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## THE LINK BETWEEN FOSTER YOUTH AND TEACHERS USING EMPOWERMENT: DO TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS IMPROVE OUTCOMES?

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EMPOWERMENT: DO TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS  
IMPROVE OUTCOMES?

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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  
Rosio Zaragoza Hernandez  
September 2017

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September 2017

Approved by:

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## ABSTRACT

This study presents findings on elementary teacher's relationship with foster youth, whether teachers are able to use an empowerment approach to build trust and improve outcomes. This study was quantitative and measured the key variables through a descriptive design. Specifically using Qualtrics which tested the key variables of empowerment, trust, and improved outcomes. Also, Qualtrics described the findings through bar graphs and the researcher interpreted this through univariate statistics specifically. Significant findings were found towards teachers making a positive impact on foster youth.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my advisor, Dr. Laurel Brown, who was a great support even when times were rough and I struggled to write this thesis. Thank you, Dr. Brown, in the short time I worked with you, I found a strong woman leader who is confident in her abilities and who extends her knowledge to newcomers with passion. You are an inspiration and I hope to one day have your level of expertise and confidence as a leader.

I would like to thank all my professors who helped push me through this journey. Their support and dedication to expanding the knowledge of their students will not be forgotten. I would especially like to thank the participants of this study who were so genuine in taking time for this survey and who take their time to positively impact foster children.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis foremost to my husband, Hector Hernandez, for his genuine support in the course of this journey. He has worked two jobs, seven days a week for the past three years and always kept pushing through. I am eternally grateful for his sacrifices which allowed me to accomplish my dreams, this would not have been possible without you.

To my kids Nailea and Robert, although you are but children, you both inspired me to get this degree. Because of you, I did not give up even though many times I wanted to. You both gave me the strength that I needed to accomplish this. Nailea, you were my first born, you have been with me in this long journey and somehow got accustomed to “mommy is doing homework”. And, although I thought you didn’t understand, you did, and you never acted up, rather you showed me the love and affection that motivated me to finish. I hope that as a woman, one day I will inspire you to pursue your dreams.

I would also like to thank my family for supporting me in this journey, without their support I would not be where I am now. To my parents, thank you for migrating to this country and instilling in me that education is the key to success. I now understand what you told me all along, that hard work pays off and dreams do come true. Si se puede!

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## CHAPTER ONE

### ASSESSMENT

#### Introduction

This chapter introduces and discusses the research topic, the relationship between the use of empowerment by a teacher with their foster youth students and the improved outcomes. It then describes the chosen positivist paradigm used to conduct and guide this research project. Next, a literature review for the research problem is presented and followed by the theoretical orientation of this study. Lastly, the study's possible contributions to micro and macro social work practice are discussed.

#### Research Focus

The research describes the relationship between a teacher and their foster youth students. With a focus on the use of an empowerment approach by teachers to build trust and improve outcomes among their foster youth students. Specifically, on teachers who have worked with elementary school children placed in foster care, in order to understand their perspectives on building trusting relationships through the use of empowerment. To understand this approach, elementary school teachers participated in the research study by completing an interview questionnaire. Based on the information provided, social

workers that work with foster youth will be able to further develop skills, interventions, and programs that positively effect the outcome of foster children through empowerment in their classroom setting.

### Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm

This research study utilizes the positivist paradigm perspective. Study participants consist of teachers from a local elementary school setting who have experience working with students who are foster children. Study participants were interviewed through a survey questionnaire to gather information about the type of relationship that exists between foster child students and their teacher. The questions gathered information about academic and behavioral changes in foster care students from having a positive relationship with their teachers. Finally, this is the appropriate paradigm because it will help provide social work practice with a better understanding of a teacher's interest in having a positive relationship with a foster child student.

### Literature Review

The literature review focuses on the research topic, specifically providing the definition of a foster care placement, followed by a discussion on the outcomes of foster care. This will develop an understanding of foster youth's feelings of abandonment. Finally, a discussion on a teacher's involvement with foster youth students and the definition of empowerment are presented.

## Foster Care Outcomes

It has long been presented by the Child Welfare System that foster care is defined as a safe place for a child whose safety in their own home can no longer be assured. It is specifically defined as the process of removing a child from their biological or extended family and placing them into foster care (Kessler, Pecora, Williams, Hiripi, O'Brien, English & Sampson, 2008). In the United States, there are an estimated 40,000 children in foster care, with an estimated annual cost of \$29 billion per year (Gypen, Vanderfaeillie, Maeyer, Belenger, & Van Holen, 2016). Once a child is removed from their home environment and placed in foster care a number of different placement options are available including non-relative placement, group home placement, emergency shelter placement, and pre-adoptive foster homes.

Once in foster care, only 24 percent of children stay with relatives, 25 percent are placed in institutional settings and more than half, 53 percent, are placed with non-relatives (Kessler et. al, 2008). Unfortunately, one of the primary reasons for children being placed in foster care is they come from a lower socioeconomic standing family with limited resources, and have parents who experience high levels of physical and psychological problems (Borczykowsky, Vinnerljung, & Hjern, 2013). As a result, these children often experience maltreatment and lack stability in their lives (Kessler et. al, 2008). Due to their age, vulnerability, and potential for ongoing harm, children from these home environments need to be placed into a foster care setting.

Goltzman, Kollar and Trinkle (2010) suggest that stability is of high importance for foster youth, especially when it comes to consistent contact with the professionals who are responsible for their care. They also found that limited child welfare services have an effect on foster youth because they are crucial to foster youth's safety, well-being, permanence, and stability (Goltzman, Kollar and Trinkle, 2010). So, when their case assigned social worker leaves, transfers, or resigns and is no longer a part of the child's life, the foster youth are emotionally and psychologically impacted. Further, when caseworkers were more involved the turnover of foster youth was influenced and a positive association between foster youth and the turnover of case workers was established. Specifically, when foster youth have one worker, they experience a higher likelihood of being placed in a permanent home and demonstrating the importance of having stability within their lives (Goltzman, Kollar & Trinkle, 2010).

### Foster Youth and Trauma

Overall outcomes of foster youth are predominately disproportionately lower than non-foster youth. The overwhelming majority of foster children experience long-term trauma resulting from the abuse and neglect they are subjected to. In addition, foster children experience an additional trauma from their parental separation they are subjected to. As a result of this traumatic experience foster children are profoundly affected both physically and emotionally. A common symptom from experiencing significant trauma is

increased levels of psychological stress from the abuse and neglect and from having limited to no adult support.

High levels of stress can lead to increased rates of both mental and physical illnesses and affect cognition, memory, behavior alteration, depression, and suicidality (Dorsey, Burns, Southerland, Cox, Wagner, & Farmer, 2012).

Trauma exposure is the leading cause of behavioral disorders. Behavioral disorders are diagnosed five times more often in foster children than children who never enter foster care. However, not all foster children present with behavioral disorders due to trauma exposure as their diagnosis is due to genetic causes (Forkey, Morgan, Schwartz, & Sagor, 2016).

#### Teacher's Involvement with Students in Foster Care

Zetlin, Macleod, and Kimm (2012) point out that foster children are among the most susceptible populations for negative educational outcomes. This is primarily due to multiple foster placements resulting in school instability for foster children. As a result of these barriers teachers face numerous challenges in aiding foster children with their educational development. Often, new teachers lack knowledge and experience in working with foster kids and collaborating with the child welfare system (Zetlin, Macleod, & Kimm, 2012). Additional barriers for foster children include cognitive disabilities, higher rates of tardiness, increased grade repetition, and high frequencies of mid school year changes. Foster children have lower test scores resulting in scoring below grade level standards

at higher rates than their non-foster care peers (Zetlin, Macleod, & Kimm, 2012). These barriers combine to increase the complexity newer teachers face in supporting the specific needs of foster students, often placing newer teachers at a greater disadvantage to aid their foster students.

Although 25 percent of children experience traumatic events of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse foster children experience even higher rates of acute and chronic trauma that negatively impacts their educational well-being (Crosby, Day, Baroni, & Somers, 2015). Trauma can interfere with the well-being and functioning of a child through both internal and external symptoms (Crosby, Day, Baroni, & Somers, 2015). A common symptom of trauma for both girls and boys is displayed through internal and external behaviors, most notably anxiety, depression, and anger. Often, as a result of their external emotional behaviors foster children are designated for placement in special education classes at a high rate (Crosby, Day, Baroni, & Somers, 2015). With foster children facing so many barriers to their academic success teachers would benefit from receiving additional education and training on the effects of trauma exposure on children, and specifically foster children. Including education for their own self-care and how to request necessary support from school administration in order to better serve their foster child student population. Because teachers spend a significant amount of time with foster children, and having a specific and meaningful role in their lives teachers also require adequate training about the child welfare system

and how it operates. This additional education and training for teachers will support and aid their foster children students in and out of their classrooms.

### Empowerment

Souza (2011) describes empowerment as being a similar construct, at the psychological level, as self-efficacy and self-esteem. Empowerment emphasizes the individual's development of a positive self-concept of their personal competence. Empowerment also aids in the development of a psychological sense of self-control and the corresponding development of an individual's concern with social influence (Souza, 2011). With empowerment comes the development of personal power, which is primarily possible through the ability to access and meet basic needs. In addition, at the community level, empowerment allows resources to become available in order for individuals to make self-evident health-related changes.

If an individual's empowerment is not properly developed, their psychosocial problems can be attributed to unequal distribution and access to resources that can become overwhelming. When applied to a foster child, empowerment and the values it can bring, is not enough to overcome the barriers the foster child faces without adequate access to necessary resources, such as having a teacher who provides positive modeling, empathy, and emotional support. However, the inverse is true, if a child has positive and supportive adult relationships they can access and take advantage of, they will benefit from an

empowerment approach. Primarily because empowerment allows management of the power within the self allowing change to occur due to the individual being accepting of external resources allowing them to better conquer difficult situations (Souza, 2011).

Teachers can play a unique and positive role in the lives of their students in foster care. By the very nature and context of their profession and the amount of time they spend with their students in foster care, teachers can assist foster care students with increasing their empowerment. Teachers can also utilize empowerment to help them provide a positive classroom environment that aids and supports the needs of foster children to help aid in their academic success (Lacour, Mcglawn & Dees, 2016). By being knowledgeable about foster youth and the barriers and issues they face, teachers can identify how best to help them, through recognition they are different than their non-foster care peers. In particular, as students, foster children may be disengaged, hyperactive, and lack engagement skills, which may lead to increased disciplinary actions. For teachers, this crucial additional knowledge about foster children and their experience allows them to think differently and can help shape their response in the classroom setting when certain situations arise with their foster care students.

The positive relationship between the foster care student and their teacher is crucial in meeting the unique educational needs of foster children. It has been demonstrated that teachers can teach and model important socialization and appropriate behaviors to their foster care students through praise and

encouragement (Lacour, Mcglawn & Dees, 2016). If a foster child is ever dealing with a negative behavior or emotion, the teacher can have the child leave the situation and follow up with him/her by asking questions about their feelings. Also, by helping the child recognize limits and expectations that will help the child establish a solution to the problem. In general, children who are survivors of trauma need loving and nurturing adults who are able to support them and be emotionally available for them in their most troubling moments (Lacour, Mcglawn & Dees, 2016). Overall, a teacher's role in helping their foster care students overcome their inherent barriers simply by being in foster care is very important. Thus, making the relationship between a foster child and their teacher a very special one that should be understood by others.

Finally, this literature review was presented to better understand the reality of foster youth and how they can succeed with the help of an invested teacher. First, the definition of foster care was introduced to create a better understanding of what it means to be in foster care. This gave way to explaining the outcome of foster care, explaining how it negatively affects foster youth. After this, foster youth's sense of abandonment was expressed to bring forth the way foster youth feel after being taken away from their family. Then, teacher's involvement with foster youth was described to comprehend the importance of the relationship between foster child and a teacher. Lastly, the definition of empowerment was described because it is crucial to understand a teacher's role and if their

presence can positively affect a foster youth's ability to trust others and build positive relationships.

### Theoretical Orientation

The framework of this study is attachment theory. This study focuses on an empowerment type of interaction between foster youth and their teacher's and if this has helped them build trusting relationships. It is well known that foster youth face a difficult transition when they are taken away from their home and put into protective custody. These children end up with feeling abandoned, angry, and have difficulty establishing trust with others. These emotions have to do with attachment theory because it describes human behavior as it relates to establishing bonds with people they gain trust with. According to Blakely and Dziadosz (2015), attachment theory is based on attachment styles between the child and their caretaker. Specifically, this theory proposes that there exists psychological distress within the child of being deprived of his/her mother. It is suggested that those who suffer from abandonment trauma usually experience anxiety. Particularly, it is believed that there exists a continuation of attachment from childhood through adulthood and individuals develop anxiety because of a lack of a positive attachment contact with their caregiver (Blakely & Dziadosz, 2015). Due to this, it is believed that if a foster child has a stable person in their lives, this individual can fulfill the child's lack of attachment and help build a secure style of attachment.

## Potential Contribution to Micro and Macro Social Work Practice

The information obtained from this study is of great relevance to micro level social work practice because it offers ways in which social workers can better understand troubled foster youth and offer help towards establishing relationships. Specifically, social workers can learn how to properly approach the client and their needs to offer proper guidance to establish trust. By doing this, Social Workers will advance in dealing with foster youth and learn their way of dealing with trust issues to understand a child's reasons behind their ordeal. Additionally, the contribution to macro level practice will be to distribute these research findings towards local school districts that deal with foster care students. Hence, providing the community organization opportunities to properly deal with social issues, such as troubled foster youth.

## Summary

In this chapter, the research topic of the relationship between foster children and teachers was addressed in collaboration with the positivist approach. Next, a literature review was introduced which defined foster care, discussed the outcome of foster care, explained foster youth's sense of abandonment and informed about the outcomes of foster youth having teacher involvement, as well as, the definition of empowerment. Followed by the theoretical orientation of the study, attachment theory. Finally, this chapter addressed how this study contributes to micro and macro level

social work practice through providing social workers with better intervention strategies for individuals and families in the community, that have experienced foster care. This will allow finding proper ways of addressing troubled foster youth to help build positive relationships.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ENGAGEMENT

#### Introduction

In this chapter, the engagement phase for this study is interpreted. Specifically, information about the location of the agency, the services it provides, and the type of clients it serves is included. There is a discussion regarding the engagement process with both the gatekeeper and the teachers, who are the study participants. Next, self-preparation for the study is mentioned, followed by diversity, ethical, and political issues that arose during the research. Lastly, the role of technology in this study is mentioned.

#### Study Site

The research site is a local public elementary school in Coachella Valley, California where children ranging from 5 to 11 years old attend. Specifically, this is a school setting where children in grades K-5 are taught academic skills that are required by state standards. This is available through the work of the teachers who are specifically employed to educate elementary students. Particularly, this public-school setting offers their services to all the local children who live within the mile radius required to attend. Its location is in a small city within the Coachella Valley that is made up of low income and middle class families. Accordingly, this city has 21% of its population living in poverty as

compared to 15% for the state of California (US Census Bureau, 2013). The outskirts of the town, are known to be of low income, which is a known factor of child endangerment and CPS involvement. Due to this, the local school district office that oversees all local public schools, provides educational services to children of all backgrounds. Essentially, services are also extended out of the educational aspect and towards a counseling or guidance approach to those who may need it, especially foster youth who need someone of trust in their lives. Precisely, the school district's mission is to "ensure every student develops the knowledge, skills, and motivation to succeed as a productive, ethical, global citizen by assuring equal access to learning provided by caring, committed, collaborative staff working with our families and extended partnerships" (Desert Sands Unified School District, 2016).

#### Engagement Strategies for Gatekeepers at Research Site

Engagement strategies for this study were conducted by contacting the gatekeeper for approval, and sending emails to teachers that were willing to participate in the study. Here, the gatekeeper is the school principal who oversees all the staff. Information was given to the gatekeeper, in person, regarding the purpose of the study, and questions were answered upon request. Then, a follow up with the gatekeeper was conducted via email to revisit the purpose of the study and obtain official permission. Upon this, the researcher contacted the teachers via email to explain the purpose of the study, and inform

about the granted approval. Also, contact information of the researcher was provided to the gatekeeper and the participants via email to allow them to ask any questions they might have.

### Self-Preparation

During the self-preparation process, rapport was established through properly contacting the staff at the local school site. Further, a professional relationship was established through adequately addressing information about the study, introducing myself and answering the questions that arose. Additionally, an informed consent was also provided, along with obtaining support from the gatekeeper, and the volunteers that took part in the study. Upon collecting data, a comprehensive literature review was created to focus on specific areas that negatively affect foster youth and the importance of having someone of trust. Additional preparation included establishing a trusting relationship between the participants and researcher so the participants could have trust and positively impact the study findings.

### Diversity Issues

Diversity issues were expected, and the researcher remained open to this likelihood. Diversity issues that could've posed a threat to this study were age of participants and the amount of years they have been teachers. Age of the participants was a potential threat because participants between ages 20-29

years could negatively affect the study. This is because they are far younger and have little experience in being a teacher as compared to participants who were over 49 years old. Additionally, the amount of years' participants have been teachers was also a potential threat for the same reason. Those with little experience have were expected to have limited knowledge about foster children and those with more experience were expected to have more knowledge about foster children. There was no other diversity issues present and there were no potential threats to diversity.

### Ethical Issues

An ethical issue that arose was differences in moral values from the participants. This means that some participants had different beliefs in participating in the research and were not as willing. This was verified when the researcher respectfully sent out the survey a second time and Qualtrics showed 3 surveys that had been started but not completed. The researcher encouraged participants to take the survey every time it was sent out as a reminder. The researcher tried to prevent incomplete survey by providing a respectful introduction in the body of the email along with information regarding the importance of research on foster youth's ability to form trusting relationships with their teachers. This information was part of the engagement phase where participants were encouraged as much as possible without making them feel pressured. However, there continued to be no responses from those 3 surveys.

Unfortunately, the research had to go on without these responses but it posed no threat to the overall results. Regardless, throughout the rest of the reminder emails, the researcher continued to establish rapport with the participants by having open communication and providing the researcher's name and number in the informed consent.

### Political Issues

A political issue that arose was the authority that the school principal held. This had an effect on the participants given that after the researcher asked the principal to remind his staff to complete the survey, they did so in that same day. However, when the researcher reminded participants without the help of the gatekeeper to take the survey, the participants did not participate. Thus, the researcher maintained rapport with the principal and continued to have open communication to receive help in encouraging the teachers to take the survey. Thus, the principal was very open to this and accepted to help the researcher without any repercussion.

### The Role of Technology in Engagement

During the preparation process, technological devices that were used were a computer, email and a link to the online survey. The computer acted as the electronic device that allowed the researcher open access to the web where more information was gathered for the literature review of this study. Also, the

web allowed the researcher access to her email and this allowed the initiation of contact with the gatekeeper of the agency. The web also offered the researcher access to the Qualtrics program that initiated the survey. Additionally, the email allowed the researcher to conduct individual emails to the participants for each participant to have their own link to the study. Overall, technology had a very important role in this study as it was the only form of communication between the teachers and the participants and it worked out well.

### Summary

This chapter introduced the stages of the engagement process; an introduction of the study site was mentioned to explain how the engagement process took place. Given that the city of Indio is of low socioeconomic status, it is important to take demographics into consideration. This helps to acknowledge the importance of foster youth's involvement with their teacher's because their environment can also impede their motivation to look for help and/or trust people who are willing to help. Next, engagement strategies with the gatekeeper were explained, and the researcher was used email to initiate contact and began the research that way. The self-preparation process was also mentioned, where the researcher established rapport with the gatekeeper and participants by providing contact information to permit participants to call if any questions arose. This was followed by diversity, ethical and political issues, all of which could have had a negative effect on the results of the study, but none posed any threat. Lastly, the

technological devices were presented; these were a computer, email and link to the survey. These devices were the focus of the communication between the researcher, gatekeeper and participants, which then facilitated the approval of the study and allowed for proper and open communication.

# CHAPTER THREE

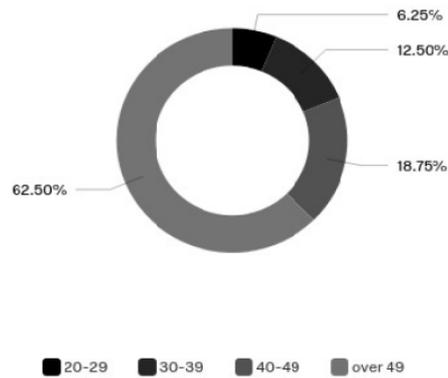
## IMPLEMENTATION

### Introduction

This chapter addresses the implementation process. It describes the participants, and discusses the selection of participants. Further, data gathering is presented, followed by the phases of data collection. Finally, data recording is explained followed the data analysis procedures.

### Study Participants

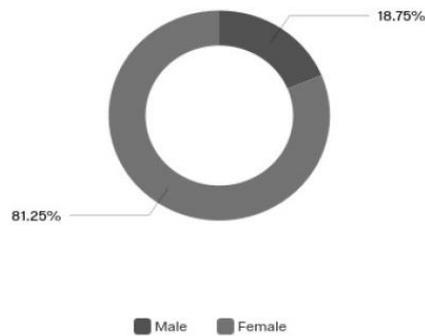
Q2 - How old are you?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	20-29	6.25%	1
2	30-39	12.50%	2
3	40-49	18.75%	3
4	over 49	62.50%	10
	Total	100%	16

Figure 1. Participants' Age.

Q37 - What is your gender?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	18.75%	3
2	Female	81.25%	13
	Total	100%	16

Figure 2. Participants' Gender

Participants in this study are teachers at a local elementary school. Participants were invited to participate through email on a voluntary basis. Most participants were female teachers 13 (81.25%). Male teachers also participated, however their sample was much smaller 3 (18.75%). Additionally, the age of the participants varied only 1 (6.25%) was between 20-29 years of age while 2 (12.50%) were 30-39, followed by 3 (18.75%) between 40-49 and 10 (62.50%) over the age of 49. The years of experience in being a teacher was also asked and the answers varied. There was 1 (6.25%) with 1-2 years of experience, 2 (12.50%) had 3-5 years, and 13 (81.25%) had over 10 years of experience. Lastly, race of participants ranged from Hispanic to other as the two main races involved.

## Selection of Participants

Participants were selected on a voluntary basis. Participants in this study were not in a controlled or experimental group, rather they participated on a voluntary basis and understood that their participation could provide benefits to the results of the study. The researcher was provided with the teacher's individual email by the study's gatekeeper. The researcher then emailed each teacher, stating the purpose of the study and provided a link to the survey. There was a total of 25 emails sent to the participants, out of these only 16 responded and took the online survey. Hence, this developed into convenience sampling. According to Morris (2014), with this type of sampling "most surveys get a response rate of approximately 25%, and a 50% response rate is considered very good" (p.56). By having convenience sampling, the study represented a small portion of teachers in the Coachella Valley and the statistics were a measure of the components of the population of interest which was elementary teachers in the Coachella Valley. Lastly, participation was voluntary after the researcher informed of the study's purpose along with an informed consent that validated the terms of confidentiality

## Data Gathering

To determine the impact that teachers have on foster youth, data was gathered through quantitative research, specifically through an online based survey. The self-administered questionnaire consisted of 34 questions and it was

available online during the participant's available time (See Appendix A). The questions focused on the experience teachers have had with foster children, the amount of time they've been teachers, and if they have used an empowering approach or not, if they have built trust with foster children and whether this has helped to improve outcomes. The survey consisted of multiple choice and true-false questions.

### Phases of Data Collection

The data collection began when the researcher reached out to the teachers via email. An email was sent to a list of 25 teachers. In the email, a description of the study, an informed consent document and the survey link were included. After, participants could open the survey link and they were immediately provided with the informed consent before taking the survey. Participants consented by the following statement 1) this is to certify that I have read the above and I am at least 18 years or older. Subsequently, participants accepted terms of confidentiality and could participate in the online survey. Questions were based off information presented in the literature review as well as the researcher's own experience in working with foster youth. Lastly, a debriefing statement was presented to the participants where they were reminded of the study's purpose and thanked to have participated.

## Data Recording

Data was recorded through a self-administered survey, specifically through the program Qualtrics. This program facilitated the time for the participants and made it convenient for them in terms of allowing them to take the survey when they had time throughout their work day. Further, data collection began February 6, 2017 and closed on March 31, 2017.

## Data Analysis Procedures

Data Analysis was conducted through descriptive and inferential statistics as described in a positivist paradigm. With descriptive statistics, data is described and summarized. With inferential statistics, the results are shown in univariate statistics which explain the results in terms of bar charts. Additionally, the data was interpreted through Qualtrics, which summarized the findings in bar graphs as described in univariate statistics.

## Summary

This chapter explained the implementation phase, which introduced the study participants, and the process of selecting the participants. The total number of participants for this study was 16 teachers from a local elementary school. Next, data gathering, phases of data, data recording, and data analysis were presented.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EVALUATION

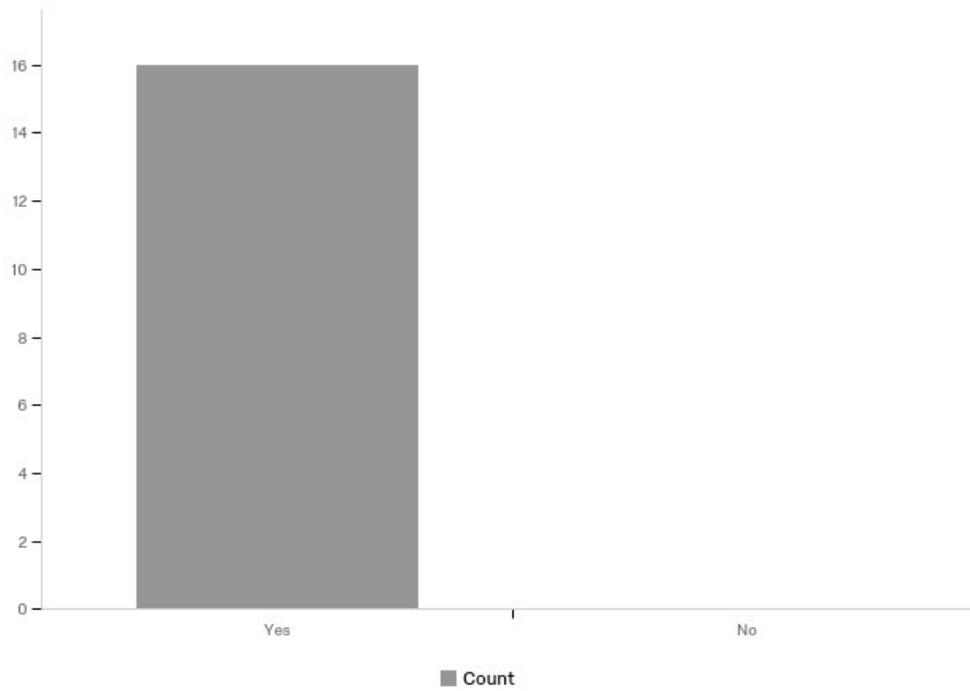
#### Introduction

This chapter presents the data collected from the online survey. First, the data analysis will be presented which focuses on the type of analysis that was used for the findings, in this case univariate analysis. Then, data interpretation is described to explain key findings. Lastly, implications of the findings will be discussed.

#### Data Analysis

Data was analyzed through the program Qualtrics. The data is presented in univariate statistics through tables that explain the percentages of what the participants answered for each question. The key variables were empowerment and trust, and the outcomes of these two approaches.

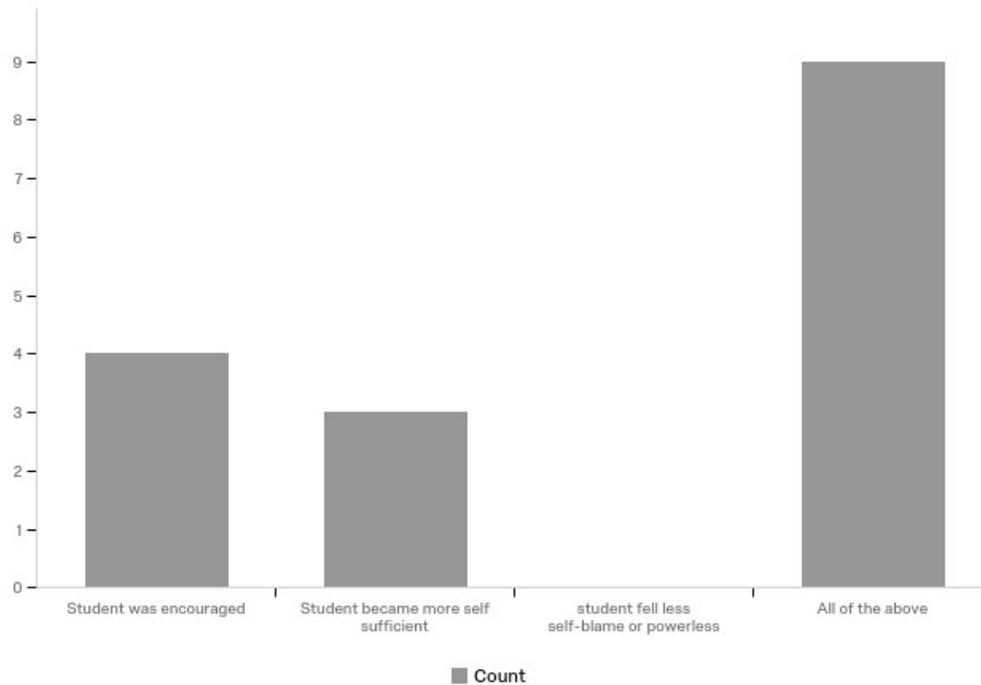
### Empowerment



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	100.00%	16
2	No	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	16

Figure 3. Empowerment

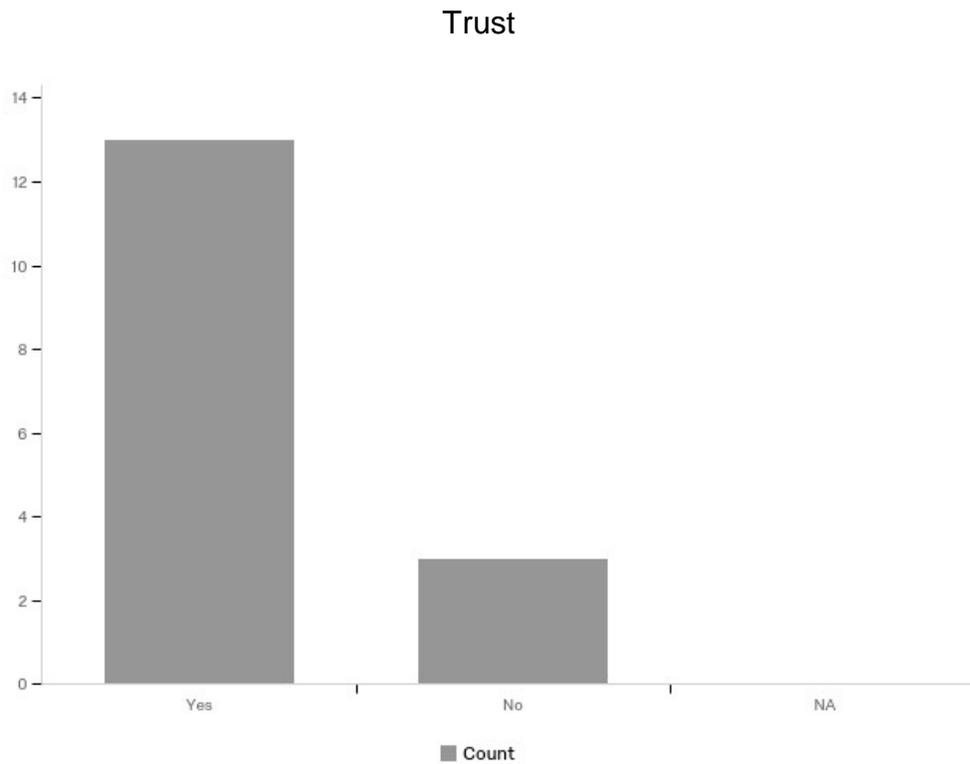
When participants were provided with the definition of empowerment, 16 (100%) of them agreed. Hence, this illustration resulted in all of the participants understanding the definition provided.



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Student was encouraged	25.00%	4
2	Student became more self sufficient	18.75%	3
3	student fell less self-blame or powerless	0.00%	0
4	All of the above	56.25%	9
	Total	100%	16

Figure 4. Empowerment II

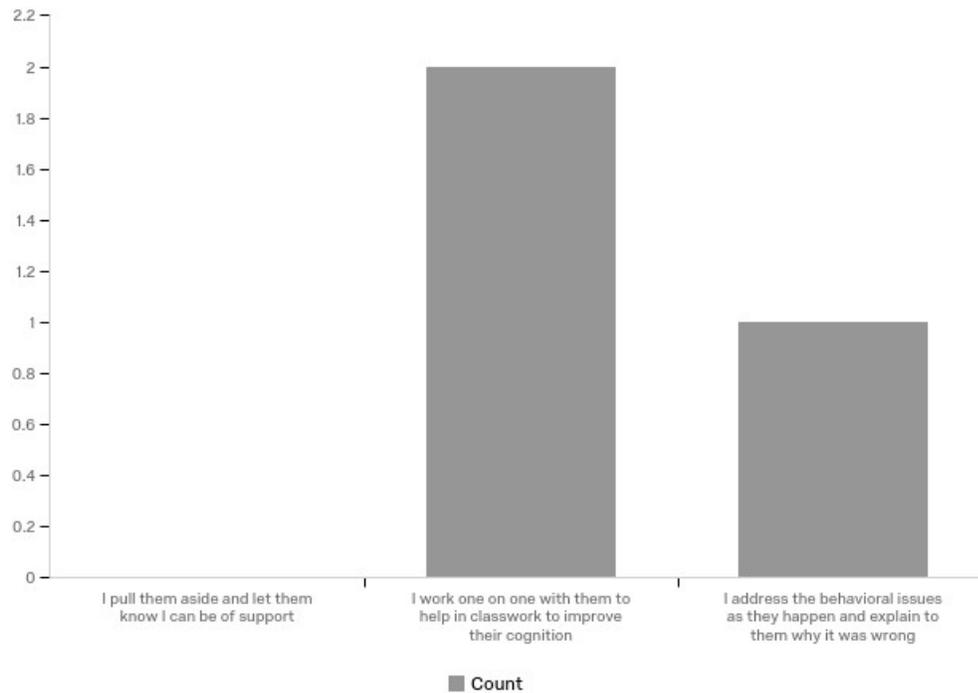
After being asked what outcomes were seen by using an empowerment approach, 4 (25.0%) said the student was encouraged, 3 (18.75%) stated student became more self-sufficient, 0 participants decided not to respond to student feeling less self-blame, and 9 (56.25%) responded all of the above. This question resulted in the majority of the participants believing that the use of an empowerment approach positively affects foster youth in many ways.



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	81.25%	13
2	No	18.75%	3
3	NA	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	16

Figure 5. Trust

Participants were provided with the definition trust as it applied to foster children, they were asked whether they agreed to this definition. Surprisingly, 13 (76.5%) said yes, however, 3 (17.6%) said no, they did not agree to this definition. Nonetheless, the majority of the participants were able to relate that foster children lack trust due to being separated from their biological families and experiencing trauma.



#	Answer	%	Count
1	I pull them aside and let them know I can be of support	0.00%	0
2	I work one on one with them to help in classwork to improve their cognition	50.00%	2
3	I address the behavioral issues as they happen and explain to them why it was wrong	25.00%	1
	Total	100%	3

Figure 6. Trust II

After the researcher asked if they agreed to the factors that are present in foster children with a lack of trust, participants were then asked how they build trust with foster children to help reduce factors. Out of the 16 participants, only 3 of them decided to answer this question. Hence, 1 (25.0%) said they address the behavioral issues as they happen and explain why it was wrong. Further, 2

(50.0%) answered that they work one on one with children to help in classwork to improve their cognition. Lastly, 0 participants decided not to pick the answer of pulling children aside and let them know they can be of support.

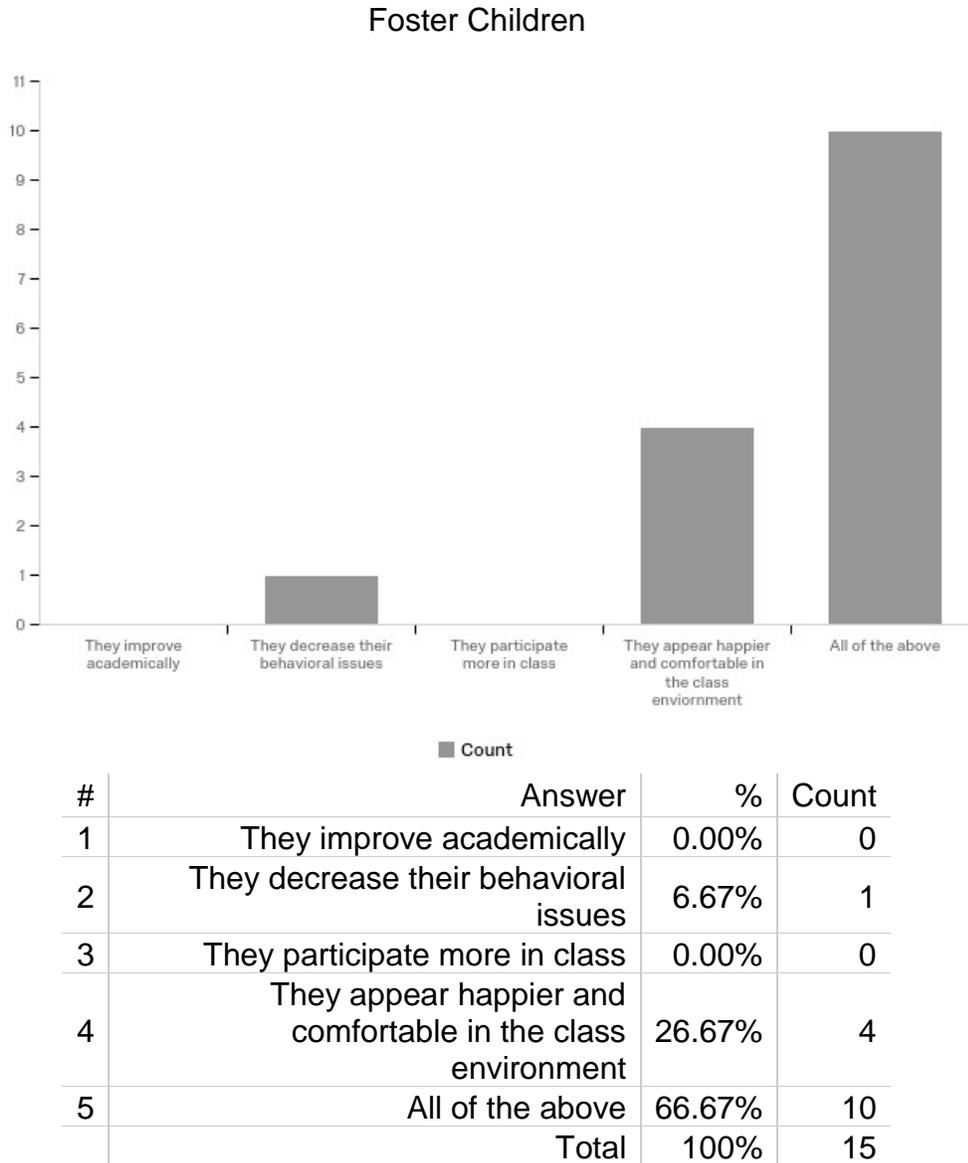
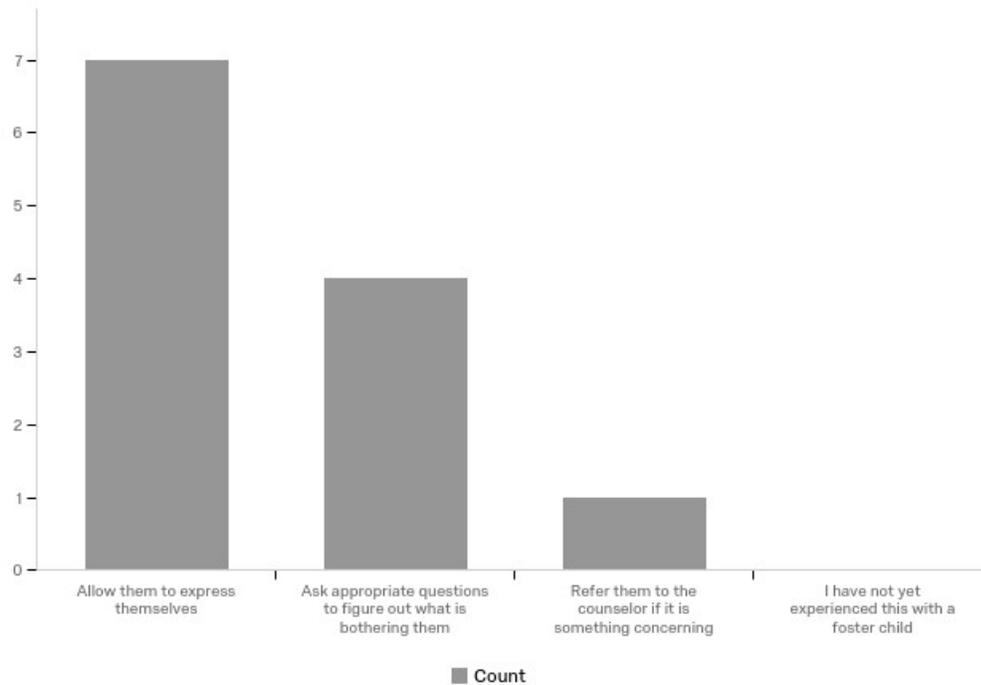


Figure 7. Foster Children

Additionally, teachers were asked how they knew if foster children build trust with them. This was another question where not all 16 participants, however, the majority (15) did answer the question. First, 4 (26.67%) said that children appear happier and comfortable in the class environment. Next, 1 (6.67%) answered that children decrease their behavioral issues. Lastly, 0 participants answered that children improve academically, or participate more in class. However, 10 (66.67%) responded with all of the above, meaning that there existed various ways in which teachers knew that foster children build trust with them and are being positively affected.



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Allow them to express themselves	58.33%	7
2	Ask appropriate questions to figure out what is bothering them	33.33%	4
3	Refer them to the counselor if it is something concerning	8.33%	1
4	I have not yet experienced this with a foster child	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	12

Figure 8. Foster Children II

Upon being asked how they knew that foster children built trust with them, teachers were then asked how they engage. Once again, not all participants participated but 12 of them did. Hence, 7 (58.33%) said they allow children to express themselves, 4 (33.33%) said they ask appropriate questions to figure out what is bothering the child. Last, 1 (8.33%) said they refer them to the counselor

if it is something concerning and 0 did not respond to not experiencing this with a foster child.

### Improvements in Behavior

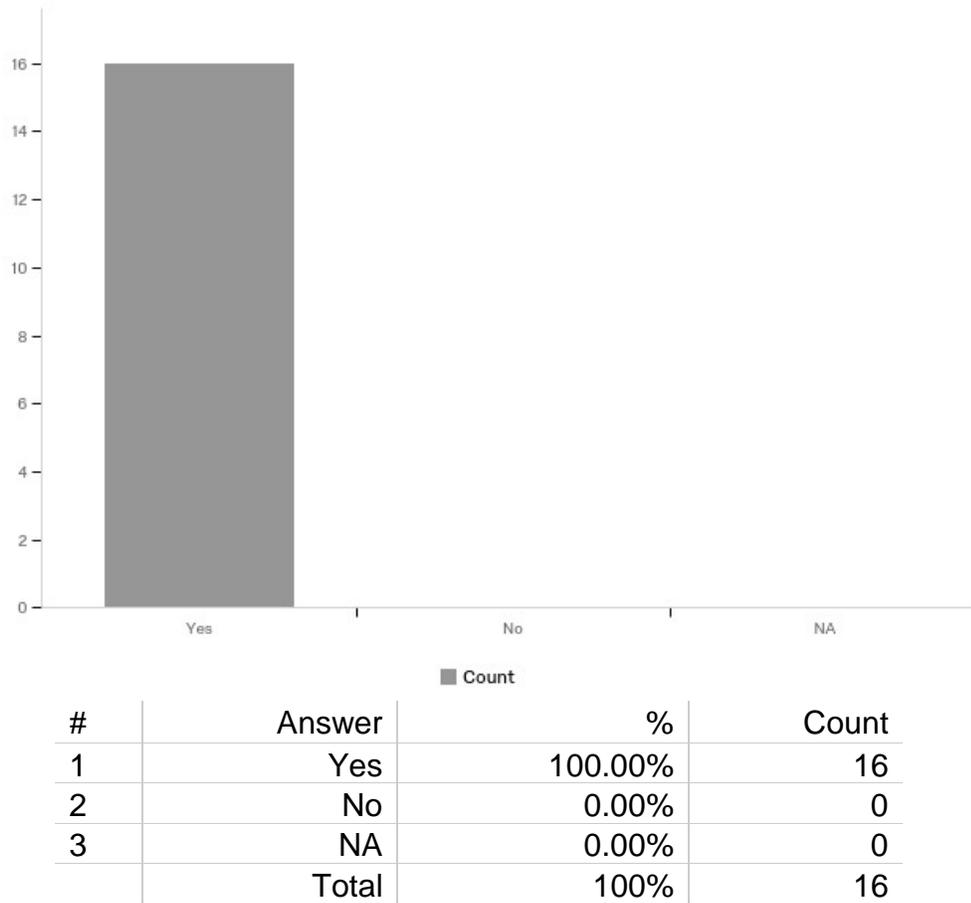
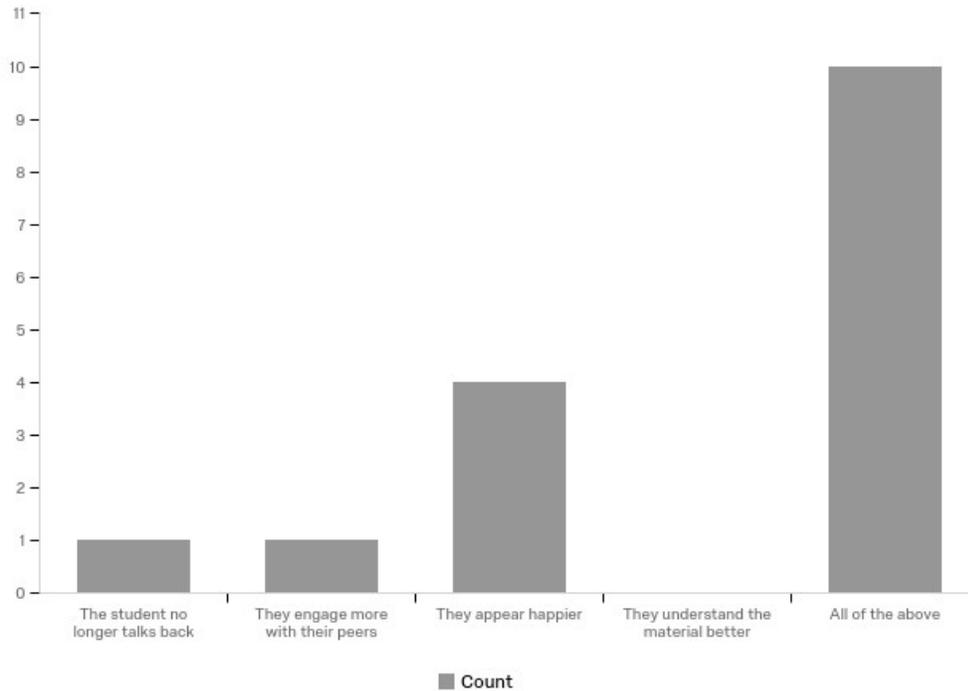


Figure 9. Behavioral Improvements

Participants were asked if they believed that having a trusting relationship with a foster child, helped to improve their behavior in class. As expected, 16

(100%) of the participants said yes to this question. Meaning that foster children’s behavior is positively affected by having a trusting relationship with their teacher.



#	Answer	%	Count
1	The student no longer talks back	6.25%	1
2	They engage more with their peers	6.25%	1
3	They appear happier	25.00%	4
4	They understand the material better	0.00%	0
5	All of the above	62.50%	10
	Total	100%	16

Figure 10. Behavioral Improvements II

Teachers were then asked what were the improvements in behavior. First, 1 (6.25%) said the student no longer talked back, while 1 (6.25%) said that the foster children engage more with their peers. Second, 4 (25.0%) answered that foster children appear happier. Lastly, 0 participants answered that foster

children understand the material better, however 10 (62.5%) answered all of the above. Meaning, most the participants agreed to seeing significant improvements in behavior.

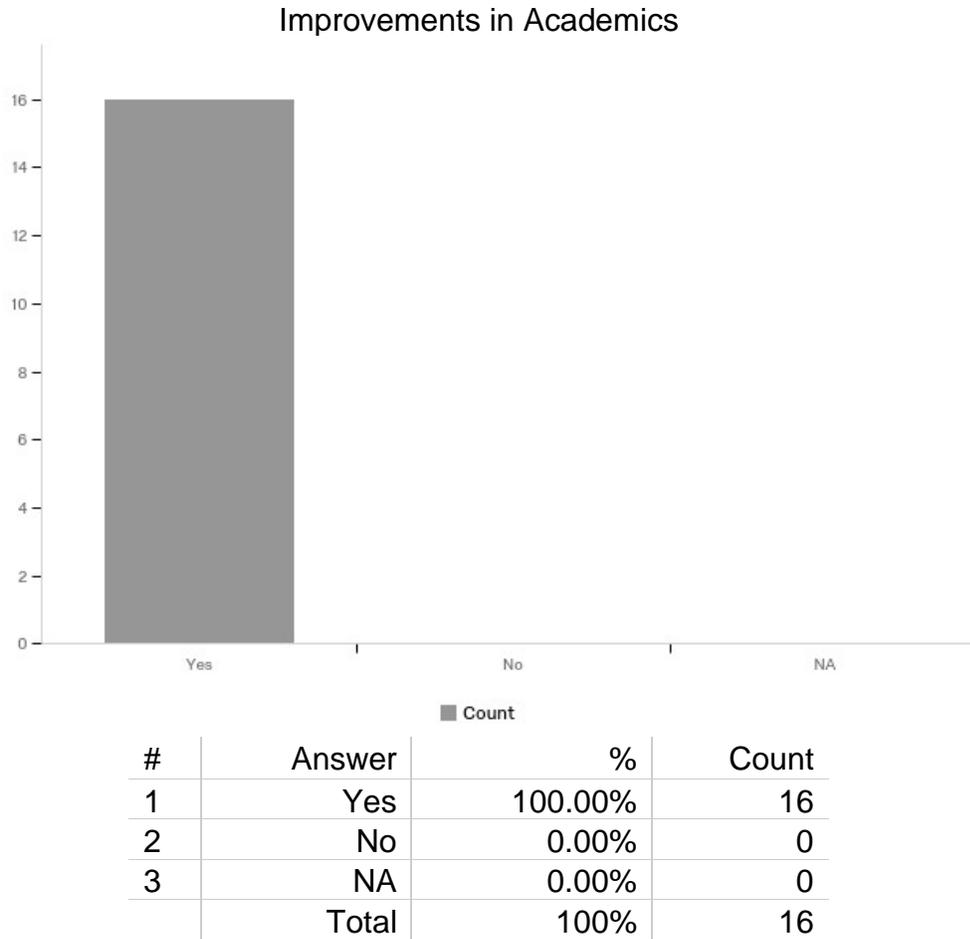
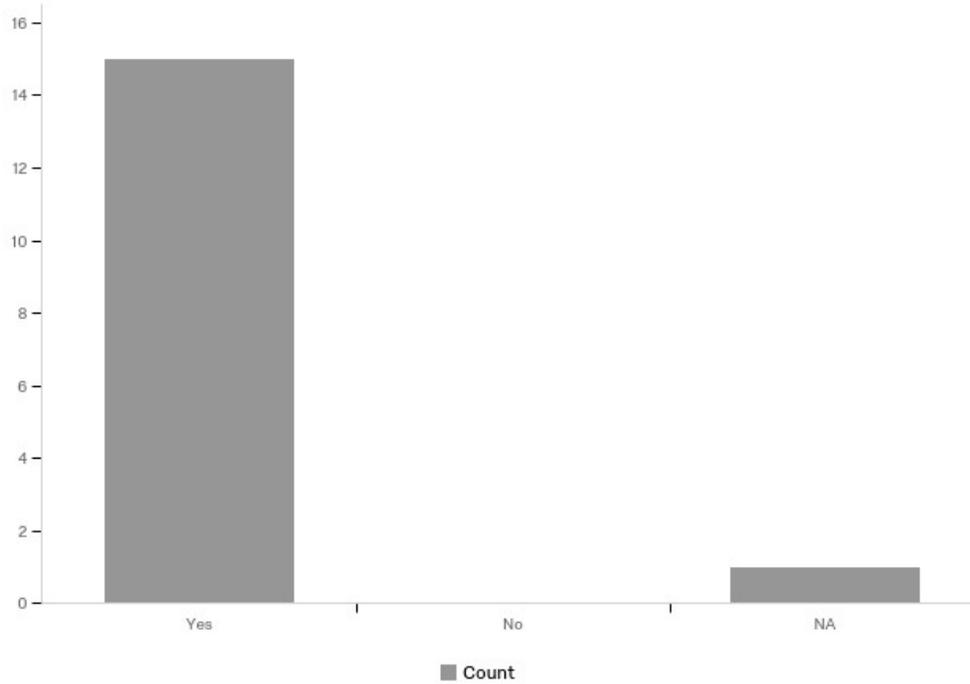


Figure 11. Academic Improvements

The researcher also focused on improvements in academics, thus asking participants if they believed that having a trusting relationship with a foster child

helped them perform better academically. All participants answered yes to this question 16 (100%).

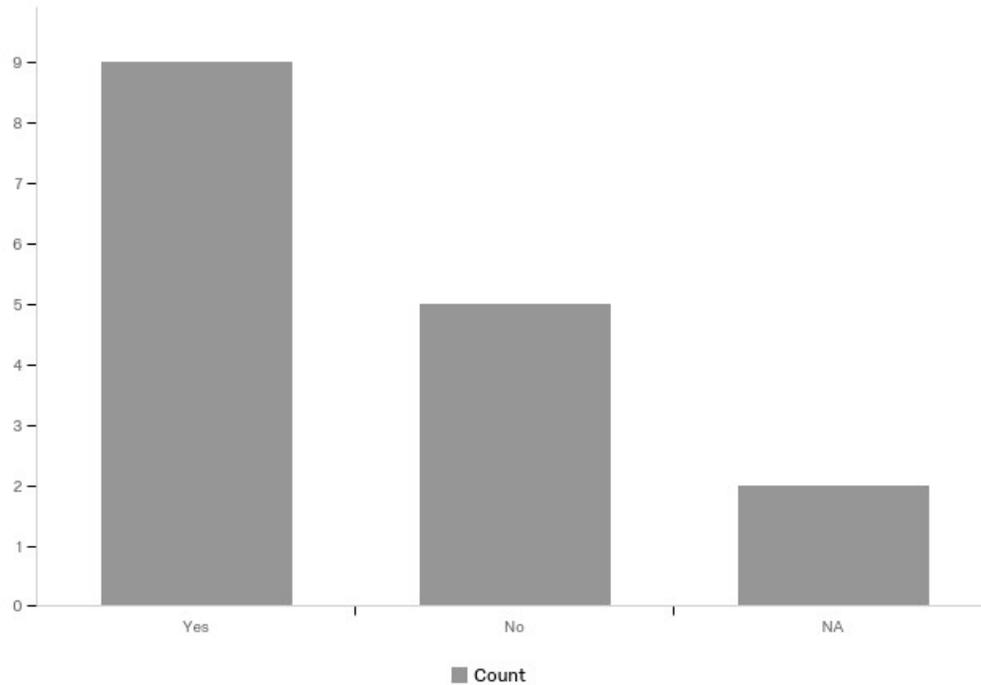


#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	93.75%	15
2	No	0.00%	0
3	NA	6.25%	1
	Total	100%	16

Figure 12. Academic Improvements II

Participants were then asked if in fact, they experienced academic improvements with foster students. Surprisingly, 15 (93.75%) answered yes while 1 (5.9) decided not to answer the question. However, most participants agreed that yes, there are improvements in academics.

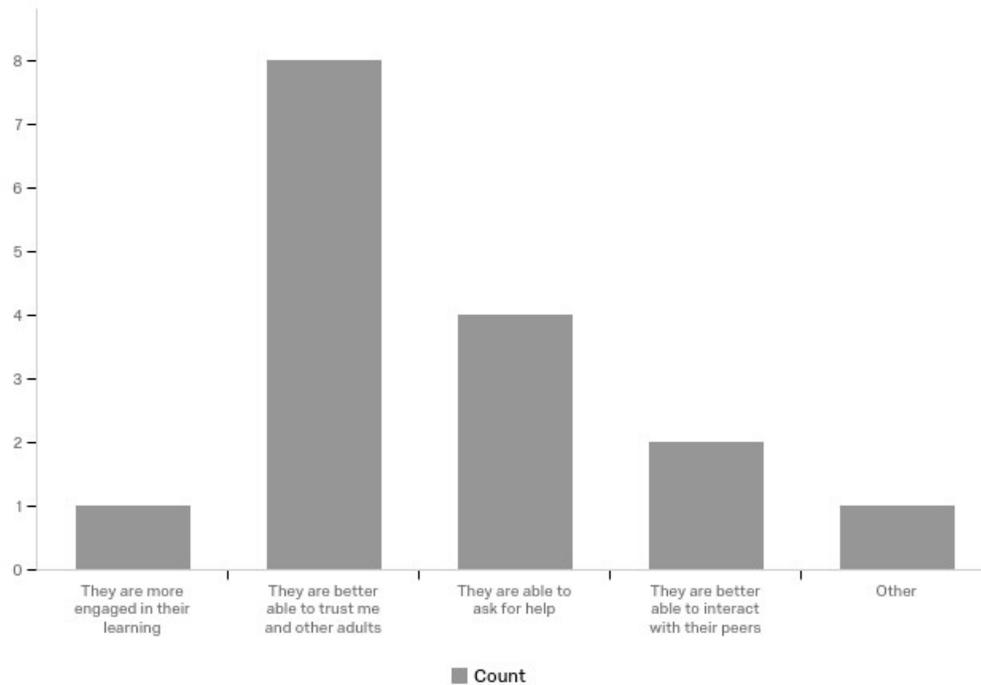
### Teacher's Impact on Foster Children



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	56.25%	9
2	No	31.25%	5
3	NA	12.50%	2
	Total	100%	16

Figure 13. Spending One on One Time

The researcher also focused on teacher's impact on foster children and specifically asked participants if they spent one on one time with these students. The answers provided were 9 (56.25%) of participants said yes they do spend one on one time with foster children. Surprisingly, 5 (31.25%) answered No and 2 (12.5%) decided not to answer the question.



#	Answer	%	Count
5	Other	6.25%	1
3	They are able to ask for help	25.00%	4
4	They are better able to interact with their peers	12.50%	2
2	They are better able to trust me and other adults	50.00%	8
1	They are more engaged in their learning	6.25%	1
	Total	100%	16

Figure 14. Teacher’s Impact on Foster Children

The teachers were then asked how they believed they impact foster children. First, 1 (6.25%) answered that foster children are more engaged in their learning. Second, 8 (50.0%) said foster children are better able to trust the teacher and other adults. Third, 2 (12.50%) said that foster children are better able to interact with their peers. Fourth, 4 (25.0%) answered that foster children

are able to ask for help. Lastly, 1 (6.25%) answered other, meaning there was no impact on foster children.

### Data Interpretation

Based on the findings regarding the key variables that were presented, it was found that teachers do have an impact on foster children. Specifically, the research focus was if teachers' use of an empowerment approach positively affected foster children in establishing a trusting relationship leading to improved outcomes. The research focus proved to be true given that participants responded yes to seeing positive outcomes after using an empowering approach and building trust with foster children. The findings were presented through univariate statistics, which allowed the questions to be presented through univariate statistics in terms of bar graphs that explained the findings. The key variables of empowerment, trust, and positive outcomes are presented.

### Empowerment

For the definition of empowerment, 100% of the participants agreed to the definition. When asked if using an empowerment approach allowed them to experience different outcomes, 9 (56.25%) specified that they experienced outcomes in students being more encouraged, students being more self-sufficient, and students feeling less self-blame or powerless. In fact, these

outcomes were the exact meaning of empowerment and participants agreed that they are present.

### Trust

When the researcher focused on trust, it was found that teachers understand that foster children lack trust due to being separated by their biological families. In particular, teachers understood that this lack of trust causes factors like trauma cognitive delays, and behavioral issues. In accordance, teachers also understood that they can work with foster children in reducing such factors and build trust with them. Specifically, when teachers perspective towards the lack of trust building negative factors in foster children was considered, it was found that 13 (81.25%) out of the 16 total participants agreed to this. Surprisingly, when asked if participants can build trust to reduce the negative factors in foster children, only 3 participants responded. Moreover, when asked more about trust, 2 (50.0%) said they work one on one to help in classwork to improve cognition and 1 (25.0%) responded that they address behavioral issues as they occur and explain why it was wrong. Hence, testing this data indicates that teachers understand that lack of trust negatively affects foster children and they are comfortable enough to be the person to build the broken trust that has established in foster children.

## Foster Children

When teachers were asked how they knew that they build trust with foster children, only 15 out of the 16 participants decided to respond. Out of these, 1 (6.67%) said foster children reduce their behavioral issues, 4 (26.67%) said the children appear happier and comfortable in the class environment while 10 (66.67%) agreed to both mentioned answers along with saying that children participate more in class and improve academically. When asked how they engage with foster children only 12 out of the 16 participants responded, suggesting that the majority of participants are comfortable engaging with foster children. Hence, 100% of these respondents agreed that they allow foster children to express themselves, they ask appropriate questions to figure out what is bothering them, and they refer the children to a counselor if something is of concern. Overall, the findings of building trust and how to engage suggest that teachers were knowledgeable about knowing that trust has been established with foster children and properly engaging with them afterwards.

## Improvements in Behavior

Further, improvement in behavior was also considered by asking participants if they believed foster children improved their behavior after establishing trust and if so, what were these improvements. When asked if foster children improved in behavior all of the participants (100%) said yes. When asked what the improvements in behavior were, 1 (6.25%) said the student no

longer talked back, 1 (6.25%) answered that children engage more with their peers, 4 (25.0%) said foster children appear happier and 10 (62.5%) agreed to all the mentioned answers. These results indicated that indeed, behavior improvements exist after foster children build trust with their teacher.

### Improvements in Academics

Additionally, improvements in academics was also researched when participants were asked if they believed foster children improved academically and if in fact they experienced any improvements. When participants were asked if they believed that there were improvements in academics (100%) of them said yes. Participants were also asked if in fact they experienced academic improvements, 1 (6.25%) decided not to answer while 15 (93.75%) answered yes. Hence, this showed that, yes, there exist academic improvement in foster children by having a trusting relationship with their teachers.

### Teacher's Impact on Foster Children

Lastly, teacher's impact on foster children was investigated when participants were asked if they spent one-on-one time with foster children and how they believed they impact foster children. After participants were asked if they spent one-on-one time with foster children 9 (56.25%) said yes, 5 (31.25%) said no and 2 (12.5%) decided not to answer the question. This question, was almost a 50% on both yes and no, however, participants who answered yes

outweighed the results. When teachers were asked how they believed they impacted foster children 1 (6.25%) said children are more engaged in their learning, 8 (50.0%) foster children are better able to trust the teacher and other adults, 2 (12.5%) answered foster children are better able to interact with their peers, 4 (25.0%) foster children ask for help and 1 (6.25%) answered “other”. After reviewing the impacts teachers have on foster children, it was found that yes, by spending one-on-one time with foster children, teachers made a positive impact on them.

#### Implications of Findings

The findings of this study suggest that CPS social workers should become more involved with their client’s teacher. As mentioned, foster care can be a negative outcome for young children who still do not understand what is going on around them. They are left feeling scared, traumatized, and lack trust because they no longer have a secure type of attachment with those who they care about the most. When this happens, children begin to act up in school, they repeat grades, and have a lot more school transitions than the regular ed students. Specifically, foster children have higher rates of discipline issues, and are left with little educational knowledge that won’t benefit their future (Cox, 2012). It takes a person who is willing to be a part of their lives to allow these children to trust again and to have a positive outcome in their lives. Due to this, it is important that CPS workers become more involved with the foster children’s

teacher. By doing so, social workers will be adding to their micro practice because they continue to build on resources for their clients. Hence, providing foster children with their academic improvements and making sure they are in contact with their teachers for whatever they may need. Lastly, social workers and teachers coming together is a great thing that will not only benefit foster children but also the teacher and the social workers on the case. The teacher can learn how to properly deal with foster children who are not doing so well in class. Teachers' can learn this by being in contact with the social worker and asking appropriate questions towards the development that these children have and how they can address these issues. Lastly, a social worker is impacted as well because they become case managers in working with teachers and having them as an extra resource to the foster children.

### Summary

Finally, this chapter discussed the findings of the research. Specifically, the findings were explored by using univariate statistics which presented the analysis of each question. Univariate statistics allowed for data to be presented in graphs to simplify the explanation of findings. After, data was interpreted in terms of descriptive sampling where each of the key variables were described in detail. Thus, the key variables were empowerment, trust and the outcomes of these. All key variables suggested that yes, teachers are able to use an empowerment approach to build trusting relationships with foster youth and

improve outcomes. Lastly, the implications to micro social work were presented where the emphasis was on the importance of CPS social workers and teachers being in contact to better assist a foster child.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

#### Introduction

In this chapter, termination of the study is presented followed by the communication of findings to the study site and study participants. Then, the ongoing relationship with study participants is described followed by the study's dissemination plan.

#### Termination of Study

The termination of the study was introduced to participants when the researcher informed them of the anticipated completion and availability of the research study after August, 2017. After this date, the researcher will email and thank each one of the study participants for taking part in the study and remind them of its completion and publication.

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

Findings will be communicated to the research site and the participants through the publication of the study, which will be located at Cal State San Bernardino's Pfau Library. The researcher will contact the research site and participants by email to inform them the study is published. Additionally, the researcher will give instruction on how to obtain a copy of the study through

California State University San Bernardino. If participants are unable to obtain a copy themselves, the researcher will obtain one and, with their permission, mail a copy to the research site to allow everyone interested to obtain a copy.

Participants will be granted access to the publication of the study to review the study findings with the hope the findings will contribute to their ongoing use and implementation of empowerment with their foster youth students. Also, the importance for teachers to understand foster children need extra support to achieve their academic goals and support more positive outcomes for them.

#### Ongoing Relationship With Study Participants

Participants will be encouraged to continue having a relationship with the researcher if they may ever need a question answered or provided with any referrals for foster children. The researcher will keep in touch with the research site to learn if the findings of the research were significant to them. By keeping a relationship going, the participants will find comfort in knowing that they have extra support in knowing more about foster children. This is especially true for the participants that were younger and had little experience working with foster children. For those, that had more experience, they knew more about foster children and how to deal with them. However, the open relationship will be for every teacher who may have a question or concern and to stay up to date on any newer research of foster children.

## Dissemination Plan

The study will be distributed to the study participants after its completion in August, 2017. Participants will be reminded of this date and the directions for how they can obtain a copy of the completed research study. After the study is completed, and ready for submission for publication, the participants will have access to it. However, if participants are not able to obtain a copy, the researcher will provide a copy and mail it to any participants that request a copy. Participants will be emailed regarding the publication timeline and informed that a copy of the completed research project will be sent to them through the mail. The notification process to the study participants for the completed research study also provides an opportunity to thank them for their participation in the study.

## Summary

Lastly, this chapter described the termination of the study, and the ongoing relationship with the study site and the study participants. Of importance was the need to keep an ongoing relationship with the participants to provide them with an open forum to ask any questions, concerns or to seek clarification when they needed to. The dissemination plan described the publication process and the procedures for participants to obtain a copy of the completed research study. Finally, how participants who are unable to obtain a copy on their own are assisted by the researcher to have a copy mailed to them.

APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE

## Questionnaire

1. How old are you?
2. What is your race?
3. What is your gender?
4. How long have you been a teacher?
5. Foster care is defined as a temporary living arrangement in which adults provide for the care of a child or children whose biological parents were not able to care for them. Do you agree with this meaning?
6. Have you ever had foster children in your classroom?
7. Do you like working with foster children?
8. How long have you been working with foster children?
9. How do you know if a child in your class is in foster care?
10. Empowerment means, the ability to encourage someone else, increase self-sufficiency, reduce self-blame and powerless that has been created through negative values. Would you say that you use or are able to use an empowerment approach with foster children?
11. If yes, which of these outcomes have you experienced in your work with foster children?
12. If not, what was the reason you were not able to use this approach?
13. Trust means the obligation or responsibility imposed on a person in whom confidence or authority is placed on, to be caring, a person on whom one relies. Based on this, would you consider yourself someone of trust.
14. Typically, foster children lack trust due to being separated by their biological families and experience trauma, cognitive delays and behavioral issues. Would you agree with this?
15. If yes, how do you establish trust with foster children to help reduce factors?

16. Now that you know the meaning of empowerment and trust, would you say that having an empowerment approach can help build trust with foster children?
17. Was it hard to establish trust with foster children?
18. How long would you say it takes to establish trust with a foster child?
19. After establishing that trust, how often would you follow up with them?
20. How do you know they have built trust with you?
21. Do you spend one on one time with foster children?
22. What is your perspective towards a foster child being able to build a trusting relationship with you?
23. Would you say they are comfortable in asking for help if they need it?
24. If so, how do you engage?
25. Do you believe that by having a teacher to trust, a foster child can perform better academically?
26. If yes, is there an improvement in academics?
27. Do you believe that by having a teacher to trust, a foster child can perform better in their behavior?
28. If yes, is there an improvement in behavior?
29. What are these improvements?
30. If you answered NA to questions 14-29, what was the reason?
31. Commitment is defined as willing to be involved, engaged and prepared to help. Based on this, would you say you are committed to working with foster children?

32. How involved would you consider yourself to be with foster children?
33. Do you believe you are making a positive impact on foster children?
34. How would you say you impact foster children?

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APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
School of Social Work

**Informed Consent**

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to examine the involvement that elementary school teachers have had with foster youth, their knowledge on the usefulness of empowerment and if this has had a correlation towards trusting relationships with foster youth. The study is being conducted by Rosio Hernandez, graduate student at Cal State San Bernardino and supervised by Dr. Lori Brown. The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work-Sub Committee, California State University, San Bernardino.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to examine elementary school teacher's level of involvement with foster youth, their knowledge on empowering this youth, and whether or not this approach has allowed foster youth to form trusting relationships.

**Description:** Participants will be asked several questions regarding the amount of time they have had involvement with foster youth. Also, their knowledge of foster youth services, their knowledge on empowerment, and whether or not this has been successful towards helping build trusting relationships with foster children.

**Participation:** Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You have the option of excluding yourself to participate in this study, at any time and with no consequences.

**Confidentiality/Anonymity:** Your answers will be kept anonymous and data will be reported in group form via email.

**Duration:** It will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

**Risks:** There will be no risk involved to the participants.

**Benefit:** There will not be any direct benefits to the participants.

**Contact:** If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Lori Brown at (951) 442-8556.

**Results:** Please contact ScholarWorks database at the John M. Pfau Library at California State University San Bernardino for the results of the study after June 2017.

909.537.5501 · 909.537.7029

5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

APPENDIX C  
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT



### Debriefing Statement

The study you have just completed was designed to examine teacher's involvement with foster youth, their knowledge on empowerment and whether or not this helps foster children form trusting relationships. We are interested in studying the extent of teacher's involvement with foster youth in order to assess what factors social workers can utilize towards the educational level and in general to offer greater support for this population. This is to inform you that no deception is involved in this study.

Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions about the study or would like to obtain a copy of the results, you may access the Scholar Works data website in the John M. Pfau Library at California State University San Bernardino at <http://library.csusb.edu/>. The results of this study will be available after June 2017.

APPENDIX D  
IRB APPROVAL

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

Researcher(s) Rosio Hernandez

Proposal Title The Link Between Foster Youth and Teachers: Are Trusting Relationships Able to Be Formed Through the Use of Empowerment?  
# SW1680

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.

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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)

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Committee Chair Signature

2/6/2017  
Date

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

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