THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Foster Parents' Beliefs about Relationship Formation with Adolescents: Scale Development and Initial Evaluation

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of the

Department of Psychology

School of Arts and Sciences

Of The Catholic University of America

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Catherine A. Rathman

Washington, DC

2012

Foster Parents' Beliefs about Relationship Formation with Adolescents: Scale Development and Initial Evaluation

Catherine A. Rathman, Ph.D.

Director: Barry M. Wagner, Ph.D.

A new measure of foster parents' beliefs about relationship formation with adolescent foster youth was developed in this two-part study. First, scale items were developed through consultation with foster care experts and review of past qualitative research with foster parents. Second, the psychometric properties of the new measure were tested with a sample of 134 foster parents who currently had a foster child between the ages of 11 and 17 years in their care. Data were gathered through an anonymous online survey. An exploratory factory analysis was used to determine the scale's underlying structure. The Beliefs about Foster Parenting Scale (BFPS) is comprised of four subscales: (1) emotional connection, (2) understanding the child, (3) reasons for misbehavior, and (4) flexible commitment. The emotional connection subscale measures foster parents' beliefs about how quickly and easily a close foster parent-child relationship can develop. The understanding the child subscale measures foster parents' beliefs about how thoroughly they can understand and resolve foster youth problems. The reasons for misbehavior subscale measures foster parents' generalized beliefs about the reasons for foster youth misbehavior. The flexible commitment subscale measures foster parents' beliefs about the importance of monitoring and tending to their own health

and well-being. The subscales demonstrated good internal consistency, reliability, and relationships with other measures of parenting behaviors, providing support for their construct validity. The BFPS represents a potentially useful tool for developing a better understanding of foster parents' experiences in caring for foster youth and for improving training and support programs for foster parents.

This dissertation by Catherine A. Rathman fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in clinical psychology approved by Barry M. Wagner, Ph.D. as Director, and by Sandra Barrueco, Ph.D. and Brendan Rich, Ph.D. as Readers.

_____

Barry M. Wagner, Ph.D., Director

_____

Sandra Barrueco, Ph.D., Reader

_____

Brendan Rich, Ph.D., Reader

Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction and Literature Review 1
- Overview of Family Foster Care 4
- Foster Parenting Adolescents 7
- Beliefs about Parenting 16
- Assessing Foster Parenting 17
- Construct Validity: Parenting Characteristics Relevant for Foster Parenting 20
- Purpose of the Present Study 26

Chapter II: General Method 29
- Item Pool 29
- Face and Content Validity 29
- Factor Structure 31
- Reliability 35
- Construct Validity 36

Chapter III: Study 1, Face and Content Validity of BFPS Items 38
- Participants 38
- Item Development 38
- Procedure 41
- Results and Discussion 41

Chapter IV: Study 2, Psychometric Properties of BFPS 43
- Participants 43
- Measures 45
- Procedure 49
- Results and Discussion 50

Chapter V: General Discussion 69
- Interpretation and Integration 69
- Contributions and Implications 91
- Limitations 96
- Future Directions 98
- Conclusions 100

Appendix A: Expert Panel Feedback Form 102
Appendix B: Beliefs about Foster Parenting Scale 108
Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer 112
Appendix D: Demographic Questionnaire 113
Appendix E: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire 116
Appendix F: Maternal Emotional Styles Questionnaire 117
Appendix G: Parental Stress Scale 118
Appendix H: Satisfaction with Foster Parenting Inventory 119
Appendix I: Consent Form 120
Appendix J: Pearson Product-Moment Bivariate Correlation Matrix for 37 Items 122
Appendix K: Communalities for 37 Items 125
Appendix L: Reliability Statistics for BFPS Subscales 126
Appendix M: Moderator Analyses of Foster Parent Experience 128
Appendix N: Reliability Statistics for MESQ Subscales 129
References 130

Table of Figures and Tables

Table 1: Frequency Data of Test Sample Demographic Variables 44
Table 2: Factor Eigenvalues and Percentages of Variance Explained for 60 Items 51
Figure 1: Scree Plot for Eigenvalues for 60 Items 52
Figure 2: Scree Plot for Eigenvalues for 37 Items 54
Table 3: Factor Eigenvalues and Percentage of Variance Explained for 37 Items 55
Table 4: Pattern Matrix of Item Factor Loadings for the Four-Factor Solution 56
Table 5: Factor Correlation Matrix for the Four-Factor Solution 57
Table 6: BFPS Subscale Descriptive Statistics and Patten of Group Responses 60
Table 7: Differences in BFPS Subscale Mean Scores by Parent Demographics 62
Table 8: Differences in BFPS Subscale Mean Scores by Child Demographics 62
Table 9: Correlations between BFPS Subscales and Demographic Variables 63
Table 10: Intercorrelations of Other Parenting Constructs 65
Table 11: Correlations between BFPS Subscales and Other Parenting Constructs 66
Table 12: Standardized Coefficients for BFPS Subscale Prediction of Other Parenting Constructs 67

Chapter I: Introduction and Literature Review

Although ideally families are a source of love and support, situations can and do occur in which caregivers struggle to provide adequate care for children. Whether the adversity arises from uncontrollable stressful circumstances or intentional neglect of basic health and safety, communities have a responsibility to protect children, who cannot advocate for their own needs. Child welfare agencies and other child-focused professionals play an integral role in monitoring and responding to families in need. Social workers evaluate the safety and competency of parents, therapists and pediatricians care for children's health, and judges and lawyers oversee the entire child welfare process to ensure the protection of everyone's rights. Within this cast of dedicated professionals, the needs of one vital team member often are regrettably overlooked: the foster parent.

When the maintenance of basic family safety is no longer possible, child welfare professionals must place children in foster families. The foster parent must be prepared to care for a child who may be experiencing intense socioemotional and/or health problems on an around-the-clock basis for an undetermined amount of time. While foster parents are part of a team of professionals caring for a particular child, they are on the front line of managing child symptoms, monitoring educational progress, and obtaining healthcare. Many foster parents tirelessly care for their foster children, but when unsupported and not fully considered in decision-making, a large number decide to leave foster care (Rhodes, Orme, & Buehler, 2001).

While the needs of all foster parents must be attended to, foster parents of adolescents may have a particularly challenging task. Parenting strategies must change to meet the changing needs of children across development. The developmental struggles for independence and autonomy that occur during adolescence can challenge parents to maintain sensitivity and engagement. Given past exposure to dysfunctional parenting, foster teens are more likely to experience emotional and behavioral problems, which can further challenge parenting. A limited history of successful negotiation between foster parent and teen, combined with the increasingly risky behavior in which troubled teens may engage, make foster parents of teenagers particularly vulnerable to stress and role dissatisfaction.

In one sample, approximately 60% of foster parents indicated that they had considered leaving foster care at some point in their service (Rodger, Cummings, & Leschied, 2006). Furthermore, foster parents who experienced stress or problems in psychosocial functioning provided lower quality care, and their foster adolescents made less progress than children whose foster parents were not strained in such ways (Farmer, Lipscombe, & Moyers, 2005). According to one mail survey, almost one-half of the foster parents sampled had experienced a placement breakdown (i.e., a placement that ends for reasons not expected in the service plan) and about one-third had experienced severe family tensions due to a difficult foster placement (Wilson, Sinclair, & Gibbs, 2000). Furthermore, foster parents who had experienced placement disruptions were more likely to report symptoms of strain, lower satisfaction, and that they had considered quitting foster care.

As will be described in more detail below, the task of foster parenting is complex and challenging. Unfortunately, little research has been completed that explores how foster parents are able to adapt successfully to the unique context of foster care. It is generally thought that building a strong emotional connection with the teenager while maintaining firm control is central to successful foster parent-child relationships, just as it is in other parent-adolescent relationships (Cummings, Davies, & Campbell, 2000). However, successful foster parenting is not a well investigated topic. Further, recent research suggests that foster parents' beliefs about the parent-child relationship goal, about their role as a foster parent, and about the causes of foster children's problem behaviors, may all have an important influence on their own motivation to remain in the foster parent role as well as on foster child outcomes (Schwerzler & Wagner, 2009). When individuals become foster parents, their ideas about children, parenting, and relationships must be accommodated to the unique context of foster care. In other words, their cognitions must be tailored to meet the constraints that the foster care system imposes on their efforts to care for children. Successful accommodation allows for more adaptive functioning because, with an accurate understanding of the context, individuals can select their responses to environmental demands with greater precision (Piaget, 1971 as cited in Bukatko & Daehler, 2004).

The purpose of the present study was to create a measure of foster parents' beliefs about relationship formation with adolescents. The creation of the scale was strongly grounded in the experiences of foster parents and so is designed to reflect the important adjustments to foster parents' beliefs that result from the unique context of foster care.

The following literature review will highlight the need for such a measure given that little is known about how foster parents conceptualize foster parent-child relationships. This review will be accomplished in three steps: (1) providing an overview of the context of family foster care to highlight the challenges foster parents must consider when caring for foster youth, (2) reviewing the currently available research on foster parenting to illustrate the limited understanding of the construct of foster parenting, and (3) considering the inadequacy of currently available assessment tools for foster parents as a barrier to future research. Based on the implications from these various findings, a measure of foster parents' beliefs about their relationship goal, their parenting role, and the reasons for misbehavior was created. It was predicted that the new scale would be a reliable and valid tool for the assessment of foster parent functioning. Such a measure will be useful for future research to understand how parenting is transformed within the context of foster care as well as for guiding the development and implementation of foster parent training programs intended to support foster parents in their important work.

Overview of Family Foster Care

A brief overview of family foster care will be provided to highlight the specific challenges that foster parents must face and make sense of when providing care for foster youth. Children and adolescents come into foster care when their parents cannot provide adequate care to maintain their health and safety. Thus, many children in foster care have experienced some form of maltreatment, which has important implications for the type of parenting foster parents can and should provide. The primary goals of family foster care are to prevent further child maltreatment, to meet the child's immediate healthcare needs,

to stabilize and improve the child's emotional, social, and cognitive functioning, and to maintain the child's family, school, and community connections (Pecora & Maluccio, 2000). These goals are supported by public policies that dictate the many regulations and constraints for foster families, and which represent another important influence on parenting.

Foster care policies. The parameters of foster care will be considered first to highlight the constraints under which foster parents operate and the extent to which they must accommodate their parenting to adapt to the child welfare system. Within the foster care system, the usually private matter of caring for children is set on a stage in the public arena. Foster parents are part of a larger system of professionals caring for a particular youth. They must deal with the child's daily care and management but have only limited power in big picture decisions. Instead, public policy regulates the ultimate course of the foster family placement, imposing concurrent planning for two incompatible long-term placement goals: (a) reunification with the biological family or (b) adoption. Planning this way helps to avoid prolonging foster children's length of stay in care so that adoption arrangements can be in place once parental rights are terminated (Pecora, Wittaker, Maluccio, Barth, & Plotnick, 2000), but it creates a mixed message for foster parents. They must emotionally connect with the youth for the health and well-being of the foster family, but they must also maintain some emotional distance to prepare all members of the family for the eventual separation.

By definition, foster families are temporary. The limited history and unclear future of foster parent-teen relationships are key differences from typical parent-child

relationships. Unlike biological parents, who have a history of repeated experiences with their children, foster parents lack the advantage of knowing their teen's specific emotional struggles and effective ways to respond to the teen's distress. Thus, foster parents may fall back on beliefs and expectations they bring with them to the situation, such as general beliefs about adolescents or unrealistic expectations about what can be accomplished during a short-term foster placement. These structural conditions unfortunately are not the only challenges to foster parenting. Importantly, foster parents are providing care to adolescents whose developmental pathways may have been seriously disrupted by the experience of maltreatment.

Outcomes of child maltreatment. Child maltreatment is a major threat to children's health and emotional security. The effects of maltreatment on development are clearly negative. Early adolescents who have been maltreated may display disorganized attachment, social withdrawal, low self-esteem, and difficulty discriminating emotions (Hildyard & Wolfe, 2002). Maltreated children exhibited significantly lower levels of emotion regulation skills and higher levels of emotion dysregulation than children who have not been maltreated (Shipman et al., 2007). The ability to intentionally modulate one's emotions, or to emotion regulate, is an important skill for adaptive functioning. The type of maltreatment to which children have been exposed can have unique effects on development. Neglected children often display a negative view of the world, less social maturity, difficulty trusting others, and difficulty solving relational problems (Hildyard & Wolfe, 2002). Neglected children tend to show internalizing symptoms, whereas physically abused children show increased levels of

aggression and externalizing behaviors (Margolin & Gordis, 2000). Some abused children display abnormal neurological development due to overstimulation and hyperarousal associated with maltreatment, which has important implications for cognitive and academic functioning (Van Voorhees & Scarpa, 2004).

The context of foster care creates a number of challenges for foster parents. They must quickly develop relationships with foster youth to provide care but without the assurance that the relationship has a long-term future. The social, emotional, and behavioral problems that result from being maltreated are obstacles to developing a relationship and require adjustments to typical parenting behaviors.

Foster Parenting Adolescents

Given the distinctive features of public policy constraints and significant child psychological problems inherent in family foster care, foster parents must adjust their typical parenting beliefs and behaviors. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of literature on foster parenting behavior and the process through which foster parents adjust their approaches to the context of foster care. These limitations apply to the understanding of foster parenting in general and especially to foster parenting adolescents. The current knowledge base of foster parent characteristics and parenting strategies is reviewed with important gaps for understanding the adjustment process highlighted. Understanding the process of foster parenting is vitally important for developing support programs that will help to minimize the negative outcomes of foster parent strain and dropout.

Foster parent characteristics. A portion of the literature has focused on the reasons why individuals wish to become foster parents. Many come to foster care with

admirable intentions, hoping for the best possible outcome. In response to a large mail survey, foster parents most often cited a desire to be loving parents to children and wanting to protect children from additional harm as primary reasons for becoming a foster parent (Rodger et al., 2006). This sort of study is useful for understanding the type of person who is drawn to providing foster care but does not provide any insight into how foster parents actually perform their tasks.

Other studies have focused on the characteristics that foster parents perceived as important for providing good foster care. These characteristics included concern for children, open-mindedness, acceptance of child differences, flexibility, organization, availability to focus much of their time on foster parenting, consistent and positive discipline, and family and community support (Buehler, Cox, & Cuddeback, 2003). Foster parents have also stressed the importance of recognizing their own parenting strengths and weaknesses and the ability to take care of themselves (Brown, 2008). In total, these characteristics reflect foster parents' appreciation for the importance of providing care and recognition that one must possess or develop certain qualities to meet the distinctive challenges of foster care. However, these descriptive studies are limited to general beliefs and characteristics. Therefore, they fail to examine specific beliefs about the foster parent-child relationship, how beliefs are related to parenting strategies, and whether they predict foster parents' satisfaction or success.

Interviews with foster parents have provided additional insights into the daily experience of providing foster care. The rewarding aspects of foster parenting included making a difference in a child's life, seeing the child grow and develop, and providing a

sense of ‘normality’ for the child (Buehler et al., 2003). Because foster children have been through maltreatment and family separation, foster parents seem to believe that their ability to provide a healing experience is an indication that their efforts are meaningful (Buehler et al., 2003). Foster parents reported the stressful aspects to include behavioral, emotional, and health problems of children, children leaving or being removed, perceived agency incompetency or inadequacy, being excluded from case planning, visits with the birth family, and seeing children return to bad living situations (Rodger et al., 2006). The reality of providing foster care can be quite challenging, which may require that foster parents adjust their beliefs about what can be accomplished and remain flexible regarding the factors that will help to contribute to their success or failure.

Indeed, some research underscores the importance of foster parent expectations and flexibility. Doelling and Johnson (1990) found that poorer placement outcomes resulted when foster mothers received children whose temperaments were more negative than expected. The ideas that foster mothers held about the nature of foster children influenced their ability to parent a particular foster child. Those whose expectations were not violated did not have as much difficulty managing the relationship. In fact, foster mother flexibility improved the chances of positive placements, especially when children exhibited difficult temperaments. These findings highlight not only the importance of exploring foster parent beliefs and expectations, but also their impact on parenting behaviors and placement outcomes.

Factors related to healthy relationships. In spite of the challenges and resulting strain that can accompany foster parenting, many foster parents are successful in

providing a healthy and healing relationship to their foster teens. Studying such foster families has resulted in the identification of some important parenting goals and behaviors. Foster mothers' acceptance of and commitment to foster children were negatively related to child behavior problems and positively related to both the child's appraisals of self-worth and ability to cope with separations from attachment figures (Ackerman & Dozier, 2005; Lindhiem & Dozier, 2007). Similarly, Sinclair and Wilson (2003) conducted open-ended interviews with foster children, foster parents, and social workers. Overall, informants indicated that: (1) the child needs to be accepting of the placement, (2) foster parents need to be loving, encouraging, and stable, and (3) the match between foster parent and child must include compatible discipline expectations and a positive emotional connection (Sinclair & Wilson, 2003). Foster parents of adolescents reported using behavioral management strategies, sensitive responding, and warmth to develop their relationships (Lipscombe, Farmer, & Moyers, 2003).

The emotional connection between caregiver and child and the type of parental control seem to be important elements of foster parenting. Not surprisingly, these elements are also commonly cited within the parenting literature on typically developing youth (Cummings et al., 2000). However, distinctions between healthy relationships in foster parent-child versus other parent-child relationships likely exist that have not yet been studied. For example, commitment to a foster child is likely different from commitment to a biological child given that the futures of the relationships are so different. Foster parents do not know how long a particular child will be with them whereas a biological parent can feel confident in a lifelong relationship with a child.

Thus, increasingly sophisticated research designs must be developed to sensitively capture the adjustments that allow foster parents to develop healthy relationships with foster teens.

Foster parent satisfaction. The final area of foster parent research to be considered here grew out of the previously mentioned problem with foster parent dropout. Several researchers have begun to focus on foster parent satisfaction given that higher levels have been associated with a greater intention to continue to provide foster care (Denby, Rindfleisch, & Bean, 1999). Exploring the factors associated with foster parent satisfaction is helpful for developing training and support programs that can help prolong foster parents' length of service.

Both foster parent satisfaction and dissatisfaction have been linked with a number of factors. Aspects of the context of foster care, such as communication with the social worker, agency regulations, and support from the foster care agency, have been positively related to the level of foster parent satisfaction (Denby et al., 1999; Rhodes et al., 2001). Additionally, certain foster parent characteristics have been related to greater levels of satisfaction, including older age (Denby et al., 1999), better health, and more available time for foster parenting (Cole & Eamon, 2007). Finally, child behavior problems have been linked with foster parent dissatisfaction (Rhodes et al., 2001). These findings are important for informing the practices of foster care agencies and potentially the foster parent selection process to help create a more conducive environment for providing foster care. The extent to which supportive elements are present in the foster care context clearly influences foster parents' perception of satisfaction with providing care, and at the

same time these elements could influence the belief system through which foster parents understand their task.

A few researchers have explored the relationship between foster parents' perceptions about their experience and their level of satisfaction. More specifically, foster parents' reported sense of self-efficacy to manage challenging behaviors was positively related to satisfaction (Denby et al., 1999; Whenan, Oxland, & Lushington, 2009). In addition, perceiving warm relationships with foster youth predicted greater levels of satisfaction (Whenan et al., 2009). However, regretting the time or energy invested in the child was predictive of lower satisfaction (Denby et al., 1999). These findings clearly indicate the need to focus research on foster parents' perceptions about their experience. Given that the extent to which foster parents believe they are capable and view their efforts as worthwhile is associated with their happiness with foster care, these areas should be better understood so that they can be supported.

Foster parents' beliefs about relationship formation. Given that descriptive studies and structured interview research had resulted in a limited understanding of the adaptations in parenting beliefs associated with parenting within the foster care system, an open-ended qualitative approach was recently used with good success. Schwerzler and Wagner (2009) applied a grounded theory approach to analyze focus group data and found several important themes that guide foster parents' interactions with their foster teens: the relationship goal: (1) emotional connection, (2) understanding the child; the foster parenting role: (3) temporary support, (4) flexible commitment; and (5) reasons for

misbehavior. Each theme seems to be an important aspect of healthy foster parent functioning.

First, the *relationship goal* outlines the nature of the foster parent-teen relationship and is comprised of two sub-themes. Many foster parents described a desire to provide the experience of a 'normal home' to the foster youth. In other words, they wished to provide a family experience that was characterized by safety, consistency, respect, and acceptance. Most foster parents indicated a distinction between providing physical care and developing an **emotional connection**. The physical care could and should be provided immediately whereas the emotional connection required time and trust to develop. Many foster parents held the belief that developing a relationship takes time, but others operated under the notion that they could immediately bond with a foster child. Additionally, most foster parents expressed a desire to ***understand the child's*** negative past experiences to be able to offer appropriate support and guidance. Similar to the beliefs about developing an emotional connection, ideas around communication ranged from expectations for immediate, open communication to respecting boundaries. The beliefs that emotional closeness and open discussion take time to achieve may represent appropriate viewpoints for the process of adjusting to the foster care context.

Second, the *foster parenting role* captures the identity and functions that foster parents assume when caring for adolescents and also is comprised of two sub-themes. Almost all of the foster parents interviewed described the **temporary support** that can be provided in their role, viewing themselves in a role restricted by time and context. Nearly all of the foster parents indicated that developing an understanding of the

limitations of their role was difficult. While some were able to recognize that any amount of support they could provide was important, others held the belief that they needed to resolve all of the foster child's major problems for their efforts to be worthwhile. In an attempt to maintain an appreciation for the limits of their temporary role, many foster parents described a process of monitoring the effect of the foster placement on their well-being as well as its compatibility with all of their other responsibilities. This type of ***flexible commitment*** represents a balance that can be difficult for many foster parents to maintain when the strong desire to be loving parents to foster children conflicts with the need to also take care of oneself. When commitment was flexible, foster parents appreciated their personal limits and the limitations of the foster parent role, but when commitment became rigid, foster parents ignored their own needs, believing that they carried the sole responsibility for a particular foster child. In other words, maintaining a high degree of flexible commitment allowed foster parents to monitor the impact of possible strain and frustration associated with providing foster care on their own well-being. In contrast, a low degree of flexibility prevented foster parents from recognizing that they were overwhelmed by parenting stress, were not able to effectively care for their own needs, and likely were not providing their best care to the foster child. Belief in maintaining a flexible commitment to a particular foster child and appreciating the limitations on the help that parents can provide within a temporary relationship may be appropriate adjustments to ideas about parenting within the foster care context.

Third, many foster parents described their beliefs about ***reasons for misbehavior***. The content of these beliefs was dependent on past experiences with various foster children and may have differed from an opinion about a particular foster child. These generalized beliefs about the motivations of foster children likely serve as a template from which foster parents initially begin their interactions with a new foster child. The beliefs discussed ranged from the ideal, innocent child (i.e., victim of life circumstances, wants to be accepted, wants to do well) to the seriously flawed child (i.e., mistrusting, manipulative, resisting a normal life), with variations in between. The beliefs focus on the extent to which foster children have control over their negative behaviors and whether their behaviors can be changed through intervention. Parenting beliefs may be appropriately accommodated to the foster care context when foster parents are able to appreciate the impact of negative past experiences on teens' current behavioral struggles.

These five themes provide a rich description of the parenting beliefs that are both unique and important to foster parent functioning. These ideas are grounded in the experiences of foster parents and represent important areas for further study. The present study aimed to take the next step in the research on these five constructs by using quantitative methods to determine whether they can be measured reliably and validly with a questionnaire. In the course of scale development, relationships between these particular beliefs and perceptions of satisfaction with providing foster care, parenting stress, and parental emotional style were evaluated.

Beliefs about Parenting

The beliefs about foster parenting that emerged in the focus group research highlight a process parallel to typical parenting in which parenting behavior is supported by beliefs about the causes of children's behavior and ideas about the role demands of parenting. Parents continually refine their beliefs about the causes of parenting successes or failures through their various experiences with providing care to their children. Such parental attributions can serve as a filter through which the meaning of child behavior and the parent-child relationship are interpreted (Bugental, 1987; Bugental, Johnston, New, & Silvester, 1998). Such explanations for behavior influence when and how an individual responds. An association between negative parental interpretations of child behavior and increased child problems has been empirically supported (Dadds, Mullins, McAllister, & Atkins, 2003; Sheeber et al., 2009). When mothers believed that they had little control over parenting outcomes, they were more likely to engage in negative responding to a difficult, impulsive child than an easy child. In contrast, mothers who believed they possessed a high degree of control were less likely to respond differentially to difficult and easy children, which reduced negative child behavior (Bugental & Shennum, 1984). Parents' perceptions about the context, meaning, and controllability of their own and the child's behavior may be related to parent-child interactions in important ways.

Parenting is transformed into foster parenting through the process of adjusting parenting beliefs to the parameters of foster care. The characteristic ambiguity of the foster parent-teen relationship will tend to challenge previously held ideas about how caregivers and children relate to each other. Accommodating these ideas in particular

ways will guide foster parents to engage in parenting behaviors that promote relationship development and child growth. For example, given the negative effects of maltreatment on adolescent functioning, a foster parent who interprets a youth's behavior as intentionally defiant will likely respond differently than a foster parent who appreciates that a teen's behavior is a remnant of past maltreatment. The attributions that foster parents develop about the factors that contribute to the success or failure of their efforts are important to study so that appropriate support and training programs can be developed to facilitate success. Foster parents may care for a particular foster youth for only a few months, but they will carry from child to child the beliefs that they develop about how to foster parent.

Assessing Foster Parenting

Before the important gaps in understanding the experience of foster parents can be filled, the important methodological issue of the dearth of assessment tools for foster parenting must be addressed. The primary impetus for the development of such measures has been the need to determine the suitability of foster parent applicants. As a result, currently available measures focus on foster parents' characteristics or capabilities that may be needed in the course of completing various foster care tasks. The majority of these foster parenting measures are insufficient for measuring foster parent behaviors, beliefs, and perceptions because they are intended to be completed by potential foster parents prior to beginning foster care and/or by foster care caseworkers.

For example, the Foster Parent Potential Scale (FPPS; Orme, Buehler, McSurdy, Rhodes, & Cox, 2003) measures the likelihood that foster parents will provide quality

foster care as judged by their caseworker. Items assess applicants' potential abilities in such areas as supporting relationships with birth families, attending to separation and attachment issues, providing a nurturing environment, and collaborating with the agency. In contrast, the Casey Foster Applicant Inventory-Applicant Questionnaire (CFAI-A; Orme, Cuddeback, Buehler, Cox, & Le Prohn, 2007) is a self-report questionnaire of applicants' perceptions of their potential in areas such as promoting foster child development, fostering challenging children, managing relationships with foster care workers and agencies, and integrating foster children into a foster family with birth or adopted children. While these types of scales are necessary for the selection of foster parents, they rely on guesswork about an experience that may be fundamentally different from anything applicants have previously experienced, and that continually changes with each new foster child. Furthermore, they are unable to assess how foster parents are actually performing in their roles.

Unfortunately, only a few options exist for the assessment of foster parent functioning while providing foster care, and there is a clear need for additional measures that are sensitive to the various aspects of foster parenting. First, the Foster Parents' Role Perception Scale (FPRPS; Le Prohn, 1994) measures foster parents' perceptions of the degree of responsibility foster parents assume for parenting tasks and working with the foster care agency. While the FPRPS can be used with current foster parents and could measure changes in the degree of perceived responsibility, it does not address how foster parents perform their responsibilities. Second, the degree of foster parent commitment to a foster child can be assessed with the This is My Baby Interview (TIMB; Bates &

Dozier, 1998 as cited in Dozier & Lindhiem, 2006). During the semi-structured interview, foster parents are asked to describe their child and to answer more specific questions about the quality of their relationship in order to assess their degree of motivation for maintaining a long-lasting relationship with a particular child. While the TIMB provides an in-depth look at the relationship between a foster parent and a particular child, it does not assess how foster parents are able to commit to foster children and was developed for use only with infant and toddler foster children. Finally, the Foster Parent Attitudes Questionnaire (FPAQ; Harden, Meisch, Vick, & Pandohie-Johnson, 2008) measures foster parents' attitudes toward aspects of the foster care experience, such as attachment with the foster child, motivation for being a foster parent, and interacting with biological parents. While the FPAQ addresses foster parents' opinions about a variety of areas that could influence their parenting, the new scale that will be the focus of this study will take a closer look at foster parents' ideas about relationship formation, which is directly addressed by only one subscale on the FPAQ. Furthermore, aspects of its construction are concerning. Only a few items (range = 1 – 4) assess each factor, and internal consistency reliabilities for some factors are bordering on uncomfortably low (alpha range = 0.42 – 0.70).

Any hopes for expanding the knowledge base of foster parenting depends on the availability of high quality measurement tools. Given the important differences between typical parenting and parenting within the foster care context, assessment tools of typical parenting cannot fully capture the experience of foster parenting. Without the ability to sensitively measure the unique aspects of foster parenting, predicting foster parent

success and identifying areas of needed support will be extremely difficult. Therefore, the present study aimed to develop the Beliefs about Foster Parenting Scale (BFPS) as one step toward filling this important gap. As is described in more detail below, the BFPS was designed to measure particular parenting beliefs that represent adjustments in parenting appropriate to the foster care context. The goal was to develop a tool that would be useful for identifying areas in which foster parents may be struggling to adjust, and for better understanding the relationship between the nature of foster parenting beliefs and other important aspects of the foster parenting experience.

Construct Validity: Parenting Characteristics Relevant for Foster Parenting

Following a series of steps that is described in more detail below, an important step in measurement development is construct validation. After the reliability of the scale has been established, it must be demonstrated that the scale is in fact measuring what it is designed to measure. At a preliminary level, this can be accomplished through obtaining feedback from individuals who are extensively familiar with the concept or experience being measured. Steps for testing so-called face validity and content validity will be described in the method section to follow. Additionally, construct validation can be accomplished through examining the relationship between scores on the newly developed measure and scores on previously developed scales that measure similar constructs, or testing for so-called convergent validity. Construct validity can also be examined through tests of criterion-related validity, which involve illustrating that a scale has an empirical association with some particular outcome. Before concluding this review of

the literature, a few constructs from the general parenting literature will be considered for the purposes of paving the way for establishing construct validity for the BFPS.

While there is no single overarching theory of parenting within biological families, many substantive models have been proposed to explain various characteristics of parent-adolescent relationships. Two broad aspects of parenting are particularly relevant during adolescence: emotional connection and behavioral control (Cummings et al., 2000). Given that adolescence involves increasing concern about independence and autonomy, parents of teens must balance control and emotional support to facilitate development. Furthermore, parenting stress and perceived satisfaction impact parents' capacities for providing developmentally appropriate parenting (Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

In the case of foster children, the effects of maltreatment among adolescents present clear challenges to successful parenting. Specifically, the experience of abuse or neglect has been linked with difficulty developing close relationships with others (Abrams, Rifkin, & Hesse, 2006; Baer & Martinez, 2006). When caring for a foster adolescent, foster parents are challenged to create an emotional connection but also have an opportunity, as a responsive caregiver, to contribute to the teens' adaptive socioemotional development. Adolescents entering foster care are also less likely to have internalized appropriate values and expectations for behavior, given their past experiences of maltreatment and dysfunctional parenting. The emotional and behavioral problems common amongst foster teens are probably evidence of their biological parents' problematic efforts at emotional connection and control. To successfully parent a

teenager who lacks a strong foundation of healthy values and expectations, parenting beliefs must support an appreciation for the effects of past dysfunctional parenting on children's difficult behavior.

Convergent validity: Parental emotional style. Emotion coaching involves close attention to current emotions, patience, and efforts to understand the child's experience (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996). This parenting approach closely resembles foster parents' accounts of some of the processes through which they develop effective and satisfying relationships with foster youth (Schwerzler & Wagner, 2009), and so will it be used as a test of the convergent validity of the newly developed measure of foster parents' beliefs about relationship formation with adolescents. As is made clear in the following description, it is predicted that foster parents who report greater levels of adjustment to their parenting beliefs will also report engaging in greater levels of emotion coaching and lower levels of emotion dismissing.

The practice of emotion coaching is based on an awareness of and appreciation for the benefits of emotion (Gottman et al., 1996). Emotion coaches must monitor emotions in themselves and in their children to be able to detect expressions of even relatively low levels of negative emotion. Once detected, emotion coaches take the opportunity to engage with the child around the emotional experience as a way to build intimacy in their relationship and to teach about emotions. Emotion coaches validate children's emotional experiences and help them to verbally label the emotion. After children have been able to put a name to what they are feeling, parents can help them to problem-solve around how to manage the situation that led to the negative emotion.

Throughout the process of emotion coaching, parents maintain an appreciation for the child's emotional experience while providing limits on behavioral expressions of emotion that are not consistent with family expectations. Importantly, emotion coaching behaviors have been linked with more supportive and positive parenting, less critical parenting, improved child emotion regulation skills, and improved social functioning in children (Gottman et al., 1996).

In contrast, the practice of emotion dismissing involves the treatment of children's emotions as unimportant or trivial (Gottman et al., 1996). Parents who adopt an emotion dismissing style often ignore children's emotions or attempt to make their emotions go away. These types of parents place little value on paying attention to emotions and may often be unaware of their own emotional states. They may also believe that focusing on negative emotions may make them worse. As a result of this emotional invalidation, children learn that their emotions are not helpful or even wrong. They miss out on the opportunity to learn about emotions and strategies for effectively regulating their emotions.

Given the emotional and behavioral problems that many adolescents in foster care experience, foster parents must use a method for interacting with them that helps to minimize their symptoms. If they do not, then foster parents are at increased risk of suffering frustration and quitting foster care. Each experience of strong emotion is a new opportunity for foster parent and child to connect and learn about each other. The construct of emotion coaching captures the support and validation that successful foster parents may provide "in the heat of the moment" when adolescents express strong

emotions and is consistent with the belief about foster parenting that the relationship goal is to develop an emotional connection with the foster youth to be able to provide a safe and consistent experience.

Criterion-related validity: Parenting satisfaction and stress. As described above, foster parent satisfaction and levels of stress can affect the quality of parenting, and can influence the parents' decisions about whether they wish to continue to provide foster care. Therefore, these two constructs will be used to establish the criterion-related validity of the BFPS. The degree of parenting stress is related to the perceived accessibility of resources needed to carry out the parenting role (Morgan, Robinson, & Aldridge, 2002), with greater stress being linked with perceptions of low resource accessibility. Parenting stress has been associated with dysfunctional parenting, but beliefs about children's behavior mediated the relationship (Morgan et al., 2002). Thus, it is predicted that foster parents who report parenting beliefs that are more in tune with the demands of the foster care context will also report less parenting stress and greater parenting satisfaction. An appreciation for the constraints that foster care places on typical parenting behavior should help foster parents to gain some perspective on the relationship that they can develop with foster youth and the goals that can be achieved in that relationship. This understanding could allow for more realistic expectations and improved coping with the sometimes confusing and painful experiences associated with providing care to traumatized children on a temporary basis.

To summarize, the structural context of foster care and the psychological effects of maltreatment impose obstacles on the development of foster parent-child relationships.

Currently available research on foster parenting has revealed that foster parents must either possess or develop particular characteristics to engage in foster parenting successfully and that a number of factors contribute to their level of satisfaction with foster care. However, little is known about how parenting is transformed into foster parenting. Qualitative research with foster parents has revealed the importance of attending to the beliefs that foster parents have about the purpose of foster parenting and possible parenting strategies feasible within the foster care context. Ideas about the goal of foster care, the confines of the foster parent role, and foster children's intentions will likely influence how foster parents behave when caring for foster youth, just as parental attributions influence parenting behaviors amongst biological parents and children. The development of foster parents' beliefs about their parenting tasks is likely a complex process that is strongly influenced by foster parents' experiences of being parented, parenting biological children, cultural values, and/or participation in training programs. Importantly, these beliefs about foster parenting may allow for the engagement in a different type of parenting that is consistent with the unique reality of foster care. Given the distinctive circumstances of foster care, parenting approaches typically taken with adolescents in developing an emotional connection and supporting behavioral control may be less successful. Finally, an important limitation to the advancement of foster care research is the relative lack of assessment tools specifically designed for foster parenting. Without such tools, important differences between parenting and foster parenting will be missed.

Purpose of the Present Study

The purpose of the present study was to develop a measure of foster parents' beliefs about relationship formation with adolescents that influence foster parent functioning. More specifically, the purpose was to develop a measure that includes items that tap the constructs of beliefs about the relationship goal (emotional connection, understanding the child), the foster parent role (temporary support, flexible commitment), and reasons for misbehavior (Schwerzler & Wagner, 2009). This new measurement tool, the Beliefs about Foster Parenting Scale (BFPS), was intended to be useful for expanding the knowledge base of the content of foster parents' beliefs about parenting, the influence of these beliefs on parenting behavior, and the identification of areas in which foster parents are struggling to adjust, so that support efforts can more effectively facilitate their success.

Following a series of rigorous steps to create the BFPS, its face and content validity were examined and its psychometric properties were statistically evaluated. First, it was hypothesized that a simple structure of factors for the BFPS would emerge, including five factors capturing beliefs about emotional connection, understanding the child, temporary support, flexible commitment, and reasons for teens' misbehavior. More specifically, it was predicted that items would load uniquely onto single factors representing those constructs, without cross loading onto other factors.

Second, it was hypothesized that the newly created BFPS would reliably measure latent constructs. In particular, it was predicted that the items associated with each factor would reliably measure the latent construct.

Third, it was hypothesized that the BFPS would show adequate convergent and criterion-related validity. Tests of construct validity were based on predictions about a pattern of beliefs that may be well suited to the realities of parenting within the foster care system. More specifically, it was predicted that the pattern of beliefs included: (1) low scores on the emotional connection subscale (i.e., believing that connecting with foster youth takes time), (2) low scores on the understanding the child subscale (i.e., the belief that understanding foster youth takes time), (3) high scores on the temporary support subscale (i.e., awareness of the limited time and impact parents can have on foster youth), (4) high scores on the flexible commitment subscale (i.e., belief in the importance of maintaining a balance between commitment to a particular foster child and to providing foster care long-term), and (5) low scores on the reasons for misbehavior subscale (i.e., little reliance on generalized beliefs about negative foster youth behavior). This pattern of beliefs takes into consideration the time-limited nature of providing foster care, the importance of appreciating each foster teen's unique characteristics, and making self-care a priority to support long-term foster parenting.

Furthermore, it was predicted that greater agreement with parenting beliefs consistent with foster care as reported on the various subscales would predict higher levels of emotion coaching behaviors and lower levels of emotion dismissing behaviors (MESQ scores; Lagacé-Séguin & Coplan, 2005). Beliefs about the relationship goal (emotional connection and understanding the child) were expected to be more strongly related to emotion coaching behavior than other BFPS subscales. It was predicted that greater agreement with BFPS parenting beliefs would predict lower levels of parenting

stress (PSS scores; Berry & Jones, 1995). Beliefs about the foster parent role (temporary support and flexible commitment) were expected to be more strongly related to parenting stress than the other BFPS subscales. It was also predicted that greater agreement with BFPS parenting beliefs would predict greater foster parent satisfaction (SFPI scores; Stockdale, Crase, Lekies, Yates, & Gillis-Arnold, 1997). Importantly, parents' reports of child behavior problems (SDQ; Goodman, 2001) were statistically controlled in all tests of construct validity, given that many foster children exhibit difficult behavior that could influence the relationships between parenting beliefs, parental emotional style, stress, and satisfaction.

Chapter II: General Method

Item Pool

The Beliefs about Foster Parenting Scale, a new measure of the content of foster parents' beliefs about relationship formation with adolescents, was created based on DeVellis's (2003) guidelines for scale development. According to those guidelines, the first step is to clearly define the constructs to be measured. This can be accomplished through a variety of strategies, including a thorough literature review, qualitative research, and consultation with individuals with expertise in the topic of interest. Furthermore, construct definitions must be inclusive of the entire range of possible construct levels and presentations. In other words, definitions should not simply focus on only a limited aspect of a construct. A clear, thorough definition is needed to guide the generation of potential scale items. DeVellis (2003) recommends that the initial item pool be at least three to four times greater than the number of items desired for the final scale to allow for dropping items that are worded awkwardly, overly redundant, or do not accurately represent the construct. Thus, a brainstorming approach should be adopted at the start of item generation to ensure adequate coverage of all aspects of the construct. The item pool can then be refined through the researcher's qualitative inspection and tests of face and content validity.

Face and Content Validity

An aspect of the construct validation of a new scale involves ensuring that the item set is recognizable to the respondents and contains sufficient breadth to cover the totality of constructs being measured. These tests of face and content validity are an

important step in scale development because they can help qualitatively improve a scale, which will increase the chances of creating a reliable scale that accurately measures the construct. Face validity involves the extent to which items in a measure appear to measure a particular construct whereas content validity refers to the degree to which the items reflect all aspects of the construct of interest (Kazdin, 2003). While these forms of validity cannot be statistically assessed, reports from experts about the relevance and breadth of items for each construct being measured are vital for creating a measure that is grounded in the real world experience of the respondents, which in the case of the BFPS are foster parents of adolescents.

DeVellis (2003) recommends that care be taken when selecting such expert panelists to ensure that they are thoroughly familiar with the construct being measured. The experts should be asked to give specific feedback about each item through rating scales (i.e., degree of readability on a 10-point scale) or focused questions as well as general feedback and impressions about the entire scale. When creating a scale intended to measure different aspects of a multifaceted construct, it is important to gain experts' feedback about the cohesiveness and the thoroughness of subtest items. The scale may need to be modified to eliminate confusing or redundant items based on the experts' quantitative and qualitative feedback. Expert feedback is an invaluable step in the process of scale development because the researcher can gain a greater understanding of how potential respondents will be interpreting the items and can help to prevent the problems of unclear factor structures, poor reliability, and weak construct validity due to unclear, awkward items.

Factor Structure

Following the initial evaluation of the degree to which a new scale appears to thoroughly measure the intended construct, it must be administered to a large sample to statistically evaluate the psychometric properties. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is the conventional approach for identifying the underlying factor structure of a newly developed scale, especially when limited evidence is available to support a prediction about a particular factor structure. Assuming that the total variance associated with a group of variables reflects common variance (i.e., variance shared among variables), specific variance (i.e., variance related to a particular variable), and error variance, EFA aims to identify factors that explain the greatest amount of common variance. Thus, EFA examines the patterns of correlations between items to identify those items that are most closely related to each other. Typically, multiple factors will emerge that each consists of several items that are closely related to each other and ideally are not significantly correlated with items on different factors.

Thompson (2004) highlighted a series of decision steps inherent in factor analysis that was used as a guide in the present study. First, given that EFA examines the underlying associations amongst items, the type of matrix of association coefficients to use in analysis must be specified. The Pearson product-moment bivariate correlation matrix is generally most appropriate for scales using an interval response scale (Thompson, 2004) as was used in the BFPS. In order to make sure that the correlation matrix is suitable for factor analysis, a number of diagnostic tests must be completed. First, the Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) provides an

indication of whether a sufficient sample was collected to be able to detect the underlying factor structure of a scale. A value of 0.7 or greater is conventionally considered to be acceptable (Kaiser, 1974 as cited in Field, 2009). Second, Bartlett's test of sphericity determines whether the obtained correlation matrix is significantly different from the identity matrix, which consists of correlation coefficients of 1.0 along the diagonal and 0.0 off the diagonal. If the correlation matrix were an identity matrix, then none of the variables would be related to each other and no factors could possibly be found. Finally, Haitovsky's (1969 as cited in Field, 2009) significance test of the correlation matrix determinant evaluates the singularity of the correlation matrix. Haitovsky's test examines whether the determinant of the correlation matrix is significantly different from zero. The matrix determinant describes the area of the plotted correlation coefficients. If the variables were unrelated to each other, then the correlation coefficients would be widely scattered and the determinant would equal 0; this is called a singular correlation matrix. If the variables were perfectly correlated, then the correlation coefficients would be perfectly linear and the determinant would equal 1.0. Again, identifying factors would not be possible as the unique contribution that a variable makes to a factor would be undeterminable. With the assurance of sufficient sampling and that variables are related to each other, but not perfectly so, the process of factor analysis can move forward.

Second, the method for factor extraction must be decided. The maximum likelihood method is useful because results can be generalized beyond the sample unlike in principal components analysis, which assumes that variables are measured with perfect reliability. Within the maximum likelihood method, however, it is assumed that

participants are randomly selected and that measured variables constitute all of the variables of potential interest. Another important assumption of the maximum likelihood approach is that of multivariate normality, and so data distributions must be examined prior to factor analysis to ensure appropriate conclusions can be drawn. Examining the communality coefficient is an important step in factor extraction because it is a measure of the common variance among a set of variables; in other words, how much variance of a measured variable the factors as a set can reproduce (Thompson, 2004). If a variable's communality is 1.0, then the variable has no unique variance, and thus the factors can explain all the variance associated with the variable. In contrast, if a variable's communality is 0.0, then the variable has no common variance, and thus the factors cannot explain any of the variance associated with the variable. The communality coefficient must be estimated from the observed variables, and using the squared multiple correlation (SMC) is a commonly used approach (Thompson, 2004). The SMC is the r^2 that is obtained when one factor is predicted by all the other factors. To improve the accuracy of the estimation, the SMC is placed on the diagonal of the correlation matrix so that the factors can be re-identified and the communality coefficient can be re-estimated. Several iterations are conducted until only negligible changes in communality estimations occur, which is typically around 25 iterations, but results must be checked to ensure that iterations have converged (Thompson, 2004).

Third, selecting the appropriate number of factors to retain involves an element of judgment on the part of the researcher, and thus several strategies are usually implemented. Kaiser's Eigenvalue rule indicates that factors with an eigenvalue greater

than 1.0 should be retained (Kaiser, 1960 as cited in DeVellis, 2003). Cattell's scree test involves the graphical plotting of factor eigenvalues and discarding the factors that constitute the flattened part of the plot (i.e., the scree at the foot of the mountain), which represent factors that do not explain a substantial portion of the common variance (Cattell, 1966 as cited in DeVellis, 2003). Using multiple methods for determining how many factors to retain increases the evidence to support the decision about a final factor solution.

Finally, once factors have been extracted, they must be rotated in order to reveal their simple structure. Rotation shifts the axes from which the factors are viewed to maximize the degree to which groups of variables represent a single factor. Prior to rotation, variables may appear to represent two or more factors because of the particular vantage point from which they are viewed. Traditionally, orthogonal rotations are attempted first since they maintain uncorrelated factors. However, when variables are anticipated to covary, as is likely with the themes of foster parents' beliefs about relationship formation with adolescents, an oblique rotation, which allows the variables to correlate with one another, is a more appropriate choice. While a variety of matrices have been developed for oblique rotations, the direct oblimin matrix is most commonly used. When factors are allowed to correlate with each other as with an oblique rotation, the strength of the relationship between a variable and a factor often differs from the linear model that exists between variables and factors. The structure matrix contains the correlation coefficients between each variable and each factor while the pattern matrix

contains the regression coefficients for each variable on each factor. The factor loadings contained in each matrix should be evaluated to identify the scale's underlying factors.

Reliability

The reliability of each factor as well as the overall scale must be evaluated to ensure that the scale is able to elicit consistent answers from respondents. Ideally, an individual responds to items within a particular factor in a consistent way, which is an indication that the factor is measuring a single latent variable. Cronbach's coefficient alpha is one approach to evaluating the reliability of a scale and can be used to examine the internal consistency for the overall scale as well as each subscale. Coefficient alpha measures the proportion of variance in the factor scores that is associated with the true scores. DeVellis (2003) recommends aiming for a high alpha during test development since the effects of error tend to inflate the value at this stage. Conventionally, an alpha value of at least 0.7 is considered acceptable. Evaluation of the corrected item-total correlations is another commonly used approach to testing scale reliability that examines the relationships between individual items and the mean of all other items combined. Poor corrected item-total correlation indicates that an item is not closely related to the rest of the items on the scale, and so may not be a good measure of the latent construct. Such items hurt the overall reliability of the scale and, therefore, are usually dropped. Once items have been dropped, the factor structure should again be tested to verify that the solution holds for the modified scale (Lounsbury, Gibson, & Saudargas, 2006).

Construct Validity

Once the underlying factor structure of a scale has been identified and its reliability established, the validity of the scale must be demonstrated. Broadly speaking, construct validity consists of the degree to which a scale assesses the construct of interest. Given that latent variables are not directly accessible, the validity of a scale must be indirectly evaluated through examination of the relationships between the scale and other measures that also capture the construct (Kazdin, 2003). Thus, evidence for a variety of types of validity together lends support for the overall construct validity of a scale. The most commonly examined forms of validity include face validity, content validity, convergent validity, and criterion-related validity. As discussed above, face and content validity refer to the extent to which a scale appears to measure a construct and the thoroughness of scale items in measuring a construct. While these forms of construct validity cannot be statistically evaluated, convergent and criterion-related validity can and will now be considered.

Convergent validity. An important step in construct validation involves the evaluation of the relationship between scores on the newly developed measure and scores on previously developed scales that measure similar constructs. So-called convergent validity is based on the idea that if two measures are assessing the same or similar constructs, then there should be a correlation between participants' responses to each measure. Thus, in the present study, an examination of the correlations between participants' scores on the BFPS subscales with their scores on a measure of parent emotional style (i.e., emotion coaching and emotion dismissing) served as a test of

convergent validity. Approaching foster parenting with a clear conceptual understanding of the tasks at hand likely allows foster parents to engage in a type of parenting that appropriately supports the emotional needs of their foster children. At the same time, maintaining an awareness of their own and their foster child's emotions likely supports the development of a realistic understanding of the foster child's needs and the limitations of the foster parent role. Thus, a clear relationship between these two variables would provide support for the construct validity of the BFPS subscales.

Criterion-related validity. Construct validity can also be examined through tests of criterion-related validity, which involve illustrating that a scale has an empirical association with some particular outcome. In the present study, an examination of the correlations between BFPS subscales with the scores on measures of parenting stress and satisfaction with foster care served as tests of criterion-related validity. Both parenting stress and satisfaction are important indicators of successful foster parenting, which are logically linked with an individual's conceptual understanding of the experience of providing foster care. Thus, a significant correlation between predictor and outcomes would lend support to the construct validity of the new subscales.

Chapter III: Study 1, Face and Content Validity of BFPS Items

Participants

As a test of face and content validity, a group of foster care experts was recruited to provide feedback about the newly developed BFPS. The expert panel consisted of 10 informants: three foster parents, three foster care researchers, and four foster care professionals. These panelists were recruited from foster care organizations and universities within the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

Item Development

The constructs identified through previously conducted focus groups with foster parents (Schwerzler & Wagner, 2009) were used as the basis for item development. As mentioned above, the BFPS is intended to measure the following concepts: (1) emotional connection, (2) understanding the child, (3) temporary support, (4) flexible commitment, and (5) reasons for misbehavior.

Emotional connection. The construct of emotional connection contains the beliefs that foster parents hold about the nature and process of developing a foster parent-child relationship. More specifically, foster parents have indicated that their goal for the foster-parent child relationship is to develop a close bond characterized by mutual respect, trust, and support between foster parent and child (Schwerzler & Wagner, 2009). However, foster parents reported varying beliefs about the process through which this type of relationship can be achieved. Beliefs ranged from being able to develop a close relationship within a few days to recognition that a close relationship takes time to develop. The concept that a close emotional connection must be earned through time

likely represents a belief that is more consistent with the realities of the foster care context than a belief that a strong emotional connection can develop quickly.

Understanding the child. The concept of understanding the child consists of foster parents' beliefs about how thoroughly they can understand foster children's experiences and problems. A belief that understanding takes time and requires respect for personal boundaries may be better adjusted to the constraints of the foster care context than believing that complete understanding can occur quickly.

Temporary support. The construct of temporary support represents foster parents' beliefs about the time and resource limitations of the foster parenting role. The unclear future of the foster-parent child relationship limits the amount of support that foster parents are able to provide. Recognizing the time limit on the relationship and appreciating the impact that can be made even in a short amount of time represent ideas that are more in line with the realities of foster care than believing that all or the majority of a foster child's problems can be resolved during the course of a foster care placement.

Flexible commitment. The concept of flexible commitment includes foster parents' beliefs about their dedication to different aspects of their foster parenting role. Foster parents must strike a balance between the long-term commitment to being a foster parent with the short-term commitment to a particular foster child. Maintaining a flexible balance between these two commitments means that a foster parent is able to monitor the compatibility of the teenager's demands with his or her capability to provide care. Understanding the importance of continually monitoring one's parenting capacity and various responsibilities while providing foster care represents a belief that may be more

consistent with the restrictions of the foster care context than developing a rigid commitment to one aspect of a foster parent's experience.

Reasons for misbehavior. The construct of reasons for misbehavior represents foster parents' generalized beliefs about foster youth, which may inform how foster parents respond to a certain problematic behaviors. Given the limited history of foster parent-child relationships, foster parents may rely on generalized beliefs about the reasons for children's misbehavior that range from negative, internally focused to sympathetic, externally focused. In other words, at times foster parents may believe that foster children are essentially 'bad kids' while at others think that they are 'good kids in bad situations.' Understanding that behavior of foster youth is attributable to external circumstances rather than internal defects represents a belief that may be better adjusted to the foster care context.

About 20 items per concept were created to ensure appropriate breadth. Items were kept short, clear, and straightforward to increase readability. Likert scaling was used, and so items were worded as strong statements to allow respondents to gradate their level of agreement with the response options. Additionally, about half of the items were worded in the reverse direction to prevent respondents from developing a response set. The five-point Likert scale included the options: "strongly disagree," "disagree," "neutral," "agree," and "strongly agree." These response options were selected to balance the desire for variability with the degree of burden placed on participants to make meaningful distinctions.

Procedure

Expert panelists were asked about the face and content validity of the 117-item BFPS (see expert panel feedback form in Appendix A). They were asked to rate the relevance of each item to the construct it was intended to measure on a scale of 1 – 10 with higher scores indicating greater relevance. They were also asked to rate the readability of each item on a scale of 1 – 10 with higher scores indicating greater ease of reading. Expert panelists were further asked to provide feedback about the thoroughness of item sets for particular constructs, to identify superfluous items, and to provide suggestions if certain aspects had been overlooked. Thus both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered.

Results and Discussion

Across all items, mean readability scores ranged from 7.44 to 9.50 with a mean readability rating across all items of 9.16. Mean relevance scores ranged from 5.38 to 9.63 across all items with a mean relevance rating across all items of 8.07. Thus, experts largely agreed that in its original form, the BFPS was easy to read and items were closely related to the constructs they were intended to measure.

To reduce the burden on respondents and to improve the overall soundness of the BFPS, items with readability ratings less than 9.0 and relevance rating less than 8.0 were considered for rewording or deletion. Experts' qualitative feedback and consultation with a psychologist were used to make final decisions about modifying the scale. A total of 38 items were eliminated and 26 items were rephrased in an effort to increase readability and/or relevance. Thus, a total of 79 items were included in the revised version of the

BFPS. Retained items were rated as significantly more related to the constructs they were intended to measure (M = 8.24) than dropped items (M = 7.74), *t* (115) = 2.46, p = .015. Although not statistically significant, the refined scale was also somewhat more readable than the original scale. See Appendix B for the revised version of the BFPS.

Chapter IV: Study 2, Psychometric Properties of BFPS

Participants

Participants were recruited from 70 foster care organizations that operate in various locations throughout the United States, including state operated social service agencies, treatment foster care programs, and foster parent associations. Foster parents were recruited through agency directors' dissemination of the online survey link via email (see Appendix C). Participants were also recruited through word of mouth and postings on online forums for foster parents. Foster parents of a foster youth between the ages of 11 and 17 years who had not cared for that youth prior to the age of 11 years were eligible for participation. Foster parents caring for more than one foster child were asked to focus on one of their foster children who was between the ages of 11 and 17 years. Foster parents of youth with significant developmental (i.e., autism, mental retardation, traumatic brain injury, hearing/visually impaired) or medical problems (i.e., physical disability, HIV/AIDS, fetal alcohol syndrome, genetic disorders, metabolic disorders) that require frequent visits (more than three per week) with a health care provider were excluded as additional stress may be associated with caring for children with such needs.

A total of 134 participants representing 26 different states were included in the test sample (see Table 1). The average age of foster parents was 47.22 years (SD = 10.72) and of foster children was 14.64 years (SD = 1.89). Participants had been providing foster care for an average of 7.53 years (SD = 8.03) and had cared for an average of 25.96 children (SD = 52.51). A few participants who reported providing care for more than 20 years and caring for more than 200 children resulted in a misleading

mean score for both of these variables, thus the median is a more accurate representation of these sample characteristics. Participants reported providing care for a median of four years and had cared for a median of seven children. Participants reported caring for their current foster youth for an average of 8.67 months (SD = 8.71). Again, due to wide variability, the median of six months is a more accurate summary of this variable.

Table 1

Frequency Data of Test Sample Demographic Variables

	Foster Parent		Foster Child	
Demographics	n	%	n	%
Gender				
Female	109	81	60	45
Male	17	13	61	45
Unspecified	8	6	13	10
Ethnicity				
European American	79	59	66	49
African Origin/African American	23	17	23	17
Latino/Hispanic	2	2	11	8
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0	1	1
Native American	7	5	4	3
Multiracial	2	1	9	7
Unspecified	21	16	19	14
Highest Level of Education				
Some Elementary School	0	0		
Some High School	3	2		
High School Diploma	18	13		
Some College	38	29		
College Degree	37	28		
Some Graduate School	12	9		
Graduate School Degree	25	19		
Marital Status				
Single	26	19		
Married	90	67		
Separated	0	0		
Divorced	14	10		
Widowed	4	3		
Treatment Foster Care*				
Yes	73	55		
No	60	45		

Note: *Treatment foster care involves additional training and support for foster parents to care for foster youth with substantial emotional, behavioral, or health problems.

Although few large-scale studies have examined the personal characteristics of foster parents, the demographics of the present sample were similar to other samples (i.e., Hendrix & Ford, 2003; Rodger et al., 2006; Zinn, 2009). Of course, there is a possibility that those foster parents who participate in research studies possess unique characteristics compared to those who do not participate in research. However, research is needed on effective recruitment strategies for ensuring that a wide variety of foster parents participate in research. Until that time, the present sample appears to be comparable to samples included in other published studies on foster parents.

Measures

Demographic questionnaire. A demographic questionnaire was created for the purposes of this study. Participants were asked about their personal characteristics, including age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, education level, number of years providing foster care, total number of children cared for longer than two weeks, and characteristics about their current foster child (age, gender, ethnicity, and length of placement). See Appendix D for the full demographic questionnaire.

Beliefs about Foster Parenting Scale (BFPS). The BFPS is a 79-item measure of the content of foster parents' beliefs about relationship formation with early adolescent foster youth. More specifically, the BFPS contains items that assess foster parents' beliefs about the goal of the foster parent-child relationship (emotional connection, understanding the child), the foster parent role (temporary support, flexible commitment), and the reasons for misbehavior. Participants responded to statements about these beliefs using a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The

BFPS includes items such as: “I am aware of how foster parenting affects my health and well-being” and “I often ask a foster child about the details of his/her past.” A copy of the BFPS can be found in Appendix B.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 2001). The SDQ is a 25-item measure of child and adolescent social, emotional, and behavioral functioning. There are five subscales within the SDQ, measuring prosocial behavior, hyperactivity-inattention, emotional functioning, conduct problems, and peer problems. With the exception of the prosocial subscale, scores can be summed into a total difficulties score. While teacher and youth forms have also been created, only the parent report form will be used in the present study to measure foster parents’ perceptions about the degree of challenging behavior they observe in their current foster child. Participants responded to statements about child behavior during the past six months using a 3-point Likert scale, including response options of “not true,” “sometimes true,” and “certainly true.” The SDQ includes items such as: “Would rather be alone than with other youth” and “Often lies or cheats.” The SDQ has been widely studied and serves as a useful screening tool for child and adolescent mental health problems (Janssens & Deboutte, 2009; Vostanis, 2006). The total difficulties scale has good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.82$; Goodman, 2001), and norms have been established to identify potential “cases” with mental health disorders (higher scores indicate greater difficulties; Normal = 0 – 13; Borderline = 14 – 16; Abnormal = 17 – 40). The term “foster” was included before references to children in items to increase clarity for participants. A copy of the SDQ can be found in Appendix E.

Maternal Emotional Styles Questionnaire (MESQ; Lagacé-Séguin & Coplan, 2005). The MESQ measures mothers' styles of responding to their children's emotions, including emotion coaching and emotion dismissing (see Appendix F). Emotion coaching involves attending to the child's emotion and using emotional episodes as an opportunity to connect and to teach about emotions. Alternatively, emotion dismissing involves downplaying emotion in a way that invalidates children's emotions and teaches them to avoid their feelings. The MESQ contains 14 items with a 5-point Likert response format. An example of an emotion coaching item is: "Anger is an emotion worth exploring." An emotion dismissing item is: "Sadness is something that one has to get over, to ride out, not to dwell on." Higher scores on the emotion coaching subscale indicate a stronger tendency to appreciate and accept emotions whereas higher scores on the emotion dismissing subscale indicate a stronger tendency to deny or ignore emotions. Past research has found excellent coefficient alphas for the emotion coaching and emotion dismissing subscales, which were 0.90 and 0.92, respectively. The MESQ shows good stability and convergent validity (Lagacé-Séguin & Coplan, 2005). The MESQ was selected as a measure of the responsive parenting needed by children who have been maltreated and is thus appropriate for use with foster families. The MESQ was modified to refer to foster children to increase item clarity for foster parent participants. The MESQ has not been studied with fathers and so its psychometric properties with that population are unclear. While the vast majority of those providing foster care are foster mothers, the current sample was 13% foster fathers. The scale's psychometric performance in the present study will be evaluated and discussed below.

Parental Stress Scale (PSS; Berry & Jones, 1995). The PSS is an 18-item assessment tool that measures the rewards, stressors, satisfaction, and perceived lack of control in parenting. Respondents are presented with statements about their parenting experience and asked to select from a 5-point Likert scale the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statement. Items on the PSS include such statements as: "I am happy in my role as a parent" and "Having children leaves little time and flexibility in my life." Higher scores on the PSS indicate greater levels of stress associated with parenting. The instrument has shown good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.83$), good test-retest reliability ($r = 0.81$), and associations with other more lengthy measures of parenting stress. In fact, the brevity of the PSS is an important advantage of the measure. For this study, the PSS was slightly modified to include the term "foster" before any references to children and can be found in Appendix G.

Satisfaction with Foster Parenting Inventory (SFPI; Stockdale, Crase, Lekies, Yates, & Gillis-Arnold, 1997). Satisfaction with role demands, social service support, and personal needs are measured in the SFPI (see Appendix H). Role demands satisfaction involves the degree of satisfaction about the many tasks involved in being a foster parent, such as training, managing legal issues, and balancing personal responsibilities with those of foster care. Social service support satisfaction includes contentment with the availability of social service agency professionals to provide information and assistance. Finally, the degree of satisfaction with the fulfillment of the psychosocial needs of the foster parent is captured in personal needs satisfaction. These psychosocial needs include understanding foster parent responsibilities, receiving

recognition and appreciation for providing foster care, being financially reimbursed, and relating to the foster child's biological family. The scale contains 22 items and respondents select from a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied." The SFPI includes such items as: "How satisfied are you with: your relationship with your foster children" and "How satisfied are you with: having enough information about the children placed." Higher scores on the SFPI indicate greater satisfaction with providing foster care. In past research, the SFPI has shown acceptable levels of reliability (Role: $\alpha = 0.71$, Social Service: $\alpha = 0.80$, Personal Needs: $\alpha = 0.82$; Fees et al., 1998).

Procedure

As mentioned above, participants were recruited through foster care agency director dissemination of the online survey link via email, word of mouth, or postings to online forums for foster parents. Following informed consent (see Appendix I) and directions to respond to questionnaires thoroughly and honestly, participants were guided through a series of webpages containing study questionnaires. First, participants completed a demographic questionnaire to qualify for continued participation. Those participants who did not meet study criteria were redirected to a webpage that thanked them for their interest in participation. Those who met inclusionary criteria were directed to complete the BFPS followed by the SFPI, PSS, MESQ, and SDQ. Participants were able to email the primary investigator at any time with questions about the study.

Results and Discussion

Data exploration and preparation. Evaluation of item distributions revealed that 44 items on the BFPS were significantly skewed. Both square root and logarithmic transformations were explored to improve the normality of the distributions. Logarithmic transformation provided superior results although 19 items remained significantly skewed. Qualitative analysis of these items confirmed weak and/or vague language that prevented sufficient variability in responses. Therefore, those 19 items were dropped from the BFPS.

Exploratory factor analysis and reliability. In order to determine the underlying structure of the BFPS, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was utilized with the remaining 60 items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin (KMO) measure indicated somewhat low sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = .64. Bartlett's test of sphericity, χ^2 (1770) = 3408.35, $p < .001$, indicated that the correlation matrix was significantly different from the identity matrix, and thus correlations between items were sufficiently large for EFA. Haitovsky's χ^2 (1770) = 2.32 e12, $p > .05$, indicated that the determinant of the correlation matrix was not significantly different from zero and thus suggested a possible problem with multicollinearity. However, examination of the correlation matrix revealed that 3.73% of the correlations were at least moderate ($.3 > r < .4$; Cohen, 1988), 0.93% were in between moderate and strong correlations ($.4 > r < .05$), and 0.17% were strong correlations ($r > .5$), providing evidence against problematic multicollinearity.

The maximum likelihood method was used for factor extraction. Two strategies were used for determining the optimal number of factors. Although 19 factors had

eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (see Table 2), Cattell's scree test suggested that four factors should be extracted (see Figure 1). Furthermore, closer examination of factor eigenvalues indicated that each factor beyond the fourth explained little additional variance. Therefore, there was sufficient evidence to support a four-factor solution.

Table 2

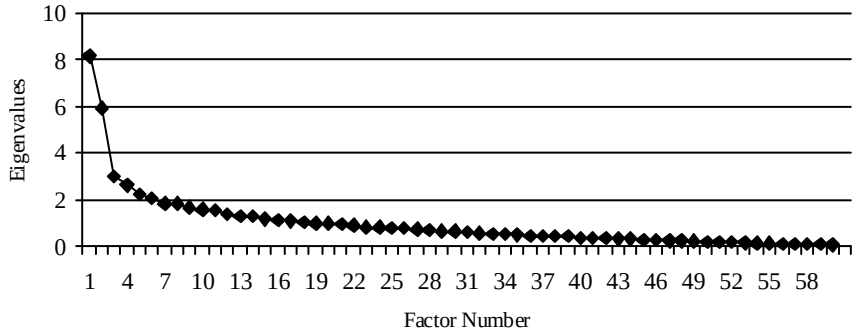
Factor Eigenvalues and Percentage of Variance Explained for 60 Items

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	Percentage of Variance	Cumulative Percent
1	8.16	13.60	13.60
2	5.94	9.90	23.50
3	3.01	5.02	28.52
4	2.65	4.42	32.94
5	2.26	3.76	36.70
6	2.06	3.44	40.13
7	1.84	3.07	43.21
8	1.83	3.04	46.25
9	1.68	2.81	49.06
10	1.58	2.64	51.69
11	1.56	2.60	54.29
12	1.41	2.35	56.64
13	1.32	2.19	58.83
14	1.28	2.14	60.97
15	1.18	1.97	62.94
16	1.13	1.89	64.83
17	1.10	1.83	66.66
18	1.04	1.74	68.40
19	1.00	1.67	70.07
20	0.99	1.65	71.71
21	0.97	1.61	73.34
22	0.91	1.52	74.84
23	0.83	1.39	76.23
24	0.83	1.38	77.61
25	0.79	1.31	78.92
26	0.77	1.28	80.20
27	0.73	1.22	81.42
28	0.70	1.16	82.58
29	0.65	1.09	83.67
30	0.65	1.08	84.74
31	0.61	1.02	85.76
32	0.57	0.96	86.72

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	Percentage of Variance	Cumulative Percent
33	0.56	0.93	87.65
34	0.55	0.91	88.56
35	0.50	0.84	89.40
36	0.48	0.80	90.20
37	0.45	0.75	90.95
38	0.45	0.74	91.69
39	0.43	0.71	92.40
40	0.37	0.61	93.01
41	0.36	0.60	93.60
42	0.35	0.59	94.19
43	0.34	0.57	94.76
44	0.32	0.54	95.30
45	0.29	0.48	95.78
46	0.28	0.47	95.25
47	0.26	0.43	96.68
48	0.25	0.41	97.09
49	0.23	0.38	97.47
50	0.20	0.33	97.79
51	0.19	0.32	98.11
52	0.18	0.31	98.42
53	0.16	0.26	98.68
54	0.14	0.24	98.92
55	0.14	0.23	99.15
56	0.12	0.20	99.35
57	0.11	0.19	99.54
58	0.11	0.17	99.71
59	0.10	0.16	99.88
60	0.07	0.12	100.00

Figure 1

Scree Plot for Eigenvalues for 60 Items



Following factor extraction, direct oblimin rotation was utilized to achieve simple structure. In the four-factor solution, 16 items did not adequately load on any factor and so were dropped to yield 44 items for analysis. To achieve simple structure and improve scale reliability, based on examination of corrected item-total correlations, an additional seven items were dropped. EFA was re-run with the remaining 37 items to verify that the solution held for the modified scale. See Appendix J for the Pearson product-moment bivariate correlation matrix used in the present analyses. The KMO measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO = 0.73 (good according to Field, 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 (666) = 1763.06, $p < .001$, was acceptable, but Haitovsky's χ^2 (666) = 2.94 e5, $p > .05$ suggested a potential problem with multicollinearity. However, examination of the correlation matrix revealed that 11.55% of the correlations were at least moderate ($.3 > r < .4$; Cohen, 1988), 3.51% were between moderate and strong correlations ($.4 > r < .5$), and 0.73% were strong correlations ($r > .5$), providing evidence against problematic multicollinearity. See Appendix K for a table of the communality coefficients. Examination of the scree plot supported the extraction of four factors, as the point of inflection occurred after the fourth factor (see Figure 2).

The four-factor solution explained 35.44% of the total variance for the 37 items (see Table 3). See Table 4 for the pattern matrix containing the regression coefficients for variables and factors. There was little difference between the pattern and factor structure matrices, which further supports the fit of a four-factor solution. As was expected, some of the factors were significantly correlated with each other (see Table 5). More specifically, the emotional connection subscale was significantly positively

correlated with the understanding the child and flexible commitment subscales. Additionally, the reasons for misbehavior subscale was negatively correlated with the flexible commitment subscale but positively correlated with the understanding the child subscale. Examination of corrected item-total correlations (see Appendix L) and coefficient alpha for each proposed factor revealed adequate internal consistency for each subscale (emotional connection $\alpha = 0.85$, understanding the child $\alpha = 0.80$, reasons for misbehavior $\alpha = 0.76$, flexible commitment, $\alpha = 0.77$).

Figure 2

Scree Plot for Eigenvalues for 37 Items

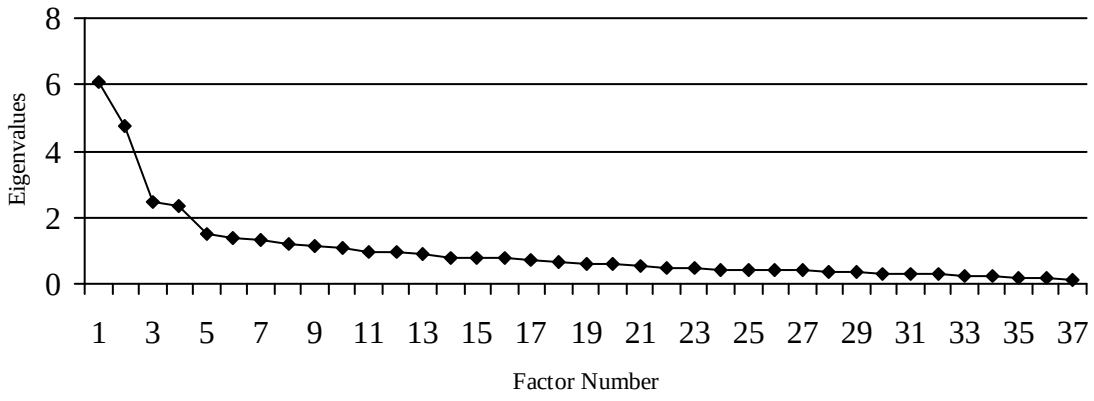


Table 3

Factor Eigenvalues and Percentage of Variance Explained for 37 Items

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	Percent of Variance	Cumulative Percent	Total	Percent of Variance	Cumulative Percent
1	6.08	16.42	16.42	5.44	14.70	14.70
2	4.78	12.91	29.33	4.15	11.21	25.91
3	2.45	6.62	35.95	1.71	4.61	30.52
4	2.32	6.26	42.21	1.82	4.92	35.44
5	1.50	4.06	46.27			
6	1.41	3.81	50.08			
7	1.30	3.50	53.58			
8	1.23	3.31	56.90			
9	1.16	3.13	60.03			
10	1.11	3.00	63.03			
11	0.99	2.67	65.70			
12	0.98	2.64	68.33			
13	0.90	2.42	70.76			
14	0.81	2.20	72.95			
15	0.81	2.18	75.13			
16	0.78	2.12	77.25			
17	0.70	1.90	79.15			
18	0.66	1.77	80.92			
19	0.61	1.64	82.56			
20	0.60	1.61	84.17			
21	0.53	1.44	85.61			
22	0.51	1.37	86.97			
23	0.47	1.27	88.25			
24	0.45	1.21	89.46			
25	0.43	1.17	90.63			
26	0.41	1.10	91.73			
27	0.40	1.08	92.81			
28	0.38	1.03	93.84			
29	0.36	0.98	94.82			
30	0.31	0.84	95.66			
31	0.30	0.82	96.48			
32	0.28	0.77	97.24			
33	0.25	0.69	97.93			
34	0.24	0.65	98.58			
35	0.21	0.56	99.14			
36	0.17	0.47	99.61			
37	0.14	0.39	100.00			

Table 4

Pattern Matrix of Item Factor Loadings for the Four-Factor Solution

	Rotated Factor Loadings			
Item	1	2	3	4
45. I can quickly accept a foster child into my heart.	.77			
34. I can quickly love any foster child who comes into my home.	.75			
59. I can easily say "I love you" to a foster child soon after he/she comes to my home.	.63			
31. I find it difficult to immediately allow myself to emotionally open up to a foster child.*	.62			
49. I can usually develop a close relationship with a foster child within a few days.	.61			
36. Once I get to know a foster child, I develop a close bond with him/her.	.61			
16. When I first meet a foster child, I believe that we will eventually develop an emotional bond.	.60			
1. It takes time for me to get to know a foster child before we can develop a close relationship.*	.48			
55. No matter how long a foster child has been in my home, I still feel a distance between us.*	.43			
44. Foster children usually want to be accepted by their foster family.	.41			
26. I know I have been successful when I have worked out the majority of my foster children's problems.		.70		
50. Learning about a foster child's past experiences is my top priority as a foster parent.		.60		
32. When my foster children keep secrets about their past, I cannot develop a close relationship with them.		.50		
76. If I provide enough love and support, any foster child will adjust to my home.		.49		
52. I need to know everything about a foster child's past to be able to help him/her.		.47		
12. I worry about getting too close to a foster child.		.45		
41. Most foster children want to overcome their problems.		.45		
51. When a foster child comes into my home, I pick a few of his/her problems to focus on.		.44		
6. I need to uncover the root of a foster child's problems to be able to foster parent him/her.		.42		
30. Because I work closely with a foster child, I understand him/her more than anyone else.		.41		
5. The most frustrating part of foster parenting is that I cannot solve all of a foster child's problems.		.41		
77. There is no difference between the role of parent and foster parent.		.40		
11. Most foster children are manipulative.			.77	
25. Foster children will usually lie to get what they want.			.65	
20. Foster children often create problems because they are used to chaotic environments.			.56	
71. Few foster children can trust that others will treat them fairly.			.55	
13. Foster children usually fight to get what they need.			.51	
58. Most foster children have a difficult time adjusting to stable homes.			.43	
68. I make time to care for my emotional needs so that I can be the best foster parent I can be.				.58
67. I do not blame myself when a foster child has to leave my home permanently.				.56
54. Others have to tell me to take care of myself before I notice that foster parenting is negatively affecting me.*				.54
10. When I am having a hard time parenting my foster children, I have a difficult time reaching out to others for help.*				.54
63. I am aware of the challenges in foster parenting that I can manage well and those I struggle with.				.52
3. I have a hard time balancing foster parenting with my other work and family responsibilities.*				.50
66. I am aware of how foster parenting affects my health and well-being.				.49
79. When caring for a foster child, everything else in life is less important.*				.48
43. I am able to understand my emotional reactions to a foster child leaving my home permanently.				.41

Note: Only factor loadings over .40 are included; *Items reversed scored.

Table 5

Factor Correlation Matrix for the Four-Factor Solution

Scale	EC	UC	RM	FC
EC	1.00			
UC	.23**	1.00		
RM	-.17	.20*	1.00	
FC	.23**	-.13	-.28**	1.00

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; EC = Emotional Connection, UC = Understanding the Child, RM = Reasons for Misbehavior, FC = Flexible Commitment

Four BFPS subscales. EFA revealed four scales of the BFPS that were conceptually similar to those predicted scales based on the previously conducted qualitative study with foster parents (Schwerzler & Wagner, 2009). However, items originally designed to measure the theme of temporary support did not emerge as a distinct subscale. More specifically, of the 11 items intended to measure this theme, three were dropped because distributions remained significantly skewed despite transformation, three emerged on the understanding the child subscale, and five did not produce sufficient factor loadings on any of the factors. Additionally, this sample of foster parents responded in somewhat different ways from what was predicted based on discussions within the focus group research, which is described in more detail below. The BFPS subscales include: (1) emotional connection, (2) understanding the child, (3) reasons for misbehavior, and (4) flexible commitment.

First, the emotional connection subscale includes items that assess foster parents' ideas about how quickly they will be able to develop a close relationship with a foster child. This subscale contains ten items, and so scores can range from 10-50 points with

higher scores indicating a belief that one will be able to quickly develop a relationship with a foster child within a few days of placement.

Second, the understanding the child subscale is comprised of items that assess foster parents' ideas about how quickly and deeply they are able to understand a foster child's needs and his or her past experiences, as well as the extent of the impact foster parents can make in a foster child's life. This subscale consists mostly of items originally intended for the understanding the child subscale, but some of the items from each of the other subscales emerged on this factor (i.e., three from temporary support, two from flexible commitment, one from emotional connection, one from reasons for misbehavior). This subscale contains twelve items, and so scores can range from 12-60 points. Higher scores on this scale indicate that respondents believe that they are able to understand a great deal about a foster child within a short amount of time, and thus they are able to help foster children solve many of their problems.

Third, the reasons for misbehavior subscale consists of items that measure foster parents' generalized beliefs about the levels of negative and challenging behaviors with which foster children present (i.e., manipulating, fighting, lying). The items in this subscale capture foster parents' ideas about the pervasiveness of negative behavior among foster children, which may influence how a foster parent perceives and responds to a particular foster child's behavior. This subscale contains six items, and so scores can range from 6-30 points with higher scores indicating strong reliance on generalized beliefs that foster children display pervasive negative behaviors.

Fourth, the flexible commitment subscale includes items that reflect foster parents' beliefs about the need to take care of one's own emotional needs and to develop an awareness and understanding of the challenging nature of foster parenting. Items also measure a belief in the importance of monitoring and caring for one's emotional and personal needs while providing foster care. This subscale contains nine items, and so scores can range from 9-45 points. Higher scores on this subscale indicate that respondents recognize the need for emotional flexibility and awareness of the challenges of foster parenting.

Based on the results from focus group research with foster parents (Schwerzler & Wagner, 2009), it appeared that many foster parents recognized that the foster parent-child relationship took time and effort to develop. However, based on the mean item responses to the BFPS subscales, the current sample seems to hold somewhat different beliefs about relationship development than were found in the focus group research (see Table 6). To better understand the group response pattern for the BFPS subscales, a cut-off point of 3.5 was selected to indicate agreement because it is halfway between the scale points of neutral (3) and somewhat agree (4), indicating at least minimal agreement with the item. A cut-off point of 2.5 was selected to indicate disagreement because it is halfway between the scale points of neutral (3) and somewhat disagree (2). Finally, the range of 2.5 to 3.5 scale points was used to represent neutral responses to items. It should be noted that negatively loading items were taken into account through reverse scoring. Percentages of group responses can also be found in Table 6.

Table 6

BFPS Subscale Descriptive Statistics and Pattern of Group Responses

	Descriptive		Group Responses (%)		
Scale	Mean Item Score	SD	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
EC	3.45	0.63	46.81	46.78	6.41
UC	2.61	0.56	5.50	52.34	42.07
RM	3.19	0.33	17.11	81.23	1.66
FC	3.99	0.23	98.38	1.52	0.10

Note: EC = Emotional Connection, UC = Understanding the Child, RM = Reasons for Misbehavior, FC = Flexible Commitment

Overall, the majority of participants indicated that they were either in agreement or were neutral in their responses to items on the emotional connection subscale. This response pattern is contrary to foster parents' comments in the focus group research about needing to take time to get to know foster youth (Schwerzler & Wagner, 2009). Thus, predictions made about relationships between this subscale and measures of other parenting constructs will need to be considered with caution given that they were made based on the assumption that most foster parents would disagree with items on this subscale. Next, the majority of participants indicated a neutral opinion about items on the understanding the child subscale. A substantial portion indicated that they disagreed with those items. Thus, most foster parents acknowledged that they may not be able to fully understand or resolve foster youth problems, which is consistent with previous qualitative findings. The vast majority of participants indicated a neutral response to items on the reasons for misbehavior subscale. This finding is consistent with findings from focus groups with foster parents because there was variability in the extent to which foster parents applied generalized beliefs to a particular foster youth (Schwerzler & Wagner,

2009). Finally, nearly all of the participants indicated agreement with items on the flexible commitment subscale. Although this finding is in the same direction as the beliefs identified in focus group discussion, it is considerably more extreme. Social desirability may have played a factor in participants' response patterns and will be discussed in more detail below.

Relationships between BFPS subscales and demographic variables.

Independent *t*-test analyses showed that mean scores for each of the BFPS subscales were not significantly different based on foster parent gender, foster child gender, or type of foster care provided (treatment vs. regular). One-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) showed that mean scores for each of the BFPS subscales were not significantly different based on foster child ethnicity, foster parent ethnicity, marital status, education level, or region of the country. It should be noted that 55.20% of participants reported that they belonged to the same ethnic group as their foster youth with 25.40% reporting belonging to different ethnic groups. Ethnic congruence could not be determined for 19.40% of the sample due to missing data. Thus, an independent *t*-test analysis was performed to determine if mean BFPS subscale scores differed based on whether foster parents and the children placed with them were of the same or different ethnic groups. Results indicated that there were no significant differences in BFPS subscale responses based on ethnic congruence. See Tables 7 and 8 for statistical parameters for tests of differences in BFPS subscale mean scores based on demographic variables.

Table 7

Differences in BFPS Subscale Mean Scores by Foster Parent Demographic Variables

	Gender		Ethnicity		Education		Marital		Care		Region	
Scale	*t*(124)	*p*	*F*(4,107)	*p*	*F*(5,127)	*p*	*F*(3,129)	*p*	*t*(131)	*p*	*F*(5,127)	*p*
EC	0.85	.396	0.70	.595	0.48	.790	0.17	.916	-0.38	.708	1.52	.189
UC	1.17	.246	1.67	.163	1.18	.324	0.12	.950	-1.32	.188	1.60	.165
RM	0.77	.445	1.81	.133	1.01	.412	1.19	.316	-1.12	.266	0.89	.490
FC	0.20	.842	1.79	.136	0.92	.468	1.16	.329	-0.84	.403	0.44	.822

Note: * p < .05; EC = Emotional Connection, UC = Understanding the Child, RM = Reasons for Misbehavior, FC = Flexible Commitment

Table 8

Differences in BFPS Subscale Mean Scores by Foster Child Demographic Variables

	Gender		Ethnicity		Ethnic Congruence	
Scale	*t*(119)	*p*	*F*(5,108)	*p*	*t*(106)	*p*
EC	1.53	.129	0.61	.691	-0.31	.754
UC	0.85	.398	1.96	.091	-0.84	.404
RM	0.41	.681	1.98	.087	-0.87	.385
FC	0.94	.350	1.22	.305	-1.62	.108

Note: * p < .05; EC = Emotional Connection, UC = Understanding the Child, RM = Reasons for Misbehavior, FC = Flexible Commitment

The majority of BFPS subscale scores did not significantly correlate with foster parent age, length of time foster parenting, number of total children fostered, length of current placement, or foster child age (see Table 9). The one exception was a significant negative correlation between understanding the child subscale scores and total number of foster children for whom participants had provided care. Thus, it appears that with experience, foster parents tend to lessen in their belief that they are able to deeply understand and thoroughly resolve a foster child's problems.

Table 9

Correlations between BFPS Subscales and Demographic Variables

	Age				
Scale	Parent	Child	Years	Fostered	Months
EC	-.13	.08	.11	-.05	-.03
UC	.06	-.03	-.15	-.26**	-.05
RM	.16	-.03	.14	.08	-.13
FC	.04	-.05	.06	.12	.01

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; EC = Emotional Connection, UC = Understanding the Child, RM = Reasons for Misbehavior, FC = Flexible Commitment, Years = Number of years foster parenting, Fostered = Number of children cared for, Months = Number of months in current foster placement

Construct validity. Following examination of the underlying structure and reliability of the BFPS, the construct validity of the BFPS was preliminarily assessed through tests of convergent validity and criterion-related validity. These tests were carried out through a series of multiple regressions with child behavior problems (SDQ; Goodman, 2001) being held constant, given that many foster children exhibit difficult behavior that could influence the relationships between parenting beliefs, behavior, stress, and satisfaction. As mentioned above, there was a significant relationship between number of children for whom foster parents have provided care and the understanding the child subscale. Therefore, this measure of foster parent experience was also held constant in tests of construct validity for the understanding the child subscale. Analyses were also conducted to determine if foster parent experience moderated the relationship between scores on the understanding the child subscale and measures of other parenting behaviors, but results were not significant (see Appendix M). A Bonferroni adjustment was utilized to maintain the chances of study-wide Type I error at an acceptable level. The internal consistency of each previously developed scale was calculated to assess their

performance with the current sample, and adequate levels were found for each scale (MESQ EC $\alpha = 0.77$, MESQ ED $\alpha = 0.74$, PSS $\alpha = 0.83$, SFPI $\alpha = 0.88$, SDQ Total Difficulties $\alpha = 0.84$). It should be noted that one item was dropped from the ED subscale of the MESQ ("I prefer a happy foster child to a foster child who is overly emotional") because of a weak corrected item-total correlation ($r = .10$; see Appendix N). Additionally, this item may have a different implication for foster parents, who have some input on the foster youth placement, than for biological parents for whom the scale was originally developed.

Inspection of data distributions and descriptive statistics indicated that data met assumptions for subsequent analyses. As expected, the measures of other parenting constructs were related to one another (see Table 10). There was a negative relationship between the PSS and the SFPI, which was to be expected as stress and satisfaction are opposing constructs. Additionally, there was a negative relationship between the MESQ EC subscale and the PSS, which was also to be expected given that emotion coaching has been shown to improve child functioning and thus reduce parenting stress (Gottman et al., 1996). The positive relationship between the MESQ ED and MESQ EC subscales was more surprising, as the creators of the scale found a negative relationship between the subscales (Lagacé-Séguin & Coplan, 2005). However, the scale was originally created with a sample of biological mothers, and so application with a different population raises the possibility that the scale will perform differently. It is possible that foster parents may be more inclined to engage in both emotion coaching and emotion

dismissing because foster youth demonstrate significant emotional difficulties related to past maltreatment, a point that is raised again in the discussion section.

Table 10

Intercorrelations of Other Parenting Constructs

Scale	MESQ EC	MESQ ED	PSS	SFPI	SDQ Total D
MESQ EC	1.00				
MESQ ED	.47**	1.00			
PSS	-.18*	-.03	1.00		
SFPI	.12	.04	-.53**	1.00	
SDQ Total D	.03	.09	.38**	-.15	1.00

Note: * p < .05, ** p < .01; MESQ EC = Maternal Emotional Styles Questionnaire – Emotion Coaching, MESQ ED = Maternal Emotional Styles Questionnaire – Emotion Dismissing, PSS = Parental Stress Scale, SFPI = Satisfaction with Providing Foster Care Inventory; SDQ Total D = Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire – Total Difficulties

As expected, many of the BFPS subscales were related to measures of other parenting constructs (see Table 11). Therefore, an important assumption of regression analysis is met and analyses can proceed. However, it should be noted that while each of the BFPS subscales was related to at least one of the other measures of parenting constructs, most were not related to all of the other parenting constructs. The understanding the child and flexible commitment subscales were only related to two of the other parenting constructs and the misbehavior ideas subscale was only related to one. Thus, tests of construct validity may be negatively impacted by the lack of a direct relationship between BFPS subscales and other measures of parenting constructs. However, the SDQ Total Difficulties scale, a measure of parents' perceptions of child behavior difficulties, was controlled for in the regression analyses, and child behavior problems could have had obscured the direct relationship. Yet, the SDQ Total

Difficulties scale was significantly correlated with the reasons for misbehaviors subscale. This correlation is not surprising given that one's experiences with a foster child who exhibits challenging behaviors likely will develop negative generalized beliefs about how foster children behave. However, this significant correlation could have an impact on tests of the construct validity of the misbehavior ideas subscale. In other words, it could possibly obscure a meaningful relationship.

Table 11

Correlations between BFPS Subscales and Other Parenting Constructs

Scale	MESQ EC	MESQ ED	PSS	SFPI	SDQ Total D
EC	.35**	.28**	-.49**	.37**	-.09
UC	.41**	.60**	-.06	.07	.02
RM	.05	.22	.41**	-.17	.44**
FC	-.02	-.17	-.50**	.43**	-.20*

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; EC = Emotional Connection, UC = Understanding the Child, RM = Reasons for Misbehavior, FC = Flexible Commitment; MESQ EC = Maternal Emotional Styles Questionnaire – Emotion Coaching, MESQ ED = Maternal Emotional Styles Questionnaire – Emotion Dismissing, PSS = Parental Stress Scale, SFPI = Satisfaction with Providing Foster Care Inventory; SDQ Total D = Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire – Total Difficulties

Parental emotional style. When controlling for SDQ scores, higher emotional connection predicted higher MESQ EC subscale scores (see Table 12). In other words, foster parents who maintained stronger beliefs that they could quickly develop a relationship with a foster child also reported higher levels of emotion coaching regardless of child behavior problems. In addition, higher understanding the child subscale scores predicted higher MESQ EC and MESQ ED subscale scores while holding SDQ scores and foster parent experience constant. Foster parents who reported stronger beliefs that

they could deeply understand and resolve foster youth problems indicated higher levels of emotion coaching as well as emotion dismissing irrespective of child behavior problems and number of children for whom foster parents have provided care. Scores on the reasons for misbehavior and flexible commitment subscales did not predict parental emotional style even with taking child behavior problems into account.

Table 12

Standardized Coefficients for BFPS Subscale Prediction of Other Parenting Constructs

	Parenting Constructs							
	MESQ EC		MESQ ED		PSS		SFPI	
Scale	B	*t*	B	*t*	B	*t*	B	*t*
EC	0.35	4.04*	0.28	3.09*	-0.43	-5.65*	0.37	4.38*
UC	0.42	4.67*	0.62	8.05*	-0.12	-1.40	0.11	1.12
RM	0.06	0.57	0.24	2.33	0.28	3.00†	-0.11	-1.03
FC	-0.02	-0.16	-0.16	-1.73	-0.46	-6.01*	0.43	5.08*

Note: * $p < .003$; † $p < .004$; MESQ EC = Maternal Emotional Styles Questionnaire – Emotion Coaching, MESQ ED = Maternal Emotional Styles Questionnaire – Emotion Dismissing, PSS = Parental Stress Scale, SFPI = Satisfaction with Foster Parenting Inventory, EC = Emotional Connection, UC = Understanding the Child, RM = Reasons for Misbehavior, FC = Flexible Commitment

Parenting stress. When controlling for SDQ scores, higher emotional connection and flexible commitment subscale scores predicted lower PSS scores. In other words, foster parents who indicated stronger beliefs that they could quickly and relatively easily develop a close relationship with a foster teen also noted that they perceived lower levels of stress associated with parenting regardless of child behavior problems. Additionally, after taking child behavior problems into account, foster parents who reported greater awareness of and attention to their own well-being while providing foster care also reported lower levels of parenting stress. In contrast, taking SDQ scores into account,

there was a trend toward higher reasons for misbehavior subscale scores predicting higher PSS scores. Although not statistically significant, it appears that foster parents who reported higher beliefs in generalized negative reasons for youth misbehavior may also be more likely to indicate greater parenting stress irrespective of child behavior problems. Scores on the understanding the child subscale did not predict parenting stress even after child behavior problems and number of children for whom foster parents have provided care were taken into account.

Satisfaction with foster parenting. When controlling for SDQ scores, higher scores on the emotional connection and flexible commitment subscales predicted higher scores on the SFPI. Thus, when child behavior problems were held constant, foster parents who indicated stronger beliefs that they could quickly and easily develop a close relationship with a foster teen also noted that they perceived greater levels of satisfaction with providing foster care. Additionally, after taking child behavior problems into account, foster parents who reported greater belief in the importance of balancing their personal care needs with their commitment to providing foster care to a particular child also reported higher levels of satisfaction with providing foster care. Scores on the reasons for misbehavior subscale not predict satisfaction with foster parenting despite controlling for child behavior problems. Scores on the understanding the child subscale did not predict satisfaction with foster parenting despite controlling for child behavior problems and the number of children for whom foster parents have provided care.

Chapter V: General Discussion

The aim of the present study was to fill a significant gap in the field of foster parent assessment through the development of a measure that assesses foster parents' beliefs about relationship formation with adolescent foster youth. More specifically, the Beliefs about Foster Parenting Scale (BFPS) was created to measure foster parents' beliefs about the goal of the foster parent-teen relationship, characteristics of the foster parenting role, and generalized beliefs about the reasons for youth misbehavior.

Through a series of rigorous evaluations, the BFPS demonstrated solid psychometric properties, making it a potentially valuable tool in the pursuit of better understanding the experiences of foster parents. The BFPS measures four aspects of foster parents' beliefs about relationship development with foster youth. Reported beliefs on the BFPS were related in meaningful ways to foster parents' styles of relating to the youths' emotions, parenting stress, and levels of satisfaction with providing foster care. These relationships provided evidence for construct validity and at the same time indicated that the BFPS beliefs are related to other elements of foster parents' experiences. Therefore, the BFPS may be a useful measure for foster care researchers and professionals to assess foster parents' beliefs that are associated with their daily care of foster youth.

Interpretation and Integration

Although face and content validity cannot be established statistically, evaluation of the extent to which a scale appears to measure its intended construct and the thoroughness with which the construct is measured are important steps in establishing

construct validity (Kazdin, 2003). The results of Study 1 indicated that adequate face and content validity of the BFPS were established. Scale items were created based on clear construct definitions identified through qualitative research with foster parents (i.e., Schwerzler & Wagner, 2009). A large pool of items was created to provide thorough sampling of all aspects of the constructs being measured. Feedback from expert panelists provided evidence for the fit between the items and the construct being measured as well as information about the ease of comprehension of items. Analyses revealed that changes made to the scale based on expert panel feedback resulted in a scale that contained highly relevant items that were more understandable than the original item pool. Thus, the BFPS represents a scale that was thoughtfully created based on close interaction with foster parents and held up to the critique of informants who were highly familiar with the complexities of the foster care system.

A series of hypothesis about its psychometric properties guided the evaluation of the new BFPS in Study 2. First, it was hypothesized that a simple structure of factors for the BFPS would emerge, including five factors capturing beliefs about relationship goals (emotional connection, understanding the child), the foster parenting role (temporary support, flexible commitment), and reasons for misbehavior. More specifically, it was predicted that items would load uniquely onto single factors without cross loading onto other factors. Second, it was hypothesized that the newly created BFPS would reliably measure latent constructs. Finally, it was hypothesized that the BFPS would show adequate convergent and criterion-related validity through its relationships with measures of other parenting constructs. Predictions were based on previous work indicating the

benefits of holding a pattern of beliefs that takes into consideration the time-limited nature of providing foster care, the importance of appreciating each foster teen's unique characteristics, and making self-care a priority to support long-term foster parenting.

Results indicated that four factors emerged to explain the greatest amount of total variance while demonstrating the greatest reliability and conceptual sense. Furthermore, solutions with factors beyond four did not contribute additional meaningful subscales, and so for the sake of parsimony were not considered acceptable. The *emotional connection* subscale contains items that measure foster parents' beliefs about how quickly and easily they are able to develop a close relationship with foster teens. The *understanding the child* subscale consists of items that assess foster parents' beliefs about the extent to which they can understand and resolve foster children's problems. The *reasons for misbehavior* subscale includes items that measure foster parents' generalized beliefs about the challenging behaviors with which foster children can struggle. The *flexible commitment* subscale contains items that assess foster parents' beliefs about the need to monitor and respond to the negative effects of providing foster care on their well-being.

Contrary to hypotheses, items created to measure the temporary support theme did not emerge as a distinct factor. A few of the items were dropped prior to EFA because the vast majority of participants responded in the same way, resulting in significantly skewed distributions that data transformation could not normalize. Additionally, a few of the items that focused on the degree to which foster parents can resolve nearly all of a foster child's problems emerged as related to foster parents' beliefs about the degree to

which they can understand foster youth problems. The remainder of the items focused on appreciating the incremental support and changes that foster parents can provide to foster youth but did not emerge as a sufficiently strong factor.

Additionally, before discussion of the BFPS subscales proceeds, it should be noted that the measure of parental emotional style (MESQ; Lagacé-Séguin & Coplan, 2005) performed differently with foster parents than it did in past studies with biological parents. More specifically, the emotion coaching and emotion dismissing subscales were positively correlated with each other in the present study, whereas in samples of biological mothers, the subscales were negatively correlated. In other words, in the present study, participants who indicated higher levels of emotion coaching also reported higher levels of emotion dismissing, but in previous studies higher levels of emotion coaching were related to lower levels of emotion dismissing. Given that emotion coaching involves attention and value placed on emotions, whereas emotion dismissing involves avoidance and minimization of emotions, they appear to be mutually exclusive concepts. However, it may be beneficial for foster parents to support foster youth to explore and understand their emotions to a certain point and then shift to supporting youth to learn to be able to move on from their distress. Foster youth often are struggling with deep emotional pain that is not likely to be resolved in a single episode of emotion coaching. Therefore, foster parents who engage in "healthy distracting" when their foster youth are experiencing difficulty moving past intense distress may develop deeper closeness with and understanding of their foster youth. This unique relationship between emotion coaching and emotion dismissing elements of foster parent emotional style has

important implications in the tests of construct validity for the BFPS, which is discussed below.

Emotional connection. The emotional connection subscale represented foster parents' beliefs that a close relationship with their foster youth will develop quickly after the placement begins. As a group, about half of the sample indicated that they agreed with the belief that they could develop a close emotional relationship with a foster teen in a relatively short amount of time while half noted a neutral opinion. Responses to the items on this scale did not differ significantly based on demographic characteristics. This finding that foster parents are thinking about the process of connecting emotionally with foster youth is not surprising given survey research with current foster parents has shown that one of the most often cited reasons for becoming a foster parent is to be loving parents to children (Rodger et al., 2006) and that rewarding aspects of foster parenting include having somebody to love the foster child and somebody to "love me" (i.e., the foster parent; Buehler et al., 2003). Additionally, Leathers (2006) found that low foster home integration (i.e., foster child's perception of belonging to the home and their probable reaction to being removed from the home) mediated the relationship between child behavior problems and placement disruption. Foster parents clearly value the emotional connection that is developed with a foster child, and the emotional connection helps to stabilize children's functioning and placements. However, the timing of when a close relationship can be achieved is unclear in the current literature base as well as the findings in the present study.

In contrast to predictions, about half of the participants agreed with the concept that they could quickly develop a relationship with a foster child, and just under half indicated a neutral response. It was predicted that a recognition that a close relationship takes time to develop would represent an appropriate accommodation to the foster care context. However, it appears that the vast majority of this sample believe that it is possible or at least do not think that it is impossible to quickly develop a close relationship with foster youth. It is possible that the term "close relationship" may have various meanings for different respondents. Additionally, it is possible that degree of "closeness" developed within a few days may be different from the "closeness" that is felt after weeks or months of placement. Nevertheless, the present results indicate that many foster parents maintain a belief that a close relationship can quickly develop within the context of foster care. Little research has been conducted on foster parents' conceptualizations of the amount of time needed to develop a relationship with foster youth. Therefore, it is not completely surprising that the prediction was contradicted, and so the emotional connection subscale represents a potentially beneficial tool for better understanding foster parents' ideas about the timing of relationship formation. To be able to more confidently state whether or not a stronger belief in being able to quickly develop a relationship is beneficial, more research is needed on the relationship between this belief and factors related to placement success (i.e., stability, quality of foster parent-child relationship, child progress).

As predicted, the emotional connection subscale was related to other parenting behaviors, which provided evidence for the construct validity of the scale. However, the

pattern of findings was moderately different than that which had been predicted. As mentioned above, it is difficult to determine whether belief in quick relationship development is beneficial or detrimental, but associations with indicators of poor foster parent functioning, such as parenting stress and low satisfaction, could help to shed light on the implications of participants' responses to this subscale.

In the present sample, it was found that higher emotional connection subscale scores predicted increased emotion coaching, emotion dismissing, and satisfaction with providing foster care as well as lower parenting stress. Therefore, it appears that those who more strongly believe that a close emotional relationship with a foster youth can develop quickly are functioning better (i.e., less stress and more satisfied) than those who do not believe that a relationship can develop quickly. Thus, maintaining a belief that a relationship can develop quickly and easily may suggest a level of hope and optimism that sustains foster parents in their work. Additionally, these foster parents are more likely to engage in parenting behavior that is both attentive to and dismissive of the teen's emotions. At first, this appears to be a contradiction. On the one hand, it is possible that belief in the rapid development of a relationship may lead foster parents to ignore foster youth emotions. In other words, foster parents' perceptions of a close relationship can be more easily maintained if they dismiss foster youth emotions that contradict these perceptions. Alternatively, the findings may suggest that beliefs valuing rapid emotional connection might be associated with foster parents' attention to foster youth emotion at some points but also their encouragement of foster youth to move on from negative emotions at other times. Given the degree of emotional and behavioral difficulties with

which foster youth present, foster parents who want to quickly establish a close relationship may find it more beneficial to minimize the youths' strong emotions at times, rather than consistently encouraging the youths to engage with their strong emotions. Foster youth typically present with substantial emotional and behavioral problems, which are not likely to be easily resolved (Margolin & Gordis, 2000). Thus, flexible attention to foster youth emotions that balances support and "healthy distraction" may increase the chances of rapidly developing a close relationship. Given the associations of emotional connection with parenting stress and satisfaction, this strategy may also result in a less stressful, and thus more rewarding, foster parenting experience.

Other studies provide evidence of the interrelations of greater emotional connection, lower parenting stress, and greater parenting satisfaction. In their study of foster parent satisfaction, Whenan and colleagues (2009) found that greater levels of perceived warmth in their relationships with foster youth predicted greater satisfaction. Emotion coaching has also been shown to be associated with the development of better emotion regulation skills (Shipman et al., 2007) and social competency (McDowell, Kim, O'Neil, & Parke, 2002) in children, both of which are associated with fewer youth emotional and behavioral problems and thus lower strain among foster parents (Farmer, Lipscombe, & Moyers, 2005).

Examination of the relationships between BFPS subscales provides some additional support for this conceptualization. There is a significant positive correlation between emotional connection and flexible commitment scores. An important element for effective emotion coaching is to be aware of one's own emotions so that one can

accurately recognize emotions in one's child (Gottman et al., 1996). Thus, those foster parents who are aware of the need to take care of their own emotional needs may be more likely to have the emotional resources available to rapidly develop a relationship and to be more effective at emotion coaching, potentially making relationship development an easier and more successful process. Furthermore, the positive relationship between emotional connection and understanding the child scores suggests that foster parents who believe that the foster parent-child relationship will develop rather quickly appear to view developing a coherent understanding of foster youth as an important part of the process. This is not surprising, given that emotional closeness is built on the sharing of increasingly personal information (Mongeau & Henningsen, 2008).

Understanding the child. As already noted, the understanding the child subscale represented foster parents' beliefs about the degree to which they can understand and attempt to resolve foster teens' problems. Responses did not significantly differ based on demographic variables. About half of participants in this sample noted a neutral opinion on this subscale with about 40% noting disagreement, indicating that many foster parents recognize that they cannot completely understand and resolve all of a foster youth's problems. Thus, participants' response pattern provides some support for the hypothesis that foster parents would maintain an awareness that time limits foster parents' ability to understand foster youth and support them to resolve their problems.

Foster parent concern about trying to understand and help foster youth is well established within the present literature. For example, Buehler and colleagues (2003) found that current foster parents identified making a difference in a child's life, seeing the

child grow and develop, and providing a sense of 'normality' for the child as some of the most rewarding aspects of foster parenting. Additionally, foster parent applicants acknowledged that they would need to adjust their parenting to meet the special needs of foster youth, including helping them to adjust to foster care and promoting foster youth emotional development (Rhodes, Orme, & McSurdy, 2003). In addition, Schofield and Beek (2005) identified five caregiving tasks that characterized foster parents' work with foster youth, including promoting reflective functioning, which involved developing ideas and theories about the child's past to help explain the present. Similarly, interviews with foster parents (Wells, Farmer, Richards, & Burns, 2004) have identified a relationship experience that researchers labeled "strategic" and included an orientation to the analysis of and intervention with youth problems; such a change-oriented task implies the presence of a belief in the importance of learning about the foster youth so that foster parents can thoughtfully choose how to parent to promote their foster youth's healthy functioning. However, there is little research that has specifically examined foster parents' perceptions about how quickly they can understand foster youth problems and the extent of foster youth progress that is possible within the confines of a foster care placement. Therefore, the understanding the child subscale represents a potentially useful tool for measuring and learning about foster parents' ideas about understanding and supporting youth difficulties.

Based on results from the present study, there were no significant differences in participants' responses based on the majority of demographic characteristics. However, there was a negative relationship between the number of foster youth for whom foster

parents had provided care and their responses to the understanding the child subscale. In other words, as number of children cared for increased, agreement with the scale decreased. Thus, it appears that while most foster parents believed that they could not thoroughly understand and help foster youth, as the number of children for whom foster parents cared increased, beliefs about how thoroughly foster children can be understood and helped decreased even further. With time and experience foster parents may learn that a deep understanding and resolution of foster youth problems is less and less possible, and so they adjust their belief accordingly.

Unfortunately, the effect of foster parent experience is an understudied area in the foster care literature. The impact of foster parent experience conceptualized as number of children cared for and/or length of service on foster parent functioning is unclear. For example, Ponciano (2010) found that less foster parent experience predicted more secure foster-parent child attachments. In other words, foster parents who had been providing care for less time and for fewer children were more likely to be able to create secure attachments with their foster youth. Ponciano (2010) noted as possible explanatory factors: (1) increased commitment to foster care immediately after become licensed or (2) fatigue and frustration associated with increased time providing foster care. In the present study, neither number of years providing foster care nor number of children for whom foster parents have fostered was significantly related to parenting stress, providing some initial evidence against the argument that foster parents with more extensive careers of services are differentially fatigued or burned out. Yet, Cole and Eamon (2007) did not find a relationship between number of months licensed and foster parents' perceptions of

caregiver role fulfillment. Both new and experienced foster parents appeared to be equally as likely to perceive themselves as meeting the expectations of the foster parent role.

A simplistic measure of experience, such as length of service or number of children cared for, may only capture part of the construct of foster parent experience. Furthermore, they also may provide redundant information about foster parent experience given that there was a positive correlation between number of years providing foster care and number of children for whom foster parents have cared in the present sample, $r = .49$, $p > .001$. Therefore, it is important to gather more detailed information about foster parents' experiences to better understand their impact on foster parent functioning. For example, Lipscombe, Moyers, and Farmer (2004) found that certain foster parent behaviors have been shown to change over the course of a single placement, including increased warmth, decreased commitment, and decreased control (Lipscombe, Moyers, & Farmer, 2004). Specific experiences of parenting tasks may represent more sensitive measures of foster parent experience, and so may be able to provide better explanations for changes in foster parenting beliefs and behaviors. Taken together, it appears that parenting behavior changes, but foster parents may or may not demonstrate awareness of their changed behavior and/or beliefs about parenting behavior. Future research is strongly needed to better understand the impact of placement conditions (i.e., timing in foster parent's career, length of placement, number of children cared for previously and currently), formal training, and on-the-job learning on how foster parents learn and grow

over time as well as how this experience impacts their understanding and functioning in the foster parent role.

As predicted, the understanding the child subscale was related to measures of other parenting behaviors, which provided support for its construct validity. Interestingly, stronger agreement with items on the understanding the child subscale was associated with increases in both emotion coaching and emotion dismissing parenting behaviors. In other words, foster parents who more strongly believe that they can thoroughly understand a foster child's problems and thus resolve the majority of those problems were more likely to attend to their foster child's emotional experience but also more likely to minimize their child's emotional experience. As was described in the case of the emotional connection subscale, it is possible that those parents who are intent on understanding their foster child may at times balance their efforts to understand by helping the child to distance from emotions, rather than consistently pushing for the child to engage. However, it is also possible that the foster parents' insistence on fixing the child's problems may lead them to persist in their efforts at communication beyond the point of listening and validating, to the extent that they downplay and minimize the child's emotions in misguided attempts to achieve their goals.

Contrary to predictions, scores on the understanding the child subscale were not related to participants' reported level of parenting stress or satisfaction with providing foster care. This lack of findings is surprising given that learning about another person is an important basis for relationship formation. Stage theories about relationship development assume that relationships are formed through a series of verbal and

nonverbal exchanges that across time and experience become increasingly closer and more attuned to relationship partners (Mongeau & Henningsen, 2008). Ultimately, open exchange about emotional experiences within the relationship leads to a stable experience of closeness, which is similar to the beliefs assessed in the understanding the child subscale (i.e., how deeply foster parents can understand and resolve foster youth problems). Stage models of relationship development indicate that this sort of focus on attempting to understand foster youth problems would promote the development of a close relationship, which as discussed above was one of the most frequently cited rewards of providing foster care. However, most participants indicated that they maintained a neutral position or disagreement with the belief that foster youth can be quickly understood. Thus, it is not surprising that foster parents report neither stress nor satisfaction related to this belief. In a sense, they set their expectations low (i.e., they will not be able to quickly or thoroughly understand foster youth), but in reality there may be too much variability in their experience of frustration and reward that clear relationships do not emerge. Some foster parents may experience relative ease in understanding and thus substantial satisfaction, whereas others may experience difficulty and thus stress.

Importantly, the understanding the child subscale captures more than just efforts to understand foster youth; it also assesses foster parents' beliefs about their ability to resolve foster youth problems. It is possible that foster parents' efforts to resolve youth problems may impact their perceptions of satisfaction and stress. In other words, foster parents may feel frustrated when their efforts to help foster youth resolve their problems are not successful although they have developed a clear understanding of foster youth and

have developed a close relationship with them. Foster parents may be satisfied about one aspect of the understanding the child subscale and at the same time stressed about another aspect. In future studies, it would be helpful to clarify these relationships.

Examining the relationship between the understanding the child and the other BFPS subscales provides additional insight into the impact of this belief on relationship formation. As mentioned above, the understanding the child subscale was positively related to the emotional connection subscale. This positive correlation is not surprising because, as discussed above, relationships are developed based on the exchange of information that becomes increasingly more personal. Therefore, it makes sense that foster parents who maintain a belief that the relationship will develop quickly are also more focused on gathering information about foster youth. In addition, a positive relationship between the understanding the child and reasons for misbehavior subscales was found. In other words, foster parents who more strongly believe that most foster youth demonstrate significantly challenging behavior, the stronger their belief in their ability to quickly understand what is driving their negative behavior. This association highlights the functional relationship between these two beliefs. For those foster parents who recognize a significant problem in youth behavior that is related to some aspect of their emotional or psychological functioning (i.e., most foster children have a difficult time adjusting to stable homes), finding the root of the problem will be helpful for guiding their interactions with foster youth. Alternatively, recognizing that foster youth behavior problems are circumstantial (i.e., low scores on reasons for misbehavior subscale) is related to lower belief in the need to understand the causes of foster youth

challenging behavior. Thus, when children are placed in foster care, circumstantial factors contributing to challenging behavior are removed, and so foster parents may not feel pressure to fully understand those situational factors.

Reasons for misbehavior. The reasons for misbehavior subscale assessed foster parents' generalized beliefs about the challenging behaviors with which foster children often struggle. The majority of this sample indicated neutral responses in regard to items assessing generalized beliefs that foster children tend to exhibit negative behaviors, such as lying, manipulating, and fighting. Furthermore, responses to the items on this scale did not differ significantly based on demographic characteristics. It should be noted that there was relatively little variability in participants' responses to items on this subscale. Ideally, scales should capture a moderate amount of variability so that meaningful differences among respondents can be explored. While adequate reliability was found for this subscale with only six items, the relatively small number of items may have contributed to the lack of variability in responses. Additionally, all the items are scored in the same direction. Although items were written to capture more positive generalized beliefs about foster youth misbehavior (i.e., misbehavior is a product of negative circumstances), none of those items significantly loaded onto this factor. Therefore, the subscale as it emerged may only capture a portion of foster parents' beliefs about youth behavior.

The present finding of limited reliance on generalized negative beliefs about youth behavior is somewhat consistent with previous research. Many foster parent applicants indicated that they believed that characteristics needed for good foster

parenting included concern for children, open-mindedness, acceptance of child differences, and flexibility (Buehler et al., 2003). Nevertheless, it is possible that practical experience with foster youth problems may lead to the formation of cognitive schemas about youth behavior that differ from previously held ideas that were based on theories or fantasies about characteristics of foster children. For example, although not statistically significant in this sample, a positive relationship was found between number of years providing foster care and the misbehavior ideas subscale. Thus, foster parents may rely more on generalized beliefs about teens' negative behavior as their careers in foster care go on, but this relationship needs more rigorous examination before any specific conclusions can be drawn. In contrast, several of the foster parent-child relationship types identified by Wells and colleagues' (2004) illustrate the variability of foster parents' perceptions of youth behavior that are consistent with the present findings. In particular, the "rejection" type consists of a rigid and cold conceptualization of foster youth problems, which maintains a belief that the youth is indifferent to the foster family. In contrast, the "mothering" type involves strong positive feelings about a foster youth and a strong commitment to providing care for that youth. Thus, it is clear that foster parents develop different ideas about youth behavior, which may range from strongly positive to particularly negative. The reasons for misbehavior subscale allows for the assessment of the extent to which the beliefs are generalized to all foster youth.

The reasons for misbehavior subscale was not significantly related to other measures of parenting behaviors, which appeared to be the result of a significant correlation between this subscale and the measure of child behavior difficulties. Thus, it

appeared that foster parents' beliefs about foster teens' challenging behavior is substantially related to their experiences of foster youth who are experiencing emotional and behavioral difficulties. Nevertheless, there was a trend toward a relationship between this subscale and parenting stress, which provided initial evidence for the construct validity of the scale. More specifically, it was found that stronger belief in generalized ideas about foster children's difficult behaviors predicted higher levels of parenting stress. This relationship appears to indicate that starting with a negative conceptualization of foster youth (i.e., they are going to lie, have difficulty adjusting) leads to greater stress. Anticipating difficult youth behavior seems to create more problems than it helps to resolve. This result builds on Doelling and Johnson's (1990) finding that violations of foster mothers' expectations about children's temperament were linked with poorer placement outcomes. Thus, foster parents' expectations of youth behavior are related to their own emotional functioning as well as their ability to provide effective care for foster youth.

Examination of the relationships between the reasons for misbehavior subscale and the other BFPS subscales provided additional insight into the impact of this belief on relationship formation. The reasons for misbehavior subscale was positively correlated with the understanding the child subscale. As was discussed in the previous section, foster parents who strongly believe that most foster youth exhibit negative behavior (i.e., lie, manipulate, distrust) are also more likely to hold strong beliefs that they can thoroughly understand and resolve foster youth problems. Thus, it appears that foster parents' conceptualizations about youth misbehavior may serve to motivate foster parents

to work with foster youth to attempt to improve their functioning. Foster parents who score high on the reasons for misbehavior subscale indicate that they strongly believe that most foster youth present with challenging behavior that is not resolved due to a change in their placement. In contrast, foster parents who score low on the subscale maintain a belief that foster youth are good kids who were exposed to bad situations and so changing environments would lead to substantial behavior changes. Therefore, the former conceptualization seems to lead foster parents to believe that they need to work closely with foster youth to help resolve their behavior problems while the later leads foster parents to limit their efforts to engage with youth around their problems. Given that foster parents' perceptions of behavior problems in their current foster youth was related to their responses to the reasons for misbehavior subscale, their belief in the need to work closely with youth may be accurate. However, a rating of child behavior problems by another informant (i.e., caseworker, teacher) would be important to clarify the accuracy of their assessment.

Additionally, there was a negative correlation between the reasons for misbehavior and flexible commitment subscales. Foster parents who reported that they more strongly maintained generalized beliefs about youth misbehavior indicated lower levels of awareness and value in taking care of their own well-being. Alternatively, foster parents who indicated lower levels of reliance on generalized beliefs about youth misbehavior noted higher levels of flexibility in balancing their commitment to a particular foster child and to their own healthy functioning. It appears that those foster parents who are highly focused on teens' emotional and behavioral difficulties and are

attempting to thoroughly resolve those difficulties have little time and energy for taking care of themselves. It is possible that a more sensitive examination of youth functioning provides foster parents with a more accurate understanding of their problems, which allows foster parents to effectively monitor and manage their own well-being.

Flexible commitment. Foster parents' beliefs about the need to monitor and manage the negative effects of providing foster care on their well-being are the focus of the flexible commitment subscale. Participants' responses to the items on this scale did not differ significantly based on demographic characteristics. However, the vast majority of this sample indicated that they agreed with the belief that one must monitor and actively care for one's health and well-being, and so there was little variability among participants' responses. There are potentially two explanations for this lack of variation. First, it is possible that this sample of foster parents was well trained and supported so that they actually are strongly aware of the need to engage in self-care, which may have been related to foster parents' willingness to participate in research and could represent a bias in the sample. However, the current sample also reported a moderate level of parenting stress, making this explanation less likely. Alternatively, it is possible that foster parents in this sample were describing their ideal beliefs about the need to take care of their own well-being. Furthermore, some may have even been attempting to present themselves in a positive light given that foster parents' capacity for providing foster care is continually being evaluated. Further evaluation of the BFPS subscales is needed to gain a better understanding of the reason for this lack of variability.

Several elements of the foster parenting experience have been previously identified as stressful (e.g., Rodger et al., 2006). Therefore, it is not surprising that the present results indicated that foster parents are aware of the importance of taking time to care for their own needs. The flexible commitment subscale represents an important extension of the developing literature on foster parent well-being. For example, foster parent depressive symptoms have been associated with reduced perceptions of fulfilling their caregiver role, whereas additional adult support was associated with increased role fulfillment perceptions (Cole & Eamon, 2007). If foster parents take time to manage their stress to prevent depressive symptoms as well as seek out support from others, they are more likely to feel confident in their work and to provide better care. Furthermore, results from Cooley and Petren's (2011) qualitative study indicated that foster parents often reported that they learned patience through providing foster care. Patience is an important skill for coping with the challenges of foster care and taking care of one's well-being. The flexible commitment subscale allows for the measurement of the strength of foster parents' belief in the importance of caring for their own needs, which can help to clarify the impact of foster parent well-being on their ability to care for foster youth.

Contrary to predictions, scores on the flexible commitment subscale were not related to parental emotional style. This lack of findings is surprising given that awareness of one's own emotions is an important aspect of parental emotional style. However, as mentioned above, the vast majority of participants in this sample indicated their agreement with items on this subscale. Thus, there may not have been sufficient variable in participants' responses to be able to detect a significant relationship.

Additionally, this subscale only assesses foster parents' awareness of the challenging aspects of the foster parent role, which may or may not be an indication of how attuned foster parents are to emotionally stressful experiences in other areas of their life. Thus, they may be able to balance the various responsibilities of the foster parenting role and at the same time experience life stress that strains their emotional functioning, preventing them from developing a consistent style for responding to their child's emotions.

As predicted, the flexible commitment subscale was related to measures of criterion-related validity, which provided evidence for the construct validity of the scale. It was found that higher flexible commitment subscale scores predicted lower parenting stress. This relationship is similar to findings on the effectiveness of emotional approach coping, which involves efforts to make use of emotional processing and emotional expression to manage stressors (Stanton, Sullivan, & Austenfeld, 2009). The flexible commitment subscale includes items that directly assess foster parents' efforts to monitor their emotional needs as well as make sense of emotionally stressful experiences (i.e., placement disruption, managing multiple responsibilities). It was also found that higher scores on the flexible commitment subscales predicted greater satisfaction with providing foster care. Foster parents who take time to care for themselves tend to find their experience more rewarding. This highlights the importance of balancing one's own needs with the demands of providing foster care. Given that satisfied foster parents are more likely to continue to provide foster care (Denby et al., 1999), developing the belief that flexible commitment is important may be a useful target for efforts to retain foster parents.

Examination of the relationships between the flexible commitment subscale and the other BFPS subscales offers additional insight into the impact of this belief on relationship formation. A positive relationship was found between the flexible commitment and emotional connection subscales. As discussed above, foster parents who believe it is important to take care of their emotional needs may find that they have more emotional resources and energy to develop an emotional connection. By virtue of their emotional readiness for relationship formation, it appears that those foster parents are more likely to believe that the relationship will develop quickly and easily. It was also found that there was a negative relationship between the flexible commitment and reasons for misbehavior subscales. In other words, as beliefs in the importance of taking care of one's well-being strengthened, generalized beliefs about challenging foster youth behavior weakened. It is quite possible that foster parents who pay attention to their own needs and sources of stress are also more likely to attend to a foster teen's unique needs and challenges. Foster parents who can accept their limitations and care for their own needs may be in a better position to develop a sensitive and individualized understanding of a particular foster youth.

Contributions and Implications

The BFPS has the potential to make an important contribution to the assessment of foster parents for both clinical and research purposes. As previously mentioned, there is a striking lack of assessment tools designed specifically for foster parents (i.e., FPRPS, LeProhn, 1994; FPAQ, Harden et al., 2008), resulting in much of the research being conducted with scales that were developed for biological parents. That carries the risk of

missing some important dimensions of foster parenting and distorting or misrepresenting other ones. The lack of adequate measurement has arguably hindered efforts to ground training and support efforts in an accurate understanding of foster parents' needs and experiences. In contrast, the BFPS was developed from the ground up; that is, it was based on constructs drawn from the accounts of foster parents of adolescents, and thus taps important foster parenting dimensions that—while often discussed in the foster parent literature—have been omitted from other measures.

In this initial evaluation, the BFPS has demonstrated good psychometric properties. The relationships found between BFPS subscales and other measures of parenting behavior in the present study have important implications for the theory about foster parent-teen relationship formation (Schwerzler & Wagner, 2009) and point to ways in which the use of the BFPS may be helpful in evaluating and refining long-held assumptions about foster parents. For example, many foster parents indicated their agreement with the emotional connection subscale, which implies a belief that the relationship will develop quickly and relatively easily. If additional research with the BFPS provides consistent findings with additional samples of foster parents, then the previously held premise that foster parents believe it takes time to develop a close relationship potentially may need to be altered. Additionally, the negative relationship between number of children for whom foster parents have provided care and the understanding the child subscale highlights the importance of taking into account experience and learning on foster parenting. The beliefs about foster parenting that the BFPS captures represent a variety of potential avenues for developing a more nuanced

understanding of the impact of experience on how foster parents understand their role and their task.

In terms of other implications for future research, findings obtained in the process of developing the BFPS highlight the importance of using multiple methods for understanding a particular construct. That is, there were some conflicting findings between the focus group research (Schwerzler & Wagner, 2009) and the pattern of responses to the new self-report measure regarding beliefs about foster parenting. It should be noted that sample differences (i.e., location, size, degree of contact with researcher) could account for the conflicting findings. It is also possible that differences in study designs contributed to the differing results. The group discussion may have been more reflective of foster parents' actual behaviors, as the informants shared narratives of their experience and came to a consensus of meaning through the back-and-forth process of the discussion. At the same time, the public nature of the focus groups may have led some participants to provide less than fully honest responses. The anonymous survey method used in the development of the BFPS could lead to more honest responding, but it is also possible that responses to the BFPS may represent aspirational or ideal performance, since social desirability could have impacted participants' responding (Kazdin 2003). Although they were encouraged to be honest and informed that their response would be anonymous, foster parents—given their unique circumstance—are often primed to being evaluated, since they know that if they do not provide the appropriate responses, their future as a foster parent may be in jeopardy. Use of a social desirability measure in future research may help to determine the impact it might have on

the survey responses. Also, direct observations of foster parent behavior may help to provide additional insights into the importance of their reported beliefs, including the relationship of their belief patterns with their parenting behavior. The usefulness of observational data could be enhanced if foster parents were asked in vivo about the intention guiding their behavior.

In addition to better understanding foster parenting, the BFPS could also support additional research on foster care outcomes. While outcome research is extremely important for ensuring the health and safety of children being cared for in the foster care system, not until recently have aspects of the foster parent-child relationship been closely examined to determine their impact on outcomes. For example, less foster parent commitment, warmth, liking, and control as well as greater disciplinary aggression and inconsistent discipline predicted poor quality relationship and placement disruption (Lipscombe et al., 2004). The BFPS would allow for the exploration of the impact of foster parents' beliefs about relationship formation on foster parents' ability to actually develop a relationship with foster youth as well as the impact of that relationship on placement stability and child functioning. It is possible that various belief patterns could potentially result in distinctly different types of foster parent-child relationships, which could have different outcomes for foster youth and foster parents.

A broader and deeper knowledge base of foster parent functioning would allow for the development of a variety of important avenues for supporting foster parents. More specifically, foster parent training programs could be modified or developed to specifically address beliefs about relationship formation. These training programs could

help to better prepare foster parents for their caregiving role, which could lead to higher foster parent satisfaction, better care, and positive child outcomes. The BFPS could be used to measure change in foster parents' beliefs related to their participation in such trainings. Additionally, foster care caseworkers could be trained about foster parents' beliefs about relationship formation so that they could better understand foster parents' perspectives and adjust their efforts to support foster parents accordingly.

The BFPS may also have potential as a tool that foster care professionals could utilize to support the recruitment, training, and retention of foster parents. During the recruitment phase, the BFPS could be used to assess foster parent applicants' beliefs about relationship formation to inform decision-making about licensure. If foster parent applicants maintain beliefs about relationship formation that have been shown to negatively impact foster parent functioning and placement outcomes, they can either be found ineligible or given specialized training to support the development of beliefs better suited to successful foster parenting. The foster parents who maintain beliefs about relationship development that are most likely to result in successful outcomes are likely to be the foster parents who continue to provide foster care for the long-term. Results from the present study indicate that particular belief patterns are associated with greater satisfaction with providing foster care and lower parenting stress, which have been previously found to be associated with foster parent retention (Whenan et al., 2009). As a result, the resources and cost of recruiting and training foster parents would be reduced, making additional resources available for supporting current foster parents as well as for

the prevention of child maltreatment (and thus, ultimately, the need for foster care placement).

Limitations

While the BFPS represents an important advancement in the area of foster parent assessment, design limitations of the present study should be noted. First, a convenience sample was obtained through an online survey. The online survey allowed for participants to remain anonymous, which can increase the honesty of their responding, and allowed for the collection of a national sample because of the expanded network of foster parents accessible through the Internet. However, an important drawback of an online survey is the risk of a biased sample because those foster parents without computer access, or who are less familiar with computers, did not have an equal opportunity to participate. Their perspective on developing a relationship with foster teens may be different from that of foster parents who have access to and knowledge of computers because of a variety of potential confounding variables, including socioeconomic status and education. Nevertheless, participants in the present sample ranged in education levels from some high school education to graduate diploma, and no significant differences in foster parents' beliefs were found based on education level. Furthermore, the demographics of the present sample were similar to those of other large-scale studies of foster parent characteristics (i.e., Hendrix &Ford, 2003; Rodger et al., 2006; Zinn, 2009).

Second, while well-established guidelines (DeVellis, 2003) were used to guide scale development, elements of the analysis were not ideal. In particular, the sample size

was relatively small for EFA. Given that EFA makes use of correlation coefficients to identify groups of closely related items that form factors, and that sample size has an important impact on the stability of correlation coefficients, sample size can influence the reliability of the results. Many would recommend 300 cases as minimally acceptable for EFA (e.g., Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007 as cited in Field, 2009). However, Guadagnoli and Velicer (1988) proposed that the magnitude of factor loadings should also be considered. They argued that factors with four or more loadings of 0.6 should be considered reliable regardless of sample size and that factors with ten or more loadings of 0.4 should be considered reliable with samples of 150 or more. Factor 1 meets the former criteria, Factor 2 meets the latter criteria (although the sample size was not quite 150), and Factor 4 contains nine items with factor loadings above 0.4. Additionally, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy indicated good sampling, as the patterns of correlations were fairly compact. Nevertheless, to firmly establish the structure and soundness of the BFPS, results from the present study should be replicated with another sample using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) procedures (Thompson, 2004).

Finally, the present tests of construct validity should be considered to be preliminary, as results are limited by the scope of the selected measures. One clear limitation of the selected measures of other parenting behaviors is that the MESQ (Lagacé-Séguin & Coplan, 2005) and PSS (Berry & Jones, 1995) have not been used previously with foster parent samples. As previously discussed, there is a substantial lack of parenting measures developed for or systematically tested with foster parents. Both the MESQ and PSS demonstrated adequate reliability with the current sample, which is

supportive of their use with foster parents. Another limitation to the evaluation of construct validity is that data were gathered through the single method of self-report measures at single time point. Therefore, it is unclear whether relationships between any two measures are due primarily to their tapping the same underlying construct or rather are largely an artifact of using shared assessment methods. Under ideal circumstances, a multitrait-multimethod approach can help to clarify whether relationships are due to similarities in assessment technique or are truly representative of the construct being measured (Kazdin, 2003). Furthermore, the cross-sectional design of the present study prevents the inference of a time-ordered relationship. It is possible that foster parents' beliefs guide their behavior and thus are developed early on in a foster parents' career. However, it is also possible that foster parents' beliefs are continually refined based on their ongoing experiences with foster youth. The potentially interesting relationships between experience over time, foster parent beliefs, and foster parent behavior cannot be critically examined in the present study but is an important area for further research.

Future Directions

The field of foster care is understudied, but the field of foster parenting is significantly understudied. In addition to research possibilities already discussed in the "Contributions and Implications" section, the newly created BFPS can be used to expand the current knowledge base in multiple other ways. One potentially interesting line of research could focus on factors that influence the development of foster parent beliefs. For example, adult attachment, experience (i.e., training, length of service, previous parenting experience), and perceptions of support from foster care professionals could

each strongly influence foster parents' beliefs about relationship formation with foster youth.

A second important direction: it would be valuable to determine the degree to which particular foster parent beliefs can be easily taught. Knowing the ease with which beliefs are modifiable can influence the extent to which program developers and policy makers might wish to invest in training programs that target them (assuming those beliefs have been shown to have important implications for placement outcomes). If particular beliefs are difficult to teach, then it may be particularly important to screen foster parent applicants' for them, as an aid in the selection process.

As noted in the "Contributions and Implications" section, another valuable program of research could target foster care performance and outcome variables. More specifically, one of the primary goals of foster care is to stabilize and improve the child's emotional, social, and cognitive functioning. Thus, the BFPS would allow for further study of the impact of foster parent beliefs on parenting behavior and child functioning (i.e., health, psychosocial functioning, academic achievement, placement stability). Foster parents who maintain particular patterns of beliefs likely engage in different types of parenting behaviors, which could have various effects on foster youth functioning. Developing a better understanding of the relationship between foster parent and foster youth functioning would help to identify those foster parenting beliefs and behaviors that are most effective in meeting the goals of foster care.

Finally, examining similarities and differences in belief patterns between different types of foster parents would help to extend the present research. For example, foster

parents may differ based on whether they work with the public agency or a private agency, provide treatment or traditional foster care, are specialized (i.e., adolescent boys without learning disabilities) or more general; they also differ in their levels of experience with providing foster care. The present results indicate that there is a relationship between number of children for whom foster parents have provided care and the understanding the child subscale. Future studies could focus on identifying additional differences to explore their impact on foster parent behaviors to help explain differences in foster care outcomes. Differences or lack of differences could also influence the training and selection of foster parents. Foster youth present with varying needs, and it may be important to match youth with particular foster parents who are best suited to meet their needs. For example, although the present findings did not demonstrate a difference in foster parent beliefs between those affiliated with a treatment foster care program and those who were not, there are substantial differences in training and child needs between treatment and traditional foster care settings (Dorsey et al., 2008). Therefore, it would be useful to further examine the differences in belief patterns about relationship formation between treatment and traditional foster parents to better understand their impact on relationship formation and outcomes. Results of such studies could have important implications for adjustments to training and practice in both types of foster care.

Conclusions

The Beliefs about Foster Parenting Scale (BFPS) was developed in order to fill a gap in the measurement of foster parents' beliefs about relationship development with

adolescent foster youth. The BFPS consists of subscales that measure beliefs about connecting emotionally, understanding and resolving youth problems, conceptualizing negative youth behavior, and taking care of foster parents' own needs. Acceptable psychometric properties were demonstrated and initial construct validity was established. The BFPS is an important addition to a limited repertoire of currently available measures specifically designed for foster parents. In addition, the BFPS may be a useful measure for expanding the knowledge base on foster parents' experiences of providing care, and may have important clinical and practical research applications.

Appendix A: Expert Panel Feedback Form

The following items describe how many foster parents think about their foster parenting choices and their relationships with foster children. Please use the provided descriptions of each theme to rate the relevance of the following items, using a scale from 1-10 where 1 is not relevant at all and 10 is extremely relevant. Please also rate the readability of each item using a scale from 1-10 where 1 is difficult to read and 10 is easy to read. Then, please provide any written thoughts or ideas you have about each item. These comments may include, but are not limited to, ideas about how to improve the relevance or readability of an item, thoughts about too much overlap between items, preferred item wording between two that address similar topics, and/or suggestions for additional items.

Emotional connection. Mutual respect, trust, and support between foster parent and foster child characterize the goal of developing an emotional connection. The concept that emotional connection must be earned through time represents a belief that has been more accommodated to the foster care context.	**Relevance (1-10)**	**Readability (1-10)**	**Comments**
1. I find it easy to accept a foster child into my heart.			
2. Within a few days, I can develop a close relationship with a foster child.			
3. It makes me happy when a foster child immediately calls me mom/dad.			
4. It is easy for me to accept a foster child into my home.			
5. I develop a close bond with a foster child soon after he/she arrives in my home.			
6. I immediately love any foster child who comes into my home.			
7. I soon forget that a foster child is not my own because we have developed a close bond.			
8. I can easily say 'I love you' to a foster child soon after he/she comes to my home.			
9. When a foster child comes into my home, he/she becomes a long-term member of my family.			
10. My family routine does not change when a foster child enters my home.			
11. My worry about the pain I will feel when a foster child leave my home prevents me from developing a close relationship with him/her.			
12. No matter what I do, something holds me back from creating a strong emotional connection with a foster child.			
13. My primary goal is to provide for a foster child's basic physical needs.			
14. I would never trust a foster child with a house key.			
15. I do not allow myself to become close to a foster child.			
16. Getting close to a foster child makes it more painful when he/she leaves, so I do not get close.			

Emotional connection. Mutual respect, trust, and support between foster parent and foster child characterize the goal of developing an emotional connection. The concept that emotional connection must be earned through time represents a belief that has been more accommodated to the foster care context.	**Relevance (1-10)**	**Readability (1-10)**	**Comments**
17. No matter how long a foster child has been in my home, I still feel a distance between us.			
18. I worry about getting too close to a foster child.			
19. Because a foster child eventually has to leave my house, I do not allow myself to bond with him/her.			
20. To protect myself emotionally, I always have to maintain some distance with a foster child.			
21. I do not stay in contact with foster children who have been in my house.			
22. A foster child could never become a long-term member of my family.			
23. When a foster child immediately calls me mom/dad, I am worried.			
24. It takes time for me to get to know a foster child before we can develop a close relationship.			
25. Even though I provide for a foster child's basic needs right away, I find that a close relationship takes time.			
26. When I first meet a foster child, I believe that we will eventually develop an emotional connection.			
27. A foster child is welcome in my home but earning an emotional place in the family takes time.			
28. I find it difficult to immediately allow myself to emotionally open up to a foster child.			
29. I immediately accept a foster child into my family routine but we must spend time getting to know each other.			
30. In order to develop a close relationship with a foster child, we have to spend a lot of time together			
31. I stay in contact with foster children after they have left my home.			
32. Once I get to know a foster child, I develop a close bond with him/her.			
33. After a foster child has been in my home for a few months, we have usually developed a close relationship.			
34. I make it clear to a foster child that I am interested in anything about the past he/she wishes to share with me.			
35. I know that there are some parts of a foster child's past that he/she cannot share with me.			
36. I respect that a foster child might not be able to talk about all of the reasons he/she is now in foster care.			
37. I do not push a foster child to tell me about negative past experiences.			
38. I know that it will take time for a foster child to feel comfortable enough to share stories about their past with me.			

Understanding the foster child. Efforts to spend time observing and speaking with foster youth represent strategies for understanding how past experiences and present situations influence the functioning of foster youth. A belief that communication and thus understanding take time and require respect for personal boundaries is better adjusted to the constraints of the foster care context.	**Relevance (1-10)**	**Readability (1-10)**	**Comments**
39. I do not need to understand all that a foster child has been through to be able to care for him/her.			
40. If a foster child cannot tell me what is wrong, then I can learn about it through observing his/her behavior.			
41. I do everything that I can to reassure a foster child that he/she can be honest with me.			
42. Making a foster child feel like he/she can tell me anything is my top priority.			
43. I give a foster child as much time and space as he/she needs to feel comfortable sharing personal information with me.			
44. Learning about a foster child's past negative experiences is my top priority as a foster parent.			
45. I need to uncover the root of a foster child's problems to be able to foster parent him/her.			
46. For a foster child to recover from negative past experiences, he/she must tell me about them.			
47. Because I work closely with a foster child, I understand him/her the most.			
48. I expect a foster child to tell me about the reasons he/ she is in foster care.			
49. I have a hard time living with a foster child who does not tell me about his or her past.			
50. When a foster child keeps secrets about his/her past, I cannot develop a close relationship with him/ her.			
51. I need to know everything about a foster child's past to be able to help him/her.			
52. I repeatedly ask a foster child about his/her past.			
53. I cannot care for a foster child unless he/she shares all the details about his or her past.			
Beliefs about the reasons for foster children's misbehavior. Given the limited history of foster parent-child relationships, foster parents may rely on general beliefs about the reasons for foster children's misbehavior that range from negative, internally focused to sympathetic, externally focused. In other words, at times foster parents may believe that foster children are essentially 'bad kids' while at others think that they are 'good kids in bad situations.' Understanding that behavior of foster youth is attributable to external circumstances rather than internal defects represents a belief that is better adjusted to the foster care context.	**Relevance (1-10)**	**Readability (1-10)**	**Comments**
54. Foster children are manipulative.			
55. Foster children have a difficult time adjusting to stable homes.			
56. Foster children will always try to lie to get what they want.			

Beliefs about the reasons for foster children's misbehavior. Given the limited history of foster parent-child relationships, foster parents may rely on general beliefs about the reasons for foster children's misbehavior that range from negative, internally focused to sympathetic, externally focused. In other words, at times foster parents may believe that foster children are essentially 'bad kids' while at others think that they are 'good kids in bad situations.' Understanding that behavior of foster youth is attributable to external circumstances rather than internal defects represents a belief that is better adjusted to the foster care context.	**Relevance (1-10)**	**Readability (1-10)**	**Comments**
57. Foster children like to create chaos in their foster homes.			
58. Foster children cannot trust that others will treat them fairly.			
59. Foster children must fight to get what they need.			
60. Foster children cannot tolerate a calm and predictable home.			
61. Foster children will not let their guard down.			
62. Foster children do not want to fit in foster families.			
63. Foster children will always resist help from others.			
64. Foster children have problems that cannot be solved.			
65. Foster children want help to overcome their problems.			
66. Foster children's problems are the result of their negative past experiences.			
67. Foster children often create problems because they are used to chaotic environments.			
68. Foster children want to be accepted by their foster family.			
69. Foster children may behave negatively, but they still have an innocent side underneath.			
70. Foster children want to improve their lives.			
71. Foster children will eventually adjust to consistent rules.			
72. Foster children are able to trust that foster families are trying to help them.			
73. When in a safe foster home, foster children can let go of old strategies for protection.			
74. Foster children want to change their negative habits.			
75. Foster children want to become a part of their foster family.			
Temporary support. Given the unclear future of the foster-parent child relationship, foster parents may develop beliefs about the amount of support they are able to provide. Recognizing the time limit on the relationship and appreciating the impact that can be made in even in a short amount of time represents ideas that are more in line with the context of foster care.	**Relevance (1-10)**	**Readability (1-10)**	**Comments**
76. As a foster parent, I have a limited opportunity to redirect a foster child's path in life.			
77. Even though I may only have a short amount of time with a foster child, the support I provide can have a big impact.			
78. I can only provide a small dose of love and support to a foster child.			

Temporary support. Given the unclear future of the foster-parent child relationship, foster parents may develop beliefs about the amount of support they are able to provide. Recognizing the time limit on the relationship and appreciating the impact that can be made in even in a short amount of time represents ideas that are more in line with the context of foster care.	**Relevance (1-10)**	**Readability (1-10)**	**Comments**
79. As a short-term protector, I can help a foster child in important ways.			
80. As a foster parent, I can provide some advice to a foster child that helps him/her advance in life.			
81. I can solve some of a foster child's problems but not others.			
82. When a foster child comes into my home, I pick a few of his/her problems to focus on.			
83. When a foster child permanently leaves my home, I feel satisfied with even small amounts of change.			
84. The small changes I can suggest to a foster child are important.			
85. I trust that my small part in a foster child's life can have a big impact later in his/her life.			
86. I can only have a big impact on a foster child's life if I fix most of his or her problems.			
87. Any advice that I provide to a foster child will not be able to offset the influence of past negative experiences.			
88. The most frustrating part of foster parenting is that I cannot solve all of a foster child's problems.			
89. When I care for a foster child, I try to fix his/her important problems.			
90. When a foster child has to leave my home before his/her problems are solved, I feel a deep regret.			
91. When I cannot fix almost all of a foster child's problems, I think about quitting foster care.			
92. I know I have been successful when I have worked out the majority of a foster child's problems.			
93. I often resent not having enough time to work on a foster child's problems.			
94. When a foster child enters my home, I must work to fix his/her important problems.			
95. When a foster child no longer lives in my home, I regret that I could not solve more of his/her problems.			
96. Often I forget that as a foster parent I am part of a team of people caring for a foster child.			

Flexible commitment. Foster parents must strike a balance between the long-term commitment to being a foster parent with the short-term commitment to a particular foster child. Maintaining a flexible balance between these two commitments means that a foster parent is able to monitor the compatibility of the teenager's demands with his or her capability to provide care. Understanding the importance of continually monitoring one's parenting capacity and various responsibilities while providing foster care represents a belief that is consistent with the restrictions of the foster care context.	**Relevance (1-10)**	**Readability (1-10)**	**Comments**
97. I am able to balance being a foster parent with my other responsibilities.			
98. I am aware of what challenges in foster parenting that I can manage and what I cannot.			
99. I respect the limits of my foster parenting abilities.			
100. Even though I may wish to continue to care for a foster child, I know some foster children need more care than a foster home can provide.			
101. I am aware of how foster parenting affects my health and well-being.			
102. I feel at peace when a foster child leaves my home permanently because I know that many factors contributed to the decision.			
103. I take time to take care of my emotional needs so that I can be the best foster parent I can be.			
104. If a few months have passed and a foster child has not adjusted to my home, then I know I must make a change.			
105. I consider the needs of the entire family when I make a decision about beginning or ending foster child placements.			
106. I am able to make sense of my emotional reaction to a foster child leaving my home permanently.			
107. When I am having a hard time parenting a foster child, I have a difficult time reaching out to others for help.			
108. When a foster child has to be moved from my home before he/she is ready, I feel that I have failed him/her.			
109. I have a hard time balancing foster parenting with my other work and family responsibilities.			
110. Others have to tell me to take care of myself before I do not notice that foster parenting is negatively affecting me.			
111. When a foster child is not living in my home anymore, I have a difficult time making sense of the change.			
112. Asking for a foster child to be taken out of my home means that I have given up on him/her.			
113. If I provide enough love and support, any foster child will adjust to my home.			
114. There is no difference between the role of parent and foster parent.			
115. I will do whatever it takes to help a foster child.			
116. I often put a foster child's needs before my own.			
117. When caring for a foster child, everything else in life is less important.			

Appendix B: Beliefs about Foster Parenting Scale

Please respond to the following items about how you think about your foster parenting choices and your relationship with your foster child. If you have cared for more than one foster child, please try your best to respond about your typical experience of foster children. When items include the phrase "foster children," please consider your answer in light of all foster children for whom you have cared.

		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	It takes time for me to get to know a foster child before we can develop a close relationship.					
2.	As a foster parent, I can provide some advice to my foster children that may help them advance in life.					
3.	I have a hard time balancing foster parenting with my other work and family responsibilities.					
4.	Few foster children will let their guard down.					
5.	The most frustrating part of foster parenting is that I cannot solve all of a foster child's problems.					
6.	I need to uncover the root of a foster child's problems to be able to foster parent him/her.					
7.	When a foster child comes into my home, he/she will always have a place in my family.					
8.	I often put a foster child's needs before my own.					
9.	If a few months have passed and a foster child has not adjusted to my home, then I must make a change in how I care for him/her.					
10.	When I am having a hard time parenting my foster children, I have a difficult time reaching out to others for help.					
11.	Most foster children are manipulative.					
12.	I worry about getting too close to a foster child.					
13.	Foster children usually fight to get what they need.					
14.	When a foster child immediately calls me mom/dad, I am worried.					
15.	Foster children usually want to improve their lives.					
16.	When I first meet a foster child, I believe that we will eventually develop an emotional connection.					
17.	When a foster child permanently leaves my home, I have a difficult time adjusting to the change.					
18.	I expect a foster child to tell me about the reasons he/she is in foster care.					

BFPS

		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
19.	I immediately accept a foster child into my family routine but we must spend time getting to know each other.					
20.	Few foster children can trust that others will treat them fairly.					
21.	I respect that a foster child might not be able to talk about all of the reasons he/she is now in foster care.					
22.	My family routine does not change when a foster child enters my home.					
23.	After a foster child has been in my home for a few months, we have usually developed a warm, consistent relationship.					
24.	I make it clear to a foster child that I am interested in learning about him/her.					
25.	Foster children will usually try to lie to get what they want.					
26.	I know I have been successful when I have worked out the majority of my foster children's problems.					
27.	Asking for a foster child to be taken out of my home means that I have given up on him/her.					
28.	I do everything that I can to reassure a foster child that he/she can be honest with me.					
29.	Helping a foster child feel like he/she can tell me anything is a high priority.					
30.	Because I work closely with a foster child, I understand him/her more than anyone else.					
31.	I find it difficult to immediately allow myself to emotionally open up to a foster child.					
32.	When my foster children keep secrets about their past, I cannot develop a close relationship with them.					
33.	I often ask a foster child about the details of his/her past.					
34.	I can quickly love any foster child who comes into my home.					
35.	Most foster children will eventually adjust to consistent rules.					
36.	Once I get to know a foster child, I develop a close bond with him/her.					
37.	A foster child could never have a place in my family after he/she leaves my house permanently.					
38.	I can solve some of a foster child's problems but not all of them.					
39.	I respect the limits of my foster parenting abilities.					
40.	In order to develop a close relationship with a foster child, we have to spend a lot of time together.					

BFPS

		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
41.	Most foster children want help to overcome their problems.					
42.	Foster children's problems are usually the result of their negative past experiences.					
43.	I am able to understand my emotional reactions to a foster child leaving my home permanently.					
44.	Foster children usually want to be accepted by their foster family.					
45.	I can quickly accept a foster child into my heart.					
46.	Few foster children want to fit in foster families.					
47.	Most foster children want to become a part of their foster family.					
48.	As a foster parent, I have a limited opportunity to redirect my foster children's life paths.					
49.	I can usually develop a close relationship with a foster child within a few days.					
50.	Learning about a foster child's past experiences is my top priority as a foster parent.					
51.	When a foster child comes into my home, I pick a few of his/her problems to focus on.					
52.	I need to know everything about a foster child's past to be able to help him/her.					
53.	The small changes I can suggest to a foster child are important.					
54.	Others have to tell me to take care of myself before I notice that foster parenting is negatively affecting me.					
55.	No matter how long a foster child has been in my home, I still feel a distance between us.					
56.	When I cannot fix a foster child's problems, I sometimes think about quitting foster care.					
57.	I do not push a foster child to tell me about negative past experiences.					
58.	Most foster children have a difficult time adjusting to stable homes.					
59.	I can easily say "I love you" to a foster child soon after he/she comes to my home.					
60.	When a foster child no longer lives in my home, I regret that I could not solve more of his/her problems.					
61.	Often I forget that as a foster parent I am part of a team of people caring for a foster child.					

BFPS

		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
62.	Any advice that I provide to a foster child will not be able to offset the influence of past negative experiences.					
63.	I am aware of the challenges in foster parenting that I can manage well and those I struggle with.					
64.	Unless legally prohibited, I stay in contact with foster children after they have left my home.					
65.	Foster children may behave negatively, but they still have an innocent side underneath.					
66.	I am aware of how foster parenting affects my health and well-being.					
67.	I do not blame myself when a foster child has to leave my home permanently.					
68.	I make time to care for my emotional needs so that I can be the best foster parent I can be.					
69.	I do not allow myself to become close to a foster child.					
70.	I consider the needs of the entire family when I make a decision about beginning or ending foster child placements.					
71.	Foster children often create problems because they are used to chaotic environments.					
72.	Getting close to my foster children makes it more painful when they leave, so I do not get close.					
73.	I will do whatever it takes to help a foster child.					
74.	I would never trust a foster child with a house key.					
75.	I do not need to understand all that a foster child has been through to be able to care for him/her.					
76.	If I provide enough love and support, any foster child will adjust to my home.					
77.	There is no difference between the role of parent and foster parent.					
78.	Even though I may only have a short amount of time with a foster child, the support I provide can have a big impact.					
79.	When caring for a foster child, everything else in life is less important.					

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer

Greetings Foster Parents!

Thank you for your hard work and continued commitment to caring for adolescents in need. I invite you to take part in an anonymous research survey that will help us to understand how foster parents reflect on and adapt the care they provide to meet the needs of teenaged foster youth. Understanding how you think about your parenting tasks will help foster care professionals and community members to be able to support you in better and more effective ways. You deserve support and training programs that will help build your satisfaction with providing foster care and help you to continue to do the important work of foster parenting.

Purpose of the Study: This study is designed to develop a questionnaire about foster parents' beliefs about parenting. The relationship between beliefs about foster parenting, parenting behaviors, and satisfaction with foster parenting will be measured. The long term goal of the study is to support the development of training programs that address the challenges faced by foster parents' as they form relationships with foster youth.

Description: Your participation in this research study will involve completing a survey about your foster parenting experience on a secure website. The survey will take about 30 minutes to complete and your responses will be completely anonymous.

Benefits of Participation: You may gain some insights into your foster parenting beliefs when you complete study questionnaires. You will be contributing to the knowledge about foster parenting so that support and training programs can more effectively meet the needs of foster parents.

If you have any questions, please email CUA-fosterparentstudy@cua.edu to reach:
Primary Investigator: Barry Wagner, Ph.D.
Student Investigator: Catherine Schwerzler, M.A.

Please follow the link below to access the online survey:
https://surveys.cua.edu/fpb

Please feel free to forward this flyer to other foster parents whom you think might be interested in participating in this survey.

Appendix D: Demographic Questionnaire

Please respond to the following questionnaires about different aspects of foster parenting. Please answer as honestly as you can. Your answers will be kept confidential and **will not be** shared with your social worker or agency workers. We are interested in how foster parents of foster youth between the ages of 11- and 17-years-old are thinking about and meeting the challenges of foster care. Thank you for your thoughtful answers.

The first few questions are about general characteristics of your FOSTER CHILD:

If you are currently caring for more than one foster child, please focus on one who is between the ages of 11- and 17-years-old

Are you currently caring for a foster child?
____Yes
____No

New webpage based on response to previous question:
If No:
How long ago was your last foster placement?
____ months* (If less than or equal to 6, then include, but if greater than 6, exclude.)

How old was that foster child when she/he entered your home?
____ years* (If less than 11, exclude.)

How old was that foster child when she/he left your home?
____ years* (If in the range of 11-17, then include, but if less than 11 or greater than 17, exclude.)

Were you related to your foster child?
____Yes* (Exclude)
____No* (Include)

Did your foster child have any significant developmental (for example, autism, mental retardation, traumatic brain injury, hearing/visually impaired) or medical problems (for example, physical disability, HIV/AIDS, fetal alcohol syndrome, genetic disorders such as fragile X syndrome or Down syndrome, metabolic disorders such as phenylketonuria or diabetes) that require frequent visits (more than 3 per week) with a health care provider?
____Yes* (Exclude)
____No* (Include)

If Yes:
Are you related to your current foster child?

____ Yes* (Exclude)
____ No* (Include)

Have you adopted your foster child or has your foster child been permanently placed with you?

____Yes* (Exclude)
____No* (Include)

How old is your current foster child?

____ years* (If in the range of 11-17, include, but if outside the range, exclude.)

At any point did you care for your current foster child when she/he was younger than 11-years-old?

____Yes* (Exclude)
____No* (Include)

Does your foster child have any significant developmental (for example, autism, mental retardation, traumatic brain injury, hearing/visually impaired) or medical problems (for example, physical disability, HIV/AIDS, fetal alcohol syndrome, genetic disorders such as fragile X syndrome or Down syndrome, metabolic disorders such as phenylketonuria or diabetes) that require frequent visits (more than 3 per week) with a health care provider?

____Yes* (Exclude)
____No* (Include)

Included in survey:
What is your current (or most recent) foster child's gender?

____Male
____Female

What is your current (or most recent) foster child's ethnicity?

____African Origin/African American
____Asian/Pacific Islander
____European American
____Latino/Hispanic
____Native American
____Biracial (please list: _____)
____Other (please specify: _____)

How long has your current (or most recent) foster child been in your care?

____ months

The next group of questions is about YOUR general characteristics:

Age: ____

Gender:
____Male
____Female

Ethnicity:
____African Origin/African American
____Asian/Pacific Islander
____European American
____Latino/Hispanic
____Native American
____Biracial (please list: _____)
____Other (please specify: _____)

Marital Status:
____Single
____Married
____Separated
____Divorced
____Widowed

Highest level of education:
____Elementary School
____Some High School
____High School Diploma
____Some College
____College Degree
____Some Graduate School
____Graduate School Degree

State in which you provide foster care (2 letter abbreviation): ____

Total number of years foster parenting: ____

Over your entire foster parenting career, total number of children cared for longer than two weeks: ____

Are you affiliated with a treatment foster care program?
____Yes
____No

Appendix E: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

For each item, please indicate whether it is "Not True," "Somewhat True," or "Certainly True" of your current (or most recent) foster child between the ages of 11- and 15-years-old. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain. Please give your answers on the basis of your foster child's behavior over the last six months (or the length of time you have known him/her if less than six months).

		Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
1.	Considerate of other people's feelings			
2.	Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long			
3.	Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness			
4.	Shares readily with other youth, for example CD's, games, food			
5.	Often loses temper			
6.	Would rather be alone than with other youth			
7.	Generally well behaved, usually does what adults request			
8.	Many worries or often seems worried			
9.	Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill			
10.	Constantly fidgeting or squirming			
11.	Has at least one good friend			
12.	Often fights with other youth or bullies them			
13.	Often unhappy, depressed or tearful			
14.	Generally liked by other youth			
15.	Easily distracted, concentration wanders			
16.	Nervous in new situations, often loses confidence			
17.	Kind to younger children			
18.	Often lies or cheats			
19.	Picked on or bullied by other youth			
20.	Often offers to help others (parents, teachers, children)			
21.	Thinks things out before acting			
22.	Steals from home, school or elsewhere			
23.	Gets along better with adults than with other youth			
24.	Many fears, easily scared			
25.	Good attention span, sees chores or homework through to the end			

Appendix F: Maternal Emotional Styles Questionnaire

Please respond to the following items about how you typically respond to your foster child's emotions.

		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	When my foster child is sad, it's time to problem-solve.					
2.	Anger is an emotion worth exploring.					
3.	When my foster child is sad, I am expected to fix the world and make it perfect.					
4.	When my foster child gets sad, it's time to get close.					
5.	Sadness is something that one has to get over, to ride out, not to dwell on.					
6.	I prefer a happy foster child to a foster child who is overly emotional.					
7.	I help my foster child to get over sadness quickly so he/she can move on to other things.					
8.	When my foster child is angry, it's an opportunity for getting close.					
9.	When my foster child is angry, I take some time to try to experience this feeling with my foster child.					
10.	I try to change my foster child's angry moods into cheerful ones.					
11.	Childhood is a happy-go-lucky time, not a time for feeling sad or angry.					
12.	When my foster child gets angry, my goal is to get him/her to stop.					
13.	When my foster child is angry, I want to know what he/she is thinking.					
14.	When my foster child is angry, it's time to problem-solve.					

Appendix G: Parental Stress Scale

The following statements describe feelings and perceptions about the experience of being a parent. Think of each of the items in terms of how your relationship with your foster child typically is. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following items by placing the appropriate number in the space provided.

		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I am happy in my role as a foster parent					
2.	There is little or nothing I wouldn't do for my foster child if it was necessary					
3.	Caring for my foster child sometimes takes more time and energy than I have to give					
4.	I sometimes worry whether I am doing enough for my foster child					
5.	I feel close to my foster child					
6.	I enjoy spending time with my foster child					
7.	My foster child is an important source of affection for me					
8.	Having a foster child gives me a more certain and optimistic view for the future					
9.	The major source of stress in my life is my foster child					
10.	Having a foster child leaves little time and flexibility in my life					
11.	Having a foster child has been a financial burden					
12.	It is difficult to balance different responsibilities because of my foster child.					
13.	The behavior of my foster child is often embarrassing or stressful to me					
14.	If I had it to do over again, I might decide not to have a foster child					
15.	I feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of being a foster parent					
16.	Having a foster child has meant having too few choices and too little control over my life					
17.	I am satisfied as a foster parent					
18.	I find my foster child enjoyable					

Appendix H: Satisfaction with Foster Parenting Inventory

Please respond to the following statements about foster parenting. Please answer as honestly as you can. Your answers will be kept confidential and not shared with your social worker or agency workers. We are interested in your level of satisfaction with foster parenting. (If an item does not apply to you, leave it blank and continue to the next item.)

How satisfied are you with:

		Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Unsure	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
1.	Understanding your responsibilities as a foster parent?					
2.	Your working relationship with social services agencies (social worker, DHS, CFSA, etc.)?					
3.	Your working relationship with other agencies related to the foster child (schools, counselors, etc.)?					
4.	Your relationship with your foster children?					
5.	Your relationship with the biological families of your foster children?					
6.	Balancing foster care with your own family's schedule?					
7.	Recognition from your community for foster parenting?					
8.	Having enough information about the children placed in your home?					
9.	Being able to reach social workers when needed?					
10.	Amount of payment for providing foster care?					
11.	Being included in planning for the needs of your foster children?					
12.	Availability of additional training?					
13.	Assistance from social workers?					
14.	Feeling appreciated for being a foster parent?					
15.	Understanding the legal system?					
16.	Opportunities to meet other foster families?					
17.	Your role in helping children?					
18.	Your overall level of satisfaction with foster parenting?					

Appendix I: Consent Form

CUA

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Department of Psychology
Washington, DC 20064

Consent Form

Title of Study: Beliefs about Foster Parenting Study

Primary Investigators: Catherine Schwerzler, M.A. & Barry Wagner, Ph.D.

Investigator Contact Information: 13schwerzler@cardinalmail.cua.edu, wagnerb@cua.edu, 202-319-5762

Purpose of the Study: This study is designed to develop a questionnaire about foster parents' beliefs about parenting. This study will also examine how beliefs about foster parenting are related to other aspects of foster parenting, including parenting stress, parenting strategies for supporting youth emotions, and satisfaction with providing foster care. The long term goal of the study is to support the development of training programs that address the challenges faced by foster parents as they form relationships with foster youth.

Description of Procedures: I understand that I will complete an online survey about my personal information ("demographics") and experiences as a foster parent. The survey will take about 30 minutes to complete.

Potential Risks of Participation: I understand that the risks of being in this study are small. However, I may experience some mild boredom or fatigue while completing the survey. I understand that I can stop my participation in this study at any point without any consequences. My choice to stop does not affect my relationship with the agency through which I learned about the study. If I have any questions or concerns about this study, I may contact the investigator to discuss these.

Potential Benefits of Participation: I understand that I may not get any direct benefits from participating in the survey. However, I may learn about my beliefs about developing relationships with foster youth when completing the survey. In addition, the knowledge gained through this study will contribute to understanding the experience of being a foster parent and the creation of future support and training programs for foster parents.

Confidentiality: I understand that the survey is completely anonymous and that the information I report will not be associated with any code number or other identifying information. I understand that all information about me will be kept as confidential as is legally possible and that only aggregate findings will be shared in the report of the results. I understand that records of my answers will be destroyed at the end of the study.

I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study.

I have had an opportunity to ask any questions about the study and/or my participation in it, and these have been answered to my satisfaction. If I have any concerns about the conduct of this study and my rights as a participant, I have been told that I can call the Office of Sponsored Programs of The Catholic University of America at (202) 319-5218.

I understand my rights as a research participant, and I willingly consent to participate in this study. I will NOT receive a signed copy of this consent form. A PDF copy of this consent form can be downloaded by clicking the Download Consent Form button.

I have read and agree to the informed consent above.* (Web-based response option.)

Appendix J: Pearson Product-Moment Bivariate Correlation Matrix for 37 Items

	1	3	5	6	10	11	12	13	16	20	25	26	30
1	1.000												
3	.250	1.000											
5	.049	.058	1.000										
6	.212	.375	.350	1.000									
10	.064	.387	.173	.214	1.000								
11*	-.104	-.239	-.119	-.168	-.101	1.000							
12	.008	.158	.153	.275	.199	-.156	1.000						
13*	-.015	-.126	-.201	-.212	-.234	.345	-.119	1.000					
16*	.297	.045	-.209	.001	.076	-.041	-.005	.127	1.000				
20*	-.183	-.132	-.181	-.097	-.138	.466	.057	.274	.095	1.000			
25*	-.029	-.090	-.213	-.223	-.129	.493	-.249	.421	-.029	.343	1.000		
26	-.183	-.091	.338	.267	-.005	.157	.276	-.106	-.146	.089	-.114	1.000	
30	-.086	-.021	.313	.264	.103	.089	.158	-.122	-.253	.080	-.078	.425	1.000
31	.355	.176	.069	.183	.129	-.138	.275	.001	.308	-.095	-.129	-.059	-.127
32	.162	.164	.270	.231	.209	-.168	.177	-.185	.009	-.204	-.161	.217	.171
34*	.400	.251	-.082	.014	.174	-.227	.081	.002	.450	-.018	-.065	-.193	-.241
36*	.292	.138	-.194	-.060	.151	-.122	.100	-.046	.483	.068	.009	-.307	-.293
41	-.199	-.162	.115	.072	-.080	.061	.174	-.181	-.147	.159	-.099	.415	.138
43*	.314	.411	.094	.187	.109	.062	-.009	-.096	.029	-.072	-.054	.030	-.104
44*	.223	.168	-.046	-.007	.149	-.020	-.060	.036	.293	-.035	.058	-.265	-.153
45*	.319	.185	-.096	.027	.115	-161	.072	-.013	.405	-.033	-.028	-.243	-.293
49*	.502	.175	-.106	-.065	.056	-.061	-.144	.180	.409	-.117	.163	-.370	-.249
50	.084	.163	.348	.376	.119	-.119	.261	-.148	-.006	-.121	-.218	.329	.253
51	.069	.018	.185	.233	.018	-.119	.215	-.136	-.028	-.127	-.200	.265	.282
52	.087	.130	.211	.363	.127	-.112	.245	-.099	.143	-.124	-.233	.249	.102
54	.233	.334	.199	.182	.380	-.098	.039	-.103	.170	-.250	-.145	-.052	.102
55	.243	.311	-.060	.089	.107	-.337	.228	-.128	.123	-.075	-.134	-.219	-.181
58*	-.260	-.097	-.174	-.055	-.122	.338	-.168	.210	-.150	.225	.352	.037	-.073
59*	.354	.169	-.013	.004	.166	-.149	.002	-.078	.293	.048	.045	-.196	-.128
63*	.084	.313	-.003	.042	.332	.047	.127	-.008	.058	-.003	-.039	-.160	.041
66*	-.035	.237	.051	.056	.326	.002	.059	.026	.136	-.132	-.041	-.115	.002
67*	.070	.327	.136	.306	.321	-.166	.045	-.027	.072	-.171	-.257	-.117	-.008
68*	.222	.277	.068	.164	.334	-.076	-.018	.047	.276	-.053	-.062	-.278	-.097
71*	-.159	-.179	-.200	-.100	-.032	.387	-.088	.316	.068	.252	.330	.040	-.067
76	-.252	-.039	.250	.039	-.105	.029	.249	-.054	-.347	.104	.008	.403	.321
77	-.194	-.058	.218	.108	-.104	.014	.050	.129	-.175	.093	.074	.326	.218
79	.069	.207	.217	.245	.306	-.043	.058	-.226	-.193	-.136	-.046	.018	.165

*Item reverse scored.

	31	32	34	36	41	43	44	45	49	50	51	52	54
1													
3													
5													
6													
10													
11*													
12													
13*													
16*													
20*													
25*													
26													
30													
31	1.000												
32	.245	1.000											
34*	.380	.058	1.000										
36*	.270	.006	.464	1.000									
41	-.068	.065	-.142	-.244	1.000								
43*	.198	.249	.117	.049	.077	1.000							
44*	.350	.056	.338	.321	-.349	.179	1.000						
45*	.464	.083	.601	.466	.042	.253	.435	1.000					
49*	.440	-.015	.452	.438	-.268	.096	.270	.418	1.000				
50	.160	.421	.081	-.138	.166	.164	-.070	-.054	-.053	1.000			
51	.091	.504	-.067	-.048	.109	.094	-.118	.043	-.165	.328	1.000		
52	.286	.353	.172	.032	.045	.020	.048	.096	.041	.391	.203	1.000	
54	-.035	.245	.180	.005	-.126	.302	-.021	.032	.046	.166	.196	.104	1.000
55	.315	.236	.357	.298	-.037	.238	.198	.406	.182	.109	.155	.150	.112
58*	-.217	-.256	-.226	-.031	.061	-.057	-.115	-.248	-.119	-.058	-.150	-.108	-.282
59*	.327	-.045	.498	.431	-.064	.052	.205	.534	.436	.018	-.038	.072	.051
63*	.133	.159	.105	.231	-.087	.297	.186	.198	.116	.033	-.013	-.002	.270
66*	.160	.091	.046	.217	-.203	.178	.231	.161	.118	.177	.152	.088	.200
67*	.137	.132	.130	.022	-.156	.256	.158	.110	.119	.067	.101	.097	.300
68*	.173	.005	.233	.202	-.277	.176	.200	.185	.228	-.002	-.010	-.068	.380
71*	-.099	-.067	-.102	-.101	.095	.018	-.117	-.028	-.037	-.051	-.058	-.107	-.099
76	-.137	.224	-.307	-.316	.337	.065	-.240	-.206	-.364	.288	.096	.032	-.022
77	-.052	.157	-.255	-.243	.161	.025	-.101	-.166	-.221	.207	.169	.087	.100
79	.003	.241	-.160	-.076	-.045	.191	.043	-.133	-.124	.148	.225	-.033	.150

*Item reverse scored.

	55	58	59	63	66	67	68	71	76	77	79
1											
3											
5											
6											
10											
11*											
12											
13*											
16*											
20*											
25*											
26											
30											
31											
32											
34*											
36*											
41											
43*											
44*											
45*											
49*											
50											
51											
52											
54											
55	1.000										
58*	-.242	1.000									
59*	.326	-.169	1.000								
63*	.192	-.125	.104	1.000							
66*	.049	.055	.101	.273	1.000						
67*	.187	-.205	.137	.305	.236	1.000					
68*	.179	-.182	.189	.277	.298	.469	1.000				
71*	-.188	.363	-.047	.016	-.056	-.111	-.057	1.000			
76	.037	.081	-.211	.080	-.016	-.136	-.222	.042	1.000		
77	-.121	.027	-.204	.109	-.088	-.034	-.204	.174	.513	1.000	
79	.043	-.023	-.120	.191	.294	.209	.117	-.120	.142	.168	1.000

*Item reverse scored.

Appendix K: Communalities for 37 Items

	Initial	Extraction
1. It takes time for me to get to know a foster child before we can develop a close relationship.	.557	.304
3. I have a hard time balancing foster parenting with my other work and family responsibilities.	.504	.358
5. The most frustrating part of foster parenting is that I cannot solve all of a foster child's problems.	.391	.301
6. I need to uncover the root of a foster child's problems to be able to foster parent him/her.	.538	.334
10. When I am having a hard time parenting my foster children, I have a difficult time reaching out to others for help.	.501	.328
11. Most foster children are manipulative.	.605	.587
12. I worry about getting too close to a foster child.	.451	.236
13. Foster children usually fight to get what they need.	.454	.300
16. When I first meet a foster child, I believe that we will eventually develop an emotional connection.	.533	.359
20. Few foster children can trust that others will treat them fairly.	.492	.337
25. Foster children will usually lie to get what they want.	.519	.469
26. I know I have been successful when I have worked out the majority of my foster children's problems.	.588	.571
30. Because I work closely with a foster child, I understand him/her more than anyone else.	.437	.307
31. I find it difficult to immediately allow myself to emotionally open up to a foster child.	.528	.414
32. When my foster children keep secrets about their past, I cannot develop a close relationship with them.	.551	.361
34. I can quickly love any foster child who comes into my home.	.606	.571
36. Once I get to know a foster child, I develop a close bond with him/her.	.584	.428
41. Most foster children want to overcome their problems.	.415	.286
43. I am able to understand my emotional reactions to a foster child leaving my home permanently.	.523	.238
44. Foster children usually want to be accepted by their foster family.	.447	.269
45. I can quickly accept a foster child into my heart.	.653	.579
49. I can usually develop a close relationship with a foster child within a few days.	.599	.468
50. Learning about a foster child's past experiences is my top priority as a foster parent.	.474	.404
51. When a foster child comes into my home, I pick a few of his/her problems to focus on.	.496	.246
52. I need to know everything about a foster child's past to be able to help him/her.	.391	.279
54. Others have to tell me to take care of myself before I notice that foster parenting is negatively affecting me.	.564	.330
55. No matter how long a foster child has been in my home, I still feel a distance between us.	.435	.297
58. Most foster children have a difficult time adjusting to stable homes.	.450	.275
59. I can easily say "I love you" to a foster child soon after he/she comes to my home.	.520	.391
63. I am aware of the challenges in foster parenting that I can manage well and those I struggle with.	.404	.279
66. I am aware of how foster parenting affects my health and well-being.	.460	.237
67. I do not blame myself when a foster child has to leave my home permanently.	.470	.359
68. I make time to care for my emotional needs so that I can be the best foster parent I can be.	.478	.416
71. Foster children often create problems because they are used to chaotic environments.	.402	.289
76. If I provide enough love and support, any foster child will adjust to my home.	.578	.373
77. There is no difference between the role of parent and foster parent.	.539	.248
79. When caring for a foster child, everything in life is less important.	.410	.288

Appendix L: Reliability Statistics for BFPS Subscales

Emotional Connection Subscale (α = .854)

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
45. I can quickly accept a foster child into my heart.	.721	.827
34. I can quickly love any foster child who comes into my home.	.686	.829
59. I can easily say "I love you" to a foster child soon after he/she comes to my home.	.581	.839
31. I find it difficult to immediately allow myself to open up to a foster child.*	.554	.841
49. I can usually develop a close relationship with a foster child within a few days.	.602	.837
16. When I first meet a foster child, I believe that we will eventually develop an emotional connection.	.523	.844
36. Once I get to know a foster child, I develop a close bond with him/her.	.583	.839
1. It takes time for me to get to know a foster child before we can develop a close relationship.*	.525	.844
55. No matter how long a foster child has been in my home, I still feel a distance between us.*	.412	.855
44. Foster children usually want to be accepted by their foster family.	.429	.851

*Item reverse scored.

Understanding the Child Subscale (α = .795)

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
26. I know I have been successful when I have worked out the majority of my foster children's problems.	.590	.765
50. Learning about a foster child's past experiences is my top priority as a foster parent.	.561	.768
32. When my foster children keep secrets about their past, I cannot develop a close relationship with them.	.479	.779
76. If I provide enough love and support, any foster child will adjust to my home.	.456	.779
52. I need to know everything about a foster child's past to be able to help him/her.	.383	.786
41. Most foster children want to overcome their problems.	.302	.792
12. I worry about getting too close to a foster child.	.346	.790
51. When a foster child comes into my home, I pick a few of his/her problems to focus on.	.413	.783
6. I need to uncover the root of a foster child's problems to be able to foster parent him/her.	.484	.776
30. Because I work closely with a foster child, I understand him/her more than anyone else.	.425	.782
5. The most frustrating part of foster parenting is that I cannot solve all of a foster child's problems.	.450	.779
77. There is no difference between the role of parent and foster parent.	.385	.787

Reasons for Misbehavior Subscale (α = .760)

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
11. Most foster children are manipulative.	.617	.695
25. Foster children will usually try to lie to get what they want.	.588	.705
20. Few foster children can trust that others will treat them fairly.	.452	.740
71. Foster children often create problems because they are used to chaotic environments.	.500	.727
58. Most foster children have a difficult time adjusting to stable homes.	.426	.745
13. Foster children usually fight to get what they need.	.449	.739

Flexible Commitment Subscale (α = .789)

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
68. I make time to care for my emotional needs so that I can be the best foster parent I can be.	.485	.768
10. When I am having a hard time parenting my foster children, I have a difficult time reaching out to others for help.*	.553	.759
66. I am aware of how foster parenting affects my health and well-being.	.449	.773
67. I do not blame myself when a foster child has to leave my home permanently.	.533	.761
63. I am aware of the challenges in foster parenting that I can manage well and those I struggle with.	.470	.771
54. Others have to tell me to take care of myself before I notice that foster parenting is negatively affecting me.*	.478	.769
3. I have a hard time balancing foster parenting with my other work and family responsibilities.*	.513	.764
79. When caring for a foster child, everything else in life is less important.*	.321	.790
39. I respect the limits of my foster parenting abilities.	.385	.779
43. I am able to understand my emotional reactions to a foster child leaving my home permanently.	.433	.774

*Item reverse scored.

Appendix M: Moderator Analyses of Foster Parent Experience on Relationship between UC and Other Parenting Measures

	MESQ EC			MESQ ED			PSS			SFPI		
Model	B	*t*	*p*	B	*t*	*p*	B	*t*	*p*	B	*t*	*p*
Constant		6.69	<.001		2.13	.035		4.60	<.001		10.85	<.001
SDQ	0.01	0.16	.877	0.07	0.98	.330	0.41	4.73	<.001	-0.17	-1.79	.076
UC	0.41	4.19	<.001	0.55	6.73	<.001	-0.10	-1.07	.286	0.10	0.98	.328
Exp	-0.06	-0.20	.840	-0.52	-1.95	.054	0.01	0.02	.981	0.09	0.26	.796
UCxExp	0.08	0.27	.787	0.53	2.02	.045	-0.17	-0.57	.573	0.04	0.12	.906

Note: Bonferroni correction indicated p < .003 as an acceptable alpha adjustment; MESQ EC = Maternal Emotional Styles Questionnaire – Emotion Coaching, MESQ ED = Maternal Emotional Styles Questionnaire – Emotion Dismissing, PSS = Parental Stress Scale, SFPI = Satisfaction with Foster Parenting Inventory, SDQ = Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire – Total Difficulties, UC = Understanding the Child, Exp = Number of children for whom foster parents have provided care

Appendix N: Reliability Statistics for MESQ Subscales

Emotion Dismissing Subscale (α = .707)

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
3. When my foster child is sad, I am expected to fix the world and make it perfect.	.367	.686
5. Sadness is something that one has to get over, to ride out, not dwell on.	.316	.700
6. I prefer a happy foster child to a foster child who is overly emotional.	.097	.745
7. I help my foster child to get over sadness quickly so he/she can move on to other things.	.573	.632
10. I try to change my foster child's angry moods into cheerful ones.	.511	.649
11. Childhood is a happy-go-lucky time, not a time for feeling sad or angry.	.555	.633
12. When my foster child gets angry, my goal is to get him/her to stop.	.514	.648

Emotion Coaching Subscale (α = .770)

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1. When my foster child is sad, it's time to problem-solve.	.537	.732
2. Anger is an emotion worth exploring.	.327	.770
4. When my foster child gets sad, it's time to get close.	.498	.740
8. When my foster child is angry, it's an opportunity for getting close.	.523	.734
9. When my foster child is angry, I take some time to try to experience this feeling with my foster child.	.561	.726
13. When my foster child is angry, I want to know what he/she is thinking.	.453	.749
14. When my foster child is angry, it's time to problem-solve.	.524	.734

References

Abrams, K. Y., Rifkin, A., & Hesse, E. (2006). Examining the role of parental frightened/frightening subtypes in predicting disorganized attachment within a brief observational procedure. *Development and Psychopathology*, *18*, 345-361. doi:10.10170S0954579406060184

Ackerman, J. P., & Dozier, M. (2005). The influence of foster parent investment on children's representations of self and attachment figures. *Applied Developmental Psychology, 26,* 507-520. doi: 10.1016/j.appdev.2005.06.003

Baer, J. C., & Martinez, C. D. (2006). Child maltreatment and insecure attachment: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology, 24*, 187-197. doi:10.1080/02646830600821231

Berry, J. O., & Jones, W. H. (1995). The parental stress scale: Initial psychometric evidence. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 12,* 463-472.

Brown, J. D. (2008). Foster parents' perceptions of factors needed for successful foster placements. *Journal of Child Family Studies, 17,* 538-554. doi:10.1007/s10826-007-9172-z

Buehler, C., Cox, M. E., & Cuddeback, G. (2003). Foster parents' perceptions of factors that promote or inhibit successful fostering. *Qualitative Social Work, 2,* 61-83. doi:10.1177/1473325003002001281

Bugental, D. B. (1987). Attributions as moderator variables within social interactional systems. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 5,* 469-484.

Bugental, D. B., Johnston, C., New, M., & Silvester, J. (1998). Measuring parental attributions: Conceptual and methodological issues. *Journal of Family Psychology, 12,* 459-480.

Bugental, D. B., & Shennum, W. A. (1984). "Difficult" children as elicitors and targets of adult communication patterns: An attributional-behavior transactional analysis. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 49,* 1-70.

Bukatko, D., & Daehler, M. W. (2004). *Child development: A thematic approach*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Chiesa, A., & Serretti, A. (2009). Mindfulness-based stress reduction for stress management in healthy people: A review and meta-analysis. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, 15,* 593-600. doi: 10.1089=acm.2008.0495

Cohen, J. (1998). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Cole, S. A., & Eamon, M. K. (2007). Predictors of depressive symptoms among foster caregiver. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 31,* 295-310. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2006.06.010

Cooley, M. E., & Petren, R. E. (2011). Foster parent perceptions of competency: Implications for foster parent training. *Children and Youth Services Review, 33,* 1986-1974. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.05.023

Cummings, E. M., Davies, P. T., & Campbell, S. B. (2000). *Developmental psychopathology and family process: Theory, research, and clinical implications*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Dadds, M. R., Mullins, M. J., McAllister, R. A., & Atkins, E. (2003). Attributions, affect, and behavior in abuse-risk mothers: A laboratory study. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 27*, 21-45.

DeVellis, R.F. (2003). *Scale development: Theory and applications* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denby, R., Rindfleisch, N., & Bean, G. (1999). Predictors of foster parent's satisfaction and intent to continue to foster. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 31,* 287-303.

Doelling, J. L., & Johnson, J. H. (1990). Predicting success in foster placement: The contribution of parent-child temperament characteristics. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatric, 60,* 585-593.

Dorsey, S., Farmer, E. M. Z., Barth, R. P., Greene, K. M., Reid, J., & Landsverk, J. (2008). Current status and evidence base of training for foster and treatment foster parents. *Children and Youth Services Review, 30,* 1403-1416. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2008.04.008

Dozier, M., & Lindhiem, O. (2006). This is my child: Differences among foster parents in commitment to their young children. *Child Maltreatment, 11,* 338-345. doi:10.1177/1077559506291263

Farmer, E., Lipscombe, J., & Moyers, S. (2005). Foster carer strain and its impact on parenting and placement outcomes for adolescents. *British Journal of Social Work, 35,* 237-253. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bch181

Fees, B., Stockdale, D. F., Crase, S. J., Riggins-Caspers, K., Yates, A. M., Lekies, K. S., & Gillis-Arnold, R. (1998). Satisfaction with foster parenting: Assessment one year after training. *Children Youth Services Review, 20*, 347-363.

Field, A. (2009). *Discovering statistics using SPSS* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.

Goodman, R. (2001). Psychometric properties of the strengths and difficulties questionnaire. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 40*, 1337-1345.

Gottman, J. M., Katz, L. F., & Hooven, C. (1996). Parental meta-emotion philosophy and the emotional life of families: Theoretical models and preliminary data. *Journal of Family Psychology, 10*, 243-268.

Guadagnoli, E., & Velicer, W. F. (1998). Relation of sample size to the stability of component patterns. *Psychological Bulletin, 103*, 265-275.

Harden, B.J., Meisch, A.D., Vick, J.E., & Pandohie-Johnson, L. (2008). Measuring parenting among foster families: The development of the foster parent attitudes questionnaire (FPAQ). *Children and Youth Services Review, 30*, 879-892. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2007.12.015

Hendrix, S. K., & Ford, J. (2003). Hardiness of foster families and the intent to continue to foster. *Journal of Family Social Work, 7*, 25-34.

Hildyard, K. L., & Wolfe, D. A. (2002). Child neglect: Developmental issues and outcomes. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 26*, 679-695.

Janssens, A. & Deboutte, D. (2009). Screening for psychopathology in child welfare: The strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) compared with the Achenbach system of empirically based assessment (ASEBA). *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, *18*, 691-700. doi: 10.1007/s00787-009-0030-y

Kazdin, A. E. (2003). *Research design in clinical psychology* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Lagacé-Séguin, D.G., & Coplan, R.J. (2005). Maternal emotional styles and child social adjustment: Assessment, correlates, outcomes and goodness of fit in early childhood. *Social Development, 14*, 613-636.

Leathers, S. J. (2006). Placement disruption and negative placement outcomes among adolescents in long-term foster care: The role of behavior problems. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 20*, 307-324. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2005.09.003

Leathers, S. J., Spielfogel, J.E., McMeel, L. S., & Atkins, M. S. (2011). Us of a parent management training intervention with urban foster parents: A pilot study. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*, 1270-1279. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.02.022

Le Prohn, N.S. (1994). The role of the kinship foster parent: A comparison of the role conceptions of relative and non- relative foster parents. *Children and Youth Services Review, 16*, 65-84.

Lindhiem, O., & Dozier, M. (2007). Caregiver commitment to foster children: The role of child behavior. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 31*, 361-374. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2006.12.003

Lipscombe, J., Farmer, E., & Moyers, S. (2003). Parenting fostered adolescents: Skills and strategies. *Child and Family Social Work, 8*, 243-255.

Lipscombe, J., Moylers, S., & Farmer, E. (2004). What changes in 'parenting' approaches occur over the course of adolescent foster care placements? *Child and Family Social Work, 9*, 347-357.

Lounsbury, J. W., Gibson, L. W., & Saudargas, R. A. (2006). Scale development. In F. T. L. Leong & J. T. Austin (Eds.), *The psychology research handbook: A guide for graduate students and research assistants* (2nd ed., pp. 125-146). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lunkenheimer, E. S., Shields, A. M., & Cortina, K. S. (2007). Parental emotion coaching and dismissing in family interaction. *Social Development, 16*, 232-248. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9507.2007.00382.x

Margolin, G., & Gordis, E.B. (2000). The effects of family and community violence on children. *Annual Review of Psychology, 51*, 445-479.

McDowell, D. J., Kim, M., O'Neil, R., & Parke, R. D. (2002). Children's emotion regulation and social competence in middle childhood: The role of maternal and paternal interactive style. *Marriage and Family Review, 34*, 345-364.

Morgan, J., Robinson, D., & Aldridge, J. (2002). Parenting stress and externalizing child behaviour. *Child and Family Social Work, 7*, 219-225.

Mongeau, P. A., & Henningsen, M. L. M. (2008). Stage theories of relationship development: Charting the course of interpersonal communication. In L. A. Baxter & D. O. Braithwaite (Eds.) *Engaging theories in interpersonal communication: Multiple perspectives* (363-375). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Orme, J. G., Buehler, C., McSurdy, M., Rhodes, K. W., & Cox, M. E. (2003). The foster parent potential scale. *Research on Social Work Practice, 13*, 181-207. doi: 10.1177/1049731502250405

Orme, J. G., Cuddeback, G. S., Buehler, C., Cox, M. E., & Le Prohn, N. S. (2007). Measuring foster parent potential: Casey foster parent inventory – applicant version. *Research on Social Work Practice, 17*, 77-92.

Pecora, P.J., & Maluccio, A.N., (2000). What works in family foster care. In M.P. Kluger, G. Alexander, & P.A. Curtis (Eds.), *What works in child welfare*. Washington, DC: CWLA Press.

Pecora, P.J., Whittaker, J.K., Maluccio, A.N., Barth, R.P., & Plotnick, R.D. (2000). *The child welfare challenge: Policy, practice, and research*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

Ponciano, L. (2010). Attachment in foster care: The role of maternal sensitivity, adoption, and foster mother experience. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Social Work, 27*, 97-114. doi: 10.1007/s10560-010-0192-y

Rhodes, K. W., Orme, J. G., & Buehler, C. (2001). A comparison of family foster parents who quit, consider quitting, and plan to continue fostering. *The Social Service Review, 75,* 84-114.

Rodger, S., Cummings, S., & Leschied, A. W. (2006). Who is caring for our most vulnerable children? The motivation to foster in child welfare. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 30,* 1129-1142. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2006.04.005

Schofield, G., & Beek, M. (2005). Providing a secure base: Parenting children in long-term foster family care. *Attachment and Human Development, 7,* 3-25. doi: 10.1080/14616730500049019

Schwerzler, C. A., & Wagner, B. M. (2009). *Step-in Families: A grounded theory of foster parent-adolescent relationship development.* Unpublished manuscript, Department of Psychology, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.

Sheeber, L. B., Johnston, C., Chen, M., Leve, C., Hops, H., & Davis, B. (2009). Mothers' and fathers' attributions for adolescent behavior: An examination in families of depressed, subdiagnostic, and nondepressed youth. *Journal of Family Psychology, 23,* 871-881. doi:10.1037/a0016758

Shipman, K. L., Schneider, R., Fitzgerald, M. M., Sims, C., Swisher, L., & Edwards A. (2007). Maternal emotion socialization in maltreating and non-maltreating families: Implications for children's emotion regulation. *Social Development, 16,* 268-285. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9507.2007.00384.x

Sinclair, I., & Wilson, K. (2003). Matches and mismatches: The contribution of carers and children to the success of foster placements. *British Journal of Social Work, 33*, 871-884.

Stanton, A. L., Sullivan, S. J., & Austenfeld, J. L. (2009). Coping through emotional approach: Emerging evidence for the utility of processing and expressing emotions in responding to stressor. In C. R. Snyer & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology* (2nd ed. pp. 225-235). New York: Oxford University Press.

Steinberg, L., & Morris, A. S. (2001). Adolescent development. *Annual Review of Psychology, 52*, 83-110.

Stockdale, D. F., Crase, S. J., Lekies, K. S., Yates, A. M., & Gillis-Arnold, R. (1997). *Manual for foster parent research measures: Motivations for foster parenting inventory, attitudes toward foster parenting inventory, and satisfaction with foster parenting inventory.* Unpublished manuscript, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Iowa State University, Ames, IA.

Thompson, B. (2004). *Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis: Understanding concepts and applications*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Van Voorhees, E., & Scarpa A. (2004). The effects of child maltreatment on hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse, 5*, 333-352. doi: 10.1177/1524838004269486

Vostanis, P. (2006). Strengths and difficulties questionnaire: Research and clinical applications. *Current Opinion in Psychiatry, 19*, 367-372.

Wells, K., Farmer, E. M. Z., Richards, J. T., & Burns, B. J. (2004). The experience of being a treatment foster mother. *Qualitative Social Work, 3*, 117-138. doi:10.1177/1473325004043375

Whenan, R., Oxland, M., & Lushington, K. (2009). Factors associated with foster carer well-being, satisfaction and intention to continue providing out-of-home care. *Children and Youth Services Review, 31*, 752-760. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2009.02.001

Wilson, K., Sinclair, I., & Gibbs, I. (2000). The trouble with foster care: The impact of stressful 'events' on foster carers. *British Journal of Social Work, 30*, 193-209.

Zinn, A. (2009). Foster family characteristics, kinship, and permanence. *Social Service Review, 83*, 185-219.