their foster child relationships. This chapter discussed the process of termination, communication of findings and dissemination plan. The limitations to the study were also discussed.

APPENDIX A  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee

Researcher(s) Andrew Baker  
Proposal Title Attachment & interventions  
Deborah Foster parent's children  
# SW/1485

Your proposal has been reviewed by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board. The decisions and advice of those faculty are given below.

-----  
Proposal is:

- ☒ approved  
☐ to be resubmitted with revisions listed below  
☐ to be forwarded to the campus IRB for review

Revisions that must be made before proposal can be approved:

- ☐ faculty signature missing  
☐ missing informed consent ☐ debriefing statement  
☐ revisions needed in informed consent ☐ debriefing  
☐ data collection instruments missing  
☐ agency approval letter missing  
☐ CITI missing  
☐ revisions in design needed (specified below)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Chair Signature

6/13/14  
Date

Distribution: White-Coordinator; Yellow-Supervisor; Pink-Student

APPENDIX B  
AGENCY APPROVAL LETTER



Human Subjects Committee  
School of Social Work  
CSUSB  
5500 University Parkway  
San Bernardino, CA 92407

Date: 3/7/16

Dear Committee Members:

This is to confirm that Audrey Saber has permission to carry out her research project, EFFECTS OF ATTACHMENT AND INTERVENTIONS ON FOSTER PARENT AND FOSTER CHILD RELATIONSHIPS, at Greater Hope Foundation. She will be gathering data from Foster parents via surveys. The data will be gathered from 06/01/2016 to 02/01/2017. The participants will be participating voluntarily.

Sincerely,

Helena Smith

APPENDIX C  
INFORMED CONSENT



California State University, San Bernardino  
Social Work Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee  
APPROVED 6/12/16 VOID AFTER 6/12/17  
IRB# 2016-085 CHAIR [Signature]

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
School of Social Work

### INFORMED CONSENT

The nature and purpose of the study is to determine the connections between foster parents and their foster children relationships. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, the Sub-Committee of the School of Social Work, California State University of San Bernardino. The study is being conducted by MSW Student Audrey Saber, under the supervision of Dr. Zoila Gordon, School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Sub-committee, California State University, San Bernardino.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the study is to examine foster parent and their foster children attachment relationships and attachment developments.

**DESCRIPTION:** Participants will be asked of a few questions on their relationship with their foster child, their feedback with intervention from the private foster family agency, and some demographics.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation in the study is totally voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

**CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY:** Your responses will remain anonymous and data will be reported in group form only.

**DURATION:** It will take 5 to 10 minutes to complete the survey.

**RISKS:** There are no foreseeable risks to the participants.

**BENEFITS:** Increased self-awareness to the foster parent regarding their foster child's attachment development ability.

**CONTACT:** If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Zoila Gordon @ 909-537-7222 or emailatzgordon@csusb.edu

**RESULTS:** Please contact the Scholarworks Database at the John Pfau Library, California State University, San Bernardino.

909.537.5501 909.537.7029

5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

The California State University . Bakersfield Channel Islands Chico Dominguez Hills East Bay Fresno Fullerton Humboldt Long Beach Los Angeles  
Maritime Academy Monterey Bay Northridge Pomona Sacramento San Bernardino San Diego San Francisco San Jose San Luis Obispo San Marcos Sonoma Stanislaus



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**College of Social and Behavioral Sciences**  
*School of Social Work*

This is to certify that I read the above and I am 18 years or older.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Place an X mark here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

California State University, San Bernardino  
Social Work Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee  
APPROVED 6.1.11 VOID AFTER 6.13.11  
IRB# 2010-032 CHAIR [Signature]

909.537.5501 · 909.537.7029

5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

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The California State University · Bakersfield · Channel Islands · Chico · Dominguez Hills · East Bay · Fresno · Fullerton · Humboldt · Long Beach · Los Angeles  
Maritime Academy · Monterey Bay · Northridge · Pomona · Sacramento · San Bernardino · San Diego · San Francisco · San Jose · San Luis Obispo · San Marcos · Sonoma · Stanislaus

APPENDIX D  
LIKERT SCALE

**1. My foster child enjoys spending time with me.**

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Almost Always

**2. When upset my foster child comes to me for comfort.**

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Almost Always

**3. I know how my foster child will react in most situations.**

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Almost Always

**4. Foster children can form attachments to their foster parents.**

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not sure ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

**5. My foster child tells me "I love you".**

☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Almost Always

**6. I feel my foster child is attached to me.**

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not Sure ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

**7. I would do whatever is necessary to help my foster child form an attachment to me.**

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not Sure ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

**8. Foster children have a hard time becoming attached to their foster parent due to their broken past.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree
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**9. Foster children are already attached to their biological parents and can't form any attachments to foster parents.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree
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**10. My foster family agency provides appropriate intervention with assisting in attachment issues with my foster child.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree
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Developed by Audrey Saber

APPENDIX E  
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

The researcher of this project is Audrey Saber. The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of attachment on foster parent and child relationships. This research was conducted to assess the potential connections between foster parents and attachment within their relationships with their foster children.

Thank you for your participation. Participants of this study can find research results through contacting the agency they are affiliated with, as the agency will be given a copy of the results. Please refer to Zoila Gordon, the supervisor of this research project, at California State University San Bernardino for future questions or concerns. Zoila Gordon can be reached at (909) 537-7222 or by email at [zgordon@csusb.edu](mailto:zgordon@csusb.edu). Resources on attachment can be obtained through the participant's foster family agency.

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