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A Qualitative Study on the Perceived Value of Emotional Intelligence Training on Foster Parents

Omar Shere Johnson

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A Qualitative Study on the Perceived Value of Emotional Intelligence Training on
Foster Parents

by

Omar Shere Johnson

A Dissertation Presented to the
Halmos College of Arts and Sciences of Nova Southeastern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Nova Southeastern University
2020

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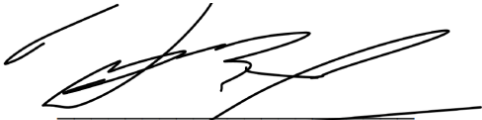
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**Nova Southeastern University
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This dissertation was submitted by Omar Johnson, under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the Halmos College of Arts and Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

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Dedication

In dedication to all who labor to make this world a better place.

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I would like to thank everyone who prayed for me as I undertook this journey. I would not have completed this journey without my faith in the Lord. The road has been long but worth it. Additionally, I appreciate those who took the time to ensure I completed this journey through the advice you gave, supporting me through the writer's block time periods and giving me a kick in the butt when I needed it. I want to personally thank Sely-Ann Headley, Sharee Haigler, Joe Munn and Madeleine Wagner for the constant efforts you gave on all fronts to help keep me moving forward. My journey would have been much more difficult without you all.

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Abstract

The experiences of a child in the foster care system rely heavily on the preparedness of the foster parent. For decades, researchers and practitioners have written about the challenges that foster children face while in the foster care system and discussed ways to assist them. This research discusses another way to improve the preparedness of a foster child as they go through the foster care system—improving the parenting skills of the foster parent using emotional intelligence. The entirety of this study is the analysis and study of this specific research question, “What perceived impact can emotional intelligence training (IV) have on how licensed foster parents treat children in their homes (DV)?” The researcher’s hypothesis was “If states offered emotional intelligence training for foster parents, then their parenting skills would improve.” After using surveys to question foster parents in North and South Carolina, the research concluded that foster parents strongly believed they would greatly benefit from incorporating a comprehensive emotional intelligence training program into the training regimen. The researcher concludes the study by developing a shell emotional intelligence training program aimed to maximize the potential of each foster parent as they care for children in their home.

Chapter One: Introduction

Joe and Jane were ecstatic to become foster parents. They wanted to make the world a better place by influencing young children who would one day grow up to rule over it. They had not parented a child before but had seen others do it and thought, “How hard can it be?” However, after the placement of the first child, then a second, then the ninth, they began to lose their joy of being foster parents. With each subsequent child came joy, then frustration and then absence. A child would come in, stay a few days or weeks, and either go back to their guardians or be moved to another home. The revolving door of children began playing on their psyche. Joe and Jane became increasingly short-tempered and frustrated at the little quirks that the other possessed. Frankly, they were not prepared for the roller coaster that is the foster care system in the United States. Joe and Jane are not alone. Many foster parents experience some form of emotional turbulence that the demands of being a foster parent place on them.

This study aims to ascertain if emotional intelligence training would be beneficial to the experience and parenting styles of foster parents. The research question was formulated after a thorough review of existing literature on the topics of training for foster parents, examining the impact of emotional intelligence skills in leaders and looking at emotional intelligence from a training perspective. By the conclusion of this study, the reader will:

- Discover the history of the United States foster care system
- See that foster parents are not equipped to handle the emotional strain of fostering children
- Have walked through a case study concerning this topic

- See why emotional intelligence training is needed in foster parent curricula
- Understand how to be a foster parent
- Have seen a proposed emotional intelligence training program for use in foster care training programs

Before we get into the problem, let us dive into a history of the American foster care system.

The History of Foster Care in the United States

The act of placing children in other homes for parental care can be traced back to the Torah and the Bible. The early church arranged for the care of dependent orphaned children by widows who were compensated by the church (McBeath et al., 2018). The Quran also mandated care for orphans and widows (McBeath et al., 2018). The idea of foster care can also be traced back to ancient Greek and Roman societies. When children were orphaned, relatives or other families would take them in and be compensated by local rulers (Waid, Kothari, Bank, and McBeath, 2016). During the 1500s, the English Poor Laws allowed poor and orphaned children to enter indentured servitude until they reached adulthood. The United States adopted a similar concept during the early colonial period. Benjamin Eaton was the first recorded child to be placed in this form of foster servitude in Jamestown in 1636. This form of foster servitude continued for two centuries. (McBeath et al., 2018)

Charles Loring Brace founded the Children's Aid Society in New York City in 1853 after noticing an alarming number of homeless children. Brace created a system to find homes for orphaned and poor children living in the city. Known as the Orphan Train Movement, over 150,000 orphaned and poor children were sent to families in the South

and West to work on farms. There was not a screening process or established requirements for families other than a commitment of their willingness to provide food and shelter for the child. Once sent to the farms, there was not a follow-up process to know how the children were being treated or their outcomes as adults. Some children were treated well, while others were subjected to abuse and worked hard labor for long hours. (McBeath et al., 2018)

The Emergence of Organized Child Protection from 1875-1960

Before 1875, child protection services were inconsistent and often left up to nongovernmental charities and individuals. In 1874, Mary Ellen Wilson was an orphaned nine-year-old who lived with an abusive foster family. Etta Wheeler became aware of the abuse Mary Ellen endured but was unsuccessful in convincing the police or other organizations to intervene. At the time, there were no child protective laws or juvenile courts to uphold laws and protect children from abuse. Therefore, police and other organizations did not have legal rights to remove children from abusive situations.

Attorneys Henry Bergh and Elbridge Gerry worked for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). They advocated for Mary Ellen's removal from her abusive foster home after Etta Wheeler made them aware of the young girl's situation. Bergh and Gerry successfully argued in court that children should have the same, if not more, legal protection against abuse than animals (McBeath et al., 2018). Mary Ellen's foster mother was ultimately convicted of assault and battery and sentenced to one year in jail. As a result of this conviction, charitable organizations, lawyers, and the public understand the nature of child abuse and their role in preventing and ending abuse (Wade et al., 2016).

Bergh and Gerry created a charity called the New York Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC). It was the world's first organization devoted to the protection and welfare of children (McBeath et al., 2018). The mission and development of the NYSPCC spread to communities across the country. By 1922, around 300 nongovernmental child protection societies were founded. Despite the increase in child protective services, many people residing in rural areas did not have access to these services. In addition to the increase of child protection agencies across the country, the juvenile court was also established. The first was established in Chicago in 1899, and by 1919, most states had juvenile courts. Initially, the juvenile court system focused on delinquent minors; however, judges had the jurisdiction to handle and intervene in cases of abuse and neglect.

During the Great Depression, many nongovernmental child protective societies were closed due to lack of funds. The government assumed larger roles in providing child protective services during the early 20th century. Individual states created departments of welfare, social services, health, and labor (Waid, Kothari, Bank, and McBeath, 2016). In 1935, President Roosevelt created the New Deal programs to alleviate hardships caused by the Great Depression (Waid, Kothari, Bank, and McBeath, 2016). Congress passed the Social Security Act, which provided old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, and funds for states to provide services for poor families and neglected, dependent, and abused children. Even with the government's increased role in child protective service agencies would now understand that there was a need for more adequate services to handle the large amounts of reported abuse and neglect cases.

Child Protective Services from 1960 to the Present

There was an increase in public awareness in child abuse due to medical interests in the issue. Prior to the 1960s, physicians received little to no training on child abuse. A small number of physicians began to draw attention to the origins of some childhood injuries. Dr. Henry Kempe wrote an article called *The Battered Child Syndrome*, which was a catalyst in bringing public attention to the issues surrounding child abuse and neglect. Many national news outlets began covering stories of childhood abuse due to the information Dr. Kempe provided in his article.

In 1962, Congress passed amendments to the Social Security Act, mandating all states pledge expansions of their child welfare system and provide access to child protection services to every county by 1975. The Children's Bureau conducted a meeting in 1962 to get suggestions on how they could support states' handling and responding to child abuse. Dr. Kempe and Vincent De Francis recommended establishing state laws that required doctors to report suspected cases of child abuse to social welfare agencies or police. All states had reporting requirements and laws for physicians by 1967 (McBeath et al., 2018).

Reports of child abuse continued to rise from the 1970s to 1990s (McBeath et al., 2018). Placing neglected and abused children in homes with other families was the first step in saving children from continued abuse. Congress passed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 (CAPTA). This act provided funds for states to effectively respond to child abuse and neglect reports, improve investigations, and increase training for departments to handle maltreatment cases (Waid, Kothari, Bank, and McBeath, 2016). In 1978, Congress passed the Indian Child Welfare Act (IWCA) to

prevent unnecessary removals of Native American children from their homes. The IWCA allows tribal courts to have authority to determine and intervene on child abuse cases on reservations. If a Native American child's primary residence is not on a reservation, state courts can determine the outcomes for the child. However, the child's tribe must be notified, and the tribe has legal rights to intervene on the child's behalf. Currently, states maintain their foster care system by relying on a series of trained professionals to investigate abuse or neglect claims, remove children from hazardous environments when necessary, and create care plans for children until a permanent solution can be reached.

The Process of Becoming a Foster Parent

Foster care is a protective service that provides children with safe homes when their families are unable to properly care for them. Children are placed in foster care for many reasons. Homelessness, mental illness, unemployment, poverty, incarceration, and substance abuse are some circumstances that make proper parenting challenging. (Waid et al., 2016). The goal of foster care is to provide a temporary, safe, and nurturing environment until the child is reunified with their biological parents or an adoption occurs. Children could be placed in traditional foster homes, group homes, relative or kinship care, tribal care, or respite/short-term care.

Foster Parent Qualifications

Each state has different requirements for potential foster parents. Most states have similar basic eligibility criteria. Some requirements include:

- a. Passing a criminal background check

- b. Completing a home study and passing a home inspection to ensure the home is safe and free of fire hazards
- c. Being available to attend trainings and interviews conducted by social workers
- d. Having a stable income prior to the placement of children in the home

Becoming Licensed/Certified

All states require foster parents to be licensed and approved in order for child placements to occur. Some states have slight variations, but most follow the same licensing procedures (McBeath et al., 2018). Potential foster parents usually reach out to a child welfare agency to express their interest in becoming foster parents. Many agencies will conduct an informational meeting to discuss the requirements for foster parenting and answer questions. Once the informational meeting occurs, interested candidates are given an application and other forms to complete.

The next step in the process is the family assessment. A social worker will gather information about the family, assess their ability to care for foster children, and learn more about the family's values, traditions, and goals. After the assessment, the agency will contact at least three references to determine the character of the family. Potential foster parents will also have to undergo a criminal background check during this phase of the licensing procedure. Next, the family's home will be inspected to ensure it is safe. Social workers use a checklist provided by the state to check all areas of the home. If the foster parent candidates pass those requirements, they can begin training. Training is usually between 10 and 30 hours and covers information on how to work with the agency and caring for children. The entire process could take three to six months depending on state requirements and timeliness of the agency and interested families.

Maintaining Foster Parent Licensure

Each state requires training each year for foster parents to retain their licenses. Training topics vary from state to state. However, many states offer training on mental health issues and treatment. Foster parents can complete their training online or in person. The number of hours of training required differs across states, but most require an average of 15 hours of training.

Background of the Problem

Training foster parents has been a challenging endeavor since the idea of a foster care system began. Agencies such as the Child Welfare League of America, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the National Foster Care Resource Center for Family, Group and Residential Care at Eastern Michigan University have worked hard to create training for foster parents towards the goal of making the foster care system more proficient in caring for the children in the foster home. However, one thing has been overlooked: Who is training the foster parents to take care of themselves? It is possible that foster parents are left to manage their own care through self-care. “Self-care is taking the time to care for yourself in whichever ways work best for you” (Loveisrespect.org, 2018). Foster parents are not supermen and women. They are not any different than other adults. This issue is vital as a foster child’s experience with their foster parents is the single most important determining factor in how the child’s experience in foster care will be.

In 2009, the Child Welfare League of America and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services partnered to create the foster parent training manual called PRIDEbook. In it, they discuss the competencies that foster parents need:

1. Protecting and nurturing children

2. Meeting children's developmental needs and addressing developmental delays
3. Supporting relationships between children and their families
4. Connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime
5. Working as a member of a professional team (Leighton, Matthews, Pasztor, Polowy, Watson, 2009)

In theory, an emotionally intelligent parent would find meeting and exceeding these required competencies easier than a nonemotionally intelligent parent.

Statement of the Problem

Foster parents have good intentions but often lack training on how to be effective foster parents. Many do not understand that fostering children is different from raising their children. There are activities or opportunities the child's legal guardian (i.e biological parent or state) will not allow with a foster child that a foster parent would allow their biological child to participate in. Many high-risk activities serve as an example of this. In many instances, accidental grief is caused for the foster parent as they must navigate raising children two different ways in the same household. Moreover, foster parents are expected to meet the needs of the children expertly and without fail. While this would be possible if they were suitably equipped with the proper training needed, many times a foster parent is left trying to meet the needs of children without the skills to do so. Add that foster parents have other life stressors such as financial constraints, family dynamics, and primary job requirements and foster parents can soon be looking at a daunting task when taking care of foster children in their home.

Emotional intelligence training has not been explored as a viable way to train parents to cope with the stresses of being foster parents. Additionally, there is a lack of

research in the social science community that displays how effective foster parents would be if they had this training. Why emotional intelligence training? Consider this: Are foster parents prepared to deal with the emotional strain of fostering children who come into their home sometimes emotionally, physically, socially, or spiritually broken because of being removed from their home or another significant life event?

Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to ascertain if foster parents believe providing emotional intelligence training to foster parents will make a significant impact in how effective foster parents, foster children, and others associated with them view their parenting skills. Here is an example: Joe just picked up James, his 15-year-old foster son, from visitation with his parents. James is showing signs of anger, depression, and fear. James' has been placed in foster care on three different occasions due to the living conditions at home. This study aims to explore if foster parents believe that having emotional intelligence training could make the difference in Joe's ability to respond in the most effective way to James.

Research Question

The research question serves as the guiding question that launches a research topic in any discipline. A research question is "used to analyze and investigate a topic" (CIRT, 2019). The research question for this study is, "What perceived impact can emotional intelligence training (IV) have on how licensed foster parents treat children in their homes (DV)?" Hypotheses differ from research questions. Hypotheses are educated assumptions based on existing knowledge of the topic or the information that informs the topic. The data that is collected and analyzed is then used to support or negate the

hypotheses and determine a conclusion (CIRT, 2019). The hypothesis is, “If states offered emotional intelligence training for foster parents, then foster parents’ believe their parenting skills would improve.” This research will focus on determining if emotional intelligence training would be effective in nurturing better foster parents.

Significance of the Study

Those interested in this study are people considering becoming foster parents, current foster parents, courts, child and family lawyers, guardians, foster children, social workers, and the biological parents of the foster children residing in the foster home. Because there is a lack of literature on the efficacy of emotional intelligence training for foster parents, this study could fill that void. The results could inform policy, cause discussion, and add to the quality of the parenting skills of foster parents. Three theories will be used to conceptualize the framework of this study: emotional intelligence theory, systems theory, and human rights theory.

Definition of Terms

1. Foster parent: Someone who officially takes a child into their family for a period of time without becoming the child's legal parents (Collins Dictionary, 2018).
2. Foster child: A child raised by someone who is not their natural or adoptive parent (Dictionary.com, 2018).
3. Child welfare worker: An investigator, especially of a social agency, who aids disadvantaged individuals or families chiefly by analysis of their problems and through personal counseling (Dictionary.com, 2018). A spokesperson for the child in the foster home.

4. Resource worker: A caseworker that caters specifically to the needs of the foster parent, like a child welfare worker.
5. Judge: A public official authorized to decide questions brought before a court (Merriam-Webster, 2018).
6. Department of Children and Family Services: a governmental agency responsible for investigating reports of child maltreatment, determining whether child abuse or neglect has occurred, and intervening to ensure a safe environment for the child (Hymel, K, Deye, K, 2011)
7. Child Welfare League of America: The oldest child welfare organization in the United States. The organization's primary objective is to "make children a national priority." The CWLA is the trusted authority for professionals who work with children and the only national organization with members from both public and private agencies, providing unique access and influence on all sectors of the children's services field (Wikipedia, 2018).
8. Biological parents: The parties that conceived the child.
9. Guardian ad Litem: Volunteers trained to advocate for children in the foster care system.
10. Annie E. Casey Foundation: A foundation focused on improving the well-being of American children (Aecf.com, 2018).
11. National Foster Care Resource Center (renamed the Center for Child and Family Programs): A center at the University of Michigan dedicated to action and change whose work focuses on building the capacity of child welfare

agencies to meet the needs of children at risk of removal from their families and those already placed in out-of-home care (Mallon, 2018).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions in a research study are those that are generally accepted by those who will read this study. The assumption is that emotional intelligence training can make a difference in how effective foster parents are at parenting foster children in the home. The reason is there are many studies that have concluded that emotional intelligence training is good for organizations, work environments, intrapersonal reflection, interpersonal skills, etc. Limitations are possible weaknesses of a research study. I anticipate the limitations being lack of funding for a long-term research project, doing the research study with a full-time job and a part-time job, the availability of the foster parents for the study, location and setting of the study. The delimitations are the characteristics that limit the scope and describe the boundaries of this study (Researchgate.com). The delimitations of this study are as follows: This is not a research study into foster children but rather into the foster parent. This study will look specifically at factors influencing emotional intelligence of foster parents.

Conclusion

“All emotions are impulses to act, the instant plans for handling life that evolution has instilled in us. The very root of the word emotion is *motere*, the Latin verb “to move,” plus the prefix “e-” to connote “move away,” suggesting that a tendency to act is implicit in every emotion” (Goleman, 1994). Having a high emotional intelligence allows an individual to approach high emotion situations with maturity and grace. Emotional intelligence training would allow foster parents to be fully equipped to handle

the strong emotional situations that inevitably arise in a foster home. The children of the foster care system deserve to be in the best situations to develop into capable adults.

“According to Casey Family Programs, the nation’s largest operating foundation on foster care issues, it is estimated that 30-50 percent of youth exit the foster care system without a high school diploma or high school equivalent. Meanwhile, only 30.7 percent of children who grow up in foster care graduate from high school. Additionally, only 2.5 percent of children who grow up in foster care graduate from a four-year college, while fewer than 2 percent of youth formerly in foster care complete a bachelor’s degree before the age of 25, compared with 24 percent of the general population. Overall, these adolescents are more likely to perform below grade level, to score lower on statewide achievement tests, to repeat grades, to have high rates of absenteeism and tardiness and to drop out of school” (Nelson, 2018). Furthermore, Christine Kim, a policy analyst at the DeVos Center for Religion and Civil Society, states, “While academic research has consistently shown that increased spending does not correlate with educational gains,[4] the research does show a strong relationship between parental influences and children's educational outcomes, from school readiness to college completion. Two compelling parental factors emerge: (1) family structure, i.e., the number of parents living in the student's home and their relationships to the child, and (2) parents' involvement in their children's schoolwork.

Consequently, the solution to improving educational outcomes begins at home, by strengthening marriage and promoting stable family formation and parental involvement” (Kim, 2018). Simply put, there is a possibility that if we focused on truly developing the

emotional intelligence of foster parents, it would send a positive ripple effect across the foster care system.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Foster parents have remained the forgotten arm of the foster care system. What they are asked to do can have significant impact on how they respond emotionally to not only the children placed in their home but also to other life events for many years after being a parent. Below is some previous research that has been gathered. The goal is to show the need for emotional intelligence training based on the finding by each author when looking at foster parenting experiences. The following literature review will be organized by theoretical frameworks of emotional intelligence, systems, and human needs. This section of the study will use the emotional intelligence theory published by Daniel Goleman. Emotion serves as an indicator of one's interpretation of issues that impact a person's integrity in physical, social, or psychological situations. Additionally, emotions are considered to be adaptable and can either protect an individual's self-interests or lead the person to achieving personal goals and tasks (Goleman, 1995).

Current Foster Parent Training Curriculum

How the System Works

Social workers from the Family and Children's Services focus on protecting children from maltreatment and reuniting families once barriers are eliminated in providing a safe environment for their children. When a child is placed in the foster care system, there will be at least three hearings to create and review care plans, assess parental involvement and progress, and to determine the best outcome for the children involved.

Licensure

To become a foster parent, a comprehensive process must take place to ensure qualifications and standards are upheld. Applicants must undergo a medical exam, complete a home inspection, attend at least 10 hours of training and pass a criminal background check.

Legal

Foster parents must adhere to confidentiality agreements established by the agency. Information pertaining to the child should only be shared with authorized staff members. The agency is not responsible for property damages caused by children in the foster care system.

Placement

Social workers will match children with foster parents that can adequately meet the needs of the child. A child can be moved if their needs change or if it is in their best interest. Within seven days of initial foster home placement, a child will undergo a comprehensive medical evaluation. Social workers are required to make dental, medical, and mental health appointments within 30 days necessary based on the findings of the reports. Foster parents are expected to keep appointments once they are scheduled.

Vacation and Respite

Foster parents are encouraged to allow foster children to participate in family activities including family vacations. The agency must grant permission for trips away from home for more than one night. The court must approve international trips. If the child cannot travel with foster parents for any reason, the agency must know as soon as possible to provide temporarily placement for the children in care.

Discipline

Foster parents are required to sign a Discipline Policy as a parent of the licensure process. The policy outlines proper use of discipline including using positive reinforcement and techniques specified by the child's caseworker or behavioral therapist. Foster parents are not allowed to use corporal punishment or withhold food, affection, or other necessities as a form of punishment

Financial/Resources

Foster parents will receive a monthly allotment while they have a placement. The monthly allotment should be used for costs related to caring for the child. Foster parents should obtain written approval from the agency for items or activity fees that need to be reimbursed. In addition to the monthly allotment, foster parents will receive a clothing allowance for children in their care. Social workers will be able to provide a list of resources to properly care for the children. Behavioral health, dental, and academic services and resources will be provided based on the needs of the child.

Emotional Intelligence

Stress is the indication of negative emotions that are caused by an adverse situation, such as a threat or challenge. Stress can send signals to the body in preparation for a response to protection of oneself. This is known as "flight or fight," a concept first described by Cannon (1931). Emotional intelligence is about how individuals process their emotions in conjunction with thoughts and actions (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000). Since foster parents can be stressed by the caretaking of foster children, emotional intelligence can be key in building resilience. Using the emotional intelligence framework, this part of the literature review is separated into Section I: Studying Foster

Parenting; Section II: Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace; Section III: Emotional Intelligence as a Training Program; and Section IV: Other Training Options for Foster Parents.

Section I: Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

Slaski and Cartwright discuss emotional intelligence in the workplace in their article *Emotional intelligence training and its implications for stress, health and performance*. They note that researchers (in the 1980s and '90s) have been unsure if EI was a form of intelligence, meaning it's a concept that could be developed over time, or if it was more determined by a series of specific personality traits (Davies, Stankor, & Roberts, 1998). Researchers have also heralded EI as one of a few effective indicators of leadership success and personal well-being (Bar-On, 1997, Goleman, 1995, 1998). A study of 200 UK retail managers indicated that those with high EI scores reported having less stress and better health, and they were viewed as being high performers by line managers as opposed to those with lower EI scores (Slaski & Cartwright, 2002).

The study followed 120 managers from a UK retail chain, with 60 managers in a training group and 60 managers in a control group. Managers in the training group attended EI training for one day per week for four weeks. Those in the control group did not receive any training. Both groups were matched for marital and educational status, age, and gender. The Bar-On EQ-I (Bar-On, 1997) was used to measure EI. The assessment consisted of 133 questions with a five-point response scale. The EIQ (Dulewicz and Higgs, 1999, 2000) was used in addition to the Bar-On to assess emotional intelligence regarding behavior in the workplace. The EIQ was used on the training group only to further provide the researchers with more accurate information about the

effectiveness of EI training. General health information was obtained by utilizing the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ 28; Goldberg and Hillier, 1979; Goldberg and Williams, 1998). A self-reporting rating scale was used to determine each manager's level of stress and quality of working life.

Prior to EI training, both groups had similar outcomes and scores in regard to emotional intelligence, stress, health, and quality of work life. After the training group received EI training, their emotional intelligence scores increased, while the control group remained constant. The researchers concluded that, based on the results of this study, it is worthwhile for more research to be conducted on developing EI training and programs for the workplace. The study also suggests that emotional intelligence can be taught and can improve overall well-being, productivity in the workplace, and health.

Kathryn Thory (2012) took a different angle in her study, discussed in *A Gendered Analysis of Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace: Issues and Concerns for Human Resource Development*. This article analyzes how emotional intelligence is demonstrated in the workplace by gender. It explores how both genders are perceived based on established ideals of masculine and feminine characteristics of EI. Furthermore, this article examines the benefits of demonstrating both masculine and feminine characteristics of EI skills. EI is a concept that can be learned and developed, which makes it attractive to human resources departments. It offers another form of measurement for success in the workplace, something that was not previously considered when evaluating effectiveness at work. There are differences in emotional intelligence between men and women. Studies have shown that women score higher than men on EI (Day and Carroll, 2004; Joseph and Newman, 2010; Palmer, Gignac, Manocha, and

Stough, 2005). According to these psychological studies, women are more effective at analyzing body language and non-verbal cues and are more attentive to emotions in others. This article highlights that these assessments are self-reported, meaning there are limitations such as participants reporting stereotypical gender-related responses. Many EI studies have been dominated by psychological approaches, which diminish the structural factors of the workplace.

Lastly, Thory (2012) suggests human resources departments look into a “different but complimentary” approach, which would minimize one gender’s EI skills to dominate others. This creates an isolating atmosphere, in which people are not being utilized for their skills but intimidated to conform. Additionally, using both genders’ EI skills is better for the organization, as it creates a balanced work environment, which leads to more effective business practices and success.

Weinberger discusses the effect that emotional intelligence plays in leadership style in his article *Emotional Intelligence, Leadership Style, and Perceived Leadership Effectiveness*. One hundred fifty-one managers were asked to complete an emotional intelligence survey called MSCEIT. Of those 151 managers, 138 surveys were completed. The MSCEIT is an assessment that measures leadership ability as it relates to emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2002). Subordinates of the surveyed managers were asked to complete the MLQ5x, which assessed the perceptions of the managers’ leadership style and effectiveness. Out of 1,165 requested participants for this portion of the study, 791 submitted completed surveys.

There was no significant relationship found between emotional intelligence and leadership style or ability. However, Sosik and Megerian (1999) published a study that

concluded that the higher the managers and leaders scored on emotional intelligence assessments, the more effective their leadership styles were perceived to be by themselves and their subordinates. Because these two studies had different conclusions, more research needs to be done on the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership style in the workplace.

In the article *Applying Emotional Intelligence Skills to Leadership and Decision Making in Non-Profit Organizations*, Hess and Bacigalupo argue that characteristics and behaviors which are associated with people who exhibit emotional intelligence would greatly benefit nonprofit organizations. The author's main purpose was to review emotional intelligence literature and provide information for nonprofit leaders on how EI can enhance their organization's leadership. Effective leaders of nonprofit organizations must be able to manage the time and resources of themselves and others as well as fill numerous roles and responsibilities. In a study published by Goleman, Goleman concluded the best organizational leaders possessed self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Hess, 2013). According to Goleman, organizational leadership styles may vary; however, effective leaders are able to understand their emotions as well as the emotions of others.

The author notes much of existing literature surrounding emotional intelligence is centered on the theoretical aspects of emotional intelligence, but little research and literature is devoted to how leaders can apply the characteristics and qualities of emotional intelligence. The author also points out that emotional intelligence can be developed. He believes leaders of nonprofit organizations should utilize emotional intelligence training and research to maximize desired outcomes for the organization.

In the article *Developing Emotional Intelligence Through Workplace Learning*, Clarke notes there are few empirical studies that investigate existing literature surrounding the development of emotional intelligence in organizational settings. This research examines a health care study on emotional abilities in the workplace and which emotional abilities could be developed using on-the-job training. With consideration to the influence of socio-cultural factors, the workplace can be a learning asset for proper emotional display.

Clarke believes two emotional abilities, managing emotions and using emotions to facilitate thinking and teamwork, are essential factors when considering and evaluating job performance. Clarke assessed hospice workers in the UK for their emotional intelligence levels. After the assessment, they were provided resources and training on how to improve their emotional intelligence for their career choice. They were assessed again, showing improvements in their emotional intelligence scores.

In the article *Developing Emotional Intelligence Abilities through Team Based Learning*, Clarke theorizes that there is growing evidence to suggest emotional intelligence training can improve individual and organizational health, effectiveness, and productivity. There have been a few studies that suggest team learning is an effective training tool for emotional intelligence. For this study, a group of MBA students were selected to participate in a one-day emotional intelligence training session. After the training session, participants were assigned to teams to learn ability-based emotional intelligence concepts. When MBA students received training alone, there was no significant effect. However, when training was followed by team-based learning and emotional training, the students scored higher on emotional assessments. Research

supports participating in team-based learning since it can strengthen relationships and fortify the development of emotional abilities after individuals have gained knowledge about their own emotional intelligence.

The purpose of the article *Developing Emotional Intelligence Skills among Practicing Leaders: Reality or Myth?* by Nafukho, Muyia, Farni, Kacirek and Lynham was to analyze emotional intelligence training programs and determine if they had any benefits for a group of international NGO leaders. The results were measured by having NGO leaders take an EI assessment before participating in an EI training program. The authors hypothesized that participants would show improvements of their EI scores after completing EI training. Additionally, the authors believed the participants would see improvements on the five EI dimensions: intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, stress management, adaptability, and mood skills.

The Bar-On's theory of socio-emotional intelligence is the basis for this study. The emotional quotient inventory (EQ-i) was used to assess participants' emotional competence levels. Seventy-one NGO leaders from 30 countries participated in the study, with 79% of participants being women and 21% being men. After participants completed the EQ-I assessment, they attended a five-day EI training workshop. Topics of discussion included self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management skills. Participants received individual and confidential feedback on their performance during the workshop and individual coaching sessions to help them interpret the data they received.

The same NGO leaders were assessed after EI training, and their pre-EQ-i and post-EQ-i scores were compared. There was growth in each of the five dimensions, with

the highest growth occurring in the interpersonal dimension. The smallest growth occurred in the stress management dimension. The results of this study highlight how emotional intelligence can be improved within individuals and in workplace settings.

Srivastava looks at the impact of emotional intelligence on organizational effectiveness in the article *Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Effectiveness*. Various studies imply emotional intelligence is an important component in analyzing and determining leadership skills and effectiveness (Cherniss, 2010). Emotional intelligence and its effects on leadership are evident when teamwork is required in the workplace. Studies indicate leaders directly have an impact on the behavior of employees and directly influence the culture of the workplace (Cherniss, 2010). Further research is required to analyze how much of a positive impact leader have on the workplace and employees. The author states a high level of emotional intelligence provides an advantage in ability identification, delegation of roles and responsibilities, and positive conflict resolution outcomes. In conclusion, emotional intelligence positively impacts organizational effectiveness. More research and analysis are needed for assessment quality and predictability as it relates to individual leadership and success. Current literature suggests there are facets of emotional intelligence that significantly contribute to the ability for organizations to achieve their goals and foster job satisfaction.

Emotional intelligence has been formally described as the “ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (p.189). Brackett, Rivers and Salovey discuss success as it relates to emotional intelligence in their article *Emotional Intelligence: Implications for Personal, Social, Academic, and Workplace Success*.

There are two approaches to emotional intelligence: the ability model and mixed models. The ability model states emotional intelligence satisfies the traditional criteria for an intelligence (Mayer, Roberts, and Barsade, 2008). This model views emotional intelligence as a mental ability, which can be measured by performance assessments. The mixed model views emotional intelligence as an intelligence with strong influences such as personality traits (Cherniss, 2010). This model encourages individuals to self-report how accurate they understand emotions and their ability to impact their choices and behaviors. It is believed that high emotional intelligence aids in optimal academic performance due to one's ability to regulate emotions in educational settings, especially during assessments or testing. There are some studies that show positive correlations between emotional testing and high academic performance (Barchard, 2003; Brackett and Mayer, 2003), while others report no correlation (O'Connor and Little, 2003; Rode et al., 2007). More research is necessary to analyze if and how emotional intelligence affects learning and academic performance. The authors note that emotional intelligence may impact other areas of student performance in school, such as behavioral problems or learning and attention difficulties.

In workplace settings, emotional intelligence is believed to contribute to good leadership skills and successful employees through the use of strategies to manage conflict and stress (Ashkanasy and Daus). Preliminary research suggests there is a strong positive correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance.

The article *Personality and salary at Early Career: The Mediating Effect of Emotional Intelligence* (De Haro, Castejon, and Gilar, 2018) explores how emotional intelligence influences the relationship between salary during early career and specific

personality traits. Using the Big Five Model, a sample of 130 university graduates who were in the early stages of their professional careers were selected for a longitudinal study. Characteristics that affected salary included positive and negative neuroticism, positive extraversion, and openness. The authors of this research concluded there is positive correlation between high emotional intelligence and positive salary negotiations. Additionally, the authors suggest emotional intelligence assessments and tools should be used to complement other tools human resources use to assess skills and abilities during the hiring process.

The study *Emotional Intelligence, Leadership Style, & Perceived Leadership Effectiveness* analyzes the correlation between leadership and emotional intelligence. While leadership styles can be different, the study sought to determine if there is a specific leadership style that demonstrates more emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness. For this study, 150 managers were asked to complete the MSCEIT, an emotional intelligence survey that measures leadership ability (Mayer et al., 2002). Subordinates of the managers surveyed were asked to complete the MLQ5x, which assessed the leadership abilities of their managers. Based on the results of the study, there was not a direct correlation between specific leadership styles and higher emotional intelligence. The managers and their subordinates viewed their leadership as effective when they scored high on the emotional assessment (Sosik and Megerian, 1999). The author suggests assessments that are developed to analyze and explore both character traits and abilities in order to have a well-rounded view of emotional intelligence as it relates to effective leadership. Foster parents are the leaders of their homes. Looking at emotional intelligence from a leadership perspective is helpful in exploring how effective

leaders become if they are emotionally intelligent. Next, developing emotional intelligence as part of a training program will be explored.

Emotional intelligence is a cornerstone trait that is needed for effective management of people in a workplace. Several reports show that emotionally intelligent leaders are more effective at leading others and highly desirable. The foster home is a workplace for foster parents, and, as such, the results from examining the effects of emotional intelligence in managers and leaders is highly correlated to foster parents. These parents are leading children and assisting in developing them into adults. It can be argued that it is more important for foster parents to be emotionally intelligent because their workplace is also their residence—thus creating a more complicated dynamic for all involved.

Section II: Developing Emotional intelligence in a Training Program

Clarke argues in his article *Emotional Intelligence Training: A Case of Caveat Emptor* that training programs that claim to develop emotional intelligence (EI) are as effective as they are touted to be. However, studies are still inconclusive on the true effectiveness and improvements to organizations that EI trainings are reporting. It is not clear if EI trainings coupled with positive organizational structures and interpersonal skills impact the studies that measure EI in the workplace. Clarke suggests research should focus on understanding the emotional abilities of the EI training models so that human resources departments can target those within their organizations.

Advocates for EI argue it can be beneficial for businesses and organizations to promote teamwork, more productivity, and unified and individual success. Clarke suggest these claims are not based solely on the limited studies currently available on EI

but are viewed along with personal testimonials. Additionally, Clarke points to certain areas to which EI researchers should redirect their efforts for a better understanding.

First, there should be studies that provide data on how differing emotional abilities can be developed through training interventions. Secondly, trainings are needed to analyze various work environments to understand the norms of emotional capabilities and limits within an organizational structure. This would help isolate emotional intelligence skills for that type of organization and find out if EI training can further develop those skills. Lastly, studies are needed to understand the different career fields and individuals within those organizational structures. Clarke states most of the beneficial EI trainings are conducted within health care settings. A wider range of career fields need to use EI training to fully understand if it is effective or not.

Bagshaw, in his article *Emotional Intelligence- Training People to be Affective so They Can Be Effective*, focuses on how people are trained in EI. He notes consistent negative emotional energy is often an indicator of low emotional intelligence, while consistent positive emotional energy depicts a higher level of emotional intelligence. This is particularly important in teamwork and collaborative efforts because it affects the outcome of individual productivity and group/business success. When team members are working at their greatest potential, everyone can bring their best work and energy to projects and tasks.

Additionally, he notes that emotional intelligence is difficult to measure. He lists five areas that can be used to measure an individual's emotional intelligence competence: creative tension, active choice, resilience under pressure, empathic relationships, and self-awareness or self-control. Creative tension strikes a healthy balance between managing

future and current tasks and goals. Active choice utilizes one's feelings in making choices, being proactive, and ultimately accepting the outcomes of these choices. To demonstrate resilience under pressure, a person must manage their reactions to stress and have a healthy, positive way to handle adversity and struggles. Empathic relationships involve developing trustworthy and credible relationships and making sincere efforts to understand others. Lastly, self-awareness or self-control is the ability to be aware and understand one's deepest feelings and recognizing the effects of any actions that are done based on emotion (positive or negative).

Since emotional intelligence can be learned, having competent trainers is essential. Trainers should be able to facilitate discussions about emotions and experiences without being a person's counselor. They should make individuals aware of this new sensitivity so each person can be responsible for finding healthy ways to handle emotions as concepts, not as personal problems. An organization that emphasizes emotional intelligence as one indicator of success may prevent setbacks, increase productivity, and decrease potential delays or conflicts. Campo, Laborde, and Weckemann discuss emotional intelligence training from a performance and health point of view in their article *Emotional Intelligence Training: Implications for Performance and Health*. Emotional intelligence contributes to how a person manages their emotions and perceives the emotions of others. Research supports the idea that emotional intelligence can positively impact a person's health and performance.

EI has been seen from two perspectives: the ability model, which is assessed through performance measures and the trait model, which is assessed through self-reporting measures. The authors suggest that using emotional intelligence training and

intervention for different fields and domains can positively impact individual's health and performance. For this research, an intervention plan was developed for rugby players. The authors believe emotions play an important role in sport performance. The protocol involved using a tripartite model of EI specifically developed for the sport domain. Each player took an emotional intelligence assessment at the beginning and end of the study followed by a 45-minute feedback session based on the results of the emotional assessment. The rugby players participated in one weekly session for five weeks. Players participated in a 90-minute session that focused on increasing their knowledge and role of emotions. The next session discussed emotion regulation, and the final session focused on practical application as it relates to sports. Once additional training was provided, players performed better by regulating their emotions during their games, observing the opposing team's emotional patterns during the game, and winning more games. The authors concluded the positive association between emotional intelligence, health, and performance can be integrated in other fields, such as schools and other organizations to improve the impacts on community and society. Research shows emotional intelligence can lead to less development of psychological disorders.

Foster Parenting

Section I: Studying Foster Parenting

In 1996, Denby and Rindfleisch analyzed results from a study termed *African Americans' Foster Parenting Experiences: Research Findings and Implications for Policy and Practice*. This study involved 804 foster parents in eight urban Ohio counties. These foster parents were selected solely based on demographics. The foster parents had a grievance with the training information, resources for both the children in their care and

the foster parents, compatibility of children that were placed in their homes, and the revoking of license policies. In 1996, the nation was experiencing a shortage of foster parents and adequate homes for placement. Child abuse and neglect cases had increased, while the number of qualified foster care providers had decreased (General Accounting Office, 1989). In a national study, there is significant evidence that there was a shortage of foster homes provided by African American foster parents (Bell and Associates, 1993).

In one of the counties analyzed for this study, African American children comprised 80% of the children placed into the foster care system (Ohio Department of Human Services, 1993). Only 56% of licensed foster homes in that county were African American households. Denby and Rindfleisch suggested further research was warranted in the areas of foster parent retention as it relates to the home structure of foster parenting, training requirements, financial compensation, and respite. Foster parenting is more frustrating for lower-income families; thus, exploring options of providing additional resources could help ease the burdens of these foster families. Foster parents in Ohio stated they would feel more equipped for the variety of children placed in their homes if they had better training.

Dozier discusses the challenges of foster care in his article *Challenges of Foster Care*. He emphasizes children in foster care cope with varying situations by becoming self-reliant and skeptical of new caregivers. Even when caregivers demonstrate the willingness and ability to provide for the needs of a child, their efforts are often met with reluctance and lack of trust. Researchers and observers are concerned when foster parents respond angrily to children due to the child's poor coping strategies and avoidance. Schofield (2005) suggested intervention programs be introduced to help

caregivers respond in nurturing ways, even when the child responds hastily. The goal is to use caregivers, as opposed to therapists and counselors, as agents of change so children can have better worldviews and self-awareness. Research and observations suggest foster parents are fundamental in helping children change certain problematic behaviors. The children that were observed in previous research were school-aged and more likely to display troubling behaviors. The information presented in this commentary compared previous findings with observations of infants and toddlers. Dozier suggests the current function of foster care is not beneficial to young children because of their need for strong, continuing commitment. By its very nature, foster care is designed to be a temporary, surrogate means of care. There is a critical need for a system in which caregivers can commit fully to children.

Previous research suggests emotional intelligence can be a significant factor in obtaining success in life (Gardner, 2005; Gardner and Hatch, 1989; Goleman, 2001). Turculet and Tulbure examine emotional intelligence as it relates to parents and children in their article, *The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence of Parents and Children*. Emotional intelligence, unlike other abilities and characteristics, can be influenced and developed in individuals. Children can develop emotional intelligence during their first few years of life with the capacity for growth continuing as they get older. An individual's emotional abilities in adulthood are dependent on the capabilities introduced in the early years of life. Turculet and Tulbere's focus was to determine if the emotional development of children was influenced by the emotional habits of their parents. During one school semester, researchers identified the parents' level of emotional development values and that of their children. Researchers established that a

positive correlation exists between the parents' and children's emotional development values. Research was collected using an emotional intelligence test for 20 parents and direct observation of children in a school setting. The children were between ages four and seven, and the parents were between 26 and 58.

The results of this study supported previous literature about the profound impact of parents' emotional development values and its effect on their children. The study showed a strong positive correlation between the emotional development values of parents and the behaviors observed by the children. The author suggested expanding training methods for emotional intelligence to parents so they could have a positive impact on the development of their children.

In some instances, a child is removed from their biological families if there is a threat to the child's safety or well-being. For reunification to occur, parents must meet certain requirements, which may include participating in parenting classes and intervention. In the article, *A Promising Parenting Intervention in Foster Care*, Linares, Montalto, Li, and Oza studied how effective intervention models were on improving parenting skills and reducing behavioral problems in maltreated children. Over 100 foster and biological parents were selected from a foster care agency in New York City. Researchers used a two-component intervention for biological and foster parents. The main goal was to improve parenting skills and reduce instances of children externalizing problems. Foster parents and biological parents were randomly assigned to complete the intervention or usual care. Parents selected for intervention participated in a 12-week parenting course called "Incredible Years" and an additional parenting component. Parents not assigned to the intervention group received their normal monitoring and

monthly case visits. Once the intervention concluded, parents assigned to the “Incredible Years” intervention group reported improvements in parenting skills, higher skills in managing externalizing behavior and fewer instances of children externalizing behavior. The results supported adding interventions and additional training for foster parents and biological parents to improve parenting skills and promote better management of their children’s externalizing behavior. The authors concluded foster care agencies would benefit from additional training. Foster parents would be confident in taking on more challenging cases while biological parents would benefit from gaining the skills necessary to acquire and maintain reunification.

Nontherapeutic foster parents must have six to 36 hours of training (depending on the state), with ongoing training requirements. Some states allow foster parents to complete training online or through other means such as DVDs, books, or in-person training sessions. The focus of foster parent training is to understand state requirements and standards and what is involved when people decide to become foster parents. Important information, such as safety procedures, visitation, and documentation are discussed during training sessions.

In the article *Foster Parenting as Work*, Hannah Roman believes increasing compensation would allow states to be more rigorous with licensing and training requirements. More compensation would demand higher training efforts. Current training for many states focuses on the importance and need for foster parenting, which can be a great recruitment tool. However, foster parents should have access to training that shifts the focus to acquiring parenting skills in order to handle the complex needs of foster children. Treating foster parenting as work would allow agencies and

organizations to provide complimentary training for foster parents to acquire necessary skills and would consider the foster parent's existing knowledge and background when making placements in their homes. Higher quality training would have additional benefits such as:

- 1) Less disruptive and frequent placements since foster parents would be trained to handle a variety of issues and concerns.
- 2) Foster parents feeling confident since they have tools and skills to make informed decisions concerning the care of children placed in their homes.
- 3) A shift in focus from case workers monitoring foster parents to make sure they are following the rule to supporting them during the parenting journey.

Training also helps foster parents view themselves as professionals with the knowledge and insight to help make decisions alongside case workers and educators on behalf of the children.

For individuals to become foster parents, they must pass home inspections and complete training before children can be placed in their home. While training is required by law (The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999), there is not a standardized training program or curriculum. Therefore, training differs by state and local agencies. Hebert and Rulkin conducted research, published in their article *An Investigation of Foster Parent Training Needs*, by asking foster parents who attended a state foster parent association conference a series of questions. These questions were centered on areas needed for them to fulfill their roles as foster parents. Foster parents consistently ranked their need for additional training as an area of much concern. Specifically, foster parents

need training on how to manage challenging behaviors and skills on how to help children adjust in their homes.

In 2008, Chamberlain, Price, Leve, Laurent, Landsverk, and Reid wrote an article on the results of their study examining behavior problem prevention methods for children in foster care. The federal and state governments require parenting training for foster parents. Every state has different training regulations, guidelines, and curricula as well as different licensing requirements. It is unknown if the current training curricula for each state are effective in providing the skills and knowledge needed to handle the variety of issues faced when parenting children in foster care. Developmentally sensitive parent training has been proven to be effective.

Developmentally sensitive training programs, such as KEEP (Keeping Foster Parents Trained and Supported), were tested by a randomized trial. Seven hundred foster and kinship parents from San Diego County Child Welfare Service participated in the study. The focus of the intervention was to reduce problematic behaviors from children and youth placed in foster care by increasing and strengthening parenting skills.

Various intervention models, especially those catered to providing training to foster parents, have proven to be effective in reducing problematic behaviors. Children exhibiting high-risk behaviors showed significant improvement when parents practiced specific skills learned during training and intervention. The authors conclude that parents and foster children would benefit from specific training to handle behavioral changes and developmental challenges involved in foster parenting.

Foster children exhibit problematic behaviors at three to four times the rate of the general population of children. There are few mental health interventions that have been

studied with children placed in foster care. Further research is needed to develop interventions that reduce problematic behaviors, provide the children in foster care with the support they need, and give foster parents the confidence needed to handle a variety of parenting situations. Leathers, Spielfogel, McMeel, and Atkins conducted a pilot study of a parent management training intervention called *Use of a Parent Management Training Intervention with Urban Foster Parents*, which was created specifically for predominately African American foster families.

For this study, Chamberlain's KEEP program was adapted to study in a predominantly African American child welfare agency in Chicago. Materials were added to discuss school achievement. Modifications were made to address children with moderate to severe behavioral issues and to account for cultural background. For this study, there were 31 pairs of foster parents. Thirteen pairs of foster parents were in the control group, and 18 pairs of foster parents were in the intervention group. The authors believed that with proper training, foster parents would see a decrease in disruptive behaviors and an increase in positive parenting practices. For this intervention, there were 16 sessions, with each session being 90 minutes. The sessions were led by a trained paraprofessional and co-facilitator. The sessions went into detail about effective encouragement, discipline strategies, promoting school success, and how to handle severe behavior.

After the intervention, foster parents were monitored and asked to complete questionnaires. Most of the parents in the intervention group reported less negative parenting styles (they stopped yelling at the children and became more consistent with positive parenting and followed through on consequences). Each month after the

intervention, foster parents reported fewer significant behavioral problems. The follow-up on children's behaviors ended at five months post-intervention due to reunifications. The results of this study were like Chamberlain's and Price's KEEP intervention program in the San Diego County study. That study focused on all children that were newly placed in foster care, while this study targeted urban families with mental health needs. The authors concluded that effective intervention and training models can be adapted to fit the needs of foster parents in a variety of settings.

Greeno, Lee, Uretsky, Moore, Barth, and Shaw conducted a study of the KEEP intervention (Keeping Foster and Kinship Parents trained and supported) and analyzed the training and intervention program in their article *Effects of a Foster Parent Training Intervention on Child Behavior, Caregiver Stress, and Parenting Style*. The main focus was to evaluate changes to children's behavior, foster parenting style and techniques, and the consistency of permanency and placement. For this adaption of the KEEP intervention, 65 foster and kinship parents who cared for children ages four to 12 participated in the study. Participants of this study were selected due to children's behavioral issues as reported by the foster parents. Foster parents were given a child behavior checklist (CBCL), which was given before the intervention (baseline) and after the intervention (posttest analysis). The information collected from these checklists was followed up with through interviews to discuss parenting style changes and child behaviors. Maryland child welfare provided data on permanency and placement changes for the participants of the study.

Each foster and kinship parents reported a drastic drop in problematic behaviors when the posttest was analyzed. Parents that completed training also reported more

stability with child placements. The results of the adapted version of the KEEP intervention provided evidence that specific parenting training can reduce problematic behaviors in children and foster parents can acquire the skills necessary to parent effectively. In her study *Mental Health Care Issues of Children and Youth in Foster Care*, Tina Polihronakis created an information packet for New York's Adult, Child and Family Children's Bureau. In her review of current literature on mental health issues in individuals placed in foster care, she concluded children and youth are at a significantly higher rate of having mental health issues, as well as social and developmental delays. Treatment and prevention for the issues can be highly effective. According to various literature pertaining to childhood disorders, behavioral interventions, psychotherapy, and psychopharmacology have been effective in reducing symptoms of these issues. Recently, there is growing evidence that early identification, prevention, and training can improve the positive impact of conventional remedies.

Polihronkis believes there are specific barriers that prevent children and youth in foster care from getting the treatment needed to reach their full potential. She recommends the following methods to improve the mental health care for children in foster care: (1) establish effective training for any individual involved in providing services and care to foster children, (2) improve care coordination, and (3) conduct yearly mental health screenings and assessments for children. She adds that since foster parents are the primary caregivers, it is important for them to receive ongoing health training and intervention as well as receive clinical support and consultations as needed.

Adequate foster parent training can promote a lasting bond between children and their biological families. Andrew Sanchirico and Kary Jablonka (2000) suggest the

development and implementation of specialized training for foster parents to facilitate visitations and contact with biological parents. Ongoing training and support help foster parents handle the mixed emotions and complex behaviors of children who are struggling to adjust to their out-of-home placements. For this study, the authors provided specialized training to foster parents as well as ongoing support following the training program. The results support the effectiveness of having foster parents that can confidently navigate the contact and visitation process of the parents and children and encourage healthy communication between the children and their biological families. Foster parents that participated in the study said they were better able to handle emotions and behaviors of the children.

Children in foster care may have been exposed to maltreatment or other disruptions in building relationships with their primary caregivers. There are not many evidence-based interventions that address the risk factors foster children could be exposed to. Mary Dozier, Oliver Lindhiem, Erin Lewis, Johanna Bick, Kristin Bernard, and Elizabeth Peloso tested the effectiveness of a new intervention and additional training for foster parents, the results of which are explored in their article *Developing Evidence-Based Interventions for Foster Children: An Example of a Randomized Clinical Trial with Infants and Toddlers*. The intervention, Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up, was specifically designed to assist foster parents in cultivating the relationship of children with their primary caregiver. For this study, children were randomly assigned to the experimental intervention or to a control intervention. Participating foster parents of children in the study all received in-home weekly training sessions for 10 weeks. Once the 10-week sessions were complete, follow ups were completed after a month.

The results of the study suggested specific trainings and interventions can produce promising effects for both foster parents and children. Children whose foster caregivers participated in the intervention had cortisol levels that were in an appropriate range for children their age in a stable and healthy environment. Foster parents that received the intervention stated they were able to interact with the children in their care in a targeted and meaningful way. The authors concluded that time-and-problem-specific interventions could positively impact the relationships between caregivers and children.

Evidence-based interventions (or training) for children in foster care can increase the mental health outcomes and overall well-being of children. Fisher (2009) suggests a systematic implementation of evidence-based training and intervention to (1) improve placement stability, (2) improve children's likelihood of achieving permanency, and (3) provide training to meet the variety and changing needs and risks seen in foster care. The author provides a framework for determining the different types of programs needed for children in foster care. The suggestions include creating a screen to identify children and foster parents who are in need of additional supplemental services, providing an enhanced foster care with more services for at-risk children and youth, implementing interventions that address specific issues such as academic performance or behavioral issues, and providing intensive therapeutic foster care programming as necessary. These types of programs require additional training for foster parents and care teams. Fisher (2009) suggest there should be policies in place at the state level to ensure these services are adequately administered to foster children.

Overall, foster parents are on the front lines when impacting children in the foster care system. Because of this, it is important to ensure that they have good training and

are set up for success. There is substantial research showing the need for foster parents to be trained on how to deal with the challenges that foster children bring into their homes.

Section II: Other Training Options for Foster Parents

Chamberlin, Moreland, and Reid set out to see if providing more services and more money to foster parents would increase their retention rates in their article *Enhanced Services and Stipends for Foster Parents: Effects on Retention Rates and Outcomes for Children*. In 1992, child protective services nationwide were struggling to recruit adequate foster homes while handling the influx of children entering the foster care system. Factors that made recruitment and retaining foster parents difficult included the need for most individuals in the household to work, low financial reimbursement rates, availability of support and resources for foster parents and children, and the severity of problems that are demonstrated by the children placed in their care. Some researchers believed that the foster care system should return to ins care (such as orphanages and group homes), while others believed the current state of the foster care system is inevitable when any organization is overburdened and lacks adequate resources.

The purpose of this study was to determine if enhanced services and increased financial reimbursement produced more satisfied, competent foster parents. Researchers for this article studied the impact of providing an increase of \$70 to the financial reimbursements that participating foster parents received. Additionally, the foster parents were able to meet once a week to discuss any concerns they had and receive additional training. There were 72 children and their foster parents that were analyzed for this study. The participants had similar demographics: two-parent homes, median yearly income of \$20,000-24,900, same education level (some college courses, but no degree),

and mostly female, Caucasian foster children in their care. The authors of the study concluded that there were significant benefits to providing additional training for foster parents. The foster parents reported feeling more confident in handling behavioral challenges due to the additional training. Additionally, foster parents reported feeling more valued and appreciated with the slightly higher stipends. Caseworkers reported higher satisfaction with participants (skill and competence levels in their caregiving roles).

Sanchirico, Lau, Jablonka, and Russell sought to determine if foster parent involvement in case planning increased job satisfaction in their article *Foster Parent Involvement in Service Planning: Does it Increase Job Satisfaction*. Many foster parents decide not to continue caring for foster children because they are not satisfied with various welfare agency policies and guidelines (Campbell and Downs, 1987; Cautley, 1980; James Bell Associates, 1993). Agencies can reduce the amount of foster parents' dissatisfaction if they identify and resolve factors that contribute to lack of retaining quality foster homes. The author hypothesized that lack of involvement in service planning and management contributes heavily to foster care job satisfaction (James Bell Associates, 1993; U.S. General Accounting Office, 1989).

Surveys were sent to 3,000 current foster parents and 1,500 former foster parents (who were decertified within one year of the survey). All the surveys were identical. Only data from the current foster parents were used for the results and conclusion of the study. There was a 38.7% response rate. While that is favorable for mail-out surveys, the percentage of nonrespondents can possibly change the outcome of the study. The study was conducted in New York; therefore, it cannot be generalized or representative of

other states welfare agencies. Agencies can increase the quality of foster care by allowing foster parents on the service planning team. Participants were most satisfied with their job when they felt a part of service planning, compared to those who did not view themselves as team members. Respondents also indicated that if caseworkers had more in-person contact, their satisfaction with foster parenting would be higher. The authors of this study also suggest agencies should consider the education level of foster parents when evaluating job satisfaction and involvement in planning. Participants with a higher level of education were more critical of their job satisfaction and role in the case planning process. Lastly, the researchers noted that in-service training had a slight effect on job satisfaction. Foster parents of special needs children reported a higher rate of dissatisfaction in training. Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that agencies seek to identify and eliminate factors that contribute to lack of retention rates.

Systems Theory

The American foster care program exists as a system. “A system is an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something” (Meadows, 2008). The American foster care system is comprised of elements and has a purpose. Specifically, to determine if something is a system, it is important to ask four questions:

1. Are there elements that you can identify?
2. Are the elements affecting each other?
3. Do the elements together produce an effect that is different from the effect of each singular element?

4. Does the effect, the behavior over time, persist in a variety of circumstances?
(Meadows, 2008)

“The stock is the foundation of any system. Stocks are the elements of the system that you can see, feel, count, or measure at any given time” (Meadows, 2008). The elements in the foster care system consist of foster children, foster parents, social workers, child welfare agencies, courts, occupational therapists, the health care system, and the school system. Each are interconnected to each other and play a significant role in the life of the foster child and, to a smaller degree, the foster parent. “Foster care exists to provide a family and their child(ren) with an alternative to living together in the unfortunate case that being in the same home is either unsafe or impossible. Foster care may also be used for children who are suddenly in the position of having no family or home” (Fostering Futures, 2018). The following gives an idea of how each element relates to the foster care system and subsequently relates to the foster parent.

Section I: Foster Children

Children are placed into the foster care system through a variety of unfortunate familial circumstances. Harden discusses this in the article *Safety and Stability for Foster Care Children*. Maltreatment, abuse, and neglect are the common reasons for the removal of children and youth from their primary caregivers. Harden discusses the importance of safety and stability for the healthy development of children. There are several risk factors when children are not placed in safe environments to grow. Harden’s research concludes children in foster care face higher risks of experiencing poverty, future maltreatment in familial or foster care settings, and poor health outcomes, including inadequate brain functioning. Without stable or healthy attachments, children

in foster care can lack adequate social skills, which can cause problems in adulthood. The complete well-being of children is the primary and fundamental purpose of child welfare agencies. Foster care agencies should focus on providing nurturing and stable environments for children in foster care to improve their resilience and to combat negative exposures that may hinder their emotional, physical, and cognitive development (Harden, 2004).

Section II: Foster Parents

Foster parents are kinship or unrelated caregivers responsible for taking care of displaced children placed in their home by state, local, or private agencies. In the qualitative study *The Caregiver as Gatekeeper for Accessing Healthcare for Children in Foster Care: A Qualitative Study of Kinship and Unrelated Caregivers*, Janet Schneiderman, Caitlin Smith, and Lawrence Palinkas explore issues pertaining to accessing adequate health care for children in foster care. The four themes explored in this study are:

1. “Doing our best” (advocating for adequate health care)
2. “Support from Others Helped” (using social networks, caseworkers, and other organizations for additional support)
3. “Child has complicated, serious, chronic health problems” (Caregivers had significant issues obtaining specialty medical information and appointments. Furthermore, Medicaid was not sufficient to meet the medical needs of the children.)
4. “Caregiver Competence in Meeting Health Needs” (Caregivers were unable to attend medical appointments.)

Their research noted that kinship caregivers faced more challenges in obtaining medical resources for children placed in their care as well as additional financial stress. Unrelated caregivers reported dissatisfaction with child welfare agencies' level of responsiveness in meeting health care needs for children in foster care. Even with the number of obstacles in obtaining medical care for children in foster care, foster parents and kinship caregivers have consistently advocated for proper care for children in foster care. The authors conclude foster parents positively affect health outcomes for children in their care. The authors believe that training future foster parents on their roles as potential advocates for the well-being of foster children could alleviate stressors and encourage foster parents to learn about additional resources available to them (Schneiderman et al., 2012).

Schneiderman and Villagrana discuss how important foster parents are in meeting the needs of foster children in the home in their article *Meeting Children's Mental and Physical Health Needs in Child Welfare: The Importance of Caregivers*. Caregivers in the child welfare system (foster care) have vital roles in ensuring the overall well-being of children placed in their care. One important role of foster parents is making sure children are obtaining the medical attention necessary for proper development. Foster children typically have higher rates of mental health conditions along with other health concerns. Services for mental health and other health issues have been underutilized within the foster care system. This article examines the obstacles foster parents face while meeting the health care needs of children placed in their care. Janet Schneiderman and Margarita Villagrana indicate foster families do not have complete or accurate health information when children are placed in their homes. This could be due to reporting

errors by caseworkers or biological families withholding information. Additionally, some children are not diagnosed or properly screened for medical issues until they are placed in the custody of a child welfare agency. Without complete information, foster parents struggle to get medical services needed for health development. Other issues include problems finding specialists that are covered by Medicaid. When health emergencies or behavioral issues at school or home arise, foster parents report slow or inadequate help from caseworkers. Biological families reported problems in understanding changes in medical care while their children were placed in foster care (Schneiderman and Villagrana, 2010). Schneiderman and Villagrana believe caregivers have the most prominent role when ensuring children have access to medical care and reporting changes or needs as they arise. Case managers and child welfare agencies should work to alleviate obstacles foster parents could face so children can have the best possible health outcomes.

Section III: Social Workers

Social workers are professionals who work in child placement agencies or child welfare agencies. Their central role is coordinating and managing care for foster families. Additionally, they arrange resources for biological families to eradicate problems that lead to lack of quality care for minors. Terpstra discusses the role that social workers play in the foster care system in their article *The Rich and Exacting Role of Social Work*. Most child welfare agencies place an emphasis on permanence. Therefore, the tasks and responsibilities of social workers are centered on creating a stable environment for children involved. At times, this may mean placing children in foster homes until a treatment or care plan is completed by the biological or primary

caregivers. Social workers can be involved in the selection of foster parents through the screening and licensing process. Each state sets their own regulations and guidelines for licensing. Social workers ensure that these guidelines are met, and foster homes are safe environments for children (Terpstra, 2007).

Social workers must also work with children by assessing their needs through physicians, educators, previous foster parents (if applicable), and family members. Through visitations and proper documentation, social workers relay information to individuals on the child's care team to ensure all their needs are met in a timely manner. Social workers must also monitor and report progress on biological families' situations and provide resources through the state with the goal of reunifying families. If reunification is not possible, social workers must coordinate a place for children to build new, stable, positive relationships (Terpstra, 2007).

O'Reilly and Dolan wrote *The Voice of the Child in Social Work Assessments: Age Appropriate Communication with Children*. They explain social workers should be well-trained on how to engage with children who are involved with child welfare agencies. Understanding how to communicate with children who have experienced trauma and troubling issues is a primary skill for social workers or case managers. Several studies indicate children learn and communicate best through play. Since the most effective way to learn about children is through play, social workers should have a vast knowledge of child-centered methods when playing with and communicating with children (O'Reilly and Dolan, 2016).

Using a compilation of literature concerning children's play and communication, O'Reilly and Dolan designed a program called Play Skills Training for social workers.

Social workers learned different techniques on engaging children from different backgrounds and varying levels of trauma. The authors believe many child welfare agencies could benefit from having additional training for social workers. When social workers can communicate positively and sufficiently on behalf of children, they are able to produce child-centered care plans and assessments (O'Reilly and Dolan, 2016).

Section IV: Child Welfare Agencies

Children are placed in foster care due to the concerns of their safety within their homes. When children are removed from their homes due to concerns of maltreatment, child welfare agencies are responsible for establishing a safe, structured, and stable environment until reunification can occur. Children are placed in out of home settings, which is monitored by the case worker. Out of home placements consists of non-related foster parents or kinship care in which the child is placed with relatives. Overall, children who are removed from their homes manifest more behavioral, educational, and mental health problems that children who live with their biological families (Winokur et al., 2014).

In the article *Kinship Care for the Safety, Permanency, and Well-being of Children Removed from the Home for Maltreatment*, Winokur, Holtan, and Batchelder evaluate whether kinship care is more effective in producing higher rates of safety, permanency, and well-being for foster children. For this study, researchers used randomized experimental and quasi-experimental studies. They used information gathered about children removed from their homes due to maltreatment but were placed in kinship care and compared it to children who were placed in non-related foster families. After reviewing other studies and literature, researchers collected data on over

600,000 foster children. Children that were placed in kinship care were less likely to exhibit behavior problems than children that were placed with non-relatives. The authors believe child welfare agencies should place heavier emphasis on kinship placement due to the decrease in behavioral problems for children in the home (Winokur et al., 2014).

Section V: Courts

In the article *A Comparison of Types of Attorney Representation for Children in California Juvenile Court Dependency Cases*, Gail Goodman, Robin S. Edelstein, Emilie B. Mitchen, and John E.B Myers discuss how the family court dictates care plans and outcomes for children in foster care. Children should have an advocate who is knowledgeable about the specific care needs of the child in foster care and represent them in court. The child welfare system uses varying legal representation for children, which drastically affects the ability to consistently meet the care needs of the children. The state of California uses four types of legal representation: 1) public defenders, 2) county counsel, 3) private firms (both for profit and nonprofit), and 4) pro bono attorneys. Goodman, Edelstein, Mitchen, and Myers studied the outcomes of maltreated children involved in the family court system in California. Their research analyzes the different types of legal representation juvenile cases received in 2000. The purpose of the study was to determine whether children in foster care had different outcomes based on the types of legal representation.

In order to collect data, every county's child welfare division supplied information regarding juveniles' experiences in foster care (through caseworkers' observation reports and other information collected through child welfare agencies). Additionally, each county supplied information regarding children's legal defense. Most

counties in California used public defenders or court-appointed attorneys to represent children. Court-appointed attorneys includes the district attorney, county counsel, or public defender. Counties that employed independent types of legal counsel, such as private firms, had fewer cases of foster care placements. Researchers concluded a variation of legal representation in the family court system concerning children placed in foster care were associated with better outcomes for children (Goodman et al., 2014).

The family court system plays a vital role in the outcomes of children placed in the foster care system. This division of the legal system collects data from the observations and reports of child protection professionals. According to research conducted by Josh Gupta-Kagan and discussed in his article *Child Protection Law as an Independent Variable*, legal representation and interpretation of laws vary from state to state. Each state has differed in how child welfare laws are enforced. Additionally, the legal definition of child negligence, requirements of whether a child is removed from their home by protective services, and the stipulations for reunification with parents [all differ from state to state] (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018). For example, in Alabama, “‘Neglect’ means negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical treatment, or supervision.” Arizona provides a more detailed explanation for neglect. “‘Neglect’ or ‘neglected’ means:

- The inability or unwillingness of a parent, guardian, or custodian of a child to provide that child with supervision, food, clothing, shelter, or medical care, if that inability or unwillingness causes unreasonable risk of harm to the child's health or welfare:

- Permitting a child to enter or remain in any structure or vehicle in which volatile, toxic, or flammable chemicals are found, or equipment is possessed by any person for the purposes of manufacturing a dangerous drug
- A determination by a health professional that a newborn infant was exposed prenatally to a drug or substance listed in § 13-3401 and that this exposure was not the result of a medical treatment administered to the mother or the newborn infant by a health professional
- A diagnosis by a health professional of an infant under age 1 with clinical findings consistent with fetal alcohol syndrome or fetal alcohol effects” (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018).

Family and juvenile court systems are expected to determine if a child has been the victim of child abuse or neglect. If there is evidence supporting the decision to remove a child from their primary caregivers, the court must decide whether the child should be placed under court or child welfare agency supervision. The court must also ensure that children are not removed from their homes unnecessarily. If children are unable to safely return to their homes, the court system must enforce a care plan that prevents children from remaining in temporary care for years.

Josh Gupta-Kagan argues that the outcomes for children are different when there are variations of child welfare practice from state to state. He suggests researchers compile information about the outcomes of court cases as it relates to children in foster care. By studying and analyzing outcomes, policymakers can create better practices to ensure the best interests of the kids are being met (Gupta-Kagan, 2016).

In their article *Guardian Ad Litem and Children's Attorneys in Arizona: A Qualitative Examination of the Roles*, Jennifer E. Duchschere, Connie J. Beck, and Rebecca M. Stahl examine the similarities and differences in the roles and responsibilities of guardian ad litem (GAL) and children's attorneys (CA) in family court and dependency cases. GALs and CAs in Arizona were interviewed and questioned about their roles and experiences. GALs are appointed by a court to investigate a child's circumstances at home, school, or their temporary home if they have been removed from their home. GALs are volunteers, and most states require in-service training and court observations before assigning them a case. GALs are typically required to visit with the child at least once a month and attend all court hearings pertaining to the case. In conclusion, the researchers of the article found GALs and CA shared similar goals, which include ensuring the safety of the child, maintaining healthy familial ties/reunification, advocacy for the child's best interests, and presenting solutions that offer the least amount of stress for the child. Both GALs and CAs state there are limited community resources as well as slow court systems that make it challenging to provide the best outcomes for children (Duchschere, J., Beck, C., and Stahl, R., 2017).

Since the family structure of the American family has been changing over the last few decades, lawyers must take more variables into consideration when determining and advocating for the needs of minors. These variables include mental health conditions of the adults and children involved in the case and financial circumstances. When it comes to child custody, family lawyers should be proficient in advocacy as well as counselor-at-law roles. In their article *Child Custody Innovations for Family Lawyers: The Future Is Now*, Linda Smith and Eric Frazer believe this multidisciplinary approach would be

helpful in a variety of family court proceedings. If there is an emergency court proceeding involving child custody cases, lawyers might not have the time to research the best methods or potential outcomes for the child involved. Using the technological advances available could help lawyers become more efficient at their increasing roles within the family court system (Smith, L. and Frazer, E., 2017).

Section VI: Occupational Therapy

Children in foster care face higher risks of mental health problems. Hambrick, Oppenheim-Weller, N’zi, and Taussig argue in their article *Mental Health Interventions for Children in Foster Care: A Systemic Review* that behavioral health scientists and researchers have challenges creating interventions for children in foster care due to the complexities of their mental health conditions and the frequency of their transitions — new home placements, reunifications with family, adoptions, new schools, or children living in group home settings. Children in foster care experience a wide range of trauma and maltreatment that could increase their risk of mental health conditions. Between 50% and 80% of children in foster care meet the criteria of a mental health disorder (Farmer et al., 2001; Leslie et al., 2005). Some of the most common mental health diagnoses include anxiety disorders, PTSD, ADHD, and disruptive behavior disorders. In addition to these common mental health issues among children in foster care, there is a high prevalence of developmental issues such as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and other cognitive delays. Without mental health interventions, children in foster care are prone to having lifelong challenges that can lead to substance abuse, increased risks of dysfunctional relationships, and living in poverty (Hambrick et al., 2016).

The study *Occupational Therapy's Emerging Role with Transitioning Adolescents in Foster Care* by Amy Paul-Ward emphasizes the importance of occupational therapy for children and adolescents in foster care. Occupational therapy focuses on an individual's recuperation from a physical or mental illness by performing exercises and activities that they would do on a normal basis. Some adolescents in foster care might struggle with mental health conditions or physical limitations. This can make daily activities and school participation challenging. Occupational therapists can positively improve the lives of adolescents in foster care by teaching skill development in health, independent living, and activities/exercises conducive to proper school participation. Students with sensory processing issues can benefit from occupational therapy. Some students can be overwhelmed by school or home environments, which can cause attention issues. By using various activities and exercises, occupational therapists can help students overcome these obstacles (Ward, 2014).

Section VII: The Health Care System

Mary Greiner and Sarah Beal discuss challenges and recommendations in health care for children in foster care in their article *Developing a Health Care System for Children in Foster Care*. Children in foster care have different medical needs than children who reside with their biological families. The medical system plays a critical role in managing the care of children entering the foster care system. The reports and findings of medical personnel determines the diagnoses, treatment plans, and interventions needed for the child to be healthy. Caseworkers and court systems can use the information from doctors to determine if a child was subjected to neglect and abuse or other untreated medical conditions. This information directly affects where a child is

placed, their care plans, and any specific needs the child might have. Maintaining the health records for children in foster care is difficult. Missing health records, the transient nature of foster care, state mandates, and impoverished social settings have contributed to poor health care management for children in foster care.

The Cincinnati Children's Hospital launched comprehensive health evaluations for Cincinnati's Kids (CHECK) in 2012. The purpose of this program is to improve medical record-keeping of children in foster care in Cincinnati. The author of this study believes having a singular system to which doctors and therapists can report their medical and clinical findings would alleviate the need for unnecessary repeat visits due to lost medical records. In the event the child is moved to a different home, medical professionals and caseworkers can provide the resources and medical attention necessary without delays in retrieving medical records from one provider to the next (Griner & Beal, 2018).

Section VIII: The School System

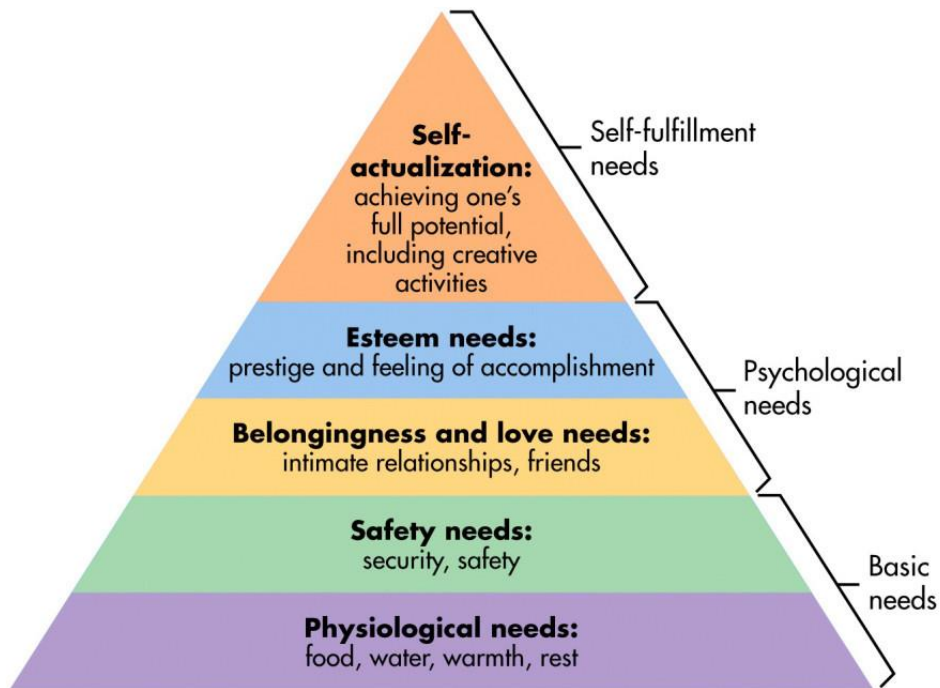
In the study *Supporting Students in Foster Care*, Lauren Palmieri and Tamika La Salle (2011) explore how minors in foster care face higher risks of enduring problems at school. Issues with behavior, school attendance, and academic functioning are some of the multiple challenges students in foster care face. Additionally, students in foster care are twice as likely to receive out of school suspension for disciplinary problems and three and a half times more likely to be placed in special education programs. Given the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic problems this demographic could face, schools should be knowledgeable and resourceful when responding to the special needs of these students.

School psychologists are important due to their abilities to support the academic success of students that face a host of challenges. They achieve this by identifying the needs of students in foster care and work with the appropriate individuals to meet those needs. Effective school psychologists must seek to understand the wide range of complex issues and vulnerabilities that students in the child welfare system face. This is accomplished by having access to a variety of support services within the school system and in the community. It is in the best interest of students in foster care for schools to establish partnerships with caregivers, schools, and the child welfare system.

Researchers recommend school psychologists develop and implement classes or activities that are centered on teaching problem solving, anger management, and social skills. School psychologists should also partner with mental health staff and practitioners to determine how to incorporate effective therapies and interventions in a classroom setting. Finally, school psychologists should encourage school staff to display positive attitudes and expectations for students. Students in foster care might feel singled out at school. Educational staff can support the varying needs of these students while working hard to keep the school atmosphere inclusive (Palmieri and La Salle, 2017).

Human Needs Theory

Human Needs Theory centers on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1987). Specifically, "the needs are physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization. Needs lower down in the hierarchy must be satisfied before individuals can attend to needs higher up" (McLeod, 2018).

Figure 1*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*

1. Physiological needs - these are biological requirements for human survival, e.g. air, food, drink, shelter, clothing, warmth, sex, sleep. If these needs are not satisfied the human body cannot function optimally. Maslow considered physiological needs the most important as all the other needs become secondary until these needs are met.
2. Safety needs - protection from elements, security, order, law, stability, freedom from fear.
3. Love and belongingness needs - after physiological and safety needs have been fulfilled, the third level of human needs is social and involves feelings of belongingness. The need for interpersonal relationships motivates behavior.

Examples include friendship, intimacy, trust, acceptance, receiving and giving affection and love. Affiliating, being part of a group (family, friends, work).

4. Esteem needs - which Maslow classified into two categories: (i) esteem for oneself (dignity, achievement, mastery, independence) and (ii) the desire for reputation or respect from others (e.g., status, prestige). Maslow indicated that the need for respect or reputation is most important for children and adolescents and precedes real self-esteem or dignity.
5. Self-actualization needs - realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences. A desire “to become everything one is capable of becoming” (Maslow, 1987, p. 64).”

In the article *Parenting Behaviors That Shape Childhood Compliance*, Gardner, Melendez-Towns, Knerr, and Overbeek analyze parenting techniques to determine which behaviors effectively shaped child compliance and promote socially acceptable behaviors. Current research on parent-child relationships are centered on correlational research and evaluations using fully packaged interventions. These interventions do not isolate individual behaviors or techniques that lead to improved childhood compliance. Researchers systematically reviewed parent-child relational journals and literature as well as conducted interviews with experts in the childhood behavioral field. After many studies were reviewed, 19 studies on four distinctive parenting behaviors were analyzed. These behaviors are praise, ignore, verbal reprimands, and time-out.

Researchers observed whether any of these four parenting behaviors increased compliance or if it had any effect on the children’s behaviors. Parents involved in the study also self-reported changes in their children’s behaviors. Time-outs for disruptive or

noncompliant behaviors increased child compliance as reported through observations and parent-reported measures. When verbal reprimands and time-out techniques were combined, compliance was increased for longer periods of time. Praise was least effective at encouraging child compliance. Positive parenting practices are important for raising children. When parents have the proper, age-appropriate techniques to foster good behaviors, familial relationships are less stressed. Positive parenting education can effectively reduce problematic behaviors and attitudes among parents and children as well as reduce circumstances of abuse (Gardner et al., 2013).

YaeBin and Kim created a parenting needs assessment through their research of parents and young children in southern Nevada and discuss the results in their article *Parenting Needs as Perceived by Agency Personnel Working with Parents and Young Children in Southern Nevada*. These researchers have used a wide variety of data collection methods to gather information for parenting needs assessments. These methods include creating an advisory committee, survey questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews with agency staff members that work directly with parents and young children in Nevada. Through various interviews with child welfare agency personnel, researchers have identified three key areas of parental needs when raising children of their own or in foster care. These key needs are community resources, agency needs, and family support. Parents reported low familial support, such as respite care, ongoing childcare, and lack of stability, such as family traditions. According to agency personnel, parents expressed dismay at slow agency responses, especially when decisions on children's medical or educational care required immediate assistance. When agency personnel were not available, parents did not have information regarding community

resources available to them for educational, behavioral, and social support. YaeBin and Kim concludes these results are important to create and implement programs that assist parents of young children obtain the information necessary to make informed parenting decisions. Agencies can use the data collected in this research to create parenting education programs and improve agency relationships with parents and the community (YaeBin, Kim, 2014).

Even though new parents might have an increase in the amount of communication with their parents or in-laws following the birth of a child, the contact does not necessarily equate to emotional support. The study *Emotional Support from Parents and In-Laws: The Roles of Gender and Contact* analyzes whether the frequency of contact (as opposed to geographical distance) was perceived and received as emotional support from parents and in-laws. Additionally, this study examines associations of emotional support by gender. According to a recent study, couples' support systems tend to decrease after they become parents (Wrzus et al., 2013). New parents' primary support networks mainly consist of family members. Researchers found that both new mothers' and fathers' support networks shrink after having children, but the genders differ on how they adjust to the transition of parenthood.

Ninety-three parents were surveyed using an online questionnaire. All of the participants were heterosexual and cohabitating. All the parents were expecting their first children during the time of the survey and were college-educated. To complete the survey, couples had to report their household income. Most couples reported earning \$60,000 per year. Researchers measured contact by how many times participants engaged in communication with their parents or in-laws during a four-week period.

Face-to face visits, phone calls, or emails are considered contact for this study. Based on the data collected from the questionnaire, new mothers perceived the increase in communication as emotional support. New fathers did not associate having more family contact with emotional support. Researchers concluded both genders need emotional support, especially during the transition to parenthood, and should receive support based on their needs. This study also emphasizes the importance of men receiving emotional support from their families and support networks to reduce stigmas about the emotional needs of men. For new parents to adjust to and handle stressful situations, they must have reliable sources of support. This also encourages healthy parenting practices (Chong et al., 2017).

Many Americans state their participation in religious congregations is an important aspect of their lives. According to a Gallop poll, half of Americans reported being part of a church or synagogue. Regardless of religion, research shows most Americans value being in a community of people that share their values and belief systems (Lugo & Cooperman, 2012). The purpose of the study *Increased Congregational Support for Parents of Children with Cystic Fibrosis* by Szczesniak et al. (2015) was to determine if parents of children with cystic fibrosis received more support from congregations than parents of children who do not have medical concerns. Additionally, researchers sought to understand how parents of children with medical concerns used the support given by congregations as a coping technique.

Data was collected from 141 parents of children who were diagnosed with cystic fibrosis. The participants reported their information to two academic pediatric health centers, one in the South and one in the Midwest. The participants had children between

the ages of three months and 13 years old. The research for this article concludes the need for congregational support for parents of children with chronic disease. Parents of children with CF reported higher levels of emotional support. Emotional support from congregations strengthened parents' ability to feel connected to a support system and community. This was especially true when parents could not participate in congregational weekly gatherings due to taking care of their child's medical needs. Increased support helped parents reframe their way of thinking. Participants who received support from their congregations felt regularly reminded that their life was a part of a bigger picture, which reduced the occurrences of depression.

Based on the results of the study, congregations should consider how they can create an atmosphere that is emotionally safe for parents with children with chronic illnesses. In addition to providing help as needed for these parents, the authors of this study believe it is important for spiritual leaders to incorporate spiritual lessons about illness to encourage parents (Szczesniak et al., 2015).

Lange, Dau. Goldblum, Alfano, and Smith conducted a study called *A Mixed Methods Investigation of the Experience of Poverty Among a Population of Low-Income Parenting Women*. In it, they examine how poverty affected parenting amongst low-income women. Mothers who participated in this study described the stress of parenting due to lack of resources. In order to carry out the study, a group of mothers trained in research methods conducted surveys to mothers in specific community settings.

Women living in poverty stated they faced difficulties obtaining basic needs, including financial support, adequate and safe housing, gainful employment opportunities, and reliable transportation. These obstacles affected their physical and

mental health. According to the results of this study, a correlation exists between a mother's ability to meet her basic needs and the quality of her parenting. The author suggests implementing parenting programs in the community that focus on early childhood development while teaching effective parenting techniques. These techniques should include coping strategies during stressful times. The authors also believe it would be beneficial to include strategies to lift parents out of poverty as a part of parenting education (Lange et al., 2017).

In the study *Looking for Solutions: Gender Differences in Relationship and Parenting Challenges: Among Low-Income, Young Parents*, Albritton, Angley, Grandelski, Hansen, and Kershaw discuss how low-income families would greatly benefit from parenting and relationship strengthening programs. Minority low-income families face high rates of relationship dissolution due to the stress of poverty and parental and relational burdens. Researchers collected data from four focus groups—all of which were made up of young parents. The data from these focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed. Three major themes emerged from the data collected from these focus groups. The themes identified were relational and parenting challenges, values, and areas of need. Men and women had similar values and high regard for honesty, trust, and communication in relationships. Both genders also indicated the need of improving communication and the lasting effects of negative relationships on their current relationships. Women in this study stated their parenting challenges were unbalanced parenting, child safety, and feeling unprepared to parent. Men stated their parental challenges revolved around finances (Albritton et al., 2014).

Research Question and Hypothesis

Based on the review of the literature, one research question was formulated: What perceived impact can emotional intelligence training (IV) have on how licensed foster parents treat children in their homes (DV)? The hypothesis is that If states offered emotional intelligence training for foster parents, then foster parents believe their parenting skills would improve.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

As children, we learn that if we want answers to questions, we need to collect and analyze data. Children are often guilty of asking too many questions. Children are phenomenal beings of curiosity (Feldman, 2008). Most adults can remember thinking, “What happens if I stick my hand in the fire?” Or “Can I fly like Superman if I jump?” The section of the research termed “methodology” is intended to show the steps taken to address the research question and the hypotheses. If the research is to be duplicated following the step-by-step approach I set forth, it should arrive at a replication of the study. As stated in Chapter I, the purpose of this study is to ascertain if providing emotional intelligence training to foster parents would make a significant impact on how effective foster parents view their parenting skills, the foster children view their parenting skills, and others who are associated with them view their parenting skills. This chapter will consist of sections discussing research design, research questions and hypotheses, setting and sample, data collection, data analysis, and conclusion.

Research Design

“As a research method, the case study is used in many situations, to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group organizational, social, political and related phenomena” (Yin, 2014). For case study research to be used with this type of research question, there needs to be a more defined focus to the case study. When case study research questions are focused on the “how” or “what,” then it is suggested that exploratory case study research be conducted.

Exploratory research, also known as grounded theory approach or interpretive research, seeks to explore a problem which is loosely defined or correlated. Exploratory case studies are used to show additional investigation is necessary and is usually a precursor to a large-scale research project. (Yin, 2014) The goal of this type of research is to have a better understanding of an existing problem. This research does not provide conclusive results; however, it identifies issues for future research. Exploratory research is generally carried out when research is in a preliminary stage. It answers the questions of what, why, and how. Some problems or topics need to be understood in depth. If research has not been conducted around an issue, exploratory research allows researchers to explore the problem without deriving a conclusion and set a foundation for future research. (Yin, 2014) This research study is appropriate for a case study because the impact of emotional intelligence training on foster parents has not been studied to the researchers knowledge and the results of this study can be used to apply to other cases and context (Creswell, 2014).

There are two methods researchers can use to gather information on a topic that has little current or available research. Researchers can use primary or secondary research methods to conduct research. Primary research methods contain information obtained directly from the subject. This method requires an in-depth study and is used to investigate a certain problem. Examples of primary research methods include surveys or polls, interviews, focus groups, and observations. Primary research methods can include an individual or groups of people. Researchers may conduct primary research methods themselves or they can employ a third party to administer the survey, observations or polls for the purposes of the study. (Gratton & Jones, 2010)

Secondary research methods require gathering information from previously published research. Researcher can collect information from published case studies or research, books, journal articles, etc. (Barling & Kelloway, 2000).

There are a few characteristics of exploratory research. This method of research is generally interactive, open-ended, and is often unstructured. Exploratory research typically is done when there is little to no prior research done on a specific topic or problem. Both qualitative and quantitative research are used for this type of study. (Yin, 2014)

Exploratory research provides a lot of advantages for researchers. Researchers have plenty of flexibility of research is conducted and can adapt to changes if new data is presented. The overall cost of conducting exploratory research is generally low. The overall goal of exploratory case studies is “to develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further study” (Yin, 2014). Also, case study was selected as the methodology due to the low chance of the participant behaviors being manipulated. Additionally, case studies attempt to come to a decision or a set of decisions about a given phenomenon, i.e., can emotional intelligence training help parents be better parents. When preparing for the case study, Yin points out five attributes that are needed for a case study:

1. Ask good questions.
2. Be a good listener.
3. Stay adaptive.
4. Have a firm grasp of the issues being studied.
5. Avoid biases.

After preparation, a case study protocol will be established with an overview of the study, how I will collect data, the questions that I will be asking, who the target audience is, and what outcome I am looking for.

A case study protocol is an official document outlining the procedures and guidelines used in data collection for case studies and research (Denzin, 2000). While case studies can vary on length and purpose, most include the same components.

Developing a protocol provides a framework of proper conduct of the researcher's work.

According to Denzin, the list below are components of case study protocol:

- a. Purpose and Need/Justification for case study
 - i.Explanation of the subject or topic of interest
 - ii.Research questions/problem areas
- b. Design /Methods of research
- c. Data collection
 - i.Methods
 - ii.Interviews
- d. Analysis of data collection
 - i.Link analysis to them or purpose of research topic
 - ii.Case perspective and cross-case comparison
 - iii.Disciplinary view

Below are the four sections of a case study protocol:

- Introduction—This section briefly explains the scope and purpose of the study. The introduction should describe the significance of the research problem and why the case study is relevant to addressing the problem.

- Literature Review/Background—The literature review provides background information and historical interpretation of context surrounding the research topic. This section should summarize relevant research and present a full understanding of the topic. Literature reviews would also demonstrate the link between current published research and the justification for additional research.
- The Presentation of Findings—After data is collected and analyzed, the case study's results should be included in this section, the researcher should describe what was learned from the results of the case study and how the results answered the questions or problems presented in the introduction.
- Conclusion—The final section should conclude the research. In case studies, the researcher's goal is not to solve the problem, but to offer possible solutions or suggestions for further research. (Denzin, 2000).

All case studies should be logical and omit opinions and assumptions pertaining to observations for research. For research to be accurate, it must be inclusive. All data and findings should be reported in research, regardless of the researcher's perceived significance or lack thereof. Personal beliefs and perspectives are not permitted to influence research findings. Lastly, case studies should be thorough and well-documented. Observations and interviews should include as much details as possible. (Denzin, 2000).

The strength of using a qualitative framework to study this topic is the ability to draw from the participant's lived experiences. Lived experiences allows researchers to derive meaning from the experiences of others. Additionally, researchers can understand

the effects of scientific research or experiences on individuals. Researchers can obtain the lived experiences of individuals by using a variety of approaches. Experiences are usually explored through unstructured, open-ended, and conversational interviews or surveys. Researchers can also observe behaviors in specific environments. Interview or observation participants must meet the qualification that are specific to the purpose of the study. When participants are observed or interviewed, it is important not to focus on or expect explanations of behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. “Why” questions may cause participants to feel defensive or alter their answers. One of the goals of researching lived experiences is to focus on the meaning of an experience in the context in which it was experienced.

Researchers follow the guidelines below in order to conduct accurate lived experiences research:

1. Planning is the first step of completing qualitative research. Researchers should plan research questions, resources, and outlines before embarking on interviews, observations, or surveys.
2. The second step is getting involved. Researchers must use humans in real-life settings when conducting qualitative research. Therefore, researchers must have proper access to subjects in the environment most conducive to the study.
3. The third step is observing and learning the subjects involved in the study. Some observations do not require researchers to reveal themselves. Other research can be completed through interviews, observing ongoing interactions between individuals in the setting being studied, or record communications.

4. Analyzing data is the fourth guideline. There are many methods of examining data. The most effective method is dependent on the goal of the research and the topic of study. During the planning process, researchers should determine the most efficient method to analyze data.
5. The final step is sharing the results of the study. All results should be thorough and accurate. (Polkinghorne, D.E., 2005)

My Case Study Protocol

My case study protocol is built using the design from Norman Denzin's case study protocol outline in *The Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2000). It encompasses the justification, the design, the collection method and the data analysis.

Justification for Case Study

This study seeks to ascertain if foster parents believe providing emotional intelligence training to foster parents will make a significant impact in how effective foster parents, foster children, and others associated with them view their parenting skills.

Design

This case study will allow for foster parents to be studied in a small or large group setting. Additionally, it assists in the investigation into whether emotional intelligence training can be helpful for foster parents. There are several types of qualitative research methods. The most common are experiment, survey, archival analysis, history, and case study. Each is based on the type of research question that is asked. Since the research question is, "What perceived impact can emotional intelligence training (IV) have on how licensed foster parents treat children in their homes (DV)?" case study research will be used.

Data Collection

The goal for the data collection is to develop a theory that emotional intelligence training is needed for foster parents. The data was collected using surveys. The survey given was to see how the participants feel about the status quo and their need for developing emotional intelligence to aid them in their parenting of foster children.

During the survey process, there were 10 questions asked:

Table 1

Questionnaire

Are you currently or within 3 years been a licensed foster parent?		
Yes	No	
Which state are you or where you licensed in?		
North Carolina	South Carolina	Other
What is your gender?	Male	Female
What is your age range?		
Many times, children in foster care cope with varying situations and new changes by becoming self-reliant and skeptical of new caregivers. Even when caregivers demonstrate the willingness and ability to provide for the needs of a child, their efforts are often met with reluctance and lack of trust. Research and observations suggest foster parents are fundamental in helping children change certain problematic behaviors. Additionally, previous research suggests emotional intelligence can be a significant factor in obtaining success in life. Emotional intelligence, unlike other abilities and characteristics, can be influenced and developed in individuals.		
Can Emotional Intelligence be developed in individuals?		
Yes	No	
On a scale from 1 to 10, rate how you perceive your need to improve your parenting skills?		
Very little	Some need	Very much

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Have you heard of the term “emotional intelligence,” and, if so, what was the source?
For Example: Friend, school, job etc.

Briefly describe what you think emotional intelligence is.

Emotional intelligence is about how individuals process their emotions in conjunction with thoughts and actions (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000)

On a scale from 1 to 10, rate how effective you believe emotional intelligence training could help you in parenting Foster Children?

Very little				Some need				Very much	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

In addition to the surveys, the researcher performed a document review of the Buncombe County Health and Human Services—Child Protective Services Division Foster Parent Manuel and the Moore County Department of Social Services Foster Parent Policy and Procedures Manuel.

Setting and Sample

The location in which I will be selecting participants is the Interstate 26 and Interstate 77 corridor in South Carolina. The backup will be North Carolina. I will be leveraging a Foster Parent Support Group called Foster to Flourish to gather most of my participants. Foster to Flourish was started to provide encouragement, healthy connections, and parenting resources for foster parents. The goals of the group are to enhance foster parents’ abilities to be transformational in the lives of the children they serve and become an integral part of their development. Well-informed, prepared, and

motivated foster parents face less burn outs and can positively contribute to the goals set forth by DSS.

The group began as a small meet up of ten individuals who were interested in providing mutual support as foster parents in Charleston, SC. An online community was established to share resources, positivity, and continued connections with foster parents who were interested in attending meetings but were unable to due to other obligations. The group meets monthly in a local library meeting room. Each month, there is a specific topic discussed and is centered around various aspects of parenting. Some of the topics explored in the meetings include behavior management techniques, coping with placement/adoption disruptions, adjusting to new placements or reunifications as well as learning proper ways to navigate the foster care system. Guest speakers, such as child psychologist, social workers, and nurses provide their professional advice that are supplemental to other foster parent training. Attendance to monthly meetings varies. However, there are a minimum of 30 members who attend monthly meetings in Charleston, SC and 37 members who have attended meetings in Charlotte, NC. There is a total of 204 members in the online community who interact regularly on the Facebook group. According to a Post and Courier article, there are fewer than 3,200 foster families in the state of South Carolina. Using this group was ideal for conducting an emotional intelligence study due to the number of regular participants and their consistent efforts to improve their foster parenting abilities. The members of the group represent a wide variety of ages, educational backgrounds, and parenting experiences that would make their feedback valuable.

A study like this has not been done in the United States, therefore I chose these two states due to the proximity to where I live making the logistics of conducting the study much easier. As of August 2018, there were 2,684 foster families in South Carolina (Caretofoster.org, 2019). The participants/population sample would be foster parents willing to participate for free. The aim is to get a sample size of 30 foster parents. I will use a power analysis to determine exactly how many participants I would need for the research. For any additional participant need, I will recruit at the social services offices and have case workers brief this when they come to foster parents' homes.

The data about the population would be described using age, gender, race, and education level. The data from the surveys and the population will be measured using the mean measurement of central tendency to help better make sense of the data and draw better conclusions. The plan is to correlate emotional intelligence and parenting skills with emotional intelligence and satisfaction. The reason is to see if the data can display that emotional intelligence can be useful in helping to retain good foster parents while also making foster parents more empathetic and sympathetic to some of the challenges the foster children may be experiencing.

Data Analysis

After the surveys were completed, all the scores were measured, and the data analyzed. This study used a pattern-matching logic to analyze the data collected from the surveys and interviews. The researcher will analyze the data using the independent variable and the dependent variable.

The tentative outline is:

1. Select survey participants

2. Conduct surveys
3. Two weeks to organize data
4. Analyze results

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research question is, “What perceived impact can emotional intelligence training (IV) have on how licensed foster parents treat children in their homes (DV)?” The hypothesis is, “If states offered emotional intelligence training for foster parents, then foster parents’ believe their parenting skills would improve.” This research will focus on determining if emotional intelligence training would be effective in building a better foster parent.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed research design, research questions and hypotheses, setting and sample, data collection and conclusion. The mixed method study uses correlation, regression and case study to examine if providing emotional intelligence training will positively or negatively impact the effectiveness of foster parents in the home. This chapter discussed the layout on how data will be collected and analyzed and what population will be researched.

Chapter Four: Findings and Results

Introduction

This study sought to ascertain if providing emotional intelligence training to foster care parents can make a significant impact on how effective their parenting skills are with their foster children. The question that guided this research was “What perceived impact can emotional intelligence training (IV) have on how licensed foster parents treat children in their homes (DV)?”

In this chapter, the researcher presented the findings from the analysis of the data collected. The findings described what was learned from the results of the surveys collected and how the results can address the problems presented in the introductory chapter. Additionally, the results correlated to the development of a shell emotional intelligence training program. Here were the problems:

1. Foster parents have good intentions but often lack training on how to be effective foster parents.
2. Foster parents are expected to meet the needs of the children expertly and without fail.
3. Emotional intelligence training has not been explored as a viable way to train parents to cope with the stresses of being foster parents.

The researcher wanted to obtain the data from qualified foster parents only. If the foster parents were within 3 years of their last licensure, that provided a stronger case for the conclusion based on how recent the foster parents were trained. The following are the results from the researcher asking how current they were on their licensing:

Are you currently or within 3 years been a licensed foster parent?

Sixty-six (98.5%) of the 67 responders said they were currently licensed foster parents in NC or SC (table 1; Figure 2).

Figure 2

Licensed

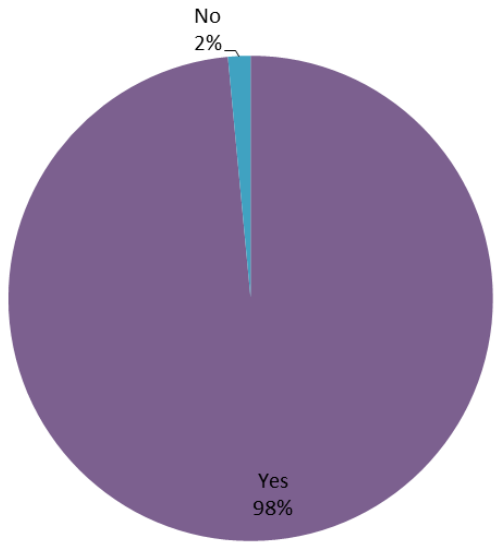


Table 2

Count/percent

Value	Percent	Count
Yes	98.5%	66
No	1.5%	1
Totals		67

Additionally, the data indicated that there are more foster children in SC alone than licensed foster homes.

Foster Homes vs. Number of Children in State Custody:

The South Carolina department of social services needs hundreds more foster homes to meet the state’s need. Even if the state had one foster home for every

child in state custody, an agency spokeswoman explained it wouldn't be enough because some foster families only sign up to take in children of a certain age (infants, for example) and other families aren't able to accept children at all times. (Lockett, 2020)

Table 3

Foster Homes, Children in State Custody (Lockett, 2020)

Year	Foster homes	Children in state custody
2017	2921	4126
2018	3080	4518
2019	3138	4584

This is important because it shows that foster system may be prioritizing finding more foster parents than taking the steps to retain the current ones.

Setting

The participants were part of a group called Foster to Flourish. They represent a small group of foster parents who seek to improve all the conditions of being a foster parent. There were not any changes of note that influenced the participants or their experience taking the survey at the time of study. Many were excited to take part in a research study that could potentially help them parent their foster children successfully. The researcher experienced some logistical challenges on getting the foster parents together. It took longer for the groups to meet due to changes in the environment such as COVID-19 and due the fact that the initial plan was to get the foster parents together in a group setting in order to administer the survey. This proved to be exceedingly difficult, so the decision was made to change the survey medium to surveygizmo.com.

Data Collection

The survey was given once, limited to only one response per person and was open from January 27, 2020 to February 28, 2020. The data was recorded using surveygizmo.com. There were no survey variations in the data collection process that differed from the plan presented in Chapter 3. Additionally, there were not any unusual circumstances encountered in the process of data collection. 86.4% were from the state of North Carolina and 13.6% were from the state of South Carolina.

Table 4

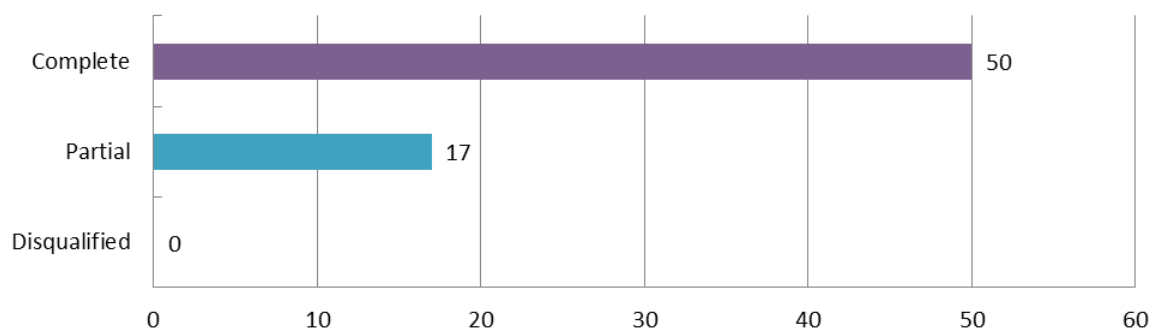
State Origin

State	Percent	Count
North Carolina	86.6%	58
South Carolina	13.4%	9
	Totals	67

Sixty-six foster parents at least partially filled out the survey with 50 of the 67 fully completing it.

Figure 3

Survey response rate



Demographics

The demographics of the study participants consisted of the following and are depicted in figures 1.0, 1.1 and 1.2. In the figures, the data displays that 97% of participants were female and 3% or participants were male. Additionally, 43.9% were age 36-45, 28.8% were age 26-35 and 22.7% were age 46-55.

Figure 4

Sex

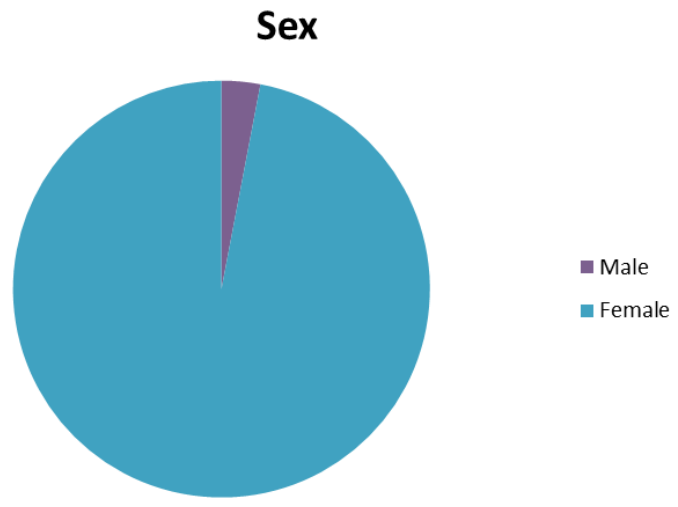
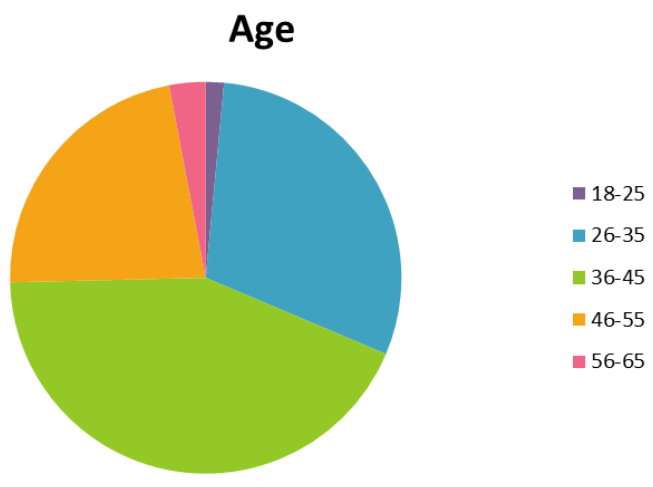


Figure 5

Age



The demographics of the children are equally as important as the foster parents. In 2015, the Fostering the Family organization completed a comprehensive analysis of the number of children in foster care, their average length of time, the demographics, and the gender of the children.

Children are placed in foster care when a child protective services worker and court have determined it is not safe for them to remain home. Displacement from their family and disruption of their usual routine and familiar surroundings is traumatizing for many children. Children in foster care need strong relationships with caring adults, a network of social support, and services to cope with the challenging circumstances of home removal. Children who are older, are a racial or ethnic minority, have special needs, or suffer from a behavioral or mental disorder are more likely to experience multiple foster care placements and stay in care longer. Young people who “age out” of foster care (instead of returning home or being adopted) may face challenges to making a successful transition to adulthood. (Fosteringthefamily, 2020)

These are the breakdowns of the children in foster care:

Table 5

Children in Foster Care

Children in foster care (2015)	SC	US
Number of children in foster care ¹	3,726	427,901
Foster care rate per 1,000 ²	3	4
Number of children who entered foster care ³	3,644	269,499
Average length of time in foster care ⁴	18 months	20 months
Percent of children in foster care for 5 or more years	5%	6%

It is important to note the number of children in foster care as it influences the questions asked to the participants and the answers that they gave. The number of children in foster care drives the number of foster homes that a state requires. Additionally, the more the disparity of foster children to foster parents—the greater the pressure on the foster parents to take more children in their home.

Table 6

Gender

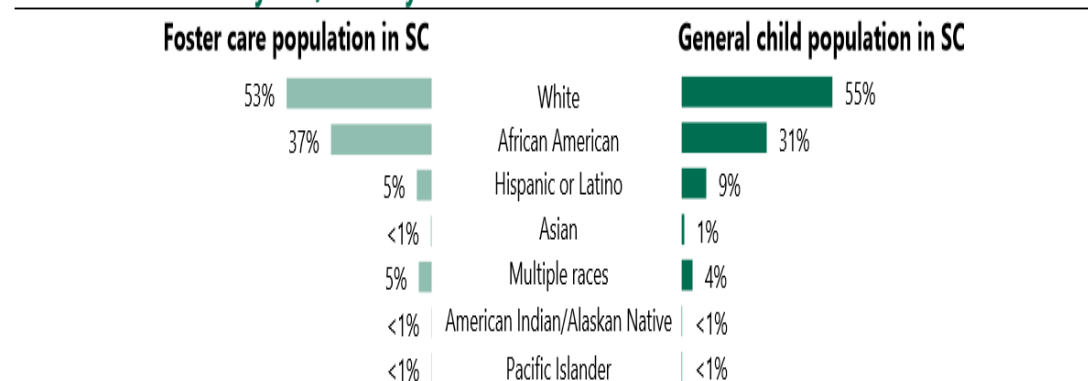
Gender of Children in Foster Care		
Male	52%	52%
Female	48%	48%

The gender of the child is significant. Case workers like to place boys in foster homes with men and girls in foster homes with women.

Figure 6

Case Load

Foster care caseload by race/ethnicity⁶



The race and ethnicity of the children allow for the states to recognize the gaps in foster parents. African American children make up 31% of the population but African American children make up 37% of the foster care population. (Fosteringthefamily.org,

2020) This shows the state that they need to make an emphasis on recruiting more African American foster parents.

The following is the analysis of the data collected.

Data Analysis

To better analyze the data, the responses were read and organized into three themes as follows: (1) Evaluating the foster parent's previous knowledge of emotional intelligence, (2) Foster parents assessed their own need to improve their parenting skills, and (3) The application of Emotional Intelligence to improve foster parenting skills. The thematic analysis strategy involved taking notes in the margins while the researcher read the responses and was supported by survey gizmo's analysis charts, graphs and organized responses.

The objective of the themes is to organize participant's written/typed responses into broad descriptive categories:

Theme
Evaluating the foster parent's previous knowledge of emotional intelligence
Foster parents assessed their own need to improve their parenting skills
The application of Emotional Intelligence to improve foster parenting skills

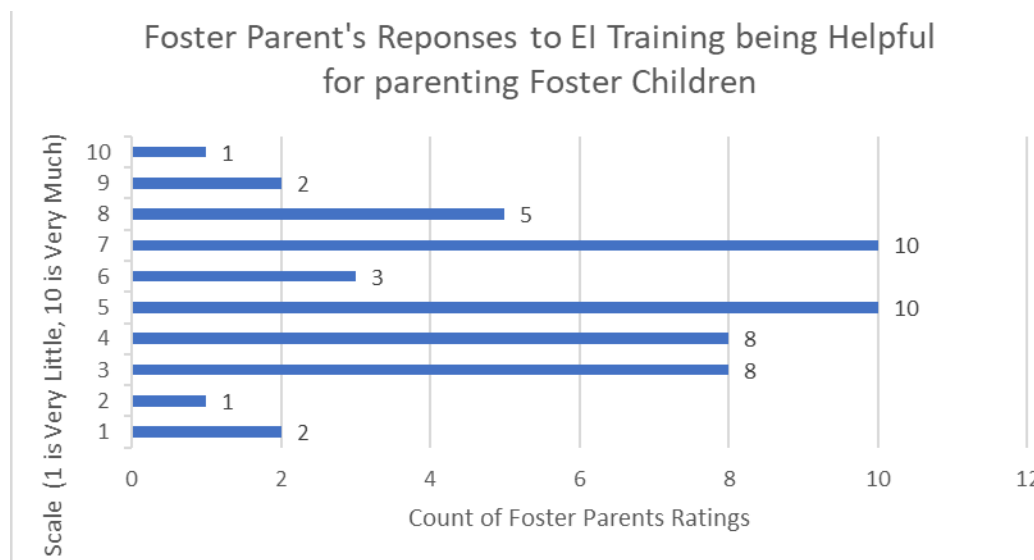
Theme 1: Evaluating the foster parent's previous knowledge of emotional intelligence

It was important to assess if the foster parents had any previous knowledge of emotional intelligence so that a baseline could be established. Because of the foster parents' range in education and training levels, the researcher deemed that needing to know their familiarity to the topic important. 50 participants stated that prior to the

survey they had previous experience with the term emotional intelligence. It is important to note that the researcher was not able to assess what impact that the foster parents who had previous knowledge of emotional intelligence would have on the rest of the survey questions. Question 5 on the survey was the question used to evaluate if the foster parent participants had any previous knowledge of emotional intelligence. Of the 50 participants, training, school, personal reading, or a therapist were the main sources of their learning about Emotional Intelligence. Many felt that they were not sure where they learned about it, but they acknowledged that it is widely used in their learning. 11 participants stated that they had not heard of the term emotional intelligence prior to taking the survey. This equated to 16.5% of the research participants.

Theme 2: Foster parents assessed their own need to improve their parenting skills

As a leader, it is important to be reflective and consider improvements to your skills even if those skills are the reason for your success. The foster parents in the research group were asked to reflect on their capabilities and consider improvements to their parenting skills. The foster parents were asked to rate themselves on how effective they believed emotional intelligence training could help them in parenting Foster Children on a scale from 1 to 10 (with 1 being no improvement and 10 definitely need improvement). 50 foster parents assessed the need to improve their parenting style and the results were optimistic. 40 of 50 stated that they either need improvement or definitely need improvement. 9 of 50 stated that they were open to improvement. 1 of 50 stated that they did not need improvement at all. In Figure 3.0, we can conclude that most felt that they would consider improvement to their parenting skills or they needed improvement to their parenting skills.

Figure 7*Foster Parents Responses*

When asked the question, “On a scale from 1 to 10, rate how you perceive your need to improve your parenting skills” (with 1 being no improvement and 10 definitely needing improvement), 21 of 50 rated in the 4-6 range and 18 of 50 rated in the 7 to 10 range. A total of 39 of 50 responses recorded displayed a willingness to either improve or possibly seek improvement to their parenting skills. It is not easy to admit that as a parent you may need to improve your parenting skills. The researchers assumed many of the participants who decided to participate in the foster care system arguably believe they already have exceptional parenting skill. As shown in figure 7, it is important for foster parent candidates to be reflective and consider improving their parenting skills to be successful with their foster children.

Theme 3: The application of Emotional Intelligence to improve foster parenting skills

This theme allows the researcher to see if the foster parents in the research group think that emotional intelligence is a way to help them improve in the parenting skills. Questions 6, 7 and 10 were used to evaluate the findings in this theme. The results were encouraging. Overall, 49 of 50 foster parents agreed that emotional intelligence can be developed in individuals.

Figure 8

EI Development

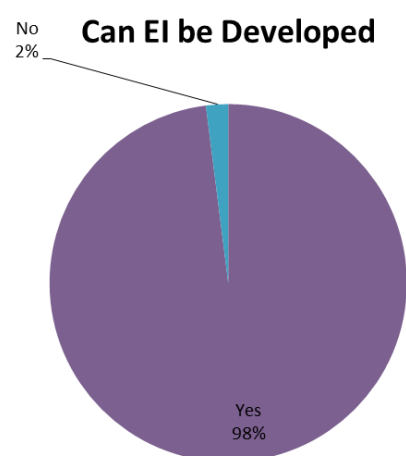


Table 7

Yes or No EI

Value	Percent	Count
Yes	98.0%	49
No	2.0%	1
Totals		50

When asked what the foster parents knew of emotional intelligence, their answers differed but settled into four main constructs in Emotional Intelligence Theory: self-

awareness, managing emotions, being aware of the emotional needs of others, and a person's ability to express their emotions (Goleman, 1994).

1. "Self-awareness is the state or condition of being aware" (Dictionary.com, 2020)"
2. "Managing emotions is the ability to be open to feelings and to modulate them in oneself and others so as to promote personal understanding" (Larson, 2020).
3. A person is aware of the emotional needs of another when they can recognize and understand the emotions of another, and they understand the impact of those emotions on his or herself. Emotionally aware people learn quickly from their feelings and make the adjustments to mitigate the negative feelings while promoting the positive feelings. They can communicate their emotional well-being to other effectively and most importantly—are able to communicate the emotional well-being of another effectively. (Goleman, 1994)
4. A person's ability to express their emotions is measured through several ways. Many researchers have used the four-construct approach in the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT). The four constructs are Perceiving Emotions, Facilitating Thought, Understanding Emotions and Managing Emotions. (Mayer, 2002a)

Foster parents lack the support to be truly effective in parenting foster children.

The findings confirm what the literature in chapter 2 exposed: there is a gap that providing emotional intelligence training for foster parents—can fill. Let us use an

example from the United States Air Force. The Air Force places a priority on providing great leadership to the enlisted corps. Commissioned officers go through rigorous training for 4 years prior to becoming an officer (with a few exceptions). After an officer commissions, that officer has 10 to 20 more courses that range from weeks to years complete. The mindset of if you want something great—you must continuously invest in it. We can take this same approach to training foster parents. They are some the officers of the foster care system. They are on the front lines each day. They interact with the customer (foster children) several hundred more times than any other entity in the foster care system. Thus, it is important to training foster parents on an ongoing basis. But the training must be personal and relevant to them or retention will likely be low. The following is a training program that the research developed to assist an organization in the execution of an emotional intelligence training for foster parents.

Recommendation: Establish a Training program

The researcher built a shell Emotional Intelligence Training focused on active listening, identifying bias, exposing gaps in parenting skills that can be helped with additional training, AED and CPR, foster parents working with social workers to identify strategies with helping children, how the foster parent can get help for themselves.

Daniel Goleman structured his model of emotional intelligence into five domains:

1. Know your emotions
2. Manage your emotions
3. Motivate yourself
4. Recognize and understand other people's emotions
5. Manage relationships (others' emotions)

He further organized these domains into four quadrants:

1. Self-Awareness
2. Social Awareness
3. Self-Management
4. Relationship Management (Goleman, 1994)

Figure 9

Competencies (Riopel, 2020)

	Recognition	Regulation
Personal Competence	<p>Self-Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Self-confidence ✓ Awareness of your emotional state ✓ Recognizing how your behavior impacts others ✓ Paying attention to how others influence your emotional state 	<p>Self-Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Getting along well with others ✓ Handling conflict effectively ✓ Clearly expressing ideas and information ✓ Using sensitivity to another person's feelings (empathy) to manage interactions successfully
Social Competence	<p>Social Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Picking up on the mood in the room ✓ Caring what others are going through ✓ Hearing what the other person is "really" saying 	<p>Relationship Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Getting along well with others ✓ Handling conflict effectively ✓ Clearly expressing ideas/information ✓ Using sensitivity to another person's feelings (empathy) to manage interactions successfully

Training foster parents on active listening is focused on the quadrants of relationship management, self-management, and the domains of recognize and understand other people's emotions and manage relationships. Identifying bias is focused on the quadrant of social awareness, self-awareness, and the domain of know your emotions. Training in exposing gaps in parenting skills is focused on the quadrants of

self-management and self-awareness. Foster parents working with social workers is focused on the quadrant of relationship management. The following is the training proposal.

Active Listening Section

Training Narrative. Active listening was selected after seeing a correlation between the responses of the participants and use of the social awareness lens in Daniel Goleman's cultural sensitivity chart. Many have experiences that influenced them to feel unheard after they explained their opinions on something important. Many can remember the frustration, resentment, or disappointment experienced when they hoped their words would be met with understanding and thoughtfulness. Active listening is one of the most effective ways to establish trust amongst others and demonstrates a high level of maturity and empathy. (Burley-Allen, 1995) This skill expresses a person's desire to be understanding, supportive, and sincerely comprehend the true essence of what is being said. Active listening involves more than just passively hearing what someone is saying. When a person is actively listening, they are fully concentrating on what is being said, using positive body language and other engaging nonverbal communication. Most importantly, active listening is allowing the speaker to have space to say what they need to say without offering advice or judgment. (Burley-Allen, 1995)

Within the system of foster care, several people make decisions on behalf of foster children. Foster children cannot decide where they will live, for how long, when and where they can visit their parents and biological family members, and other important details of their life. Thus, it is imperative that foster parents practice active listening with the children in your care. The children need to have an advocate that can

assist decision makers in placing them in the best possible situation. Active listening is a great tool to help the children feel accepted, valued, and heard. It can be healing for them since many have experienced situations where they were not heard, or their thoughts and feelings were seemingly ignored. (Burley-Allen, 1995)

There are so many distractions that can keep people from listening effectively. When the to-do list is longer than the hours left in the day or there are competing work and household obligations, it is easy to overlook the true value of listening and the bonding and other benefits it can have on everyone.

The following is a question that will be asked of the training audience: What are some things that make active listening difficult?

Here are some possible guiding answers the trainer can use to facilitate Q & A:

- Not knowing what follow up questions to ask
- Having our own agendas and ideas about the situation.
- Wanting to control or influence an outcome
- Wanting to solve the problem or give advice because we do not like to see others experience negative or painful feelings
- It can be difficult separating our feelings from theirs
- We may have a lot of things going on in our minds and may not want to make time to attentively listen to others
- We have not experienced active listening for ourselves

Active Listening Scenarios

Example One: Sean (age 9) has been displaying anger toward everyone in the house. Recently, he has been making passive aggressive comments during dinner and is more withdrawn than normal. These behaviors have persisted for three weeks. Sean started behaving this way shortly after his case worker informed him of a delay in returning home to his biological family. You, as the foster parent, have asked on numerous occasions how he was feeling. Today, you are at home preparing for dinner, which is running late. You also must complete your quarterly report by the end of the night for your primary job. Later that day, Sean comes downstairs and sits on the chair. He says, "I do not understand why I can't go back home!". Which response would you realistically give? Which response is the most helpful? How do you think Sean would respond to each of these answers?

A) You will be able to go home when it is safe for you to do so. I must get dinner started and finish up with work. Did you finish your homework?

B) Sean, you seem disappointed that you cannot go home. It is understandable that you are upset about all of this.

C) Sean, I would love to talk to you about that, but I am a little busy right now.

Let me wrap up what I am doing, and I will come over to talk with you later.

The most helpful response would be B. When someone is expressing their feelings, they are desiring to be seen and heard. By acknowledging that it is understandable to be upset about something, Sean will eventually feel comfortable talking about his feelings in a safe, productive manner.

Example Two: Stacy (age 5) is upset because she thinks she was the only person that did not attend her classmate's birthday party. She is crying and will not come out of her room. Which response is the most helpful? How do you think Stacy would respond to each of these answers?

- A) Cameron did not attend the party as well. You were not the only person that did not go, so there is no need to feel bad. There are other parties coming up soon and I will make sure you get to go!
- B) I see you are upset because you feel left out.
- C) I am so upset that you did not go to that party. I am going to call your classmate's mother today to find out why you did not get approved to go.

The most helpful response would be "I see you are upset because you feel left out." By responding this way, you are validating her experiences and feelings. It may be untrue that she was the only person that did not attend the birthday party, but it is true that she feels left out and disconnected from her peers.

Example Three: Terra (age 14) does not want to go to school. After missing the bus for school, she declares she is not going back to that "stupid school" because it is boring. How should you respond to Terra? How do you think Terra would respond to each of these answers?

- A) Terra, you do not have a choice. You must go to school. If you are not ready in the next 10 minutes, I will call your case worker.
- B) School is important. If school is boring, I will set up a meeting with the guidance counselors and teachers to ask them to create more challenging/interesting work for you.

C) Terra, you seem to be unhappy at school because it is not interesting. School should be interesting.

The most helpful response would be answer C. Again, validating her feelings and experience can help her shift from complaining to problem solving.

Tips for Active Listening

1. Start from a place of being open. The point of active listening is to focus on what is being said (using empathy) rather than listening to offer advice, personal opinions, or judgements. Avoid interpreting a person's experience but ask clarifying questions to understand what is being said.
2. Use positive body language to show you are fully concentrating on what is being said. Positive body language includes sitting or standing in a neutral position, mirroring the speaker, and making eye contact.
3. Ask clarifying questions and summarize what you have heard when the speaker is done with their ideas.

Identifying Bias

Identifying bias was selected after seeing a correlation between the responses of the participants and use of the self-awareness lens in Daniel Goleman's cultural sensitivity chart. The harsh reality is everyone is bias. The uncomfortable truth is we all have thoughts and assumptions, sometimes unconsciously, that influence our interactions or lack thereof with people. Some common types of biases are flavors of food, travel destinations, colors, textures, choice of college or school, etc. One way to immediately see an example of biased thoughts is to announce your favorite football or basketball team. Watch how quickly you will be embraced or shunned for your preference!

The simplest definition of bias is preferencing one thing over another. The Community Relations Service (CRS) is an agency within the U.S. Justice Department that focuses on settling issues of bias and prejudice in communities around the nation. They define bias as attitudes, opinions, and understanding based on subconscious positive and negative stereotypes of others. (Burley-Allen, 1995) Explicit bias occurs when individuals are aware of their prejudice thoughts and feelings. (Burley-Allen, 1995) An individual posting racist or sexist comments on social media or making racially offensive comments to others is an example of explicit bias.

Outside of friendly competition, most people are not concerned about other's personal preferences. People are programmed to be biased. Social psychologists believe people have used their ability to make quick judgements to survive. (Burley-Allen, 1995) For example, early humans categorized others to distinguish an enemy from a friend. A normal part of human behavior is grouping people and things around us into categories and generalize about it. This basic human tendency sets the stage for biased thinking.

Biased thinking can be harmful when it is directed towards other people. It can derail our best intentions to building lasting and authentic relationships with people. Since admitting bias against others can lead to significant repercussions, most people choose to keep their true thoughts and feelings inward and not get the help they need to overcome this way of thinking. What are some ways we can identify bias within ourselves? Have you ever found yourself in any of these scenarios?

- You are having dinner at a restaurant. When you look to your right and notice an overweight person, your first thought is “that person should not be eating that much. They need to skip dessert and eat a salad.”

- There is a comedy special you are watching. The comedian is telling racially offensive jokes, but you laugh anyway because you find their statements somewhat true and funny.
- You are typically accepting of others' public displays of affection; however, you are uncomfortable when a gay couple is kissing in public. You do not have the same feelings when a heterosexual couple is displaying the same affection in public.

Ways to Overcome Biases

The first step in identifying bias is recognizing it. (Burley-Allen, 1995) Think about the thoughts that cross your mind when a social worker asks your family to care for child/sibling group that is different from your family.

Challenge yourself to be more friendly and approachable to people you perceive as different. Some examples would be:

- Talking to neighbors you would normally avoid
- Having lunch with co-workers that are different from you and is outside of your inner circle
- When a social worker is telling you about a biological family and their challenges, listen with empathy and try not to judge or assume anything about the family based on race.

Developed by psychologists at Harvard, University of Virginia, and University of Washington, "Project Implicit" is an online tool to identify implicit biases.

(<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html>)

Exposing Gaps in Parenting Skills

Exposing gaps was selected after seeing a correlation between the responses of the participants and reviewing it through the lens of human needs theory. The most efficient way to assess this during a training session is by administration of a questionnaire. By answering a series of questions, the participants will be able to see where they fall on their parenting skills.

Table 8

Exposing Gaps in Parenting Skills Questionnaire

Exposing Gaps in Parenting Skills Questionnaire	1- Strongly Disagree	2- Disagree	3- Somewhat Disagree	4- Somewhat Agree	5- Agree	6- Strongly Agree
I feel confident in my ability to meet the needs of the children placed in my care.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have the proper behavioral techniques to effectively encourage positive behaviors and minimize negative/destructive behaviors and patterns	1	2	3	4	5	6
When my child is displaying frustration/anger, I have strategies to help them cope and process their feelings in a healthy manner	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have strategies for self-care and relaxation	1	2	3	4	5	6
When I need help with behavioral problems, I can get in contact with a licensed professional to help with the situation in a timely manner	1	2	3	4	5	6
I know how to ask caseworkers essential questions to determine the needs of children in my care	1	2	3	4	5	6
The children in my care feel comfortable expressing their feelings to me in a respectful way	1	2	3	4	5	6
I know how to properly reward good and positive behaviors	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have healthy boundaries with others	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have coping strategies to handle disappointments and frustrations	1	2	3	4	5	6
When I need to express myself (needs, concerns, changes) to children in my care, I use healthy communication skills	1	2	3	4	5	6
The training I receive through protective services adequately meets my parental needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have several resources I can rely on for questions, support, and encouragement concerning parenting	1	2	3	4	5	6

The participants would count all their scores up and divide by 13.

Table 9*Score Range*

Score Range and Recommendations
1 - 2.9 Parenting Skills Development is Paramount
3.0 - 4.9 Strongly Consider Taking Parenting Skill Development Classes
5 - 6 Parent has Strong Parenting Skills but Continue to Build Those Skills!

Their scores will help show where their gaps are in their parenting skills and what to focus on.

Working with Social Workers to Identify Strategies with Helping Children

Like any other team, foster parents and social workers must effective work together to accomplish the same goals. Like other work dynamics, there are people that collaborate well together and others that are more challenging to manage. Oftentimes, both parties are overworked and overwhelmed. Having strategies in place can minimize frustrations and manage expectations.

One of the most important things a foster parent can do is keep good notes. Keeping notes is great because it allows foster parents to ask questions based on what they are currently observing and learning about the child. It can also serve as a tool for foster parents to highlight information that a social worker did not previously know about the child. If the foster parent discovers the child loves broccoli, is making improvements in Math after trying tutoring or is easily triggered by something, document it and let the social worker know. The more information concerning the child that is available, the more productive conversations and visits can be.

Another way foster parents can be proactive in establishing a productive relationship with social workers is asking for a list of agencies that advocate for children

and foster children. A great time to ask for this information is before an issue arises. Having a list of resources to support behavioral and emotional well-being, medical needs, educational support, and social activities will be beneficial for everyone. When possible, ask to attend court dates, care plan meetings and other meetings that relate to the welfare of the child. Being up to date can eliminate a lot of questions and delays in communication.

Waiting for a response from a case worker can be frustrating. Sometimes, the foster parent needs answers right away. As the foster parent, find out what is the best way to communicate with your case worker. Is texting better for urgent responses or sending an email? Ask what the best way is to get in touch with them. Also, ask how long it normally takes to get a response. If the normal response time is 24 hours, then you can know what to expect.

Try to make interactions as pleasant as possible. Just like foster parents, social workers can be overworked and overwhelmed with the workload they are balancing. Communicate well and ask for clarification on things that are not clear. It is important to be understanding and proactive in this work relationship. Express gratitude for their work and efforts to establish a better life for the foster children in their care.

Self-Care Strategies for Foster Parents

As a positive agent for change in the life of foster children, it is important that foster parents are balanced and healthy in every area of their lives. Navigating the foster care system and parenting is difficult, therefore having proper self-care strategies in place can greatly reduce stress. Here are some ways individuals can care for themselves as they care for others:

1. Physical self-care is accomplished through diet and exercise. Simple improvements, such as increasing water intake, taking a short walk, or joining a class at the gym can be beneficial for foster parents. It is a wonderful outlet to have time for yourself and let off some steam if necessary. People who work out can see improvements in their energy levels and sleep quality, which is always helpful while parenting. Maintaining a healthy diet is a vital component of self-care as well. Challenge yourself to add more vegetables to dishes or try a new recipe that is packed with proper nutrients. Feeding your body well will go a long way.
2. Psychological Self-Care is essential especially if there are underlying issues that can impact moods or daily functioning. If there are personal problems, such as anxiety, depression, or assistance with life adjustments—a licensed professional counselor would be beneficial. Additionally, learning coping strategies and other ways to overcome problems will be extremely helpful as you care for others.
3. Emotional Self-Care. Time is something that can get away from us when we are taking care of others. However, as a foster parent, try to reach out to a friend or family members once a week. Maintaining friendships can be rewarding and helps maintain a healthy sense of self. Journaling, date nights, or a night out with friends regularly are great ways to pour back into yourself.
4. Spiritual self-care is important and can reduce or prevent stress. Meditation, prayer, and practicing mindfulness are great tools to care for yourself. YouTube and phone apps have guided meditations, sermons, teachings, and

breathing exercises that are only a few minutes long and easy to do when your schedule is busy! Attending church or a spiritual service regularly helps with establishing and maintaining fellowship. It is a way to get and give encouragement and seek other support as well.

5. Workplace self-care includes taking breaks, delegating task when possible, and managing time effectively. As much as possible, avoid taking work home. Create a set cut off time!

What is the hardest day of the week? For some families, Mondays are dreaded. For others, Wednesdays are long and busy. Think back to your daily schedule. Are mornings chaotic and busy? Are evenings and nights difficult to manage? Write down some areas that can use a routine to make things run smoothly. For example, if mornings are hectic, create a plan to eliminate that stress. Pack bookbags, workbags, and lunches the night before to prevent looking for miscellaneous things on the morning. Lastly, write down some tasks during the day that are tough to get through. Could your weekends benefit from a schedule? Brainstorm some activities you and your family could do to make life easier.

CPR and AED Training

Knowing the skills to save a life will directly impact your emotional wellbeing. Here are the links to two videos on YouTube:

1. CPR and AED: CPR, AED & First Aid Training Webinar (2018) Free CPR Certification!
2. AED: Using an AED by American Red Cross
3. CPR: <https://youtu.be/hizBdM1Ob68>

These videos will enable a foster parent to be prepared if a dire situation emerges in your home.

Conclusion

Foster parents are expected to meet the needs of the children expertly and without fail. Emotional intelligence training has not been explored as a viable way to train parents to cope with the stresses of being foster parents. 67 foster parents were surveyed on how emotional intelligence could help develop and maintain needed parenting skills that are unique to fostering children. 98% of the participants stated that emotional intelligence can be developed in individuals and 78% of the participants displayed a willingness to either improve or possibly seek improvement to their parenting skills. Furthermore, 98% of the participants stated that they either need improvement, needing improvement or were open to improvement to their parenting skills. Thus, the findings support that foster parents seek to improve their parenting skills using emotional intelligence training. In Chapter V, we will interpret the findings from this chapter and design a emotional intelligence training program to assist foster parents in the skills they need to effectively parent foster children in their home.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Introduction

This study sought to ascertain if providing emotional intelligence training to foster parents will make a significant impact in how effective foster parents, foster children, and others associated with them view their parenting skills. In Chapter 4 it was concluded that:

- Foster parents want to improve their parenting skills
- While foster parents may have read about emotional intelligence, they do not have practice-based training in it
- Foster parents believe that emotional intelligence training will assist in helping them become more efficient foster parents

Connection from EI to CR

Foster parents deal with the management of conflicts in their homes daily. This research attempts to tie in how emotional intelligence training allows for the foster parent to become a more efficient conflict resolution practitioner within the home. Because each child brings so many different dynamics and challenges to the home, foster parents must be able to manage their own emotions first then assist in helping teach conflict resolution strategies to the child in their home. “A variety of techniques, including time-outs, reflection, exposure to effective models, planning/rehearsal, and role play can help individuals readily use such strategies when they are most needed—and, ironically, most difficult to access spontaneously—in efforts at effective conflict resolution” (Mischel et al., 2006).

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings expand the knowledge and scope of research about foster parents. To our knowledge, no study that looked at emotional intelligence training as a viable way to increase parenting skills for foster parents. This study examined the foster care system using systems theory and identified the key stake holders to the success of the children placed in foster homes. The researcher decided to examine foster parents due to their overall impact on the success of the foster children placed in their home. Additionally, there was a gap in the social science field, regarding the study of parenting skills for foster parents and this study sought to fill that gap. Lastly, foster parents provided all the data used to conclude on if an emotional intelligence training program would be helpful in assisting in parenting skill development.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study were rooted in what it was not able to explore. This study did not cover other important topics that concern a foster parent's ability to manage their emotions:

- Understanding the racial gap and identifying strategies to minimize its effects in the home
- Stereotyping
- High poverty rates among minority groups
- Inadequate housing and childcare
- Show compassion and empathy for the children and understand children need empathy and compassion

When these topics are related to the emotional intelligence of an individual as when they are exercised by the child or the foster parent—they can cause significant emotional distress. Additionally, this study did not explore other options for supporting foster parents. By focusing on emotional intelligence training, the researcher did not explore compensation, benefits, social-economic factors impacting foster parents and children or other ways to help promote more good parents becoming foster parents.

Implications

The researcher has developed an adaptable training program that seeks to fill the gaps noted by foster parents in North and South Carolina as a pressing need. Utilizing an emotional intelligence training program for foster parents can bring positive social change to the foster home. The potential impacts are generational. Each foster child that is positively impacted by a foster parent can have a multigenerational impact on their family and each person that they encounter. The research recommends that emotional intelligence training be utilized to train new and existing foster parents and be instituted in an ongoing basis across the country.

Recommendations

When implementing the proposed training program, the researcher suggests adding it to the state's established curriculum. The researcher assumes that each state does its best to establish a training curriculum that allows the foster parent to provide the best possible environment for the nourishment and safety of the children placed in their care. Thus, the researcher recommends that this proposed program be utilized using simulations, peer to peer feedback and conducted in a learning environment. Furthermore, if this research is to be expanded, the research highly recommends

incorporating interviews as a tool for data collection. Additionally, the researcher suggests the use of a pretest/posttest if another research decides to conduct training as part of their research study. After use of the pretest/posttest, the research recommends the use of triangulation with different foster care agencies for best tracking of data.

Final Remarks

In chapter I, the researcher noted the goal of foster care is to provide a temporary, safe, and nurturing environment until the child is reunified with their biological parents or an adoption occurs. The purpose of the study was to ascertain if providing emotional intelligence training to foster parents will make a significant impact in how effective foster parents, foster children, and others associated with them view their parenting skills. In chapter IV, the findings from the research clearly state that foster parents in North and South Carolina have determined that emotional intelligence training is lacking, will likely bridge the gap in their training and will help develop their parenting skills. The research has concluded that foster parents believe it is possible to see an increase in their parenting skills by utilizing emotional intelligence training. The emotional intelligence training program was designed to help foster parents positively deal with most emotional situations that could arise in the home as a result of being a foster parent.

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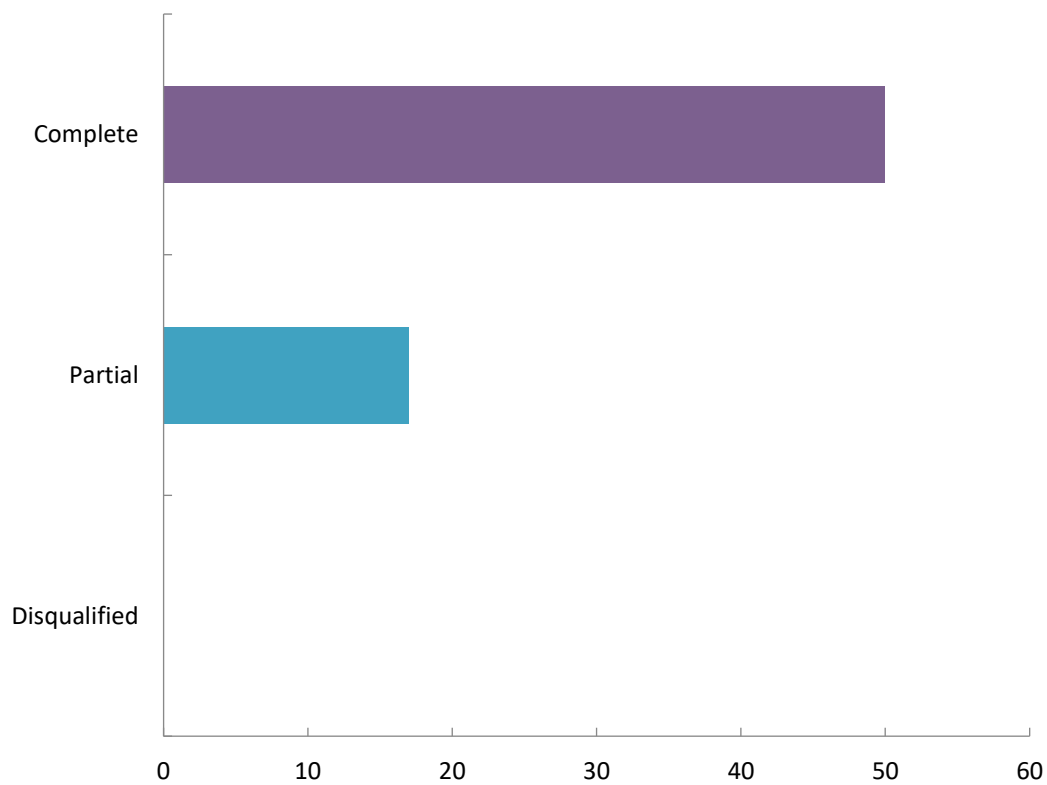
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Appendix A

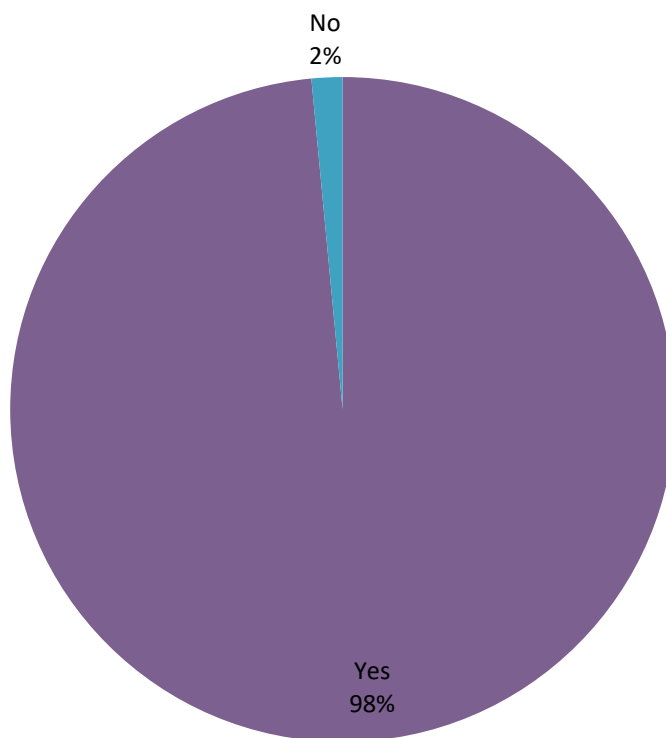
Report for Emotional Intelligence Survey

Emotional Intelligence Survey

Response Statistics

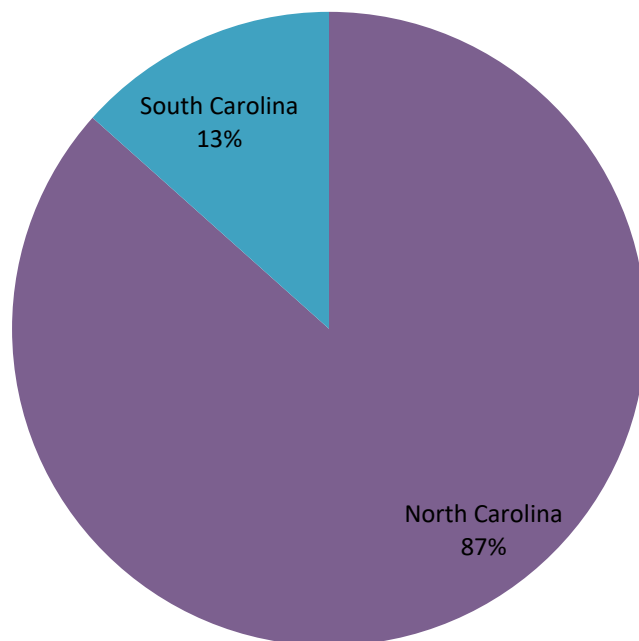
	Count	Percent
Complete	50	74.6
Partial	17	25.4
Disqualified	0	0
Totals	67	

1. Are you currently or within 3 years been a licensed foster parent?



Value	Percent	Count
Yes	98.5%	66
No	1.5%	1
	Totals	67

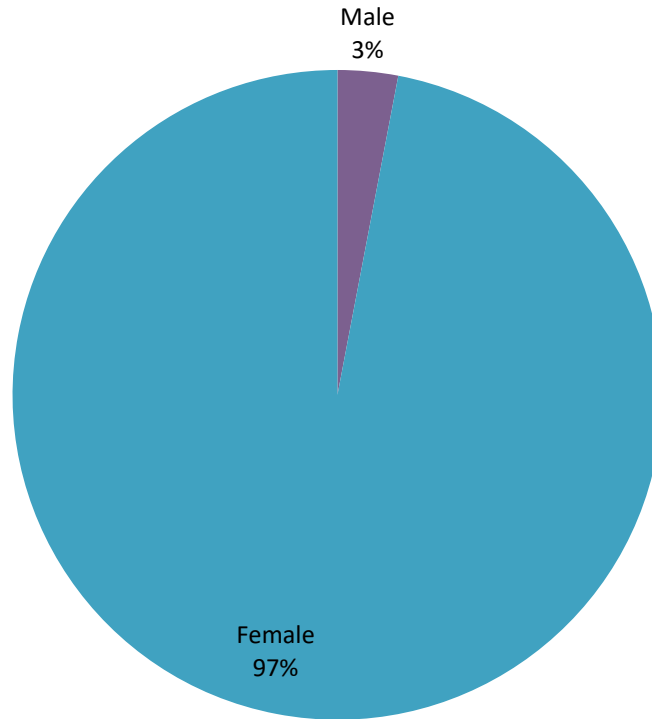
2. Which state are you or where you licensed in?



Value	Percent	Count	
North Carolina	86.6%	58	
South Carolina	13.4%	9	
	Totals	67	

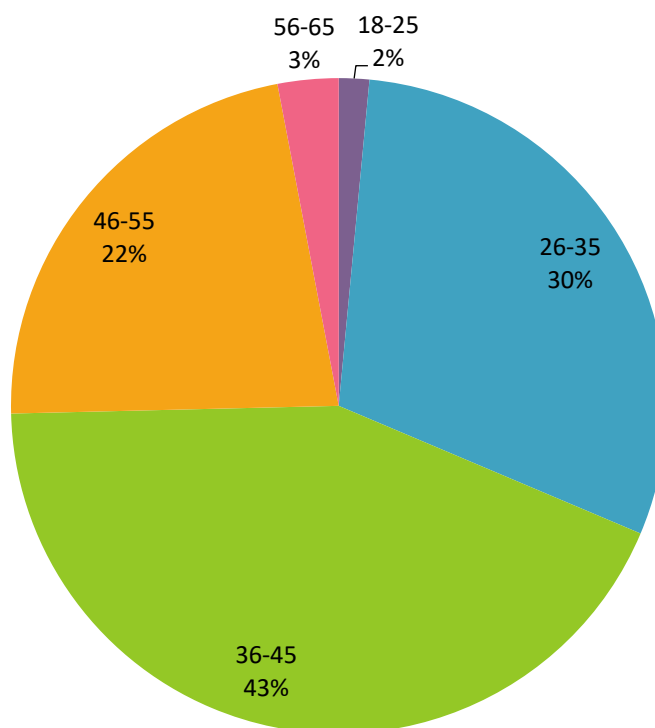
Other - Write In (Required)	Count
Totals	0

3. What is your gender?



Value	Percent	Count
Male	3.0%	2
Female	97.0%	65
	Totals	67

4. What is your age range?



Value	Percent	Count
18-25	1.5%	1
26-35	29.9%	20
36-45	43.3%	29
46-55	22.4%	15
56-65	3.0%	2
	Totals	67

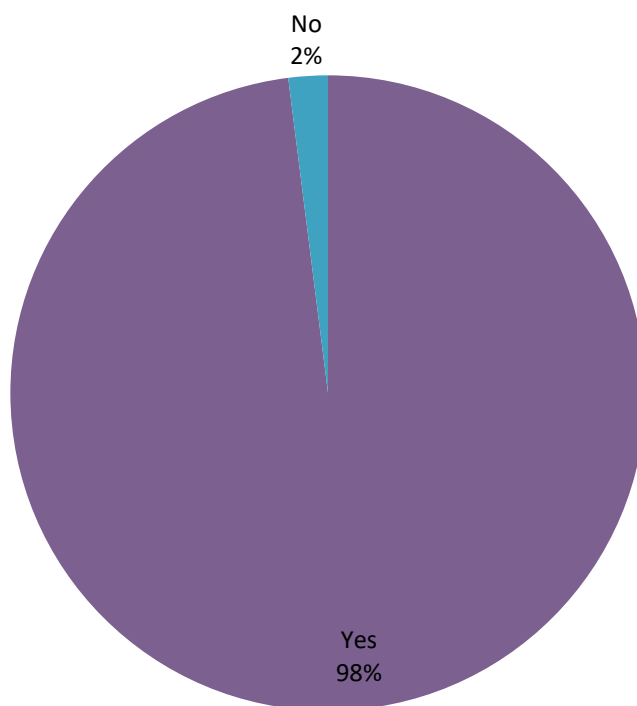
5. Have you heard of the term “emotional intelligence,” and, if so, what was the source? Example. Friend, school, job etc.

ResponseID	Response
2	No
5	Yes. Unsure of source. I've heard it multiple places/settings.
6	Career field
8	training
9	No
10	Yes, through personal research
11	Briefly and from our caseworker With our agency
12	I have heard of this in books and the internet.
13	I haven't heard this term previously.
14	Yes. My job. I work for a leadership training group. (I am tge admin. assist.)
15	Being able to recognize your emotions and how to respond. At least I think that is what it is
17	Yes, school.
18	Yes- training.
19	Yes. College.
21	Not necessarily in the terms of what I think you're asking about! (I.e. I work in a school and we've definitely spoken about a students emotional intelligence level but I assume you're talking about a specific term!)
22	Yes, articles, online
24	Yes, through a round table training.

ResponseID	Response
25	Foster care and trauma books
26	Permission to Feel by Dr.Brackett
28	Yes. School
29	Yes -- from work/school
30	Yes, my husband had a work training with a book on the subject.
32	Yes.. internet
33	Yes. School.
34	I am a registered nurse currently working on a masters for a family nurse practitioner
35	I don't remember when and where I read about it
36	College
40	Independent reading
43	No
44	unsure
45	No
46	Yes. Online mostly.
48	Yes, when I was working in the schools.
49	Took an Emotional Intelligence course paid for as personal development by my employer
50	No
52	Yes, internet
53	Yes, basic reading
54	Yes, school

ResponseID	Response
55	Yes from my education (background in child development)
56	School
57	Yes Training
58	Not really
60	MAP class and agency training
62	Yes, internet
63	Yes - university/grad school
64	Have not heard it, but can take some educated guesses on what it's about.
65	Training, school, profession
66	Yes from a therapist
67	Yes. In many places but i cant remember.
68	Yes, I'm not sure exactly when I first heard it but I feel like it is pretty widely used. Especially in the foster/adoption, parenting, and trauma circles.

6. Many times, children in foster care cope with varying situations and new changes by becoming self-reliant and skeptical of new caregivers. Even when caregivers demonstrate the willingness and ability to provide for the needs of a child, their efforts are often met with reluctance and lack of trust. Research and observations suggest foster parents are fundamental in helping children change certain problematic behaviors. Additionally, previous research suggests emotional intelligence can be a significant factor in obtaining success in life. Emotional intelligence, unlike other abilities and characteristics, can be influenced and developed in individuals. Can Emotional Intelligence be developed in individuals?



Value	Percent	Count
Yes	98.0%	49
No	2.0%	1
	Totals	50

7. Briefly describe what you think emotional intelligence is.

ResponseID	Response
2	Maybe like self-awareness and self-control?
5	Self awareness; emotional developmental level; ability to understand and process feelings and emotions; ability to develop appropriate coping strategies, verbalize thoughts, etc.
6	The ability to regulate, interpret, and understand emotions and behaviors related to emotion.
8	How to monitor and understand ones and others emotions
9	Being able to cope with and express feelings and emotions
10	The ability to understand and apply emotions appropriately
11	The understanding of you emotions
12	Knowing what your emotions are and how they interact with situations. Knowing emotions from others as well.
13	Being aware of emotional needs of children especially those that have trauma.
14	Self knowledge, ability to cope, and interact well with others.
15	Recognizing emotional triggers and learning how best to respond
17	The ability to control and express emotions.
18	The ability to cope and recognize emotional responses.

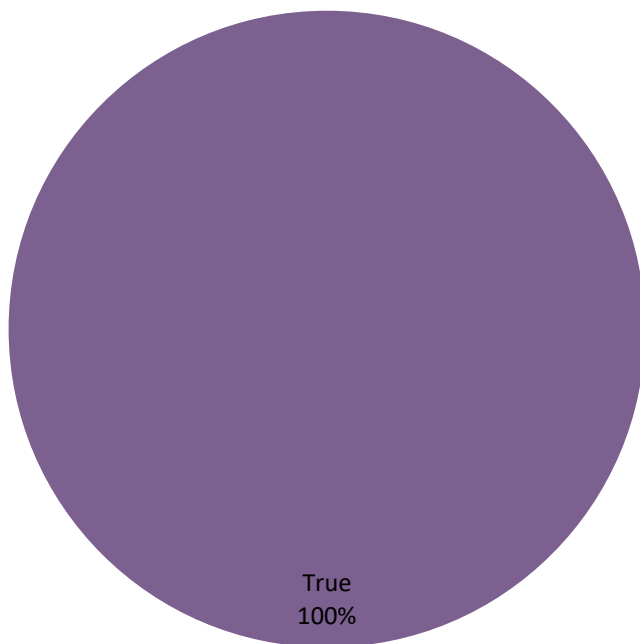
ResponseID	Response
19	Ability to know and control your own emotions and be able to have relationships in a healthy way.
21	The ability to adapt your emotions and control your feelings in new/different environments.
22	Being aware of your emotions and reactions to situations. Understanding why we react/feel as we do
24	Being able to express yourself through your emotions.
25	The ability to process and understand the emotions of yourself and others as well as respond to situations with the correct emotional response
26	The ability to recognize emotions in ourselves and other and react appropriately to those feelings
28	The ability to express and identify emotions effectively.
29	the ability to understand and handle one's emotions as well as emotionally interact with others
30	Recognizing your emotions and having self control over them
32	Emotionally aware, able to identify and articulate emotions
33	To elaborate on #6: it depends on the child, but mostly yes. Emotional intelligence refers to their socio-emotional awareness and ability to use/control it.
34	Being able to handle emotions and empathy
35	The ability to express your emotions in a desired way to obtain the desired results

ResponseID	Response
36	The ability to recognize the feelings In others and in oneself.
40	Awareness and respect for emotional cues. The ability to assess and respond to anothers emotional feedback.
43	I don't know honestly but it sounds like training or helpful tips/advice on how kids or even foster parents deal and cope with emotions and that it's ok to be angry and sad and how to deal with those emotions in a healthy way
44	An understanding of a person's emotions, and the ability to communicate and manage them.
45	The age you act emotionally
46	Being able to understand your own emotions and also understand how others are feeling and relate to them.
48	Being aware of our own emotions and recognizing it in others. This awareness contributes to EQ which is navigating emotional and social temperatures and adapting to it
49	Ability to handle emotions and dealing with others
50	I think emotional intelligence is being able to identify the emotion that a person is feeling and know how to cope with that emotion. Also being able to have a healthy outlet for facing emotions.
52	The ability to understand and identify ones own emotions as well as the emotions of others
53	To be aware and connected enough to acknowledge, encourage and empathize someone's emotions

ResponseID	Response
54	The ability to regulate emotions effectively and appropriately in private and social settings
55	Understanding your own emotions and recognizing as your emotions change and how you can cope with them (I'm feeling angry so I'm going to stomp around or breathe to feel better, etc)
56	They train themselves to protect the wall persay
57	The ability to read and express emotions. And the ability to deal with them in a given situation.
58	Ability to understand feelings and how situations can affect your mood/ emotions
60	It's basically the age they are mentally in handling their emotions. If trauma is involved, they may be emotionally immature for their age.
62	Our ability to pair reasoning with our emotions, to help us not make wrong choices and to process things in our life.
63	Your own ability to recognize your emotions, communicate them to others, and respond to them in a socially-appropriate way.
64	A type of self awareness. Helping the kids learn to identify the true emotion they are feeling. They might react in 'anger' but that's not their true emotion. From their, helping them voice and / or act appropriate to tue emotion. Helping them learn that the emotion is never wrong, but the action upon the emotion should sometimes be different.
65	The ability to monitor and understand your own emotions and those of others.

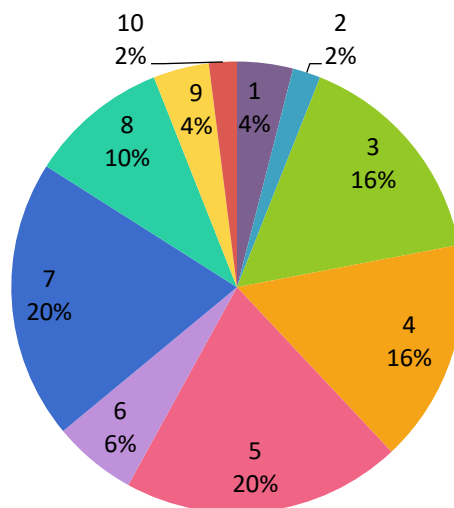
ResponseID	Response
66	The ability to self regulate and control ones own emotions.
67	The ability to logically direct and control your emotions regardless of your circumstances, manage them in the different situations you encounter, and live a better life with them under control.
68	Emotional intelligence is identifying and understanding how emotion manifests itself in behavioral form. It is looking beyond the surface level reaction to determine influencing factors and causes. A child may say they hate you, not because they do hate you, but because they have been let down a lot by previous adults in their life and they want to protect themselves from getting attached while testing your dedication and commitment to them. Emotional intelligence is the ability to make that connection and not take the child's statement at face value.

8. Emotional intelligence is about how individuals process their emotions in conjunction with thoughts and actions (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000)



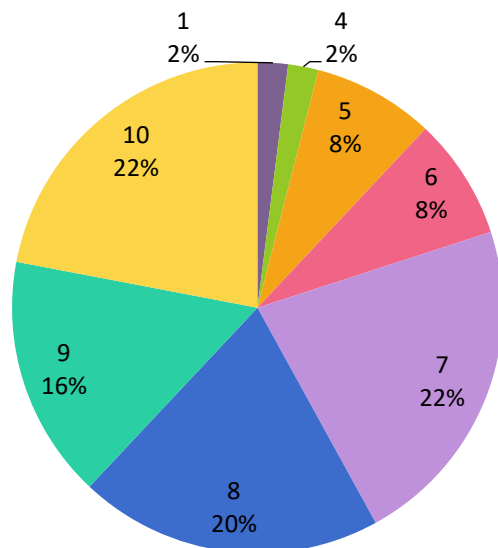
Value	Percent	Count
True	100.0%	50
	Totals	50

9. On a scale from 1 to 10, rate how you perceive your need to improve your parenting skills?



Value	Percent	Count
1	4.0%	2
2	2.0%	1
3	16.0%	8
4	16.0%	8
5	20.0%	10
6	6.0%	3
7	20.0%	10
8	10.0%	5
9	4.0%	2
10	2.0%	1
	Totals	50

10. On a scale from 1 to 10, rate how effective you believe emotional intelligence training could help you in parenting Foster Children?



Value	Percent	Count
1	2.0%	1
4	2.0%	1
5	8.0%	4
6	8.0%	4
7	22.0%	11
8	20.0%	10
9	16.0%	8
10	22.0%	11
	Totals	50