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Identifying Future Effective Foster Parent Characteristics: Using the Casey Foster Family Assessment

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MA, Walden University, 2007

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

In 2014, Washoe County Department of Social Services in Nevada, licensed only 50 of 400 parents who applied to foster children. Lack of long-term effective foster parents creates instability within the system. Significant concern over increased numbers of children entering foster care and a decreased number of qualified foster care applicants continues. The Casey Foster Family Assessment (CFFA), a comprehensive assessment of key traits of effective foster parents may further enhance the fostering application process. The identified CFFA subscales most predictive of future foster parent effectiveness, may help WCDSS more effectively identify applicants likely to provide long-term stable homes for children. Local licensed foster parents and their case managers were recruited to complete the CFFA, and Effective Foster Parent Survey (EFPS). Using the Ecology theory of Bronfenbrenner and Belsky as a foundation, a series of Pearson bivariate correlations were conducted using the CFFA and EFPS scores and a regression analysis was conducted to determine the results. Results showed foster parents (*N=35)* with a high level of dedication, sufficient time, higher perceived degree of responsibility then the agency, and willing to foster children of differing racial, religious, cultural, or sexual identity backgrounds were viewed by their case managers as being highly effective. Identifying effective skills, and providing support and training to foster parents, may increase the likelihood that a child will stay in one home instead of moving repeatedly, reducing mental health risks of foster children. Three significant correlates were identified: positive parent-child interaction, participation in spiritual activities and attendance at agency training, set a foundation for continued research in additional effective foster parent skills and how to assess for these qualities in incoming applicants.

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Dedication

   This research project was dedicated to foster parents, foster children, the agencies that care for them and the emergency shelter the children are placed in when they are removed from their caregivers. Caring for children in foster care takes a great deal of hard work, dedication and nurturance from many people and agencies. I want to thank all of those who dedicate their time, energy, and love to children who need them.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Evaluating a foster parent's personality is important when assessing and recruiting potential applicants to foster children. The process of assessing and recruiting potential foster parents is complex and worth exploration (Redding et al., 2000). Currently, the foster parent application process at the Washoe County, Nevada, Department of Social Services consists of an FBI background check, the administration of the *Structured Analysis Family Evaluation* (SAFE) home study, and the *Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory 2* (AAPI-2). This process is used to identify whether an applicant will be a good fit to provide foster care to children. The goal of this research was to identify which sub-scales of the Casey Foster Family Assessment (CFFA) were most predictive of successful future foster parent personalities in order to positively contribute the assessment and recruitment process of foster parents in Washoe County.

Background

Responsibility for children in foster care currently belongs to the states and counties within the United States. The states and counties look to hire foster parents to provide a safe and nurturing environment while children in care await a permanent placement. Henderson and Scannapieco (2006) have noted that providing effective foster care in the United States continues to be a challenge for the many agencies responsible for the care of children removed from their custodians due to abuse or neglect. An effective match of a foster child and foster parent is largely determined by whether a foster parent can create a safe and nurturing environment (McClung, 2007). With the

increase of children in foster care and the amount of emotional discord that comes from being removed from their homes, foster parents need to provide stability to decrease mental health risks for these children (Becker, 2006).

The Nevada Child Welfare system is responsible for licensing foster parents. The licensing requirements are needed to aid agencies in determining if an applicant is appropriate for fostering. According to the Nevada Revised Statues 424.036 (2013), "Before issuing a license to conduct a foster home pursuant to NRS 424.030, the licensing authority shall discuss with the applicant and, to the extent possible, ensure that the applicant understands: 1) The role of a provider of foster care, the licensing authority and the members of the immediate family of a child placed in a foster home; and 2) The personal skills, which are required of a provider of foster care and the other residents of a foster home to provide effective foster care."

Identifying effective foster parent skills to determine if an applicant is suitable for fostering can pose a challenge. Foster parent characteristics are not all currently identified during the application process. It can take agencies and service providers a great deal of time, and sometimes many placement disruptions, to identify which individuals possess the characteristics needed to manage foster children's needs and to create *placement stability* (Jones, personal communication, June 2012). Henderson and Scannapieco (2006) indicated that foster parents have characteristics such as a balanced personality, indicating equal levels of extroversion, tough poise, and independence that may help them to be more effective in creating stability and attending to the needs of foster children.

Having an effective and efficient way to identify foster parent characteristics during the application process may aid in determining if the applicant would be a good fit for foster parenting. Assessing an applicant's characteristics may aid in identifying strengths and areas where he or she may need support and/or training to provide effective foster parenting. The more strongly qualified the foster parent is and better he or she exhibits essential foster parent characteristics, the more likely he or she is to provide protection, stability, and nurturing to the foster child and reduce the emotional and/or behavioral issues that arise from several placement disruptions.

In the 2013 Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) report, The U.S. Children's Bureau (2013) reported that there were over 402,378 children in the foster care system in the United States. These children had been removed from their homes and had been placed with family members, in emergency shelters, or with foster families. According to Frasier (1996), the experience of being removed from the home can create a high level of fear and anxiety along with feelings of loss and abandonment. Schneider and Vivky (2005) stated, "Removal from the home and replacement in the home can lead to feelings of instability, loss of status and a loss of control as children may always expect and fear that they can be removed and replaced at any time without explanation" (p. 4). The emotions experienced by these children can be manifested in many different ways. Being prepared for how these emotions may manifest differently in each child, requires that foster parents need effective foster parent skills to manage different types of behaviors.

According to Fisher P., Bruce, J., Abdullev, Y., Mannering, A., and Pears, K. (2011) and Barber, J., Delfabbro, P., & Copper, L. (2001), one of the main reasons foster children are displaced from their foster homes is the foster parent's inability to manage the children when they are emotionally out of control. *Placement disruptions* or *placement changes* refer to a child being removed from one home and being placed in another or back in an emergency shelter. Pacora (2010) likewise noted that the removal from a primary caregiver may increase the severity of already present behavioral and/or emotional issues.

The potential for a decrease in emotional stability when foster children are displaced from their foster home and how displacement also may lead to an inability to manage their behavior effectively, and increase the chances that they will be removed from foster homes repeatedly was discussed by Hussey and Guo, (2005) and Price et al (2008). Henderson and Scannapieco (2006) discussed how placement stability decreases the risk factors associated with continued placement instability. Studies support the idea that a child who has problems with creating healthy attachments to their caregivers, and has experienced trauma and abuse, may suffer or present additional symptoms from several placement changes. Placing a child in a home with qualified and effective foster parents may lead to fewer placement disruptions, improving the child's life and further reducing the continued risks of the behavioral and emotional issues that arise from continued placement changes. Identifying foster parents with effective foster parenting skills, and providing them with support and training, has the potential to increase the likelihood that a child will stay in one home instead of moving repeatedly.

Problem Statement

There continues to be significant concerns over an increase in the number of children entering the foster care system and a decrease in the number of qualified foster care applicants (Smith et al., 2015). Achieving a positive outcome in fostering depends upon effective matching of foster children with potential foster families in order to create placement stability. Placement stability is facilitated by an efficient application process agencies can use to identify effective foster parents. In this research, I aimed to add to current literature on this topic by identifying which of the Casey Foster Parent Assessment subscales were most predictive of future foster parent effectiveness.

The turnover rate for foster parent's increases each year, causing placement instability for children in care. As of 2014, there were 401 licensed foster homes in the Washoe County Department of Social Services (WCDSS). Throughout 2014, WCDSS opened 152 new homes and closed 113. The 2014 recruitment process consisted of over 400 applicants who applied throughout the year, but only 50 ended up being licensed (Franklin, personal communication, June 2015).

The process for the applicants included an initial background check, a completed SAFE home study, and the AAPI-2. This application process aids WCDSS in identifying which applicants will provide effective foster parenting skills in the future. There is a scarcity of information to guide agencies in making decisions about effective foster parent skills needed to foster children (Redding, 2000). Researching assessments that may add currently unidentified information regarding effective characteristics of foster parents early in the application may decrease placement instability in the future. Working

from the premise that researching parenting assessments may add currently unidentified information regarding effective characteristics of foster parents, I explored whether the CFFA, if used early in the application process, could decrease placement instability in the future. Understanding which of the subscales of the CFFA are most predictive of future foster parent effectiveness may help agencies identify needed information more quickly, speeding up the application process.

Researchers Orme and Buehler (2001) indicated that the number of children in foster care was "large and increasing" (p. 3). They referenced a study conducted by Tatara (1998) that showed there were 262,000 children in foster care in 1982, which increased to 507,000 children in 1996, and reached 725,000 children by 1998. With the growing number of children placed in foster care each year, family foster continues to be the principal objective of child welfare programs." The need for effective foster parents continues to rise as the amount of children in the foster care system increases (Henderson and Scannapieco, 2006).

Effective foster parents have been defined as those who have the skills and abilities to (a) efficiently provide a nurturing, loving environment; (b) understand the needs of a child with mental health and behavioral concerns; (c) focus on child safety and educational, mental health, and behavioral support; (d) take into account developmental factors and reciprocate positive attachment (Shlonsky and Berrick, 2001). Effective foster parents are needed to provide stability in the lives of children who have lived through many different levels of abuse, neglect, trauma, and abandonment.

The risk of placement instability makes the need to find foster parents who will remain with the system vitally important. Smith, D., Stormshak, E., Chamberlain, P., and Bridges Whaley, R. (2001) concluded that instability risks include behavioral and emotional issues resulting from children removal from their parents and past trauma they suffered. Placement stability within the foster care system continues to be a concern of social services professionals.

Research has shown that the emotional and physical stability a foster home can provide children who have been abused or neglected, can change their future success in building healthy, trusting relationships, managing their behavior more effectively, creating a more stable sense of mental health, and help them remain stable while in the system (Jones and Harden, 2004). Harden and Jones (2002) defined stability in foster care as, "limited movement from home to home" (p. 33), and a child's continued progress in learning healthy behaviors resulting in positive outcomes, consistent academic growth and achievement, and social skill and emotional development. Rubin, D., Alessandrini, E., Feudtner, C., Mandell, D., Localio, R., and Hadley, T. (2004) found that children without placement stability were 36-63% more likely to have behavioral problems than children in stable foster care environments. This leads to continued challenges for foster parents and foster agencies.

The challenges and pressures foster parents face when having to step in and provide effective care for children can be daunting, and may discourage an individual or couple who may be thinking of fostering a child. Finding the right fit for the child and the foster parent becomes a challenging job for the agencies responsible for the safety and

wellbeing of the children in care. Many families have come forward over the years and

provided their services to aid children in the system, and many families have left the

system, which has resulted in instability for the children.

There has been a great deal of research conducted on topics such as the effects of

fostering children, how disruption affects children, how the system affects foster parent

and foster children, ways to better the system, the impact of stability on behavioral

wellbeing, and many others according to Smith et al. (2001) and Rubin et al. (2012).

Henderson and Scannapieco (2006) have identified the continued need for research to

understand how to predict which individuals will be effective in meeting the needs and

reducing the risks for children in their care.

My intended goal in this research was to determine if the CFFA subscales were

predictive of future effective foster parent characteristics. This research can provide

agencies with additional information to help aid in identifying if an individual or family

will be effective foster parents. In addition, the CFFA can be used by agencies to identify

if the applicant needs further training and support to become more efficient as a foster

parent. The CFFA can help agencies distinguish between effective and ineffective foster

parents, which in the future may result in a decrease in instability for the children in care,

and an increase in their health and happiness.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the efficacy of adding an additional

assessment to the current application process at WCDSS to aid in determining future foster parent

effectiveness. The application process is intended to determine if an applicant is fit to

foster, and will create a stable, nurturing environment for foster children. The stability created for foster children can decrease behavioral problems and mental health risks. Researchers have determined that the CFFA is a successful assessment for identifying strengths and weaknesses of foster parent applicants. In this research, I investigated which of the subscales are most predictive of future foster parent effectiveness.

In this research, I administered the CFFA to the participants in order to obtain a score on each of the nine sections of the CFFA. I correlated these scores with the ranking determined by the scores of the Effective Foster Parent Survey (EFPS) completed by the case managers or administrators working with each foster parent participant. The results identified which categories and subtests of the CFFA were most predictive of future foster parent effectiveness. After the conclusion of the study, I will present the results to the WCDSS for use with their application process in the future.

Research Question(s) and Hypothesis

I collected and analyzed data to determine if the subscales of the CFFA were predictive of future foster parent effectiveness by correlating them with the EFPS rating for each participant.

RQ 1: Would foster parents who ranked high on the EFPS completed by the agency case mangers correlate with high scores on the subscales of the foster parents self-reported CFFA?

H1o: There is a positive correlation between high rankings on the EFPS completed by the agency case managers and the high scores on each of the subscales of the CFFA completed by the foster parents.

H1A: There was a negative correlation or no correlation between the scores on the CFFA and the ranking provided by the Effective Foster Parent Survey.

RQ 2: Would the results of the research indicate that only certain areas positively correlate with the ranking on the EFPS?

H2o: Of the nine areas of the CFFA it was expected that only the scores on Area 4: Family Functioning, Area 5: Parenting Styles, Area 7: Social Support and Area 8: Cultural Competence will positively correlate with the high ranking on the Effective Foster Parent Survey.

H2A: A negative correlation or no correlation would occur on each of the four areas of the CFFA with the ranking on the Effective Foster Parent Survey.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Many asepects of a child's behavior and developement within the foster care system are complex in nature. The ecological theory I used as a foundation for this project offers an approach to such complexity using four system levels of human development. Bronfenbrenner (1977) identified these four system levels as (a) the microsystem (the setting for which a child lives), (b) the mesosystem (the relationships within a child's life that they experience), (c) the exosystem (the supports of the child), and (d) the macrosystem (the attitudes and ideologies of the culture). In addition to the original four system levels, a fifth system was the chronosystem (the outcome of an individual's experience in life). Winusaa (2012) determined that these systems have guidelines, norms, and roles that shape the development of human beings.

"Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological framework and Belsky's (1984) model of determinants of parenting are used as organizing frameworks to support this study (Orme and Buehler, 2001). Both of these perspectives suggest that parenting is central, proximal socialization influence in a children's development and that both child and parental characteristics shape parenting" (p. 4). Using the ecology theory as a foundation for this research helped me understand how identifying the characteristics of a foster parent aids in understanding his or her ability to support a child's needs.

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological theory has been used by practitioners to support the foster parent's understanding of interpersonal relationships, family functiong, child maltreatment, parent and substance abuse, in providing stability (Henderson and Scannapieco, 2006) . Henderson and Scannapieco (2006) defined effective foster parenting as foster care with the "absence of maltreatment" (p.44). Determining who will be effective foster parents can be difficult because the foster care system is so complex by nature. Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological model to understand the importance of development through guidelines, norms, and roles that shape development for effective foster parents, is helpful in that the model centers on interactions between the social environment and the individual experiencing it. Using this model to identify factors that have been and are currently important for determining effective foster parents aided me in determining if the CFFA focuses on factors that will indeed predict effective foster parents.

Nature of the Study

I conducted this study to add to current literature on the topic. The current application process of the WCDSS includes a FBI background check, the completion of the SAFE home study, and the AAPI-2. This process aids the WCDSS in determining if an applicant is a good fit to foster.

The assessments I used in this study are described in detail below. The CFFA consists of two assessments, the Casey Foster Applicant Inventory (CAFI) and the Casey Home Assessment Protocol (CHAP). The benefit to using the CFFA in addition to the SAFE and AAPI-2 is that the CFFA allows agencies to ask more detailed questions. That is, the CFFA provides agencies with additional knowledge and resources that may better equip their clients for fostering children, which in turn provides stability to the children in their care and may aid in continued research.

Currently the local social services agencies are using the SAFE home study measure and the AAPI-2 to create a general assessments of the individuals that are applying to become foster parents. The SAFE home study covers a great deal of information that is needed for the agencies to adequately identify whether an individual will be well suited for the responsibility of foster parenting, adoption, or kinship care (safehomestudy.org). The SAFE home study is a series of questions that are asked over three to four sessions in the home, and is used in 12 states in the United States and three in Canada. The main domains of questions focus on demographic information of all those in the home including family lifestyle, previous adoption or foster family experiences, finances, criminal and child abuse records, emergency care planning, contact with family of origin and significant others, and references.

The second part of the assessment includes a questionnaire covering the psychological inventory of the individual's history, personal characteristics, marital/domestic partner relationship, sons/daughters/others residing or frequently in the home, extended family relationships, physical and social environment, general parenting, specialized parenting, adoption issues, psychosocial evaluation conclusions, and identification of the children the family would best serve.

The AAPI-2 is the second assessment used by the WCDSS to identify the potential risks of foster parent applicants. The AAPI-2 is a 32-item inventory widely used to identify adolescents and adults at risk for inadequate parenting behaviors. It includes four subscales representing the most frequent patterns associated with abusive parenting: (a) inappropriate expectations; (b) lack of empathy; (c) parental value of corporal punishment; and (d) parent-child role reversal (https://www.assessingparenting.com/assessment/aapi). Officials that I interviewed in Washoe County stated that they feel these are good instruments to use to identify many aspects of ability to foster, but they reported that the instruments do not identify, systematically, areas of concerns that are identified only by the interviewer that administers the assessments. One other issue county officials discussed was that the AAPI-2 has the ability to identify potential issues, but it may also be easy to answer the questions in a way that would show favorably to the agency in which the applicant is applying.

The participants I recruited were current licensed foster parents and current case managers in the Washoe County area. The participants were not limited to any particular

race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or age group. I identified the case managers, through the agencies, as the individuals that work closest with and knew the family most accurately. I asked each foster parent participant to complete each subscale of the CFFA and supply me the results. I compared these results with the EFPS completed by the case managers or administrators in order to correlate the results to determine predictability of future foster parent effectiveness.

Definitions

Adolescent Adult Parent Inventory (AAPI): 32-item inventory identifying adolescents and adults as risk for inadequate parenting behaviors (www.assessingparenting.com/assessment/aapi)

Casey Foster Family Assessment (CFFA): Two standardized measures to assess foster parents' strengths and need for further development and support. These

assessments were created using the best practice standards. These measures are used in conjunction with other pre-service training modules to aid in determining appropriateness to foster.

Case manager: An individual employed by either the local social services department or therapeutic agency to manage and coordinate services with the foster parents.

Child development: The physical, cognitive, social, and emotional maturation of human beings from conception to adulthood. This process is influenced by interacting biological and environmental processes (Jones & Harden, 2004.)

Disruption: is considered removal from the home due to instability and/or foster child behavioral problems.

Foster care: Care provided to children and adolescents that have been removed from their parents or caregiver due to neglect or abuse.

Foster caregiver: An individual or couple that is licensed to care for children in the foster care system.

Foster placement: Agency-identified safe and secure home to place a child in care until a permanent placement can be established.

Placement stability: Environment caregivers provide which remains constant, consistent, and connected to foster children over time; caregivers who are mentally healthy and engaged in appropriate parenting practices; a cohesive, supportive, and flexible family system; and a nurturing and stimulating home environment (Harden 2000).

Psychosocial functioning: The ability to maintain mental health while functioning within societal norms.

Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) home study: Comprehensive home study tool used by social workers or foster care agencies. The SAFE home study is used in 15 different states in the United States and Canada. There are six components the SAFE home study covers including (a) practice values, (b) information gathering tools, (c) psychosocial inventory, (d) desk guide, (e) preformatted home study, and (f) matching inventory.

Therapeutic foster home: A home that provides a higher level of care to children or adolescents in the foster care system with clinically diagnosed behavioral or mental health issues.

Therapeutic foster agency: Agency that governs treatment or therapeutic-level foster homes.

Assumptions

In this study, I assumed that the foster parent participants would accurately answer the questions on each of the CFFA subscales. I also assumed that the case managers would complete the checklist with accuracy and without bias to any individual participant. Additionally, I assumed that both instruments, the CFFA and the EFPS, are appropriate means for measuring the identified variables.

Scope and Delimitations

The study included participants that were licensed family foster parents, *therapeutic-level* foster parents, and case managers and/or administrators. The local social services department and three *therapeutic-level foster care agencies* were selected to participate. I did not select or deny participants because of their gender, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or the amount of children served. My goal for participant selection was not only to identify foster parents that were available and willing to participate in the project, but also to represent the current population of foster parents in this demographic area. Given the population, representation of all cultures and races was limited. This limited the generalizability of this study to larger, more demographically diverse populations. Generalizability of this study was also limited by

the size of the demographic area in which the participants were located. Due to the small population from which the sample was drawn, future research will need to include with a more diverse and larger population to validate generalizability.

Limitations

Limitations to the study were a limited number of potential participants in the identified area from which the population was chosen. The CFFA requires approximately 90 minutes to complete, which may have led to participants' lack of desire to finish the whole assessment. Using a population from a relatively small city led to generalization issues within the study.

Significance

The study was significant because in it I identified an assessment that may be beneficial in the recruitment and assessment process of potential foster parents in Washoe County. If agencies are able to more accurately determine if an applicant will become an effective foster parent during the assessment phase of the licensing process, it may decrease the instability that comes from hiring ineffective applicants to care for the children within the foster care system. If the foster parent utilizes more effective foster parent skills identified by the agency when they are hired, the child may be more likely to be stable in the home.

Currently the local agencies are using the SAFE home study and the AAPI-2. This method has been used to do initial assessments for many years. Over the past few years, there has been a decrease in potential foster parents, which has left many children in the system in emergency care, instead of in long-term family foster care. The SAFE

home study and AAPI-2 provide a great deal of information to the hiring agencies, but still leave unanswered questions regarding an individual's future potential effectiveness as a foster parent. The lack of information can leave questions regarding how to successfully train individuals interested in fostering children. I conducted this research to determine if the CFFA, was an assessment that could fill the gap in information to aid in predicting future foster parent effectiveness within the application process.

Summary

There is a great deal of research regarding the struggles foster children face and the subsequent issues that arise from instability in their lives (Rubin et al., 2004). Instability in a child's life can lead to many long-lasting emotional and behavioral disturbances. Establishing a caring, nurturing, and stable environment for foster children is the goal of the agencies and the communities in which they reside (Smith, Stormshak, Chamberlain, and Whaley, 2001). Currently, the foster care agencies in the local county are using the SAFE home study and the AAPI to identify if a foster parent is a good fit for fostering and will provide a stable environment for foster children.

The aim of this study was to determine if adding the CFFA to the current assessment tools would increase predictability of effective foster families. I compared the results of the CFFA subscales to ratings provided by the case managers, and then evaluated them for correlational results and reported them in this research project. My intention for this research was to add additional knowledge regarding the creation of a stable environment for foster children through employing, training, and supporting effective foster parents.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Foster care literature has linked family life stability and the characteristics exhibited by foster parents with mental health outcomes of foster children (Fisher et al., 2011). Multiple foster home placements have been linked to instability, causing an increase in foster children visits to their primary care physician, therapists, psychiatrists, and other mental health services, and a decrease in educational successes or milestones met (Jones, 2008; Rubin et al., 2007). The literature I reviewed for this project addresses positive foster parent characteristics researchers have associated with stability in the lives of foster children. State agencies and practitioners can identify these positive foster parent characteristics using valid assessments administered during the application process. Because of the specific subject of foster parent characteristics and the effects of instability, some of the literature I reviewed was published outside of the previous five years.

Effects of Placement Stability on Mental Health Outcomes of Foster Children

Officials within the state licensing boards have expressed concerns over foster home retention, and increasing instability for foster children. Instability is associated with disruptive, aggressive, or dangerous behaviors exhibited by a foster child. Researchers have extensively identified these and many other adverse effects in foster children (Fisher et al., 2011; Jones, 2008; Rubin et al., 2007).

The stability or instability created by a foster parent for a foster child can have lasting effects. A caregiver who provides stability, security, and a good relationship,

assists in a foster child's positive emotional development (The Social Care Institute for

Excellence Guide, 2004). Fanshel and Shinn (1978) emphasized the foster parent's

influence on foster children and noted that they could "think of no greater influence on

the well-being of foster children while they are in care than those who directly minister to

their needs" (p. 496). Researchers and social service agencies can identify the

characteristics that foster parents possess and use them to predict their ability to create

stability and support for a child with complex needs.

Researchers have identified the adverse effects of instability on foster children

with the goals of predicting and preventing future disruptions (Fisher, P., Bruce, J.,

Abdullev, Y., Mannering, A., and Pears, K. 2011). The researchers identified disruption

as, "exiting the current placement for a negative reason (i.e., removal deemed to be in the

best interest of the child or requested caregiver)" (p. 482). They conducted a study with

117 foster preschoolers divided into two groups: 60 in the regular foster care group

(RFC), and 57 in the treatment foster care group (TFC), with the intent to replicate

previous findings regarding daily child problem behaviors at entry into a new foster

home. These findings had been used to (a) predict subsequent placement disruptions in

foster preschoolers, and (b) determined if foster care interventions were mitigated by a

treatment (Fisher et al., 2011). The intervention included examining problem behaviors

and placement disruptions for the two groups using Parent Daily Report Checklist (PDR;

Chamberlin & Reid, 1987). The results of this study indicated that disruption occurred

less in the regular foster homes with children exhibiting five or fewer behaviors on the

checklist, but a 10% increase was noted for each additional behavior exhibited. In

conclusion, the findings indicated that child problem behaviors are linked to placement disruptions, supporting the need for early preventative interventions and the need to train *foster caregivers* in effective methods of behavior management in order to reduce child problem behaviors and prevent placement disruption (Fraiser et al. 2011).

In another study, Henderson and Scannapieco (2006) studied 150 currently licensed foster parents using an ex-post facto design to determine effective foster parent correlates. Results of the study indicated there were three significant correlates: positive parent-child interaction, participation in religious/spiritual activities, and attendance at agency training. Henderson and Scannapieco (2006) suggest that these correlates can serve as a foundation for continued research in effective foster parenting skills and how to assess for them." Placement stability is significant in the lives of abused and neglected youth removed from families or caregivers. Researchers have continued to study the effects of instability on this population and how to identify foster parents to create the needed stability (Harden 2004).

A challenge, as explained by Kortenkamp and Ehrle (2002), is finding caring, skilled individuals to nurture and take responsibility for foster children. In their study, Kortenkamp and Ehrle surveyed 44,000 households in order to measure the economic, health, and social characteristics of children in the household under 18. The survey was completed by a parent or caregiver that was knowledgeable of the child's health and education. The researchers identified children in the child welfare system and then compared the results of the different groups on four domains of well-being: (a) behavioral and emotional problems, (b) school and activity experiences, (c) health and

health care, (d) care-giver well-being and interactions. The results of the study indicated

that children in the welfare system are not faring well emotionally, behaviorally,

physically or educationally. Of the population surveyed, 27% exhibited high levels of

behavioral and emotional problems. Physical, learning, or mental health conditions that

limited their activities were exhibited by 39%. Fisher et al. (2011) concluded the study by

stating that "the challenge then for *child welfare administrators* is great: to equip foster

homes to care for children with complex needs, to recruit adoptive parents and train them

to develop lasting attachments to traumatized children, to ensure caseworkers have

sufficient time to assess children and link them to appropriate service, and to make

mental health and medical services readily available" (p. 6).

The child welfare system is responsible for choosing people who can skillfully

and adequately provide foster care. Stability created by foster parents can lead to a

lifetime of growth and change for a child (Henderson & Scannapieco, 2006). The child

welfare system is responsible for finding a safe and nurturing home environment for each

of the children in its care. The system also ensures safety, permanency, and strengthening

of families to care for children. The National Survey of Children and Adolescent Well-

Being Research Group (2005) identified what characteristics were needed to effectively

foster, and the positive/negative outcomes the lack of stability creates for foster children.

The effects of disruption on the child in care as well as the foster parents can be extensive

was also researched. By understanding these effects on the child and caregiver, the child

welfare system can better identify which characteristics foster parents may need to

possess to avoid the negative effects of placement disruption.

Behavioral Outcomes of Instability and Multiple Placement Disruptions

The undisrupted length of stay of a child in a foster home can be used to identify placement stability outcomes. Researchers have linked stability to a reduction in mental health problems and an increase in secure attachments with any caregiver. Length of stay in the home as well as an increase in mental health problems and insecure attachment, which may also be linked to placement disruption (Rubin et al. 2007; Kortenkamp & Ehrle 2002; Duncan and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Fein and Maluccio (1991) discussed the relationship between instability and disruption, which has been used to support research findings of behavioral outcomes of placement stability.

Placement disruptions have been linked to attachment problems, and a child's behavioral and emotional issues (Rubin et al., 2007). *Disruption* is considered removal from the home due to instability and/or foster child behavioral problems. Smith, Stormshak, Chamberlain, and Whaley (2001) found that during the first 12-18 months in care, 38-57% of children are disrupted from stay in their foster home. These researchers found that within their study of 90 youth (51 boys and 39 girls), it was two times more likely that foster children placement will disrupt during the first six months than in the second six months. Attachment problems and a child's emotional and behavioral issues have led to continued disruption with many caregivers, which in turn perpetuated the cycle. Ruben et al. (2003) emphasized the importance of placement stability, noting, "Theory and evidence suggests that placement stability, or the avoidance of multiple placement changes and refraining from sending foster children to a higher level of care

or into group homes, is a fundamental attribute of this diverse experience that may have

a considerable impact on long-term outcomes (p. 1336).

In a wide range of studies over the last 10 years, researchers have shown the ways

that numerous negative effects in family homes create difficulties for the child, and the

broader social consequences include delayed reunification, a decrease in *psychosocial*

functioning, and need for a higher level of care (Fisher, Bruce, Abdullev, Mannering &

Pears, 2011). The negative effects experienced by the child include higher levels or

behavioral disturbances, increase in insecure attachment, negative effects on brain

development, and educational difficulties (Fisher, Bruce, Abdullev, Mannering, & Pears,

2011; Testa, 2005; Kortenkamp & Ehrle, 2002; Ryan & Leathers, 2002; Newton et al.

2000; Newton, Litrownik, & Landsverk, 2000; Johnson-Reid, & Barth, 2000; Landsverk,

Davis, Ganger, Newton, & Johnson 1996; Penzerro & Lein, 1995; Cooper, Peterson, &

Meier, 1987; Pardeck, 1984; Goldstein, Freud, & Solnit 1973).

Newton, Litrownik, and Landsverk (2000) studied the correlation between

problem behaviors and the number of placements experienced by foster children. Their

findings indicated that placement stability is critical to success in *foster placements*. Not

having stability in the home resulted in the child's lack of ability to trust adults and form

healthy attachments. Newton et al. further indicated that 50% of children in the foster

care system they sampled exhibited behavioral problems as evidenced on the Child

Behavior Checklist (CBCL; McIntyre & Keesler, 1986).   Fifty seven percent of foster

children sampled in Chicago in a 1987 study conducted by Hochstadt, Jaudes, Zimo, and

Schachter, suffered from significant emotional and/or behavioral problems that required

treatment. In a similar study conducted in San Diego, Clausen, Landsverk, Ganger, Chadwick, and Litrownik (1998) determined that 61% of the children in foster care they sampled also indicated mental health issues on the CBCL.

The overall health of foster children is directly correlated to the experiences they have in the system (Ruben et al. 2003). A foster child with medical, developmental, and mental health problems is at a higher risk for drifting from placement to placement, decreasing her or his stability, increasing the risk of emotional and/or behavioral problems, and increasing his or her need for services. Responsibility for the special and intense need of these children usually fall on the individuals or families fostering children and the child welfare system (Jones, 2008; Henderson & Scannapieco, 2006; Rubin et al., 2003; Barber, Delfabbro, & Cooper, 2003; James, 2004).

Stability of foster children may result from creating the right fit for a child and the foster parent. The responsibility of the child welfare agencies is finding individuals who can effectively foster *and* who will be the right fit for each foster child in their care. The assessments child welfare agencies choose in the application process aids in identifying characteristics linked to provision of stability. That is, it is important to understand foster parent characteristics to determine their effectiveness in foster parenting. My study was thus needed to specify which characteristics are needed to provide stability to foster children.

Foster Parent Characteristics

The characteristics of the foster parent and foster child in conjunction are more predictive of placement stability than either taken on their own (Fisher et al., 2011;

Ciarrochi et al., 2011, Becker-Weidman, 2006, Orme & Buehler, 2001; Smith, Stormshak, Chamberlain, & Whaley, 2001; Newton et al., 2000; Newton, Litrownik & Landsverk, 2000). There are many characteristics an individual can possess that can aid in effective and substantial foster parenting, according to Ciarrochi, Randle, Miller and Dolnicar (2011). These researchers noted that in order to help a foster child thrive, high-quality foster placements need to be identified to counter some of the risk factors normally associated with being a foster-child. According to Orme et al. (2004), foster parent applicants form the pool for which caregivers are chosen for 75% of the 568,000 children in foster care. Little is known about these applicants or their abilities to influence a foster child's emotional and behavioral adjustment. Not having this important knowledge limits that ability to understand how to recruit, assess, train, and support these applicants.

The findings of the 1997-1999 National Survey of America's Families (NASF), suggested that children placed with foster parents or relative placements are still living with individuals who report high levels of aggravation, symptoms of poor mental health and provide low levels of cognitive stimulation. The research that Kortenkamp and Ehrle (2002) conducted indicated that, caregivers with symptoms of poor mental health were caring for 17% of foster children in their study. Over a quarter (26%) of children in care represented in the study, lived with a highly aggravated caregiver. Twenty six percent (26%) of children in care under age 6 represented in this study lived with a caregiver who read to them two or fewer times per week, and 24% lived with a caregiver

who took them on outings, such as the park, grocery store, church, playground, two to three times a month or less.

Foster parent characteristics have a great influence on the application process and the ability to complete the tasks of caring for foster children. Zinn (2009) continued to say, foster parent characteristics could answer many questions for agencies looking to place children in need of care. He determined that there were two arguments as to why foster parent characteristics may affect foster children's substitute care outcomes. He indicated that the first argument is that foster family preferences will reflect the cultural, social, and economical stances, as well as the current stage in the life course of the individual family providing the care. He continues on to state that the age, wage income, family composition, and supports of the family help to indicate their likelihood of becoming an adoptive or long-term placement.

Two important arguments as discussed by Zinn (2009), with regard to foster parent characteristics indicated that first, foster parent's characteristics may also show a willingness of the family to engage in reunification-related activities including attending case planning meetings, parent/child visitation, kin care and nurturance of the child. The second is that, foster parents characteristics may indicate other types of decisions or willingness to perform task needed to care for the child. An example, a caseworker may look at a foster parent's age and income as an indicator for the ability to provide long-term care. Other foster parent characteristics can aid a caseworker in making assumptions on a family's willingness to participate in service provisions, willingness to provide home-based services, working with outside agencies, and permanency outcomes.

In researching foster parent characteristics, it has been determined that high-quality foster parents had characteristics that included but was not limited to; high social supports from friends, high levels of perspective taking, empathy, hope, and problem-solving skills (Ciarrochi, Randle, Miller and Dolnicar, 2011). The basic foster parent characteristics assessed are age, income, race, ethnicity, number of adults in the home, fostering history, number of years fostering, parenting styles, family home environment, family functioning, marital functioning, family demographics, parental temperament, parents mental health and social supports (Zinn, 2009; Orme & Buehler, 2001).

Characteristics believed to be influential in successful fostering are, faith or support from church, a deep concern for children, a high level of tolerance, a strong cooperative marriage for married foster parents, organized and on a routine in their daily lives so they are able to accommodate the needs of the children, but also remain flexible enough to accommodate their external needs and agency requirements. Characteristics that may inhibit successful fostering such as, competing demands for the parents' time and attention, non-child centered fostering ideals, a caregivers difficulty with attaching to a child that might have to leave, personal and interpersonal inflexibility (Buehler, Cox & Cuddleback 2003).

Research supports there are many qualities that may inhibit or promote successful fostering. A research study involving 63 foster parents in Canada conducted by Brown (2007) asked, "What do you need for successful foster placements" (p. 7). The participants reported that foster parents need a certain personality type and skills, an adequate amount of information about the child being placed, a substantial relationship

with the placing agency, individualized services, support from the community, connections with other foster families, support from both their immediate and extended family and sufficient self-care skills.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network of Florida, an organization that works with foster families, describe successful foster parents as, respected partners of the child welfare team, loving, nurturing advocates for the children in their care. They also reported foster parents would need to support and mentor birth families, kinships and siblings to aid in creating stability in the life of the child in care (NCTSN, 2012). Successful foster parents may accept the child's early adult behavior, poor academic performance and are able to remain flexible when religious beliefs are discussed (David Rowe, 1976).   These skills mentioned not only by the researchers, but also the foster parents themselves point out the importance and complexity of the skills needed to foster children. Fostering is a job that takes a great deal of dedication, flexibility and willingness to make a difference in the lives of the children in care. As each individual makes the choice to foster for themselves, the agencies job is to find a good fit for the children in their care, by evaluating the skill set each individual who desires to foster possess and comparing it with the needs of the children and the agencies (Henderson and Scannapieco 2006).

Previous research for this literature reviewed focuses on the need for stability in a foster child's life and the effects of instability. Other research has targeted the characteristics of foster parents and the importance those characteristics have on foster children. There appears to be a lack of research on how to identify those characteristics

through assessments during the application process, and how that will help agencies determine if an applicant will be a good fit to foster. With the lack of information on this topic, this research may aid in emphasizing the need for better assessment protocols.

Current Process for Identifying Potential Foster Parents

The Washoe County Department of Social Services governs all foster parents licensing in the county. They govern not only the family foster care providers, but also the therapeutic and rural area foster families. In discussion with this agency, they informed this researcher that they use the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) home study and the AAPI-2 to assess the appropriateness of each individual applying to become a foster parent according to (Jones personal communication, October 2012).

In discussion with the local therapeutic agencies, they stated that they only use the assessments required by the counties licensing department and it might be helpful to add additional assessments to identify effective foster parenting skills (Ray and Rubenstein: personal communication, July 2013). The SAFE home study is a comprehensive assessment used to identify the strengths and limitations of a potential foster parent by assessing 70 psychosocial factors that is demonstrated through research to be necessary in predicting safe and effective adoptive, kin or foster parenting (Retrieved from safehomestudy.org, August 2013).   A Caseworker administers the SAFE home study from each agency. The caseworker will meet with the individual or family on three or four home visits to complete the assessment. The SAFE home study consists of two questionnaires and a psychosocial inventory.

The first questionnaire covers how the individual experienced growing up and the relationships they were part of, such as their relationship with his/her parents, siblings and friends. The second questionnaire covers each individual's relationship with his or her spouse or partner, and systematically and uniformly leads the interviewer through questions pertaining to family functioning. The Psychosocial Inventory covers nine sections completed by the worker in order indicate what information should fit in what section of the assessment (hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/teleconferences/Structured_Analysis_Family_Evaluations.pdf).

As part of the foster parent application process, the information obtained by the worker is compiled into a report that is presented to the licensing department. The information obtained helps the agencies to determine if the individual or family is a good fit for fostering. Currently the SAFE home study is the main resource used by the local therapeutic agencies to determine effectiveness as a foster family (Rubenstein: personal communication, August 2013).

A potential drawback of using the SAFE home study alone is that it needs to be administered by an interviewer. This can leave the applicants on edge and they may not be willing to disclose private information about themselves that might be pertinent to the fostering abilities. Another potential drawback is that it is interpreted by the individual that is administering the assessment which can lead to personal bias, due to the interactions with the family and the ideas created through those interactions (Jones & Rubenstein, personal communication, August 2013).

An additional assessment used only by the local Department of Social Services is the AAPI-2. This is a 40-question assessment administered by a caseworker. This assessment originated in 1979 and has since been revised. The results of the assessment are used to indicate if the individual shows risk factors in five specific parenting and child rearing behaviors: expectations of children, empathy towards children's needs, use of corporal punishment as a means of discipline, parent-child role responsibilities, and children's power and independence (assessingparenting.com/assessment/aapi). They use the results of the assessment to add with the SAFE home study to determine if the agency feels the applicant will be appropriate for fostering (Jones, personal communication, August 2013).

It was discussed that the current process for determining foster parents has worked and is efficient, as it has been used for a great length of time. The addition of the CFFA may bring a wealth of information that is not presently acquired though using the SAFE home study and AAPI-2 alone. In review of the above mentioned assessment protocol, it appears that the CFFA may overlap with some of the information that is currently obtained, but also is able to provide additional information that is not currently discussed.

Casey Foster Family Assessment Description and Review

The CFFA was used in this study to determine if factors of effective foster parent characteristics would be predicted before they are licensed to become foster parents. The Casey Family Programs out of Seattle, Washington created the CFFA. The Casey Family programs, "is the nation's largest operating foundation focused on foster care and

improving the child welfare system" (casey.org/AboutUs/). The Casey Family Programs

was founded in 1966, since then have invested over 1.6 million dollars in improving

foster care in the United States through programs, services, research, and implementation

of effective child welfare practices (Casey.org 2013).

The Casey Family Programs, along with the University of Tennessee – College of

Social Work, developed two separate standardized measures for foster parents and foster

agencies to assess foster parent applicants. The tools created were the Casey Foster

Applicant Inventory (CFAI) and the Casey Home Assessment Protocol (CHAP). These

tools assess a broad range of characteristics. They identify an applicant's individual

strengths and areas for which they may need development and support. The ultimate goal

is to support caseworkers and foster parents to provide quality care to foster children.

These two assessments are administered to the applicants during the application

and selection process (Casey Family Programs, 2013). The CFAI has two sections, one

for the applicant and one for the social worker to fill out. The CHAP is comprised of 19

self-report questionnaires filled out by the applicant online and emailed to the social

worker. The assessments are available in English and Spanish.   The CAFI takes

approximately 20 minutes to complete and the CHAP subscale range from 3 to 40

questions and can take from a few minutes to 20 minutes to complete each subscale. The

19 subscale incorporate nine (9) assessment areas including, cultural competency,

engagement in fostering (motivation), family functioning, family history, and family

resources, fostering readiness, parenting style, physical and mental health and social

support.

The end report that is created from the assessments is used by the agencies to see the strengths of the applicant, along with where the applicant might need support or development. The assessments are used along with the home study and any other form of information gathering techniques used by each individual agency (Casey.org, 2013). Orme et al. (2007) stated that, "The CAFI-A shows promise for use in research and practice, where it might improve decisions about how to support, monitor, and retain foster families and to match, place, and maintain foster children with foster families" (p.77).

Goal of results

The goal of this research was to correlate the results of the CFFA subscales with the EFPS to identify if the subscales were predictive of future effective foster parent characteristics to add to current literature. Knowing from the onset of hiring that an individual will have the skills necessary to care for children in the foster care system may prove to be useful. A child in care has increased risk factors for mental health issues. If placed in a safe secure home those risks may decrease, indicating the more stable a foster parent is within the system, the greater likelihood the child in care may remain stable as well (Ladd and Pettit 2002; Hickson and Clayton 1995; Epstien 1991; Tinsley and Lee, 1989).

Summary

Foster parents are an integral role in creating placement stability for foster children. Finding adequate and effective individuals to take on this role in foster children's lives can be achieved through valid assessments. The service provider's

knowledge of the applicants may be enhanced with the use of these assessments. This knowledge may aid the providers in making a decision as to whether or not an individual will make an effective foster parent or if they need additional training and support from the onset.

This research looked to identify if an additional assessment, the CFFA, in conjunction with the current application requirements, identified effective foster parent characteristics, using a quantitative study with a correlational design. By correlating current foster parent's results of the CFFA subscales with the case mangers results on the EFPS, this quantitative study looked to determine if the CFFA was able to identify future effective foster parent characteristics. The characteristics identified by the CFFA could result in providing agencies with additional information not previously known to them. Increasing training and support to the new foster parent may aid in limiting the number of placement disruptions. The CFFA, along with the currently used SAFE home study and AAPI-2, may add a greater depth of knowledge the service providers do not currently have. With this additional knowledge provided by the CFFA the service, providers may be able to make more informed and educated decisions. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and research design used in this project.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In this quantitative research study, I aimed to identify which of the CFFA subscales were most predictive of future effective foster parent characteristics. I correlated foster parent subscales scores with the EFPS using currently licensed foster parents as identified by Washoe County, Nevada licensing status. Currently the WCDSS is determining potential success of a foster parent applicant using the AAPI-2 and the SAFE home study. In this chapter, I restate the research questions and hypotheses, and discuss the research design, setting and sample, instrumentation and materials, data collection procedures, and measures I took to protect participants.

Research Design and Approach

In this study, I sought to determine if there was an additional assessment available to aid foster care agencies in identifying effective foster parents. Currently, the process starts when an applicant applying for a foster care license. Next, the applicant is contacted, several encounters with the applicant ensue, a background check is completed, the SAFE home study and AAPI-2 are administered, and then the agency decides if the applicant is a good fit to foster. In this study, I correlated the results of the CFFA subscales with the EFPS to determine if the CFFA would be useful in identifying future effective foster parent characteristics. This study resulted in data which revealed the correlation of the CFFA subscales and the EFPS completed by the case managers.

I worked to answer Research Question 1 by completing a correlational analysis. I used the data I collected to rank each foster parent by the scores on the EFPS, and then

correlated those scores to their scores on each area of the CFFA. I expected to find a

positive correlation running product-moment correlation coefficients for each of the

areas of the CFFA completed by the foster parents. The results of the CFFA subtest and

areas were the variables used to determine if the covariance occurred. I completed this

by running each set of data through SPSS to identify the ratio of the variation of the joint

coefficient versus separate variables. The results of each data set indicated the positive or

negative correlation of the two assessments.

I used Research Question 2 to explore if only a few of the areas on the CFFA

were most predictive of future foster parent success. In the literature review, I found that

certain characteristics were predictive of foster parent success. In researching foster

parent characteristics, I determined that high-quality foster parents have characteristics

that included but are not limited to high social supports from friends, high levels of

perspective taking, empathy, hope, and problem-solving skills (Ciarrochi, Randle, Miller

& Dolnicar, 2011). The four areas of the CFFA most descriptive of these characteristics

included: (a) Area 4: Family Functioning; Area 5: Parenting Style; Area 7: Social

Support; and Area 8: Cultural Competence. Zinn (2009) indicated that a caseworker

might look at a foster parent's age and income as indicators of the ability to provide long-

term care. Other foster parent characteristics can aid a caseworker in making

assumptions regarding a family's willingness to participate in service provisions,

willingness to provide home-based services, willingness to work with outside agencies,

and permanency outcomes. Having identified these as most significant for determining

future foster parent effectiveness, I analyzed the correlation of these areas with the EFPS.

If the results indicated that there was a positive correlation between these four areas of the CFFA and the EFPS, I could determine that only some areas and subtests of the CFFA would need to be used to identify future foster parent effectiveness and could eliminate the need to take the whole assessment.

A correlational matrix was conducted which showed, how each of the variable scores of the CFFA related to the rating of the EFPS. The correlational matrix was determined to be effective for this research project, with the goal ultimately to allow screeners to add to or replace the AAPI-2 with the CFFA within the foster parent application process as well as add to current literature. Within the correlation process, I compared the results of the CFFA subscales and those from the EFPS. The assessments results were hand scored and the analysis was completed by running the data through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 for each area of the CFFA with the ranking of the EFPS (Keppel, Saufley Jr., Tokunaga 1992). I examined the patterns and trends in the collected data through an analysis of the correlations of the two assessments. Given the correlational design for this study, I refrained from analyzing cause and effects of the data, but instead focused on the relationships between the results of the two assessments. A correlational design addresses only the data, relationships, and distribution of the variables, and does not manipulate data occurring in the setting from which it is collected (bcps.org/offices/lis/researchcourse/develop.quantatative.html).

A correlational approach was best suited for this research study because I looked to identify the correlation of the results of the CFFA subtest in each area to the ranking assessed by the EFPS with regard to determining future effective foster parent

characteristics. I did not intend to change or manipulate the participant population or variables. I also intended to answer the research questions through correlation of the results of the two assessments administered. Determining if the CFFA subscales are able to predict future effective foster parent characteristics within this participant group aids in determining if it was useful in adding to the current application process for foster parents.

I used regression analysis to statistically identify which of the subtests or groups were more predicative of future foster parent effectiveness, given that the participants had already been foster parents for a number of years. The results of the research may have been different if the study consisted of only new applicants. The goal of choosing current licensed foster parents instead of applicants helped to establish a baseline and to create a ranking from the case managers, resulting in a correlation with the CFFA to be identified.

The goal was to determine if the CFFA is positively or negatively correlated with the EFPS, and which, if any, of the areas or subtests are more highly correlated to the higher-ranking foster parent. I conducted a power analysis, using a one-tailed test at $p<.05$, to detect an effect size of .5 with a power of at least .80, to determine that the study would require a sample size of at least 32 participants.

Research Question(s) and Hypothesis

Data was collected and analyzed to determine if the subscales of the CFFA were more predictive of future foster parent effectiveness by correlating them with the EFPS rating for each current foster parent.

RQ 1. Would foster parents who ranked high on the EFPS completed by the agency case mangers correlate with high scores on the subscales of the foster parents self-reported CFFA?

H1o. There would be a positive correlation between high rankings on the EFPS completed by the agency case managers and the high scores on each of the subscales of the CFFA completed by the foster parents.

H1A. A negative correlation or no correlation between the scores on the CFFA and the ranking provided by the Effective Foster Parent Survey.

RQ 2. Would the results of the research indicate that only certain areas positively correlate with the ranking on the EFPS?

H2o. Of the nine areas of the CFFA it was expected that only the scores on Area 4: Family Functioning, Area 5: Parenting Styles, Area 7: Social Support and Area 8: Cultural Competence will positively correlate with the high ranking on the EFPS.

H2A. A negative correlation or no correlation on each of these four areas of the CFFA with the ranking on the EFPS.

Setting and Sample

The participants included in the present study were part of a larger cohort of 423 licensed foster parents in Washoe County during December 2015 and March 2016 who had an average of at least one year fostering children. These foster parents ranged in age from 23 to 72 years. I selected participants based on their status as current licensed foster parents with at least one year of fostering experience. Age, amount of children serviced,

financial status, race, gender and ethnicity were not factors used to determine participation in this project.

Sample

I gathered the information using current licensed foster parents in three agencies— one local county social services department, and two therapeutic private agencies. These agencies work with the majority of the foster parents in the community. The available willing foster parent and *case manager* participants individually completed their appropriate rating checklist.

The sample of the population was current licensed foster parents in the local community where I reside. Each of the currently licensed individuals were licensed and had at least one year of experience working with foster children in their home.

Setting

The settings in which participants completed the assessments were in their homes or offices. I sent the project flyer to each agency and requested that it be emailed to each participant. The results were mailed back to me for data collection at the completion of the assessment. The case managers for each agency also completed a foster parent rating scale on each participant, and provide that to me via email.

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Population and Agency Identification

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Population

I identified current licensed therapeutic and family foster parents as the population for this research project. I require that they had been with each agency for a minimum of one year so that the agency had a sense of each individual's strengths and

commitment to the foster care system. Participants were able to choose if they would like to be part of the study, and I did not base participation criteria on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, religious preference, or current involvement with the child welfare system.

Agency

The agencies that I chose to participate in this study were the WCDSS and two local private therapeutic agencies that provide higher-level care foster parents to children with more intense behavioral, emotional, or mental health needs.

The WCDSS Child Welfare Department maintains a staff of 215 employees, including case managers, social workers, and administrative staff. The agency works with over 800 children at any given time throughout the year (https://www.washoecounty.us/socsrv). According to the United States Census Bureau (2013), approximately 400,000 people live in Washoe County, and the local child welfare agency works with somewhere around 3% of the local county population (Wenker, personal communication, July 2013). The services provided to the families utilizing the social services department consist of foster care, adoption, foster parent licensing and training, case management, voluntary and involuntary child placement, and community resource referrals. There is a great deal of pressure placed on these agencies to provide to this population the services required by state and county laws.

The two local private therapeutic foster parent agencies that agreed to work on this project maintain the majority of the therapeutic foster parents in this county. Agency A is a company that was established in 1982 in Nevada and California. They now have

32 sub offices covering 22 cities. The mission of this agency it to provide services and support to foster children. They currently run Therapeutic Foster Care, Adoption, Day Treatment, Medically Fragile, Residential Group Homes for chemically dependent adolescents and our Placer County Crisis Resolution Center (kfh.org). They currently serve 28 foster children, have 18 foster homes and employ 30 employees. Agency B was established in 2004 and has centers in both California and Nevada. They currently have a counseling center along with their therapeutic foster and adopt agency. They have 13 foster homes serving 20+ foster children (MCFS.org). Each of these agencies is an integral part of the foster care system here locally. They provide higher level of care and also community service and support to aid this population (Jones: personal communication, October 2012).

Limitations

The limitations to this study that could have influenced the internal, external validity, results or generalizability could have included; a lack of participants, the selection process of the participants, and self-report bias of the participant or the case managers.

There could have been a lack of participation due to the small demographic area and few individuals or families may have been willing to participate in the study. Limitations could have occurred due to participants not being discriminated due to race/ethnicity, sex, age or economic status. These factors could have created a limitation in generalizability. Participants may have been unwilling to participate resulting in a reduced number for the sample size. The participants may have been unwilling to

participate due to many factors, which may have reduced the generalizability and validity of the study.

Due to the assessments used in this study being self-report, another limitation might have been the foster parents or case manager's bias toward themselves or the foster parents. Foster parents may not have answered the questions accurately by increasing or decreasing the number associated with the answer due to the questions asked in the assessments. The case manager's may have answered the assessment questions with bias as to their relationship and experience with the foster family, thus decreasing the external validity of the study.

In order to get as large a sample size as possible, foster parent's years of foster parenting past one year, was not an exclusion or inclusion criteria. This may have created a limitation in that the answers may differ due to length of fostering showing a greater effectiveness rating scale due to longevity. Using foster parents from only the county I reside in may not have reflected the population at large, as it is a small community with limited resources thus reducing generalizability.

Instrumentation and Materials

The participants completed the CFFA as a paper and pencil assessment. The case managers of each agency completed an EFPS, which determined a ranking for each foster parent. The results of the assessment and survey were emailed to me for data collection. The results of these two assessments were analyzed using a multiple regression in SPSS to determine a correlation.

Casey Foster Family Assessments

The CFFA is comprised of two separate assessments, the Casey Foster Applicant Inventory (CFAI) and the Casey Home Assessment Protocol (CHAP). The CFAI is the initial demographic portion of the CFFA. The CFAI is a 74-item questionnaire inquiring about the desire to foster, age, address and other identifying information and takes approximately 20 minutes to complete.

The CHAP is comprised of 19 self-report questionnaires totaling 430 questions within 9 subject areas, filled out by the applicant online and emailed to the worker. The assessments are available in both English and Spanish. The CHAP subscale range from 3 to 40 questions and can take from a few minutes to 20 minutes to complete each subscale. The 18 subscales incorporate nine (9) assessment areas including; Cultural Competency, Engagement in Fostering (Motivation), Family Functioning, Family History, Family Resources, Fostering Readiness, Parenting Style, Physical and Mental Health and Social Support.

The end report that is created from the assessments is used by the agencies to see the strengths of the applicant along with where the applicant might need support or development. The assessments are used along with the home study and any other form of information gathering techniques used by each individual agency (Casey.org, 2013). The CAFI uses the T-score to rate the foster parent's ability to foster. The higher the T-score the higher the potential to foster. Casey Family Programs (2011) state, "T-scores below 50 indicate less potential, and T-scores greater than 50 indicated a greater than average potential. Someone with a T-score below 50 scored below the mean of the normative sample, someone with a T-score of 50 scored at the mean and someone with a T-score

above 50 scored above the mean" (p.2). The CHAP used the Bartlett's test of sphericity [X2(496, N=298) = 1253.14, p<.001] and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (.60) (Orme et al. 2006). These scales were used to support the suitability of the 32 items of the factor analysis.

Effective Foster Parent Survey

The case managers were asked to complete a 9-subject questionnaire to determine a "rank" for each foster parent rating them from 1-10 on each subject. This resulted in a score from 1-120 indicating if the foster parent fell in the "low" (1-40), Medium (41-80) and "high" (81-120). This score was correlated against the results of each area of the CFFA to determine if each area of the CFFA is predictive of future foster parent characteristics.

Data Collection and Analysis

The process of data collection and analysis consisted of agency identification, participant selection, form disbursement, signatures and return, assessment disbursement, completion and return, data collection and analysis. Each of these steps followed the guidelines of the IRB and Walden University research center to provide a safe and creditable research.

To begin I contacted each participating agency. Each agency sent out a flyer to each foster parent in their agency, which was used to recruit participants. For participants that contacted me willing to participate, I contacted each participant via email and with a follow up phone call. In the email, I identified myself, a brief summary of the purpose of and hopes for the study and the requirements of the participants were included. I

followed up via a phone call two days after the email was sent to discuss willingness to participate.

The participants were given one week to determine if they would like to participate in the study. If the applicant was willing to participate a second email was sent to each participant with the welcome letter, research purpose letter, informed consent forms, and a willingness to participate letter, the instructions on how to complete the assessment, the contact information for myself and where to have the results sent to. Once the forms had been signed and returned to myself the assessment was mailed out to each participant. The participants were given a two-week period to complete the assessments.

Once the assessments were mailed out to each participant, I email each agency the consent forms to participate. Once those forms have been received I emailed each agency with instructions on how to complete the EFPS, the survey, a time frame for completion of the survey and where to email it back to when completed. At the completion of the assessments, I contacted each administrator to identify if there were any questions, complaints or undue harm or stress during the assessment process.

Once all the results had been submitted to this researcher, the data was collected and entered into a SPSS program to run a multiple regression analysis. Each subscale was run against the resulting rank of the EFPS completed by the case managers. The results of the data was correlated using a statistical analysis and the results were analyzed. At the completion of the data collection and analysis, this researcher will report the results

and then provide each agency with a copy of the results, recommendations and assessments of each of their participants.

Protection of Participants

The participants were protected by providing them with consent forms and research request forms as well as an in depth understanding of the reasons for and results of the study. Once the participants had been identified, I created a list of participant identification numbers to correlate with the participants, in order to increase confidentiality for the participants from anyone other than myself working on the project. This identification number was represented on both the CFFA and EFPS. This aided in maintaining the participants confidentiality and reduced the risk presented to the participant.

The potential of psychological, economic/professional, physical, and other risks have been fully acknowledged and described to the participant by including on the consent form that, "This type of study may involve some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress or becoming upset due to the effort needed to complete the assessment. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing." The benefits of the study were also listed on the consent form. The assessments and surveys are kept on a pass-coded thumb drive in a safe at my office locked in a keyed safe, where only I have access.

At the termination of the project and after the five-year mark, all assessments and surveys will be deleted and the files destroyed. During the duration of the five years, the information will be kept on a confidential pass-coded thumb drive secured in a safe. The

participants were made aware that their assessment results will remain confidential and coded so their identity remains protected.

Summary

This research looked to identify if the subscales of the CFFA were predictive of future foster parent characteristics. The CFFA subscales were distributed to each participant to complete and the results were correlated with the EFPS rating scale completed by the case managers. If the assessment proves its validity with this population I looked to aid in implementing this assessment with the current assessment set for foster parent applicants. The research was conducted using current licensed foster parents in WCDSS. The participants were recruited through two local therapeutic foster agencies and WCDSS.

The collected data was analyzed to determine if the research questions and hypothesis could be statistically proven. I would have liked to recruit as many participants willing to participate for this study, in order to complete the CFFA subscales and 5-10 case managers to complete the EFPS. The results were analyzed to determine the results of the hypothesis, which could aid in detecting linear or curvilinear relationships (George & Mallery, 2011). The completed research will be presented to each agency and to the Casey Family Organization in Washington.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

In 2014, the WCDSS licensed only 50 of the 400 parents who applied to foster children. The process required by the WCDSS to grant foster care licenses for parents, while extensive and time-consuming, does help to identify applicants with effective foster parenting skills (Franklin, personal communication, June 2015). This process may be further enhanced using CFFA, a comprehensive assessment of key traits of effective foster parents. By identifying the CFFA scales in this project, I intended to provide WCDSS and other social services agencies information to help them more expediently identify foster parents who are likely to provide long-term stable homes for children.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the statistical findings as they pertain to the two research questions. The chapter opens with a restatement of the purpose of the study, followed by the two research questions and their associated null and alternative hypotheses. The subsequent section concerns the data collection procedure, including information on the data collection timeframe, adjustments made to the timeframe, and changes in the data collection process. The chapter continues with two sections that address study preliminary statistics. The first section presents participant demographic descriptive data and the second section provides descriptive statistics of study variables. In the penultimate section, I offer a comprehensive examination of the statistical findings as they pertain to the research questions, and I conclude the chapter with a summary.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if the CFFA was an effective assessment tool for identifying parents who were likely to be effective in providing long-term stable homes for foster children in Washoe County, Nevada. The study participants were foster parents from the WCDSS who had at least one year of foster care experience. In this study, I posed two research questions.

RQ 1. Would foster parents who ranked high on the EFPS completed by the agency case mangers correlate with high scores on the subscales of the foster parents self-reported CFFA?

H1o. A positive correlation between high rankings on the Effective Foster Parent Survey completed by the agency case managers and the high scores on each of the subscales of the CFFA completed by the foster parents

H1A. A negative correlation or no correlation between the scores on the CFFA and the ranking provided by the EFPS.

RQ2. Would the results of the research indicate that only certain areas positively correlate with the ranking on the Effective Foster Parent Survey?

H2o. Of the nine areas of the CFFA it was expected that only the scores on Area 4: Family Functioning, Area 5: Parenting Styles, Area 7: Social Support and Area 8: Cultural Competence would positively correlate with the high ranking on the EFPS.

H2A. A negative correlation or no correlation on each of these four areas of the CFFA with the ranking on the Effective Foster Parent Survey.

Using these two research questions, I studied whether the 19 subscales of the CFFA were predictive of future foster parent effectiveness by examining their statistical

relationships using Pearson bivariate correlations and MLR with an existing valid

assessment instrument, the EFPS. Two groups completed the study assessments, foster

parents answered the CFFA and foster care case managers responded to the EFPS.

Data Collection

Once I was granted Walden University and IRB approval (# 12-03-15-0095673)

to conduct the study, I initiated the study in the beginning of December 2015 with data

collection, which was concluded at the end of March 2016. The first stage of data

collection entailed contacting each participating foster care agency and informing key

personnel (i.e., foster parents' case managers and social workers) that the study was

approved to begin. I sent an email to foster care agencies in the county regarding the

study and its intent; included in the email was a request to "please email blast out the

attached project flyer" to foster parents (see Appendix A). The email blast was sent

twice, once in early December 2015 and again in early January 2016 to foster care agency

case manager and social workers, who in turn provided the project flyer and study

information to the foster families with whom they worked.

Those foster families who were interested in participating in the study contacted

me via email. I contacted each potential participant within 24 hours via email, and sent

them additional information regarding the study and a request for their mailing address to

send the study materials. Once I obtained the foster parents' home address, I mailed to

them, through the U.S. postal mail system, consent forms (one for each parent), the

CFFA assessment instrument, and instructions on how to complete the CFFA (see

Appendix: B). Since the research information was emailed to foster parents, it reduced

the need for a case manager or social worker to choose the participants, and the foster parents were able to contact me directly if they were willing to participate. This likely increased confidentiality. I requested that the participants send the completed consent forms and CFFA assessment instrument back to me through the U.S. postal mail system.

Once I received the completed assessment from the foster parents, I contacted the foster parents' case manager or social worker through email, and identified the foster parents under their supervision. In this email, I requested that the case manager/social worker complete the EFPS for their specific parent client(s) and return the completed EFPS to me. The EFPS was included as an attachment to the email. When I received the completed EFPS assessments, I matched them to the corresponding CFFA assessment instruments.

Adjustments to the Data Collection Process

The data collection was expected to take approximately two weeks. However, because the foster parents had to mail the study materials back to me, I extended the data collection process to the beginning of January 2016. The lengthy data collection process did not result in a large number of returned study materials: only 31 participants had returned all completed materials by the end of January 2016. In order to recruit more participants, in mid-January 2016 I contacted, through email, the foster parents that had voiced interest in participating in the study but who had yet to submit completed study materials. This resulted in the return of 4 completed assessments after a two-week period, for a total of 35 assessments. Subsequently, I sent out a third email to

participants, which resulted in no additional submissions from participants. At the end

data collection in March 2016, only 35 assessments had been returned.

Over the course of data collection, 413 foster parents in the Washoe County area

were emailed the research project flyer. Due to the time frame, small sample population

and lack of interest to participate, I re-evaluated the sample size. A new power analysis

was conducted to determine if the current sample size of $N=35$ could be reduced from

$N=66$, and still maintain a large enough effect size to determine sufficient statistical

results. I conducted two *post hoc* analyses for the evaluation.

The two *post hoc* power analyses, one for Pearson bivariate correlation and one

for MLR, were conducted to determine if analyses could be conducted with the sample of

$N = 35$ participants without inflating the Type I error rate, which would result in the

rejection of the null hypothesis when in fact it was true. For both *post hoc* power

analyses, one-tailed significance was set at $p < .05$, the effect size, r^2, was set to .25, a

large effect, and the sample size was set to $N=35$. The results from the *post hoc* power

analysis showed that the power was a robust .93 for the bivariate correlation analysis.

For the MLR *post hoc* power analysis (with the number of predictor variables set to 5,

based on the number of significant correlations found in correlational analyses), the

power was determined to be .81. Both *post hoc* power analyses confirmed that a sample

of 35 was large enough to ensure adequate power when conducting inferential analyses

for hypothesis testing. I informed the Walden IRB of the three recruitment attempts, and

the IRB agreed that I could stop such attempts. The sample size reduction was approved

by my dissertation committee.

After receiving approval to utilize data from the *N=35* foster parents and their case managers or social workers, I began the data entry and analyses. Data was entered manually into an SPSS 23.0 data file and the data set was reviewed and adjusted for any data entry errors. When the data entry was complete, I filed the assessment instruments in a locked file cabinet at my office that only I can access. The electronic data file was placed on a thumb drive and kept in the same locked file cabinet. The information will be saved for 5 years and then will be destroyed via shredding or deletion in March 2021.

Descriptive Statistics: Study Participants

The final study sample was $N = 35$ foster parents in the WCDSS that had at least one year of fostering experience. Of the 413 foster parents contacted, the *N=35* sample size resulted in a response rate of 9%, which was not unlike the response rates found in other studies conducted with foster parents (see Antle, Frey, Sar, Barbee, & van Zyl, 2010; Greger, Jozefiak, & Myhre, 2013; Rosenwald, 2009)

Descriptive Statistics: Study Variables

Descriptive statistics (i.e., mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores) were conducted on the 19 subscales of the CFFA, the independent variables, and the EFPS, the dependent variable. To determine if the variables met the assumption of normality, I computed $z_{skewness}$ values by dividing the scale skewness value by the skewness standard error (see Stangor, 2014). $Z_{skewness}$ values greater than 2.00 indicate that the variable shows a non-normal distribution of scores (Stangor, 2014). Descriptive statistics for the 28 subscales of the CFFA were calculated, with results presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics: CFFA Subscale (N = 35)

	M	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*	$Z_{Skewness}$
Available Time Scale	69.87	14.52	45.00	95.00	0.12
Alcohol Use Disorder Scale	1.31	1.83	.00	7.00	1.93
Cultural Competency Scale	91.20	18.76	68.00	135.00	0.95
CES-D Depression Inventory	5.37	5.78	.00	21.00	1.75
Cultural Receptivity in Fostering Scale	80.54	14.61	61.00	100.00	0.11
Foster Parent Role Performance Scale - Parenting	77.05	9.32	54.35	90.22	-0.40
Foster Parent Role Performance Scale - Agency	45.34	17.71	5.88	77.94	-0.11
Help with Fostering Scale - Extended Kin	29.76	26.68	.00	83.33	0.87
Help with Fostering Scale - Place of Worship	25.48	29.42	.00	83.33	0.81
Help with Fostering Scale - Professional	48.92	17.63	12.12	75.76	-0.55
Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale	18.21	3.47	9.00	21.00	-1.48
Kansas Parenting Satisfaction Scale	14.09	.74	13.00	15.00	-0.14
Overt Interpersonal Hostility Scale	7.41	1.68	6.00	12.00	1.20
Parental Acceptance Scale	2.85	.15	2.50	3.00	-0.87
Parent Bonding Instrument (Mother)-Care	29.06	6.74	13.00	36.00	-0.88
Parent Bonding Instrument (Mother)-Overprotective	8.49	6.55	.00	26.00	1.19
Parent Bonding Instrument (Father)-Care	24.54	9.33	4.00	36.00	-0.63
Parent Bonding Instrument (Father)-Overprotective	10.17	6.05	4.00	25.00	1.23
Personal Dedication to Fostering Scale	81.32	5.76	64.81	94.44	-0.51
Receptivity to Birth Family Connections Scale	75.63	11.67	57.14	100.00	0.30
Short Hardiness Scale	32.54	5.73	12.00	42.00	-0.90
Social Readjustment Rating Scale	92.57	65.95	.00	245.00	0.79
Willingness to Foster-Children w/ EMD	51.01	17.66	25.83	82.50	0.32
Willingness to Foster-Children w/ Spec Needs	59.24	12.29	26.32	82.46	-0.44
Willingness to Foster-Children Six or Older	64.44	33.75	.00	100.00	-0.57
Willingness to Foster-Children Less than Six	50.95	31.56	.00	100.00	0.51
Willingness to Foster-RRCS Minority Children	81.67	18.50	50.00	100.00	-0.54
Effective Foster Parent Survey	83.77	6.45	70.00	95.00	-0.08

The 19 CFFA scales, which I used as independent variables in the study, collectively measured nine constructs: (a) engagement in fostering was assessed using the Reason for Fostering scale (RFI), (b) family history was assessed using the Parent Bonding Instrument (PBI), (c) physical and mental health was assessed using the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depressed Mood (CES-D), the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), the Short Hardiness Scale (SHS), and the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS), (d) family functioning was assessed using the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS) and the Overt Interparental Hostility scale (OIH), (e) parenting styles was assessed using the Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale (KPS) and the Parental Acceptance Scale (PAS), (f) family resources was assessed using the Available time Scale (ATS) , (g) social support was assessed using the Help with Fostering Inventory (HFI), (h) cultural competency was assessed using the Cultural Competency Scale (CCS) and the Cultural Receptivity in Fostering Scale (CRFS), and (i) foster readiness was assessed using the Foster Parent Role Performance Scale (FPRPS), the Willingness to Foster Scale (WFS), the Personal Dedication to Foster Scale (PDFS) and the Receptivity to Birth Family Connections Scale (RBFCS).

The remaining CFFA measures were assessments that contained subscales. Specifically, the Family Parent Role Performance Scale (FPRP) had two subscales, the FPRP parenting subscale and FPRP agency subscale. The Help with Fostering Scale (HFS) was comprised of three subscales that measured foster parents' perceived receipt of support from their extended kin, their place of worship, and professional providers.

The Parent Bonding Instrument (PBI) was completed by the mother and father, with two subscales (care and overprotective) for each parent. The Willingness to Foster Children (WFC) scale inquired as to whether foster parents were willing to foster specific types of children: (a) those with emotional and behavioral issues, (b) special needs children, (c) children ages six years and older, (d) children younger than six years of age, and (e) children from different race, religion, culture, or gender identities than those of the foster parent. All assessment had acceptable skewness values, indicating normality in the distribution of scale scores.

Results for the EFPS are presented in Table 2. The mean EFPS score for the study participants was 83.77 (SD = 6.45), which placed them in the "highly effective" category for foster parents. The high EFPS mean score of study participants suggested that they were representative of an above average class of foster parents and represented a small percentage of the overall population of foster parents. Despite the high mean score and small sample size, the $z_{skewness}$ value was a very acceptable -0.08.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics: Effective Foster Parent Survey (EFPS) (N = 35)

	M	SD	Min	Max	$Z_{Skewness}$
Effective Foster Parent Survey (EFPS)	83.77	6.45	70.00	95.00	-0.08

Note. M = mean, SD = standard deviation, Min = minimum score, Max = maximum score, $Z_{skewness}$ = skewness/skewness standard error. The possible range of scores on the EFPS is 1 to 120.

Results

The first research question of the study was "Will foster parents who ranked high on the Effective Foster Parent Survey completed by the agency case mangers correlate

with high scores on the subscales of the foster parents self-reported CFFA?" To address

this question, Pearson bivariate correlations were conducted between the 19 CFFA scales

and the EFPS, with results presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Pearson Bivariate Correlations: CFFA Scales & EFPS (N = 35)

	EFPS
Available Time Scale	.37*
Alcohol Use Disorder Scale	.15
Cultural Competency Scale	.12
CES-D Depression Inventory	.02
Cultural Receptivity in Fostering Scale	.05
Foster Parent Role Performance – Parenting Scale	.39*
Foster Parent Role Performance – Agency Scale	-.56***
Help with Fostering – Extended Kin Scale	.04
Help with Fostering – Place of Worship Scale	.21
Help with Fostering – Professional Scale	-.03
Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale	-.35
Kansas Parenting Satisfaction Scale	-.00
Overt Interpersonal Hostility Scale	-.05
Parental Acceptance Scale	-.26
Parent Bonding (Mother) – Care Scale	.18
Parent Bonding (Mother) – Overprotective Scale	.18
Parent Bonding (Father) – Care Scale	-.07
Parent Bonding (Father) – Overprotective Scale	.19
Personal Dedication to Fostering Scale	.39*
Receptivity to Birth Family Connections Scale	.00
Short Hardiness Scale	-.28
Social Readjustment Rating Scale	.08
Willingness to Foster Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders	-.35
Willingness to Foster Children with Special Needs	.03
Willingness to Foster Children Age Six or Older	.13
Willingness to Foster Children Less than Age Six	.19
Willingness to Foster Racial, Religious, Cultural or Sexual Minority Children	.39*

Note. *$p < .05$; ***$p < .001$

Results from the Pearson bivariate correlation analyses revealed that five CFFA

scales were significantly associated with EFPS scores at *$p < .05$*. The Available Time

Scale was positively correlated with the EFPS, $r(35) = .37$, $p = .030.$, indicating that

foster parents who perceived having more time to take care of foster children were

considered to be more effective foster parents by their case manager/social worker. The

FPRP parenting subscale was positively correlated with the EFPS, $r(35) = .37$, $p = .030$.

Foster parents who perceived that they had higher levels of responsibility for the foster

child than the foster care agency did were rated as more effective at fostering by their

case manager/social worker. The strongest association was found between the FPRP

agency subscale and the EFPS, $r(35) = -.56$, $p < .001$. Foster parents who perceived that

the foster care agency had *lower* levels of responsibility for the foster child than did the

foster care parents were considered to be more effective foster parents by their case

manager/social worker. The Personal Dedication to Fostering Scale was significantly

associated with the EFPS, $r(35) = .39$, $p = .021$. Foster parents who reported higher

levels of dedication to fostering were considered to be more effective foster parents by

their case manager/social worker. Finally, foster parents who were more willing to take

foster children who were of different racial, religious, cultural, or sexual identity

backgrounds than themselves were considered to be more effective at fostering by their

case manager/social worker. Based on the significant findings, the null hypothesis for the

first research question was rejected.

The second research question was "Will the results of the research indicate that

only certain areas positively correlate with the ranking on the Effective Foster Parent

Survey?" To address this question, a MLR was conducted with the five significant CFFA

scales entered collectively in the first model of the MLR. Results from the MLR are

presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

Multiple Linear Regression: ATS, FPSP-P, FPSP-A, PDFS, and WTF-RRCSM Predicting (EFPS) (N = 35)

		Model 1	
	B	*SE B*	*β*
Available Time Scale	.057	.074	.128
FPSP Parenting Subscale	.099	.123	.143
FPSP Agency Subscale	-.140	.069	-.383*
Personal Dedication to Fostering Scale	.307	.167	.274
Willingness to Foster (RRCSM) Subscale	.033	.060	.094

F	4.98
p	.002
R²	.462

Note. *p < .05

The overall MLR model was significant, $F(5,29) = 4.98$, $p = .002$, $R^2 = .462$.

based on the R^2 of .462. The five independent variables explained about 50% of the

variance in effective foster parenting scores, a large effect size. An examination of the

individual significance of each predictor showed that only one variable, the FPSP agency

subscale, was a significant predictor of EFPS. This result can be interpreted as showing

that foster parents who perceived that the foster care agency should have *lower* levels of

responsibility for the foster child than the foster care parents themselves were considered

to be more effective foster parents by their case manager/social worker. Based on the

significant findings for MLR, the null hypothesis for the second research question was rejected.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter 4 was to discuss the statistical results of the two research questions presented in this study. The chapter opened with sections that explained the purpose of the study and the data collection procedures, including necessary changes to the procedures. In this chapter, information was provided on the 35 study participants, which was then followed by descriptive information on the study variables. The research questions and associated null and alternative hypotheses were restated, and results from the analyses, namely, Pearson bivariate correlations and an MLR, were presented and discussed. The purpose of the research was not only to determine if the CFFA was effective in determining future foster parent effectiveness, but also to assess *which* CFFA scales were most predictive of future foster parent effectiveness.

The descriptive statistics regarding the EFPS indicated that case managers and social workers identified the foster parents in the study as being highly effective. Results from the Pearson bivariate correlational analyses showed that five CFFA scales were significantly associated with EFPS scores. These scales overwhelmingly pertained to constructs related to foster parents' sense of commitment and responsibility to foster children. Results from the MLR documented that foster parents who perceived that the foster care agency should have *lower* levels of responsibility for the foster child than the foster care parents themselves were considered to be more effective foster parents by their case manager/social worker. The significant findings for both analyses resulted in

the rejection of the null hypotheses for the two research questions. The interpretations,

limitations, recommendations, and implications of these findings will be discussed in

chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

While the number of children in the American foster care system declined between 2000 and 2010, this trend reversed in 2011, with the number of children in the foster care system increasing from 396,000 in 2011 to 415,000 in 2014 (AFCARS, 2015). The national statistics on foster children and foster parents parallel those seen in the state of Nevada, including Washoe County, the geographical area under study. The number of children placed in foster care increased from 503 in 2011, to 771 in 2014, for Washoe County (Franklin, personal communication, June 2015). In contrast, the number of licensed foster homes in Washoe County has remained relatively steady between 2011, with 323 foster families, and 2014, with 332 foster families (Franklin, personal communication, June 2015).

The body of empirical work on highly effective *parenting* is vast and diverse (Belsky & de Haan, 2011; Henry, Morris, & Harrist, 2015; Richter, 2015). Not only has this body of literature greatly enhanced scholarly knowledge on parenting, it has advanced policy and practices that have greatly affected the lives of parents and children (Belsky & de Haan, 2011; Henry et al., 2015; Richter, 2015). The same cannot be said for the theoretical and empirical work on highly effective *foster parenting* (Wildeman & Waldfogel, 2014). The absence of a comprehensive body of literature on the characteristics of effective foster parents is a result of the empirical attention given to the overall topic of foster care (Wildeman & Waldfogel, 2014).

Studies where foster care was mentioned somewhere in the text that was published between 1973 and 2012 in the top three peer-reviewed journals in the fields of sociology, psychology, and social work was researched by Waldeman and Waldfogel (2014). Of the studies published in the top three social work journals between 1973 and 2012, 28.6% addressed foster care topics. The percentage of foster care studies in the top three sociology and psychology journals were similar, 1.1% and 0.9%, respectively (Waldeman & Waldfogel, 2014).

The purpose of this research study was to address this gap in the literature by determining the significant associations between the subscales that comprise the CFFA and effective foster parenting, as measured by case managers and social workers. The purpose of this chapter is to review and discuss the findings of the study. The chapter opens with a summary of the key findings, and continues with two sections on my interpretation of the findings. In the first section, I address the findings with regard to prior literature; and in the second section, I examine findings with regard to the theoretical framework used in this study, Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems model. Next I present a section in which I review study limitations, followed by sections which I provide recommendations for future research on the study topic and discuss implications for practice and positive social change. The chapter ends with a conclusion section.

Summary of Key Findings

I conducted this study between December 2015 and March 2016 with 35 foster parents within WCDSS who had at least one year of foster care experience. *Post hoc*

power analyses confirmed that a sample of 35 was large enough to ensure adequate power when conducting inferential analyses for hypothesis testing. In this study, I addressed two research questions. The first research question was, "Would foster parents who ranked high on the EFPS completed by the agency case mangers correlate with high scores on the subscales of the foster parents self-reported CFFA?" The second research question was, "Would the results of the research indicate that only certain areas positively correlate with the ranking on the EFPS?" Foster parents completed the CFFA, a 19-scale instrument that assessed a variety of foster parent characteristics, and the foster parents' case managers and social workers answered the EFPS. This methodology eliminated common method variance and response bias, both of which negatively affect the internal validity of the study (Stangor, 2014).

The two areas of the CFFA that the results most highly correlated with effective foster parenting were Area 6: Family Resources, and Area 9: Fostering Readiness. Under these two areas were the subscales ATS, FPRP-P and FPRP-A, WTFS and the PDFS. The results indicated that in order to successfully foster children, applicants must have enough resources to meet the existing needs of the family, and must have enough time to provide attention to each child. In addition, an applicant needs to demonstrate a clear understanding of the role the foster parent takes with the child and the agency. This relates positively to foster parents satisfaction and retention (Casey, 2012).

Interpretation of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine the foster parent qualities, as measured by the CFFA, that were significantly associated with effective fostering, as

reported by foster care case managers and social workers. Results from this study have both empirical and theoretical implications. I address these implications in the following sections.

Interpretation of the Findings: Prior Empirical Literature

My interpretation of the results further supports the research conducted by Buehler, Cox, and Cuddleback (2003) which identified characteristics believed to be influential in successful fostering. These characteristics included faith or support from church, a deep concern for children, a high level of tolerance, a strong cooperative marriage for married foster parents, and an organized and routine daily life so they are able to accommodate the needs of the children while remaining flexible enough to accommodate their external needs and agency requirements.

A benefit of the CFFA is that it includes measures on the above-mentioned parenting qualities, which allows for an inclusive yet thorough assessment of foster parent characteristics (Cuddeback, Buehler, Orme, & Le Prohn, 2007; Delgado & Pinto, 2011). By focusing on the key fostering qualities as measured by the CFFA that were significantly associated with effective foster parenting, I designed this study to help address the empirical concern of reducing the number of items and scales on the CFFA, as cited by Cuddeback et al. (2007) and Delgado and Pinto (2011). In the studies by Cuddeback et al. (2007) and Delgado and Pinto (2011), a substantial number of items, 73 and 43, respectively, had to be removed from the CFFA assessment, based on exploratory factor analysis (EFA) results, in order for the CFFA to be psychometrically sound.

In order to reduce the number of CFFA subscales, it is necessary to assess similarity in findings between those found in this study and those found in other studies examining effective foster parent characteristics. Cherry and Orme (2015) and Orme and Cherry (2015) included samples of foster parents that were identified as being highly effective by their case manager/social worker, as I did in this study. Cherry and Orme (2013) assessed the traits of what they termed the "vital few," foster mothers who had a history of successful fostering. These vital few foster mothers reported having available time to foster, as measured by the ATS, the same scale I used in this study (Cherry & Orme, 2013). Having available time, measured using the ATS, was significantly associated with desirable parenting behaviors in the study by Cherry, Orme, and Rhodes (2009). Orme and Cherry (2015) further found that the "vital few" foster parents were more willing to foster children of different racial, ethnic, religious, or sexual identity backgrounds as themselves, which was a significant finding in this study. The importance of willingness to foster children of different racial, ethnic, religious, or sexual identity backgrounds has increasingly become recognized as a key element of effective foster parenting (Brown, Anderson, & Rodgers, 2016; Orme, Cherry, & Cox, 2013; Coakley & Gruber, 2015; Skilbred, Iversen, & Moldestad, 2016).

In contrast to less effective foster parents, highly effective foster parents had higher levels of perspective taking regarding the foster care experience, had stronger relationships with the foster care agency, and demonstrated sufficient self-care skills (Ciarrochi et al., 2011 and Brown, 2007). These results correspond to the factors of foster parent role performance significantly associated with highly effective foster parents

that I found in this study. What differed in findings from this and the studies by Ciarrochi et al. (2011) and Brown (2007) was the lack of significant associations between social support systems and effective foster parenting.

Interpretation of Findings: Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological theory was selected as the guiding framework for this study due to its focus on the child and his/her interactions with the social environment as measured on the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Orme and Buehler (2001) stated that Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological theory was an effective model of "determinants of parenting" as it theorized that parenting was a "central, proximal socialization influence in a children's development and that both child and parental characteristics shape parenting" (p. 4). Using Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecology theory as a foundation for this research helped 1) in understanding why identifying the characteristics of a foster parent aids in understanding his or her ability to support a child's needs, and 2) further helped to identify factors that have been and are currently important for determining effective foster parents. This aided in determining if the CFFA focused on factors that would indeed predict effective foster parents.

Results from this study demonstrated the importance of the parent within the child's microsystem, or more specifically, the "determinants of parenting" that were

demonstrative of effective fostering (Orme & Buehler, 2001, p. 4). The characteristics associated with effective fostering on the foster parent microsystem level were having available time to foster [ATS], being personally dedicated to fostering [PDFS], and willingness to foster children of differing racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual identity backgrounds [WFS]. Results from this study further emphasized the important interactions between the foster parent and the foster care agency [FPRP], which is a component of the foster child's mesosystem, a system which "comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). That is, effective fostering was significantly associated with foster parents' attitudes that they were more responsible for the caretaking of the foster child than was the foster care agency. While this study did not test the theoretical adequacy of the exosystem and macrosystem in influencing foster parent or foster child outcomes, the findings from this study can inform foster parent recruitment and selection policies and procedures that exist on these system levels.

Limitations of the Study

As with all studies, this study has some limitations. The main limitation was the low sample size of 35 foster parents. Only 8.5% of the total number of 413 foster parents currently licensed by the WCDSS had at least one year of foster care experience. Increasing the population size may aid in greater generalizability of foster parents in different counties and states. The sample ended up including only highly effective foster parents as determined by the EFPS. This further decreased the generalizability of findings and created a restricted range of correlational data, which limited the data collected from

this population by a certain criterion. A greater level of generalizability would have resulted from this study if it included foster parents who scored at all levels, including in the below average range, on the EFPS. The inclusion of less effective foster parents would have allowed for the greater discrimination of foster parent characteristics by distinguishing those characteristics that differed across less versus highly effective foster parent groups.

Recommendations

This study has applied and empirical recommendations. The applied recommendations associated with this study include discussing with WCDSS and the local therapeutic agencies the results of this study. It would be my recommendation that each agency test the validity of the study results, which determined that five scales of the CFFA were most influential in determining effective fostering, through further utilization, assessment, and empirical examination. If the agencies felt it would be an appropriate fit, I would recommend administering the five subtest associated with the highest significance as determined by this study to each foster parent applicant. This would decrease the amount of time spent collecting data regarding future foster parent effectiveness in turn saving money which may decrease the time spent in the application process.

It is well established that a depth of empirical literature on effective foster parents exists (Wildeman & Waldfogel, 2014). Replication studies are a necessity: further

research on the CFFA and its association with effective fostering needs to be conducted using samples that are both larger and more diverse (e.g., with regard to family socioeconomic status, foster parent and foster child race and ethnicity, geographical location of foster families; length of time spent foster parents have fostered, length of time the child has spent in foster care, the age of the foster child). Studies conducted with larger samples of foster parents would help to confirm or disprove results in this study. Research conducted with participants from different cultural, ethnic and racial communities would increase the empirical understanding of effective foster parent traits. Notably, the CFFA is offered in Spanish. Studies are necessary to determine if results from studies conducted with Spanish-speaking foster parents yield the same results found in this study. Longitudinal studies on the CFFA are important to determine if effective foster parent characteristics remain consistent or change over the duration of the foster parents' tenure in fostering. Further, studies that examine the associations between CFFA factors and dependent variables associated with effective fostering, such as foster parents' satisfaction with fostering and intention to continue to foster and foster children's socioemotional, educational, and health outcomes.

Implications of Social Change

The implications for social change for the agency was the main focus of this research. Currently the WCDSS recruits, licenses and maintains licensing for all foster parents in the county. There is a high turnover rate of foster parents each year for different reasons, and this study aided the county in identifying the characteristics of effective foster parent applicants. If the CFFA is able to predict future foster parent

effectiveness, this may reduce the turnover rate and in turn create continued placement stability for foster children. If there was a reduction in foster parent turnover, this may decrease strain on continual foster parent recruitment to cover the foster parents that have left.

The intent of using the CFFA is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of foster parent applicants (Cuddleback et al., 2007; Delgado & Pinto, 2011). This may help to identify if and what trainings may need to be taught in order to increase the success of fostering children in the community. The impact on social change for each individual foster parent included receiving more training, which in turn helps them to provide a higher level of care, increasing stability for foster children. If the assessment is able to predict effective foster parent characteristics, further research may include identifying if a foster parent who was identified through the CFFA as having weaknesses in certain areas, and provided additional training, increase the placement stability for foster children in their home. In providing additional training and support to incoming foster parents, they may get additional understanding of interpersonal relationships, family functiong, child maltreatment, parent and substance abuse, and providing stability (Henderson and Scannapieco, 2006). This in turn increasing stability for the foster parent(s) and the children placed in their home.

Further, family social change may occur if the CFFA identifies weaknesses within the family unit due to answers identified in the assessment. If that occurs it could help the agencies provide support and training to the families in order to increase the homeostasis, in turn providing placement stability to foster children within their home.

Another advantage to social change is the support and training may aid the family

members in increasing their contentment with fostering, which may increase the length of

time they foster.

Conclusion

This research project aimed to identify which sub-scales of the Casey Foster

Family Assessment (CFFA) were most predictive of successful future foster parent

characteristics, in order to add to the assessment and recruitment process of foster parents

in Washoe County. As stated previously, providing effective foster care in the United

States will continue to be a challenge for many agencies responsible for the care of

children removed due to abuse or neglect (Henderson & Scannapieco, 2006).

Determining an effective match of a foster child and foster parent relies heavily on

whether a foster parent can create a safe and nurturing environment (McClung, 2007).

With the increase of children in foster care and the amount of emotional discord that

comes from being removed from their homes, foster parents need to provide stability to

decrease mental health risks for these children (Becker, 2006).

Adding an additional assessment to the current foster parent application process

may add a key component to gaining additional information to identify future effective

foster parent characteristics. This study adds value to the current research in that there

are many studies on the effects of foster parents on foster children, the mental health risks

of children in care and many others, but little research had been conducted on

assessments for identifying future effective foster parent characteristics. Assessments

can play an important role when trying to decide if a foster parent applicant will be a

good fit to foster. The more knowledge gained during the application process the more likely an agency can make a stronger educated decision about an applicant's strengths, weaknesses, and the type of children that would fit best in their home if they were chosen to foster.

In conclusion, placing a child in a home with qualified and effective foster parents may lead to fewer placement disruptions and/or improvements in the child's life. This may aid in reducing the continued risks of the behavioral and emotional issues that arise from continued placement changes. Identifying foster parents with effective foster parenting skills and providing them with support and training has the potential to increase the likelihood that a child will stay in one home instead of moving repeatedly.

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Research Project Needs foster Parent Participants

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Needed One hour of your time!!

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This will help foster care agencies with recruiting and assessing Future incoming foster parents

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Be the change you want to see in the world (or community in our case☺ ~ Gandhi

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Foster Parents + Research=

Volunteers needed

OCT-NOV 2015

IDENTIFYING FUTURE FOSTER PARENT EFFECTIVENESS WITH USING THE CASEY FOSTER FAMILY ASSESSMENT

Jennifer Grimes-Vawters a Doctoral Student at Walden University is looking for participants to complete the Casey Foster Family Assessment for her research project. If you would like to donate an hour of your time and participate in her research project please contact her via email at jgrim001@waldenu.edu by

Jennifer Grimes-Vawters

Appendix B: Instructions for Completing the Assessments

Instructions for completing the Casey Foster Family Assessment (Foster Parents)

- The Casey Foster Family Assessment consists of 9 areas with 18 subtests.
- Each subtest consists of 3 to 43 questions. In total, there are 417 questions.
- Each test has a mother and father section. Please fill out the portion that applies to you only.
- Please read each question carefully and check which answer fits you best.
- Depending on your reading speed, the test usually takes around an hour or less to complete.
- Please return this assessment within **one week** of receipt to receive your gift card.
- When finished with the assessment please return it in the pre-paid postage envelope to Jennifer.
- Once your assessment is received, I will send you your gift card to the address requested.

Thank you so much for your time and support with this project,

Jennifer Grimes-Vawters

Instructions for completing Effective Foster Parent Survey (Case Mangers/Social Workers)

- Effective Foster Parent Survey consist of 48 questions.
- **Please answer the questions in the PDF format of assessment and save it.**
- Please read each question carefully and pick the answer that best suits the foster parent you work with.
- You will need to know the age, ethnicity, level of education, years fostering, employment other than fostering, total annual income and number of dependents for each foster parent(s).
- The assessment should take no longer then 10-15 minutes depending on reading speed for each foster parent(s).
- Please return the assessment within one week of receipt of the assessment.
- **Once the assessment is finished if you could email it to Jennifer at jgrim001@waldenu.edu,** I would greatly appreciate it.
- I will send an email receipt that I received your assessment.

Thank you so much for your time and support with this project,

Jennifer Grimes-Vawters