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Effects of Foster Care on the Family System

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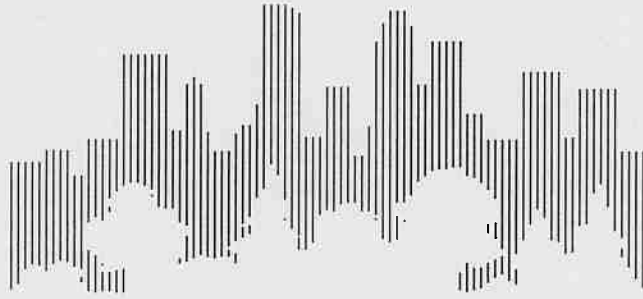
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**MASTERS IN SOCIAL WORK
THESIS**

Rochelle Del Greco

**Effects of Foster Care on
the Family System**

1999

**MSW
Thesis**

Thesis
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EFFECTS OF FOSTER CARE ON THE FAMILY SYSTEM

Rochelle Del Greco

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the degree of
Master of Social Work**

**AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA**

1999

ABSTRACT

EFFECTS OF FOSTER CARE ON THE FAMILY SYSTEM

ROCHELLE DEL GRECO

Despite volumes of studies and research on foster care as an intervention, there has been very limited research conducted on the effects foster care has on the family system as perceived by the foster parents. This study attempted to find some preliminary information about how the foster family is affected by foster children living in their home. Surveys were sent to 50 foster families in a rural county in Minnesota. The survey looked for correlations and frequencies in variables that had both positive and negative impact on the family system. As identified by the learning theorists, children learn from the environment surrounding them. This study may influence how social work implements foster care because foster parenting inevitably changes the family unit. Social workers employed in this area need to be educated not only on how to work with foster children, but also to anticipate the impact foster care has on the family system. Foster children need to be matched to appropriate foster families, and foster families need to be appropriately matched with foster children.

**MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK
AUGSBURG COLLEGE
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA**

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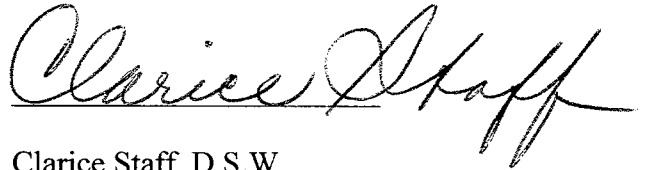
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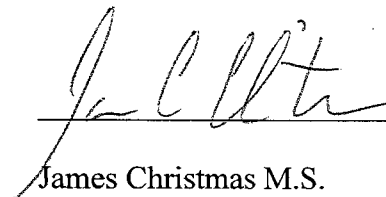
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Foster care is an intervention to help family systems deal with problems, issues, and conflict that relate to family functioning. It attempts to be a respite time for families, an intervention for abuse situations, an alternative placement for youth, and a safe place that is similar to the “family”.

Brief history

In the early 1850’s, the New York Children’s Aid Society (CAS) developed the concept of “placing-out” urban children to families in rural settings rather than sending children to institutions (Hacsi, 1995). This concept played a crucial role in the present day foster care system. The primary difference between foster care and “placing-out” is that “placing-out” focused on breaking up the family and not returning the child to the biological family home, whereas foster care focuses on temporary care of children with the hopes of reunification of the child to the biological family (Hacsi, 1995). Similarly, the foster care movement over the past decade has moved towards the inclusive model, and away from the exclusive model (Twigg, 1994). The inclusive model is a foster care intervention that is temporary with the goal of reunification of the family. The exclusive model focused on permanent removal of children, rather than reunification planning and goals. There is, and has been historically, debate as to whether or not foster care is a healthy and productive

intervention strategy. The literature review provided in chapter two looks at the dynamics of foster care as it relates to the intervention process, foster family functioning, children's perspectives regarding placement, and the comparisons of kinship care and foster care.

Research question

The research question is as follows: is foster care a positive intervention for the foster child, the biological family, and the foster family? A more refined question to be answered in the research study is; what are the effects of foster care on the family system as perceived by the foster parents?

There is very little research about the impact foster care has on the foster family system. In order to preserve and serve the family system, social workers must begin to identify themes and variables that will not only match foster children to foster families, but families to foster children. Placements of foster children must take into account the already existing family system and its needs.

There is more data needed on the impact of these interventions on children. For example, it is difficult to compare in-home services, and foster care interventions related to the foster child because data is not currently being gathered about the children when there is intervention. The focus is on parental behavior. Over the last decade, child protection agencies have focused more on providing family preservation

services. The use of foster care has substantially been reduced (Wald, 1988). This movement seems to be based fundamentally on two assumptions. First, foster care can often times be bad for foster children. Second, foster children can be protected from violence and neglect through in-home services. Children are assumed to be safe at home if adequate services are available. In contrast to Wald's observation that out of home placements have decreased, another research team has identified an increase of child placement in traditional foster care over the last 15 years (Fanshel, 1992). Simultaneously there have been decreases in agency resources and services (Tatara, 1992; Seaberg & Harrigan, 1997), which is a serious problem.

Another issue is the question about what justifies family intervention in the first place. There is significant disagreement and gray areas about when authorities, service agencies, and programs need to be interjected into the family system (Wald, 1988). Effective foster care interventions and in-home services need to work to be complementary rather than competitive.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will review five topics in the area of foster care. The topics are kinship care versus traditional foster care, the foster child's perspective, the functioning of the foster family, and the transition to independence for foster children.

Kinship Care Verses Traditional Foster Care

"Effective foster care" is an ambiguous term which needs to be identified and measured. Effective foster care can be achieved through both kinship care and traditional foster care. Kinship care as an aspect of foster care is identified as the out of home placement of children with relatives in which the children are in the custody of state and local child welfare agencies. Courtney and Barth (1996) address kinship care (foster placement with a relative) as becoming a more popular option for families. However, Goerge, Wulczyn and Fanshel (1994) emphasize that major research is needed regarding the effects that kinship care has on the duration of a child's stay in care. The likelihood that children in kinship care arrangements will eventually experience family reunification or adoption, and the extent to which these placements will create barriers in family reunification is somewhat of a question (Goerge , Wulczyn, & Fanshel, 1994).

Traditional foster care for the purposes of this review is identified as non-relative family care (Scannapieco, Hegar, & McAlpine, 1997). Scannapieco et, al. (1997) compared kinship care homes, and foster care homes, and identified minimal differences

in supervision and appropriateness of care. They do note, however, that there are significantly more services to the parents of children in traditional foster care. This finding suggests that the efforts to work with parents toward the goals of reunification are greater in traditional foster care than in kinship care. There is also evidence that caseworker contacts are greater in the non-relative foster parents than in kinship care givers (Gebel, 1996). No differences between foster care and kinship care are noted in caseworker objectives to placement length, or willingness to consider adopting a child in placement if necessary. According to Scannapieco et al. (1997), however, there is a disproportionate share of African American children who reside in kinship care, as compared to traditional foster care. This finding may be due in part because of traditional family care giving among the family systems in African American culture.

One study looked at a comparison in attitudes regarding physical punishment. In kinship care, there is evidence of a more favorable attitude toward physical discipline, and “a lower level of empathy toward children’s needs” (Gebel, 1996, p. 13). Comparatively, traditional foster care children received significantly more mental health and transportation service, and were more likely to have had prior placements (Scannapieco et al., 1997). Both studies noted a significant increase in resource availability if a family was in the traditional, non-relative foster care bracket. Comparatively, some evidence shows that placements with relatives results in more stable and long-term care, while children who are not placed with relatives tend to move from one living arrangement to the next (George, et al, 1994).

Functioning of the Foster Family

The healthy functioning of families willing to care for foster children is a key component to the resources for out of home placements for many reasons. Retention and stability of the home are of utmost importance, so that children can depend on the foster family where they are placed. It is important, furthermore, that foster families have adequate training and experience, and this comes with time and hands on work. According to Seaberg et al., in one open-ended survey completed by the foster mothers for their family, it showed that foster families are able to function in a productive and healthy manner. They identified increased sharing and loving, patience and understanding, and an increased sense of family in opening their home to foster children (Seaberg & Harrigan, 1997). The most frequent response in the study, however, was a sense of loss when a foster child leaves the home. Negative effects also include increased stress and demands, changes in daily routines, family conflict, negative financial costs, and a negative impact on natural children. No differences were found in family functioning with regard to race (Seaberg & Harrigan, 1997).

Similarly in another research study, biological children were interviewed, and the majority reported that they liked having foster siblings (Poland & Groze, 1993). Negative effects were, however, identified very differently by the biological children of this study, than by the foster parents previously discussed. The biological children did not like some of the things that had changed in their own home since foster child placement. They identified areas such as stricter home rules, feeling left out, more isolation from the family,

added responsibilities, family stress with each new placement, and concern for the foster child's well being. The crucial issue in this study was the lack of parental time with biological children (Poland & Groze, 1993). Implications of the study suggest that, although foster care families view the experience as mostly positive, it is important to make efforts to improve services to the biological children in the families. The study suggests that pre-training sessions happen for the biological children as well as for the foster parents. It is important that caseworkers spend increased time working with biological children within the foster family, and this activity will tap into predictors as to whether or not the family system is tolerating added stress (Poland & Groze, 1993). It seems that it will also increase the awareness of coping with changes in the family in a healthy way. The theme regarding the need for caseworker involvement in families is evident in almost all literature from this review of foster care for many different reasons and many different impacts. There is evidence that biological children blame their parents for the negative events that occur throughout a foster placement. The caseworker could alleviate some of this stress through professional guidance, support, and skilled work with the foster family (Poland & Groze, 1993).

In contrast to the biological children of the Poland and Groze study feeling positive about foster siblings, a separate research study completed by Twigg (1994), identified biological children as feeling they had lost something significant through the foster care experience. Specifically, time and attention from parents, family closeness, and an identified place in the family were areas of loss the children identified, and of significant

impact. There were not any positive feelings regarding the foster care experience identified in the study (Twigg, 1994). Anger was an identified feeling by these biological children, and as it was similarly identified in the Poland and Groze study, most of this anger was directed at their parents for accepting the role as foster parents. There were feelings of rejection, and that the foster parents had re-directed their love away from the biological children, and towards the foster children.

The implications of Twigg's study serve as warning signals that foster care experiences for biological children in the home may place them at significant psychological risk. Twigg emphasizes that caseworkers must provide support groups, and become sensitive to the needs of the biological children in the foster family system. These children need to be recognized, acknowledged for their contributions to the family, and closely monitored for negative reactions and stresses in regards to foster placements in the home (Twigg, 1994). Similarly, the previous study identifies that it is most important that biological children be included in the transition process of foster care family providers (Poland & Groze, 1993).

The effects that foster parenting has on the actual foster parents and their biological family can be both rewarding and exhausting. Kinship caregivers, such as aunts, uncles, and grandparents, expressed a positive view of the children in care, and believe that they could provide appropriate care as well as keep the child placed within the extended family (McFadden, 1996). Problematic issues for kinship caregivers include the

realignment of family roles and issues of shame regarding the reasons their relative is unable to provide proper care for the children (McFadden, 1996).

It is important for foster parents to realize that they will not remain unaffected by the placement of foster children in their home. There may be competition for space or for the attention of the parents by the parent's biological children, and the family may have established places that each member fits into: the arrival of foster children may require renegotiating these established places (Euster, Ward, & Varner, 1982). Foster parents often experience a paradoxical expectation of "love them and let them go" which leads some foster parents to drop out of foster care early in their career, because they are unable to handle the inherent ambiguity of their roles (McFadden, 1996). Foster parents who provide specialized care and therapeutic foster care are at risk of experiencing burnout, overloading by an agency desperate to find placements for hard-to-place children, and the possibilities that they might even overlook their biological children while trying to meet the needs of the foster children (McFadden, 1996).

Foster parents are also at risk of experiencing grief and loss. They may develop defenses such as chronic anger, denial of affect or somatization, due to a foster child being removed from their home (Euster, et al, 1982). Issues related to the foster parent's biological children may also arise. Confusion by the arrivals and departures of other children may impact biological children in the home, and the biological child may ask a question such as "when will I be sent away ?" (McFadden, 1996). Other issues which may surface relate to the double standard between the foster parent's children and other

children pertaining to discipline (Euster, et al, 1982). This can occur if the foster child sees that the biological child has different (more lenient) consequences for the same negative behavior as the foster child does.

The Foster Child's Perspective

It is important to find out if children who are being placed in foster care find the intervention productive and helpful. In some research children, for the most part described their foster care experiences as positive. They do, however, have suggestions for enhancement and improvement of foster care service and intervention strategies. According to Kufeldt, et al. (1995) many children report that they do not understand why they were placed in foster care, and state that they were able to give little input into the actual foster home chosen for them. The majority of children in the study conducted by Kufeldt, Armstrong, and Dorosh (1995) rated their foster parents in the normal to better than average range. Similarly, the majority of children in a study completed by Johnson, Yoken, and Voss (1995) reported getting along well with their foster parents, and had few serious problems in the foster home in which they were placed.

Kufeldt et al. (1995) reported that in looking at children's views regarding their biological parents, the children had strong feelings about these relationships, and a pattern developed. Children who felt deprived of contact with their biological parents, regardless of the amount of contact approved, seemed to become more cognizant of their parent's own problems. When visitation was consistent and satisfactory, the children in the study

tended to report normal and healthy functioning of their parents. Primary attachments to the biological family is extremely important to be respected and encouraged by foster parents and other service providers, as it is almost always where the child's loyalties are.

An essential element to success in placement is communication between the biological and foster parents (Kufeldt et al., 1995). Foster parent training can help parents to avoid rivalry and promote teamwork, and education between the foster families and biological parents. In some instances, dormant anger flares as foster parents are reminded of the maltreatment or abandonment that brought the child into their care (McFadden, 1996).

Training of foster families is also likely to enhance the foster child's school performance, self-esteem, and academic potential (Blome, 1997).

In the study conducted by Johnson et al., (1995), since the removal from their home, children reported that almost all changes in their new foster care environment had been viewed as positive. For example, they identified new friends, a more pleasant physical environment, better school experiences, development of recreation interests, and less fighting within the family. One child reported, "The food is good here. I get more money, and more babysitting jobs. My whole life-style is changed. Everything is better"(Johnson et al., 1995, pg. 960).

Although many of the aspects of the foster care environment are appealing for children, a common theme identified by them throughout the studies is the loneliness for the biological family. A goal that has been deemed successful to help deal with this issue

is the importance of visitation from the biological parents, and this area needs to be clearly defined to the foster family (Kufeldt et. al., 1995).

The most common piece of advice from children in foster care to their biological parents was that “parents should treat their kids well, take care of them, love them, and not abuse them...A child needs someone to raise them, someone to take care of them”(Johnson et al., 1995, p. 963). Children completing the surveys about their foster parents did not identify safety issues and supervision issues as problematic.

As identified above, the caseworker role for training and support to foster parents, biological parents, and children is very important to the success of out of home placements (Scannapieco et. al., 1997). This is an area of improvement deemed necessary, as described in the survey. Children described this important role of the caseworker, and summarized that the social worker should know the rules of foster care, histories of the biological and foster families, and resources available in the community (Johnson et al., 1995). Questions arise that need direction and answering from the caseworker, and this person must maintain contact and availability with the foster family. A good foster parent is described by the children completing the survey as a person who likes kids, listens, and understands, as it is important that the child is heard.

The placement of a child into another family is a very complicated process. The type of home that meets the child’s needs is necessary to determine, as well as the impact on the biological family, child, and foster family. Kinship care and

traditional foster care are just two of the available out of home options. There are similarities but also differences. The studies described above show that, overall, the children being placed perceive foster care as positive, but would like more input into their potential living environment. They also describe the importance of case management services, and the need for patient and nurturing foster parents. Just as placed children need to be heard and their input needs to be embraced, so do the foster families taking the children into their homes need to be heard. There are strong changes in family dynamics with the integration of new family members, whether permanent or temporary.

Transition to Independence for foster children

Moving towards independent living is a life transition important for any young adult to achieve success. It is of significant importance then to look at whether or not foster children are able to successfully transition into adulthood and how this transition occurs. This success will provide important information regarding the effectiveness of foster parent teachings and mentoring of children as they near adulthood. The study by McMillen, Rideout, Fisher, and Tucker's (1997) looked at the views of former foster youth in terms of their successes and challenges, and emphasized that the foster families must provide positive emotional support before, during, and after leaving the foster care setting. The transition into adulthood was described as going smoothly because of the support provided by the foster families. McMillen et al. (1997) further identify that foster

parents have likely provided a platform for learning important values and a positive environment to obtain the skills young adults need to live independently.

Studies suggest that multiple moves in and out of the foster care system are associated with an increased likelihood of an unsuccessful outcome when exiting from care and into adulthood (Courtney & Barth, 1996). Exiting from care consists of either returning home, emancipation, and/or moving on to independent living programs. The outcome for youth with unstable placement histories tends to be unsuccessful due to the inconsistency in their lives brought about by several moves within the foster care system.

Courtney and Barth (1996) conclude that youth who experience failed reunification efforts appear to remain “unsettled.” McMillen et al. (1997) determined that in general youth leaving foster care (or other placement such as group home care) have difficulty transitioning to living on their own. Conversely in this study, the youth discussed how it is difficult to remain in care as older adolescents. Some young adults viewed the foster care system as being intrusive and that there were too many people making decisions for them about their lives (McMillen et al, 1997).

Independent living programs preparing youth for discharge present two functions: first, to reduce the stigma and isolation of living in out of home care. Second, the importance of learning financial skills while in foster care (McMillen, et al, 1997). It is further emphasized that youth who received training in five core areas, (money, credit, consumer, education, and employment skills), were more likely to maintain a job for at least one year, and be more satisfied with life than those who had not received training in

these core areas (McMillen et al, 1997). Those youth who experienced the independent living skills/transitional services types of programs further expressed satisfaction with the overall foster care experience. Youth who emphasized that their foster parents provided emotional as well as material support during their complete stay and transition to independent living indicated that they were satisfied with their foster home and continue to maintain a relationship with their previous foster parents (Courtney & Barth, 1996). It would seem, then, that supportive foster parents in conjunction with independent living programs are the best predictors for successful transitions into adulthood.

Summary and Implications

Throughout this literature search, there were common themes to the studies identified. In general, and of significant impact on the effectiveness and satisfactory experience of foster care intervention was the involvement of the caseworker. This positive impact came as a result of a variety of reasons. Some include: support and training to biological children (Poland & Groze, 1993), monitoring of stressors and negative reactions to a placement (Twig, 1994), identification of resources (Gebel, 1996), and professional guidance (Scannapieco et al., 1997); all were enhanced areas provided by an effective foster care manager. Providing independent living skills to youth exiting foster care has proven to enhance a foster child's self-confidence of living on her/his own (McMillen, et al, 1997). These services also provide youth with the skills to maintain

employment, follow a personal budget, as well as lessen the stigmatization of having been in foster care (McMillen, et al, 1997).

Overall, reports about the foster care experience were positive throughout most of the research. There were areas and elements of the intervention identified as needing to be enhanced and worked on. Some identified problem areas include: burnout, confusion of family roles, and competition to receive the attention of the foster parents (Euster, et al, 1982). In general, however, it has been reported that foster families, biological children, and foster children all identified the foster care intervention as very positive.

In contrast, there was one study completed by Twigg (1994) that did not identify any positive experiences by biological children in foster families, and in fact raised concerns about a potentially significant psychological impact on biological children. The biological children identified a feeling of emotional vulnerability and a sense of loss. The impact of the foster care service system on individuals living within the foster home, and its impact on the family system as a whole is an area that is important to research further. This research study will focus on this area of foster care; what are the effects of foster care on the family system as perceived by the foster parents. Based on this literature review, it is evident that the majority of studies agreed that the foster care intervention strategy is a positive one. One could conclude that foster care is a necessary tool in the implementation of child safety.

CHAPTER III: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Bee, learning theory explains a central notion that children are shaped by the environment of their surroundings through the process of learning (Bee, 1985). Learning is the acquisition of new responses as a result of experience (Fancher, 1979). The learning theory and its behavioral approach gives explanation to how children develop, and holds that their environment and observations directly impact development and life choices they will make. A child develops through learning about the world around him/her. This theory relates to the research problem, what are the effects of foster care on the family system as perceived by the foster parents. The family system is altered by the introduction of foster children into it.

Description of the Theoretical Framework

Learning theorists assume that the primary cause of development and differences among children lies in the external environment that the child encounters (Bee, 1985). There are two fundamental mechanisms used in behavior development and behavior change. One is forming associations through conditioning, and the second is through observation of models in the child's life. Learning is the establishment in the child's life of new associations that are viewed as significant connections. The learning theory describes the development of self through what the

child's environmental make-up is, and it begins in the first days of life and goes to adulthood (Mussen, Conger, & Kagan, 1979). In the first stages of development (under one year old) the child spends a good deal of time in activities other than getting basic needs met, such as eating. The child is beginning to learn how the world operates (Singer & Singer, 1969). Much of learning depends upon conditioning, that is, the drive and motivation important to a child. Rewards, reinforcement, and punishment are key variables in a means of teaching a child about his/her world. Important people in a child's life will result in a general motive for approval and affection through the child's learning. The child will learn from the people he/she values and relies on to get his/her needs met. The needs of a child include basic shelter, food, and also nurturance, warmth, and approval. The child will also learn complex responses through observing someone else's responses and imitating them. By observing others, the child forms a conception of how new behavior patterns are performed, and at later times this conception of the new response patterns serves as a guide to action and behavior. Observational learning and learning by conditioning often supplement each other in complex learning requiring new responses, practice, and rewards for correct responses (Mussen, et al., 1979).

Most children want to be like the adults and the peers they look up to. Therefore, socialization and motivation for learning behavior are not only due to rewards and punishment, but also due to "competence" motivation. This means that the child comes to deal effectively with his/her environment through the growth of

affective behavior in relation to other people significant in the child's life. Children imitate the adults and peers they observe to be the people important in their lives. Through imitation they can begin to master new skills and behavior. They have an exploratory drive because children enjoy learning new things for their own sake, and seek approval and nurturance (Singer & Singer, 1969).

Expressions of learned behavior may be either general or specific. Through rewards, punishments, and imitation, a child may learn a general way to act in any environment (Singer & Singer, 1969). For example, when a child is toilet trained there are many rewards that take place. The parents may give the child a treat each time there is successful urinating in the toilet. A second reward is that the child remains dry and therefore feels more comfortable. A third reward may be the child sees older siblings use the toilet effectively, and is proud to act like them. The child likely generalizes this learned behavior to all the environments he/she interacts in.

It is important to recognize that learned behavior may also be expressed in specific environments, and not generalized to other environments. The child may behave very differently at childcare than at home. Different behaviors may be expected of the child in changing environments, and different circumstances may encourage varying responses (Singer & Singer, 1969). Children have complex learning patterns and many ways of understanding the world around them through the people important in their lives. Learning is heavily influenced by the environment, and is constant and continuous through interaction and observation (Gardner, 1978).

Definition of Terms

According to Singer & Singer, terms relevant to the learning theory can be defined as follows:

- * **Classical conditioning** is learning to perform an already formed response to a new stimulus.
- * **Cognition** is any internal representation of experience.
- * **Imitation** is a child's reproduction of behavior which he/she has seen others perform.
- * **Learning** is the formation or strengthening of an association between a stimulus and a response.
- * **Motivation** is a persistent tendency to perform some goal-oriented responses.
- * **Operant learning** is performing a response more frequently because it has been reinforced.
- * **Performance** is overt behavior after learning.
- * **Punishment** is subjecting a child to negative reinforcers for behaving in certain ways.
- * **Reward** is anything that strengthens the association between stimuli and responses causing the response to be more frequent.
- * **Stimulus generalization** is making the same, or similar, response to similar stimuli.

Application of Theory to the Research Problem

The learning theory is applicable to the research problem: What are the effects of foster care on the family system, as perceived by the foster parents. It is important to begin to understand how children who have foster siblings, and parents who take care of foster children, are affected by this experience. An understanding of the variables that contribute to the foster care experience for biological children must begin to be examined and explained. It is likely that some have good learning experiences, and some negative experiences, as does the family as a whole. Conclusively, however, the family system is impacted in many ways.

The learning theory explains that children learn from those that are important to them in their lives, both adults and peers. A question of what the biological children are learning from foster children is necessary to answer, as these children become part of the family system, and therefore likely become important members of the biological children's primary environment. If the foster child is older than the biological child, is the biological child learning through observing negative behaviors or is the child learning behaviors not to imitate? Is there reinforcement of problematic behaviors for biological children if older foster children are being placed in a home, or are the children learning how not to act through parents punishing negative behaviors and rewarding positive behaviors for the foster child? Is parental conduct in disciplining foster children who may have emotional or behavioral difficulties teaching the biological children a separate sense of rewards for attention seeking and

nurturance? Is the relationship between parents and biological children altered when foster children become part of the family? Is the relationship altered in a positive or negative way? Is the education, and therefore implementation of parenting techniques of foster parents having a positive effect on the child rearing of their own children? Do the biological children imitate the behaviors of the foster children? There are many questions necessary to answer about the impact this intervention has on the family system.

The age of the children in the home is an important factor. There may be a shift in who the biological children are learning from, depending on their age. Children nearing adolescence begin to move away from learning from parent figures, and give more attention to their peer culture. Autonomy is being tested in adolescence, and loyalties shift. A vast amount of learning occurs among peers through interaction and observation, whether it is accurate information that is shared or not (Johnson & Medinnus, 1965). If the peer culture within the home is altered through adolescent foster children being placed, there is a question of who will significantly impact how the children act and react to the world around them. The research will look at the dynamics of the ages of both the biological and foster children in the home. How different age groups in a family system impact learning comes into question. Are there some age combinations to discourage in the foster care system?

Learning theory explains that imitation, rewards, reinforcement, and punishment are all ways that a child learns. The environment the child interacts with molds what behaviors and beliefs the child develops.

Children learn from the environment where they interact. The learning theory suggests that there is significant impact on child development through the experiences and people that are present in their lives, and it is a constant and continuous process. Learning is the acquisition of new responses as a result of experience (Francher, 1979). Rewards, punishment, and imitation are complex ways children learn. Given this, the foster care experience stands to have a very significant impact on the development of children growing up in this type of family system. The research will begin to answer what this impact is, and discuss the positive or negative correlations of the foster care experience for family system as a whole. It will also begin to point to a frame of reference for the foster care families. Older foster children may have a positive effect on younger biological children, or vice versa. The number or gender of the foster children and biological children may have a significant impact on the learning and development of children. Learning is the key to child development, and the impact in this area needs further explanation.

CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY

Research Question

The research question in this study is as follows: what are the effects of foster care on the family system as perceived by the foster parents?

Concepts and Variables

There are important concepts and variables to be defined. The below definitions are used for this study.

- * **Impact of foster care--(conceptual definition)** Any change in family dynamics due to placement of foster children in the home.
- * **Satisfaction of foster care experience--(conceptual definition)** Biological children are happy or sad about foster siblings, as perceived by the foster parents. The degree to which the foster parents agree that foster care is good.
- * **Negative behavior of foster child--(conceptual definition)** The child ignores, or disregards rules of the home, school, or laws.
- * **Sadness--(conceptual definition)** Feeling loss when the foster child leaves. Wishing the child did not need to leave the home.

* **Consequences** for behavior--(**conceptual definition**) Parents or adult authority taking away privileges due to the act of the child.

This study **operationalizes** these key concepts by identifying the percentage of subjects (foster parents) that agree or disagree with how foster care impacts their family. For example, overall, taking care of foster children has been a satisfactory experience (appendix A). And, the biological children felt sad when the foster children left (appendix A).

From the survey data, the researcher will look for correlations, frequency distributions, and similarities in perceptions of the respondents.

Research Design

This study employs an exploratory research design using survey questionnaires. Mostly quantitative research was chosen due to the size of the population sample, and to provide a baseline for possible future research projects in this subject area. At the end of the questionnaire, there are four open-ended, qualitative questions. The sampling group was all foster parents throughout a rural Minnesota county. Procedures for data collection was through mail-out surveys including self-addressed stamped envelopes, to assure anonymity. The study is statistically analyzed through multivariate analysis, and the results are interpreted and the study's implications are described and discussed.

Characteristics of the Study Population

The surveys were sent to all 50 licensed foster families in a rural Minnesota county that have been providing foster care. All foster parents in a rural Minnesota county received the questionnaire, and thus a purposive sampling was used. The family was encouraged to complete the questionnaire in a comfortable setting. The surveys were sent out and returned during March, 1999.

Measurement Issues

Possible measurement errors that might have occurred include systematic error and random error. **Systematic error** which may be an issue in this study if the foster parents believe that their answers to the survey questions will not remain anonymous, and if they believe their answers will in some way affect future placements of foster children into their homes. The study will attempt to guard for this occurrence through being clear about anonymity, and that responses will in no way affect future referrals to their homes.

In addition, **random error** may occur if the questionnaire was experienced as too long and complicated. Of concern was that the study population might become bored with the questions and begin to randomly checking off answer to get done with the survey. The study attempted to guard against this by keeping the instrument short, clear, and easy to answer. A second concern was that the survey may have
d been too complicated and unclear as to what the meaning of the words and

statements are. The study attempted to guard against this occurrence by pre-testing the instrument on a similar population foster parents, in similar situations in another county.

Reliability and Validity

There are some limitations to test for reliability in this study, as it is cross-sectional, and directed at a specific rural county. It is difficult to determine if this study is reliable in predicting whether or not foster parents in other areas would have similar attitudes regarding foster care impact on their families. Each child is an individual, as is each family. These factors limit the possibility of generalizing any findings. Another issue is that the study population's attitudes on the day that they complete the survey. It is possible that their feelings regarding the rewards and drawbacks of foster care could change significantly depending upon their current experiences with the foster children for whom they are caring.

This study attempts to guard for reliability by asking for identifying information such as the number of years they have taken care of foster children, number of foster children in the home, and the number of foster children they have cared for. This identifying information attempts to find the average response from foster parents, with regards to longevity and placements.

Threats to validity in this study include mortality, that is those persons who received the mailed questionnaire and chose to ignore the survey, not sending it back. Potential subjects may have dropped out of the study before completing the survey;

and may have found the study too complicated or intrusive. Subjects may answer what they think the researcher wants to hear rather than how they really perceive the foster care experience. For some families foster care is a career and source of income. To guard for validity issues, a detailed introductory letter outlined the purpose of the study, and assurance of anonymity was given. This letter was mailed with each questionnaire. The questions which were used did not lead the subjects to an answer, or allude to right and wrong answers. An executive summary of the study was offered to be sent to the participants via a separate, anonymous postcard that the subjects could send in to request that the results of the study be sent to them.

As stated above, a threat to this study is external validity. The extent to which the results of the study can be generalized to setting and populations beyond the study group is of issue.

Levels of Measurement of Variables

The levels of measurement in this study was ordinal, as one type of measurement used was the Likert scale. Nominal measurement was also utilized through true/false questions.

Classification of Variables (discrete and/or continuous)

The variables in this study to be measured are categorized as discrete, as a Likert Scale and true/false questions were answered. Nominal and ordinal levels of measurements use discrete classifications of variables.

Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instrument included thirty questions that asked foster parents to describe the foster care experiences they have had (appendix A).

Administering the data collection instrument is defined below. The data collection instrument in this study was a questionnaire. The survey was sent by mail to foster parents in a rural Minnesota county. The survey packet included an introductory letter, the survey, self-addressed stamped envelope for return, and separate postcard for those who wanted to request an executive summary of the research.

Data Analysis

This study is analyzed through multivariate analysis, looking at frequency distributions, correlations, and similarities and differences between the responses. It looks at percentages with the base being the total number of surveys returned. Descriptive statistics is used to describe and interpret the data collected.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS

Surveys were sent to fifty foster parents in rural Minnesota county. Of these, fifteen surveys were returned, for a return rate of thirty percent (30%). This is similar to other research (N=15).

Demographics

Seventy-three percent (73%) of the foster parents have two or more biological children living in their home. Sixty percent (60%) of the foster parents reported having both male and female biological children living in their home. Twenty percent (20%) of the foster parents reported having only male biological children, and six percent (6%) reported having only female biological children.

Sixty percent (60%) of the foster parents took into their homes both male and female foster children. Thirty-three percent (33%) took in only male foster placements, and six percent (6%) took in only female foster placements.

The average number of foster children served in the foster homes over the past two years were 8.7 children per home. These children may be short term or long term placements. Foster parents have provided foster care for an average of 5.5 years, as shown on chart 1.

Number Of Years Taking Care Of Foster Children

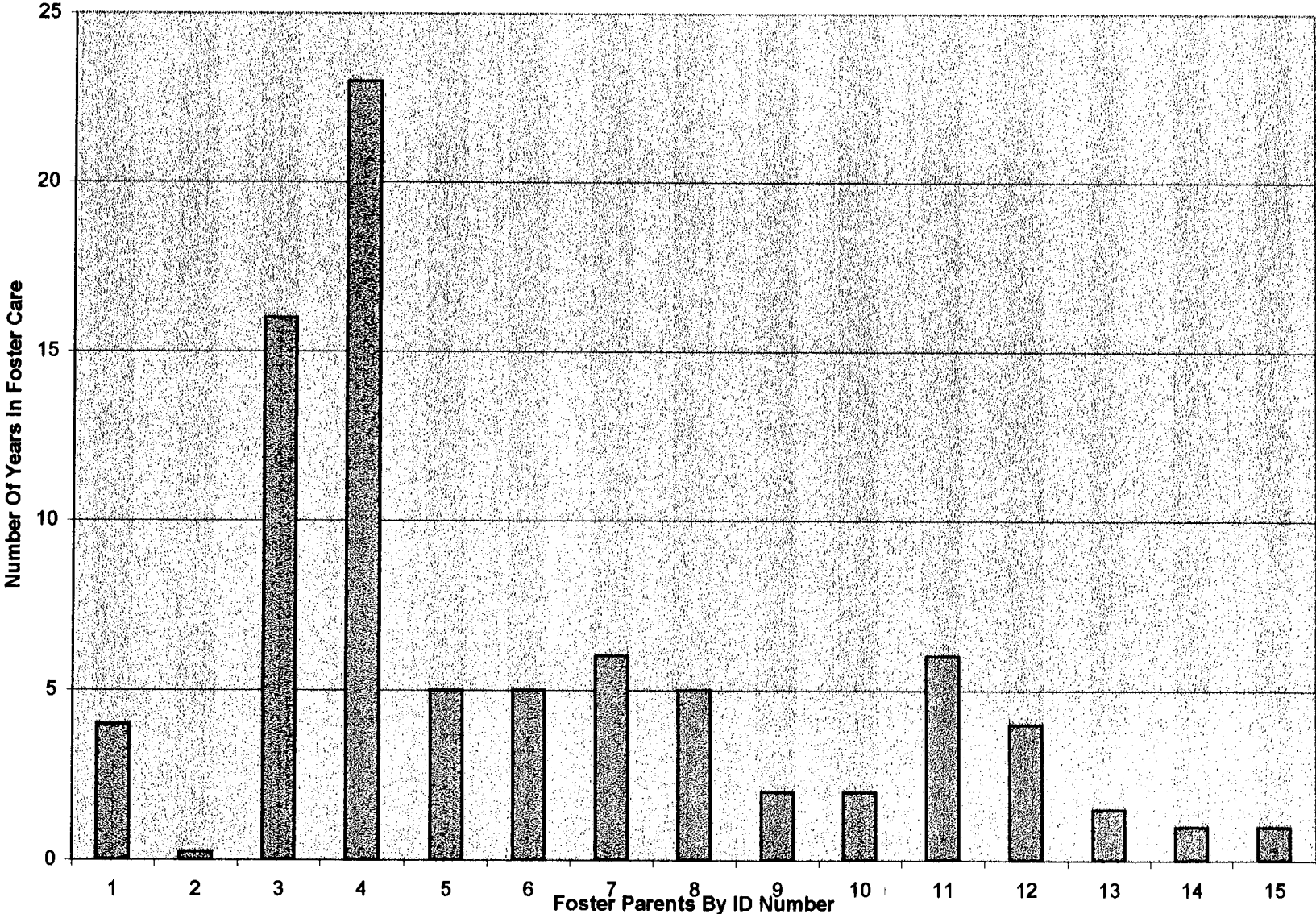


Chart 1

31

Pie chart 2 identifies the ages of biological children in the foster families that participated in this study. Thirty-three percent (33%) of the biological children were 0-5 years old and the same percentage were 16-18 years old. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the biological children were 11-15 years old, and seven percent (7%) were 6-10 years old. The foster families, then, have a wide age range of biological children in their homes.

Ages of Biological Children

N = 28

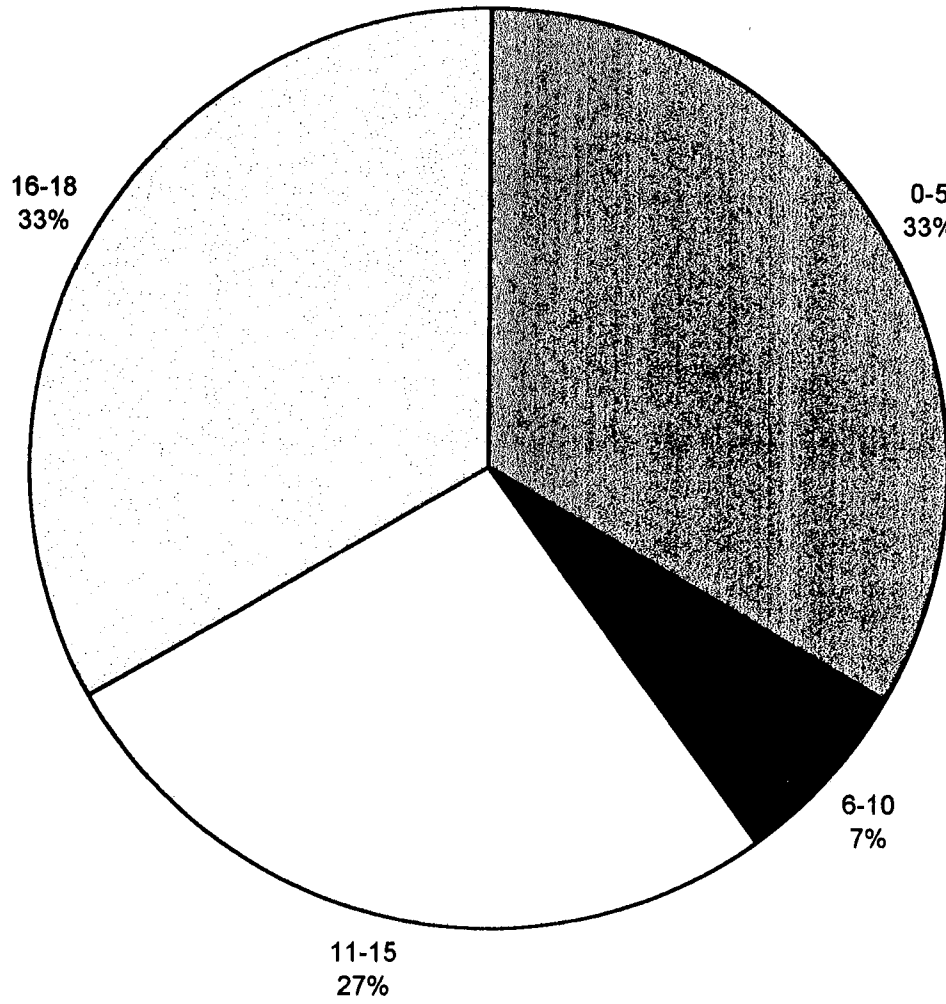


Chart 2

33

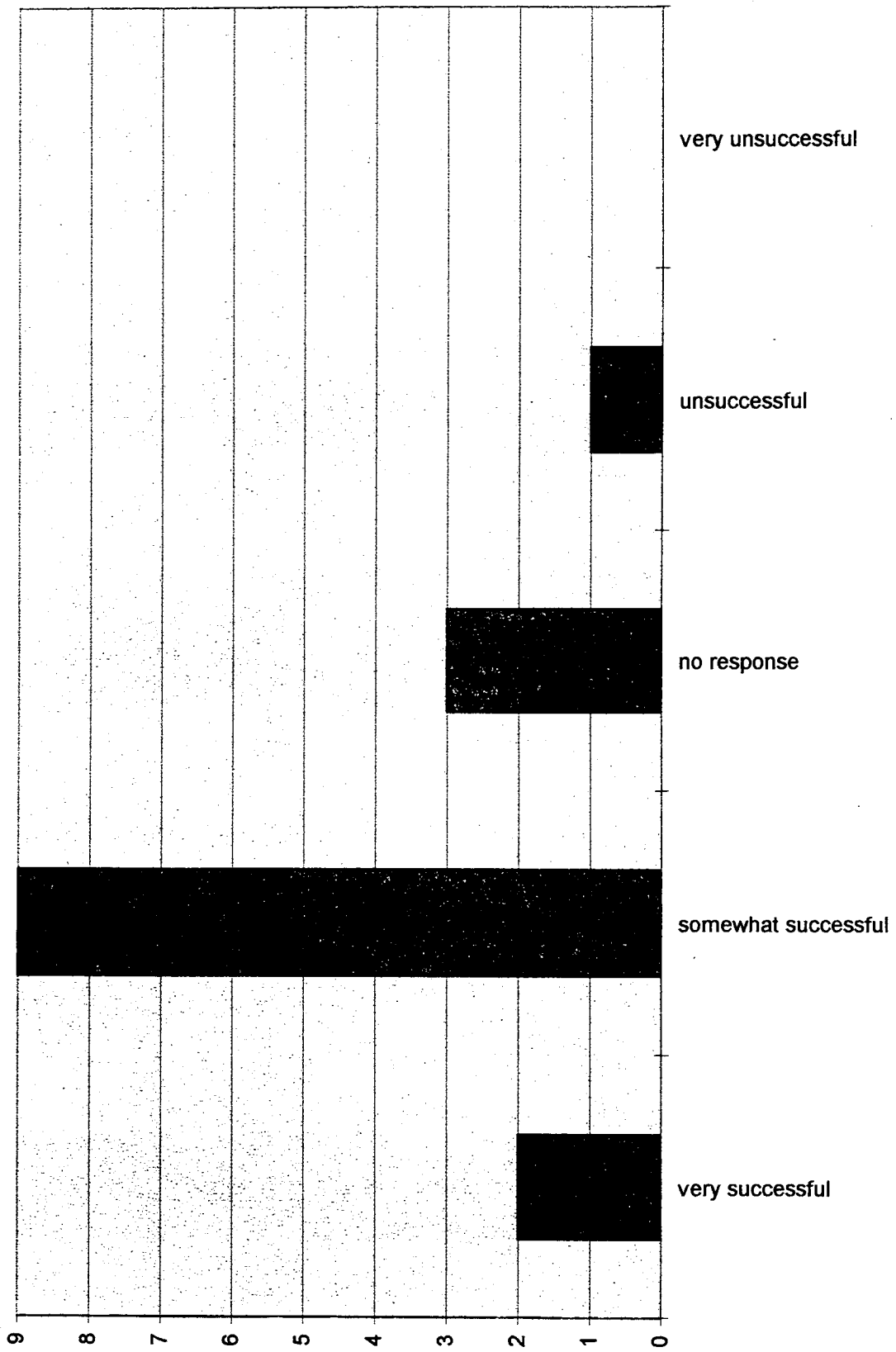
Successful Placements

Chart 3 shows the ranges of successful and unsuccessful foster care placements in the foster families according to the respondent foster parent. Seventy-three percent (73%) reported that their foster care placements were somewhat successful or very successful. Twenty percent (20%) of the foster parents were undecided about whether their foster care placements had been successful. Six percent (6%) of the foster parents reported that they disagreed with the statement that their foster care placements were successful.

Chart 3

N=15

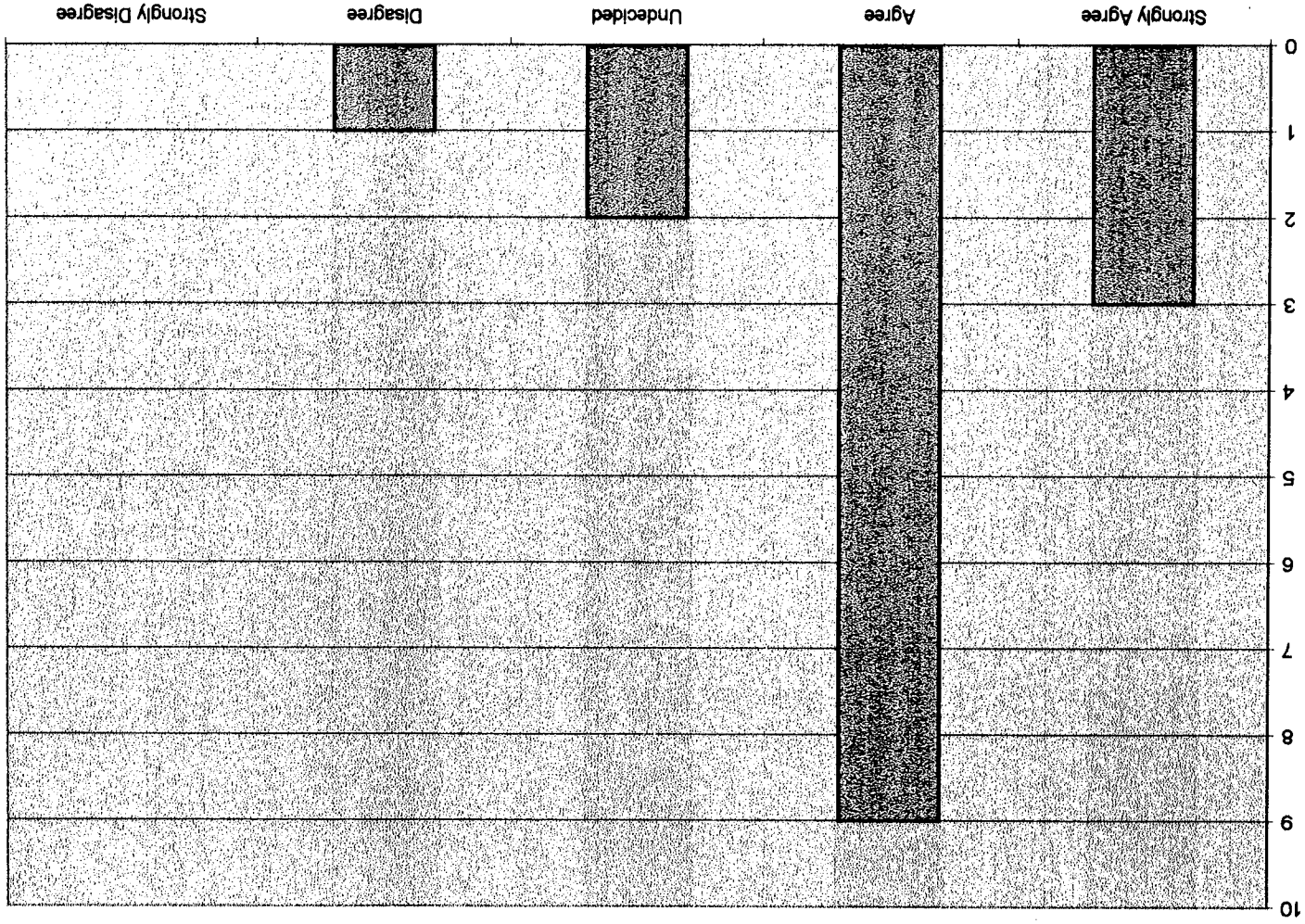
Overall Successfulness of Placements



Foster care experiences

Chart 4 maps out the overall foster parent experiences as reported by foster parents to question number nine of the survey. Again results show that foster care experiences were positive. Eighty percent (80%) of the foster parents agreed that taking foster children into their homes had been a positive experience. Six percent (6%) of the foster parents disagreed that foster care had been a positive experience, and fourteen percent (14%) of foster parents were undecided about their experiences in foster care.

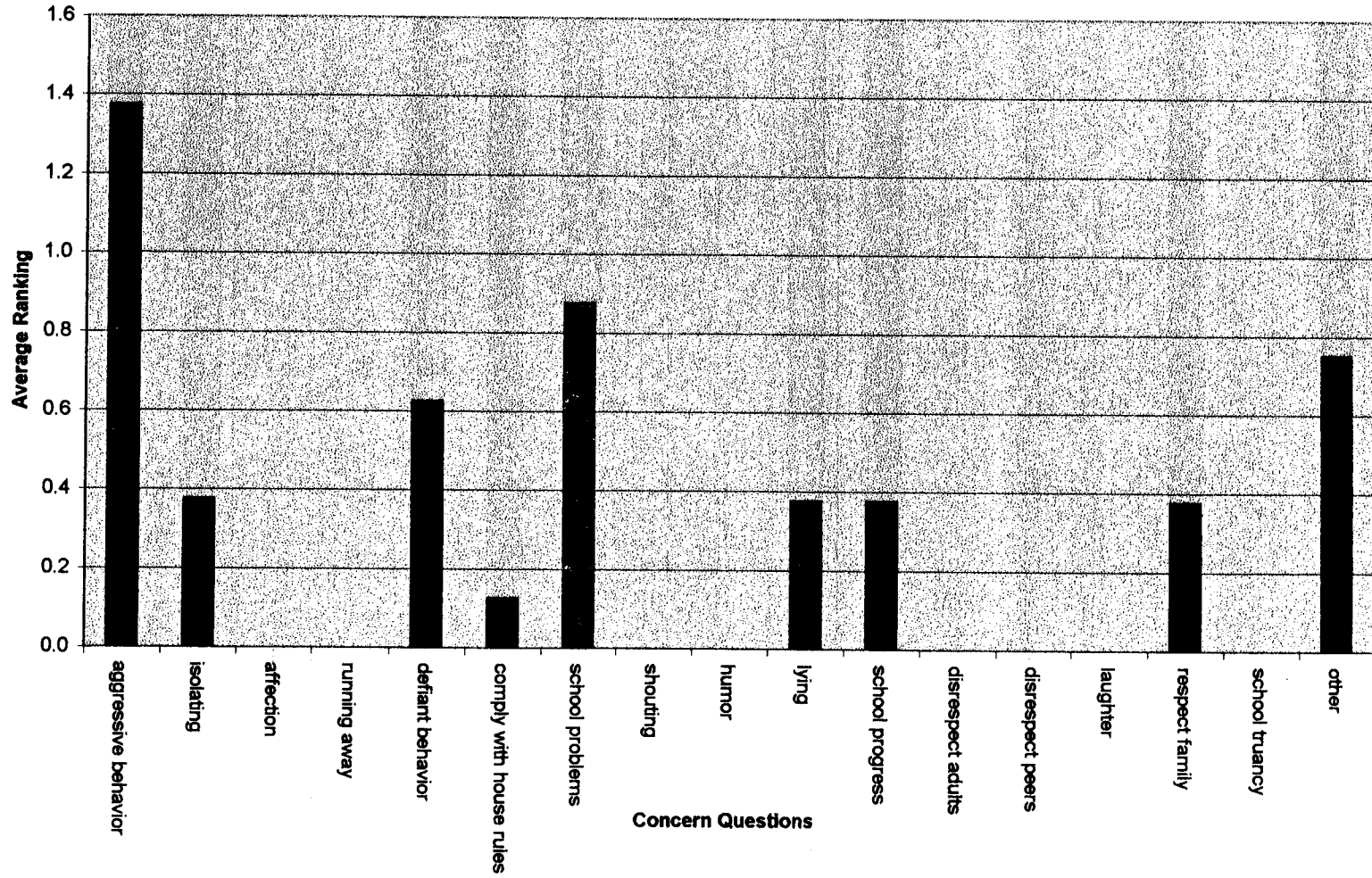
Overall Foster Parent Experience As Positive
N = 15



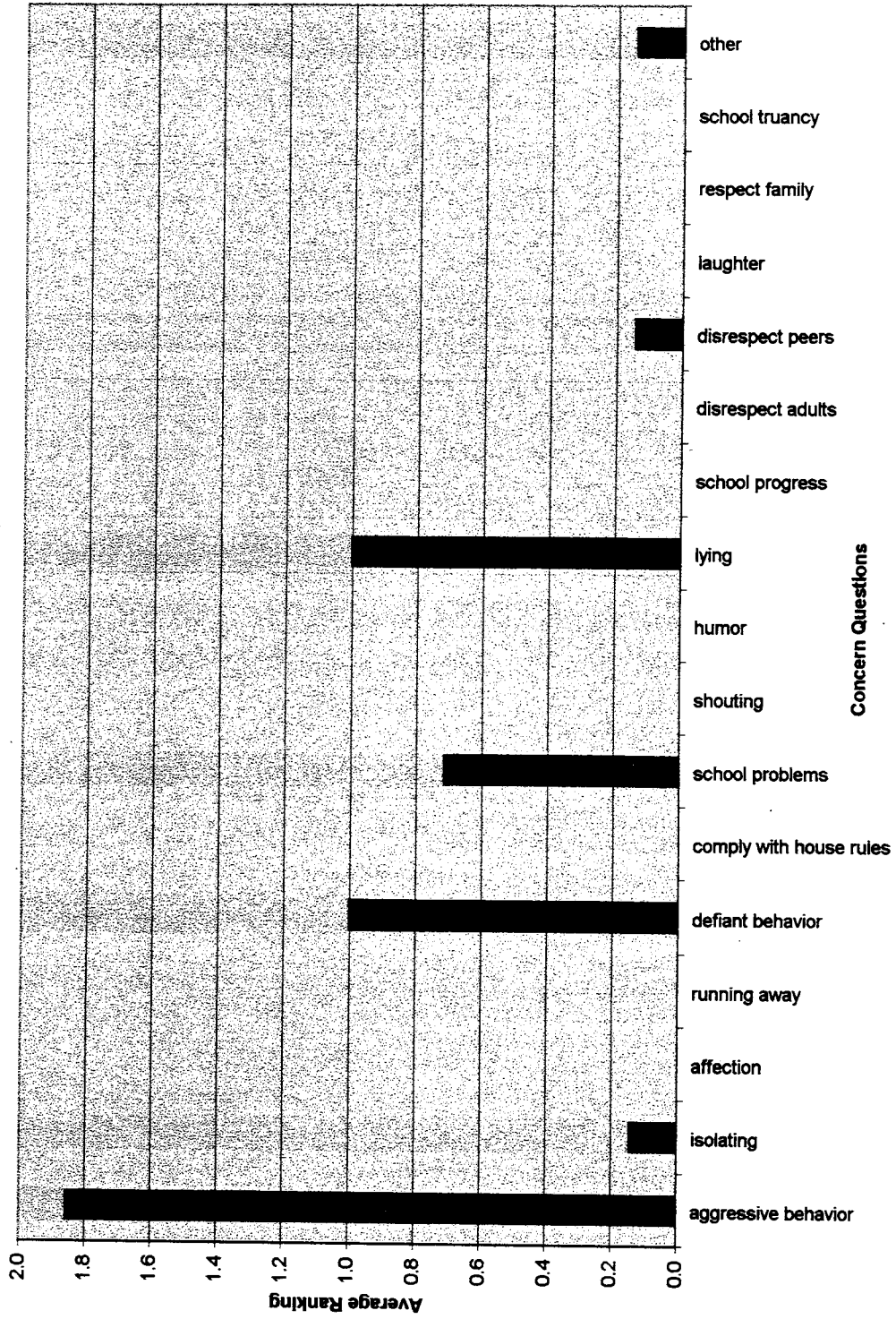
Foster parents were asked to identify the behaviors and attributes they saw in their foster children. They were asked to rank the three behavioral issues of most significant concern to them in the order of highest concern. There were some differences in the reported foster children's behavioral issues depending on the length of time foster parents had provided foster care. Distinguishing between foster parents who have provided foster care for under five years versus over five years has been used to explore differences between less seasoned and more seasoned foster homes, in terms of their experiences and views of caring for foster children. Charts 5 and 6 outline these differences through identifying concerns reported by foster parents providing foster care for under 5 years, and foster parents providing foster care for 5 years or more. The average ranking shown is the weighted score of the foster parents' identified concerns. The maximum ranking possible is 3.0.

Foster parents caring for foster children under 5 years identified aggressive behaviors, school problems, and defiance as the most significant behavioral issues, respectively. Foster parents caring for foster children for over 5 years identified aggressive behaviors, lying, and defiance as most the significant behavioral issues, respectively.

**Concerns Expressed By Foster Parents With Under 5 Years Experience
As Foster Parents
N = 8**



**Concerns Expressed By Foster Parents With 5 Years and Over Experience
As Foster Parents
N = 7**

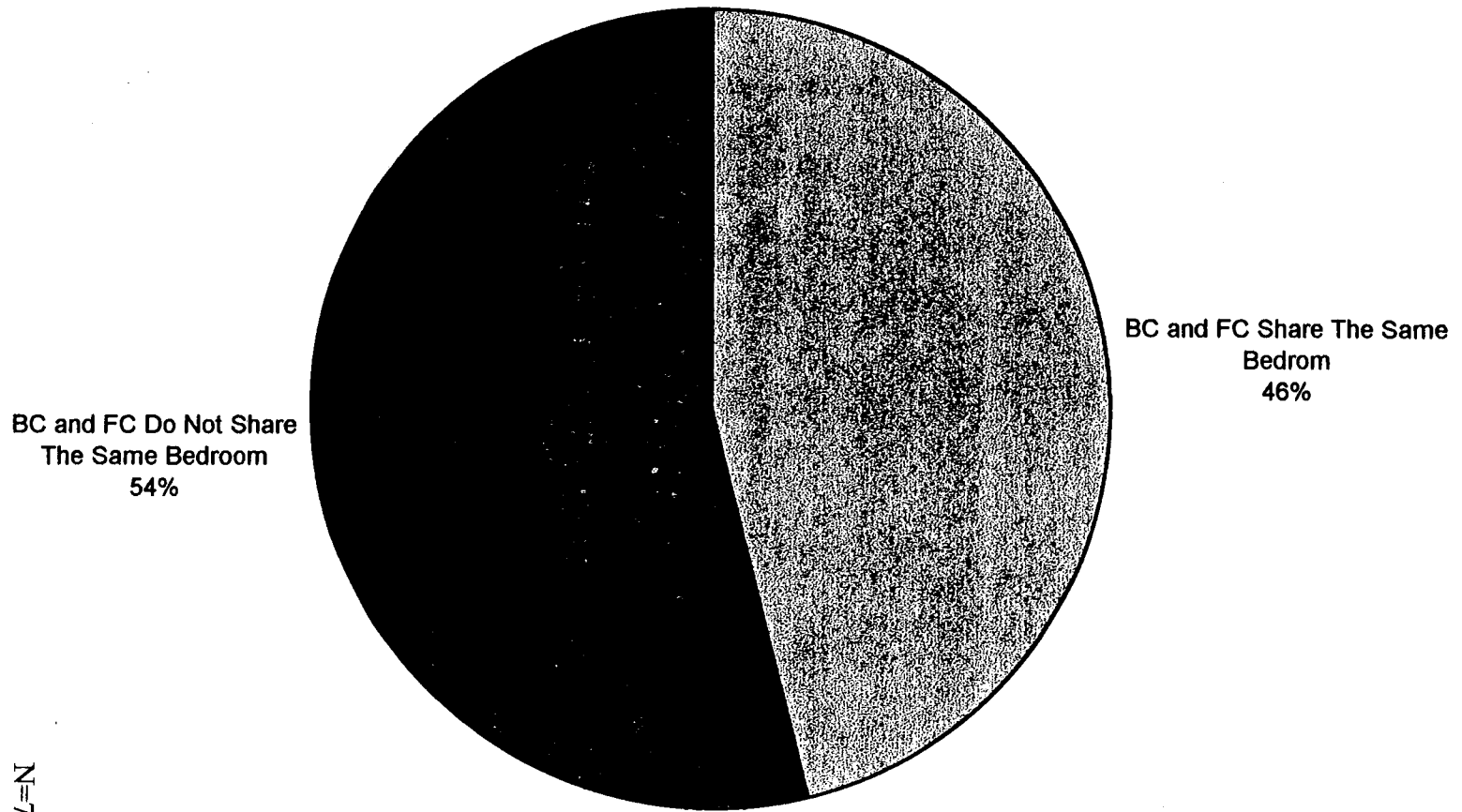


Sharing the same bedroom

Pie chart 7 identifies that fifty-four percent (54%) of biological children (BC) and foster children (FC) did not share the same bedroom. Forty-six percent (46%) of biological children and foster children did share the same bedroom.

Bedroom Arrangements

Chart 7



N=75

Biological Children's Input Regarding Foster Child Placements

According to the literature, input from all family members seems to play an important role in the satisfaction of the foster care experience. There is a strong correlation between biological children providing input in the decisions families make about taking foster children into their homes, and their acceptance of foster children, once they become a part of their family. Chart 8 shows the biological children's input in taking foster children. Of the thirteen households reporting, twelve households responded that their biological children had input into the decision to care for foster children, and one household responded that the biological children had very little input. Two households did not respond, due to having no biological children living in their home.

Biological Children's Input In Taking In The Foster Children

Chart 8

N=13

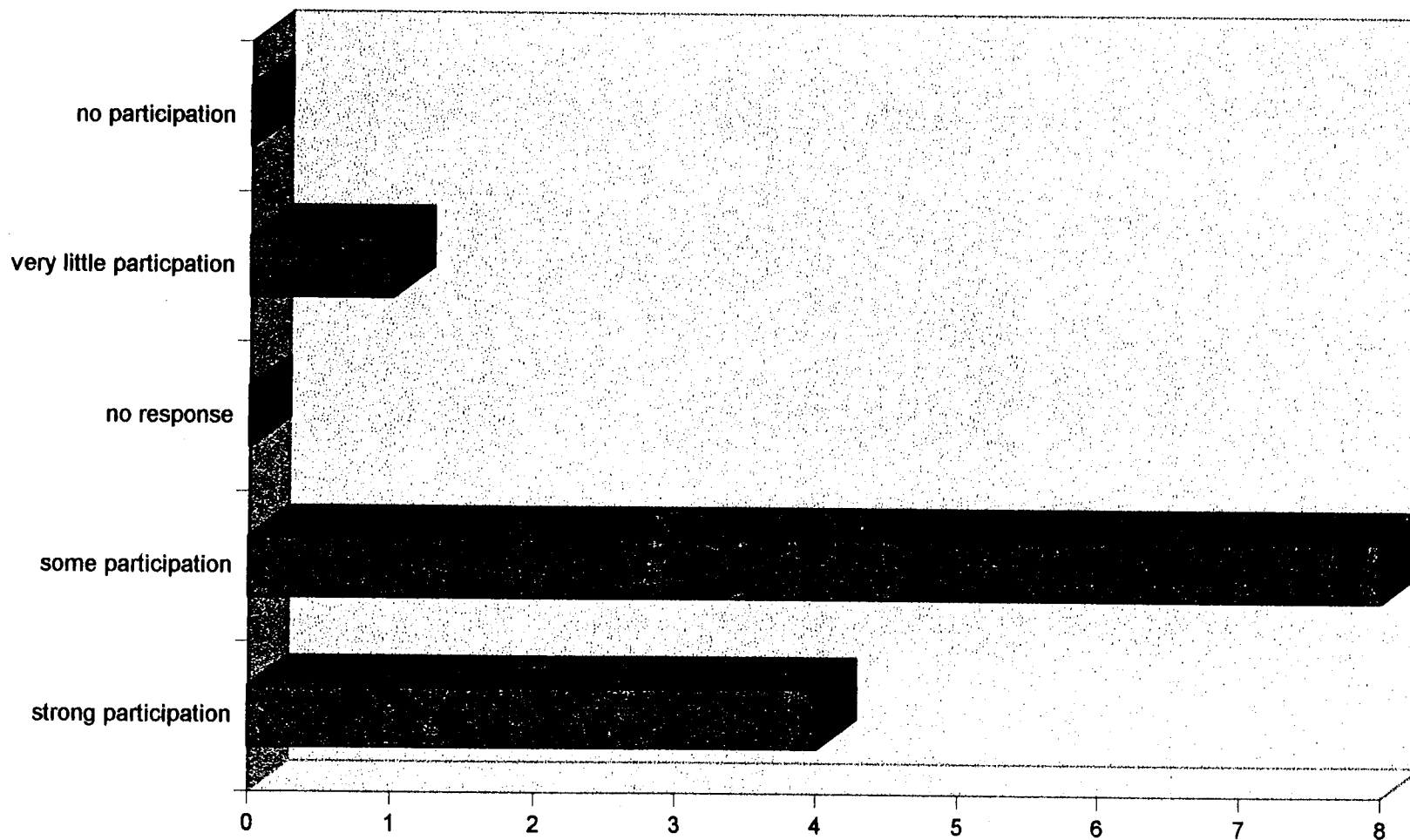
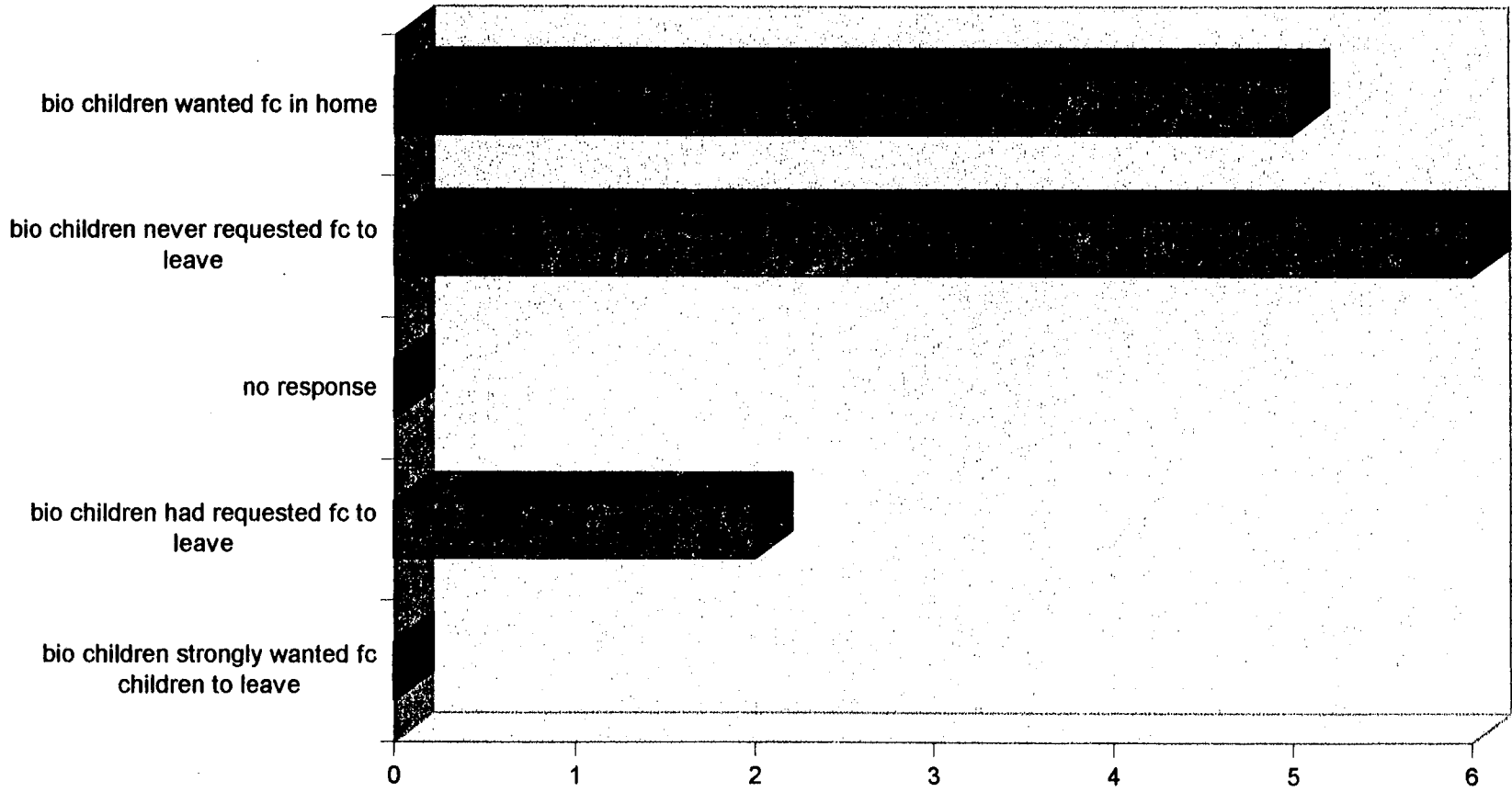


Chart 9 shows the number of biological children who requested that the foster children leave their home. Eighty percent (80%) of the households reported that their biological children provided input in the decisions about caring for foster children. Seventy-three percent (73%) of households disagreed that biological children requested foster children leave their home. One household reported that their biological children provided “very little” input in the decision to take foster children, and thirteen percent (13%) reported that their biological children requested foster children to leave their home.

Biological Children Requesting That Foster Children Leave The Home

Chart 9



N=13

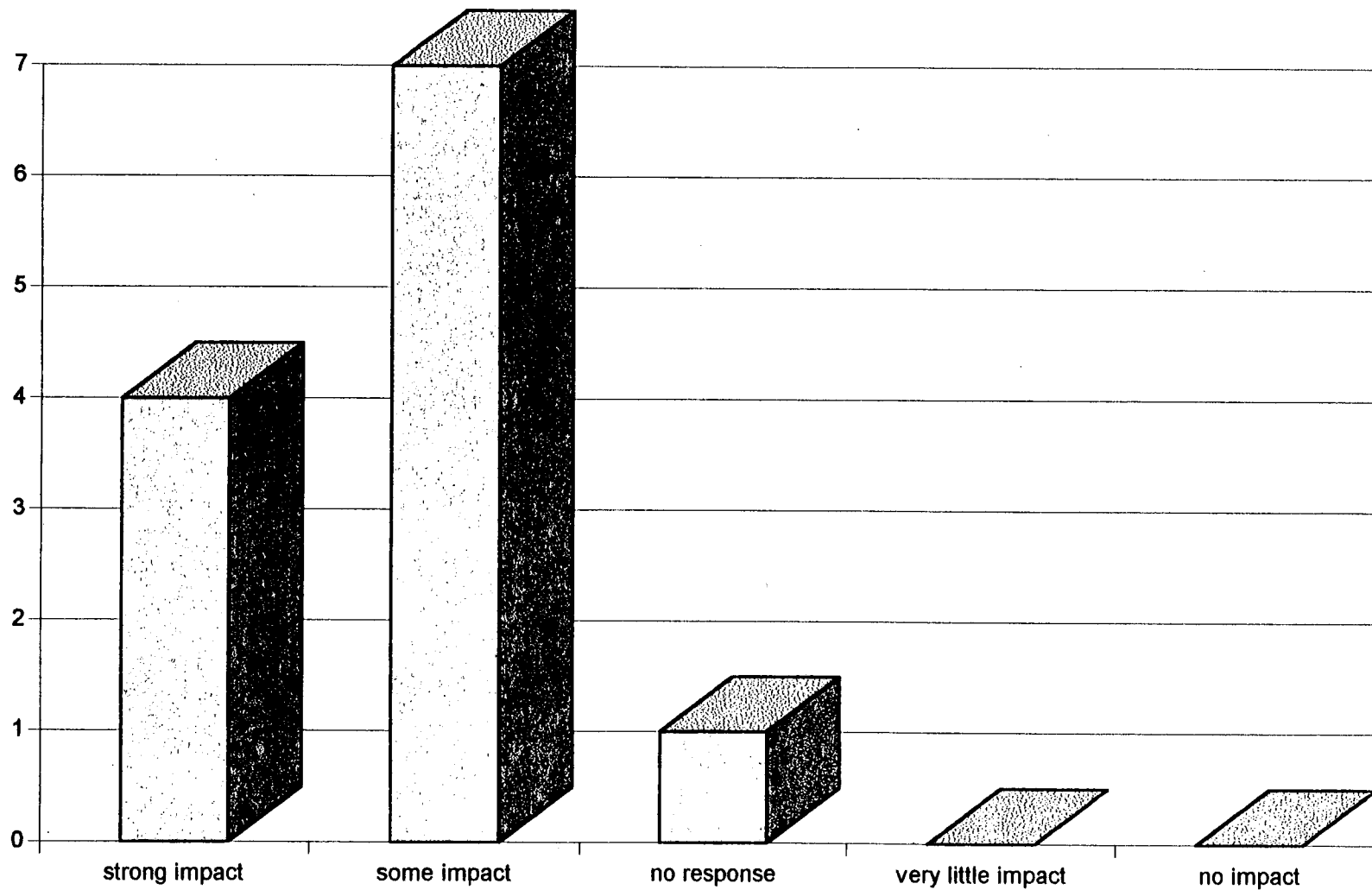
Foster Children's Influence on Biological Children

Chart 10 indicates that foster parents feel that their biological children have a positive impact on the foster children cared for in their homes. In fact, 100% of the respondents reported that there was a positive interaction by their biological children towards the foster children, and the foster children gained something from these relationships. One respondent made no response to the question.

Did Biological Children Have Positive Impact On Foster Children?

Chart 10

N=12

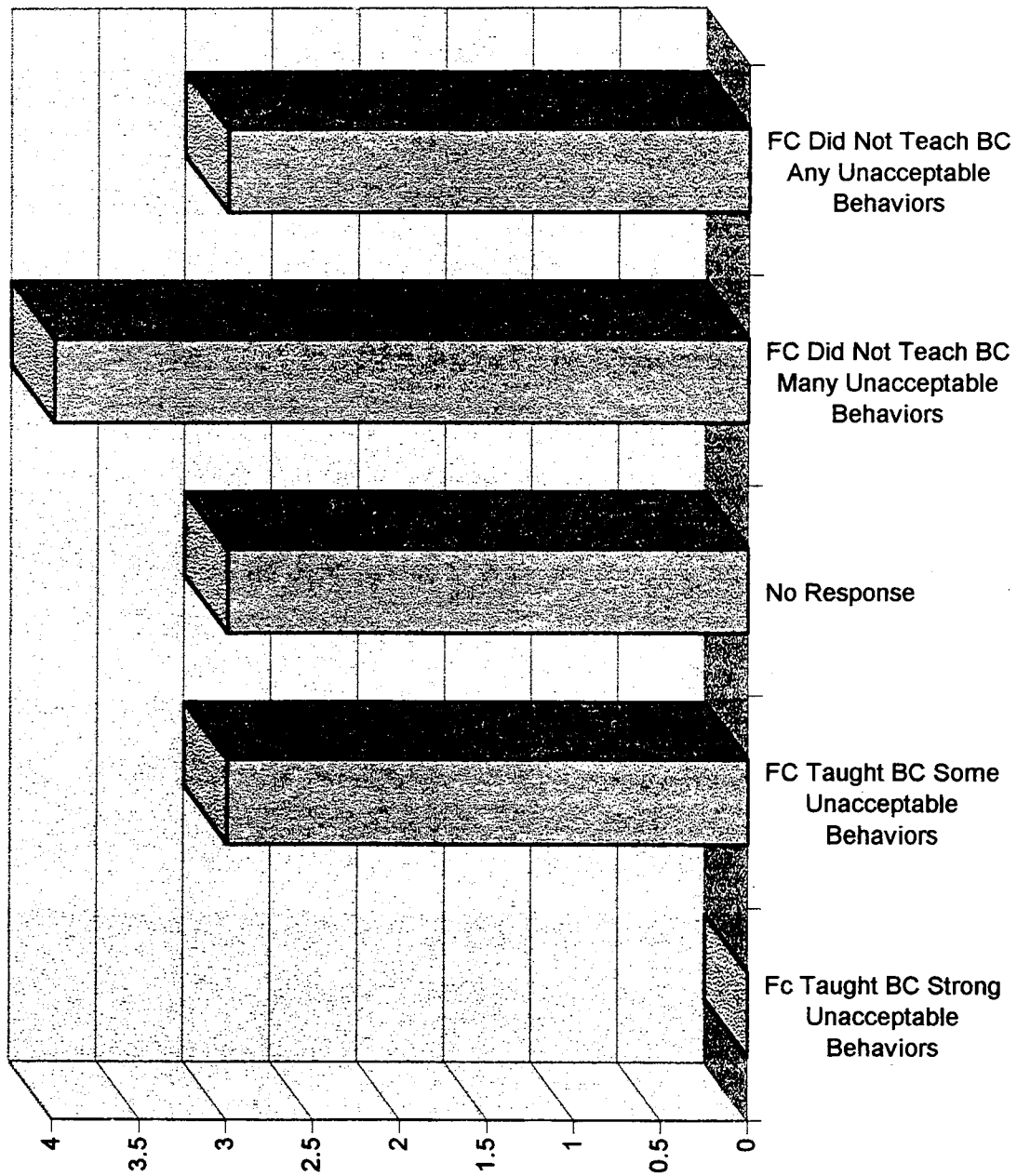


The majority of foster parent responses showed that foster children have had a positive impact on their biological children. Chart 11 shows that forty-three percent (43%) of the household reported that foster children did not teach their biological children unacceptable behaviors, while twenty percent (20%) of the households reported that foster children taught their biological children unacceptable behaviors. Twenty percent (20%) of the households provided no response.

Chart 11

N=13

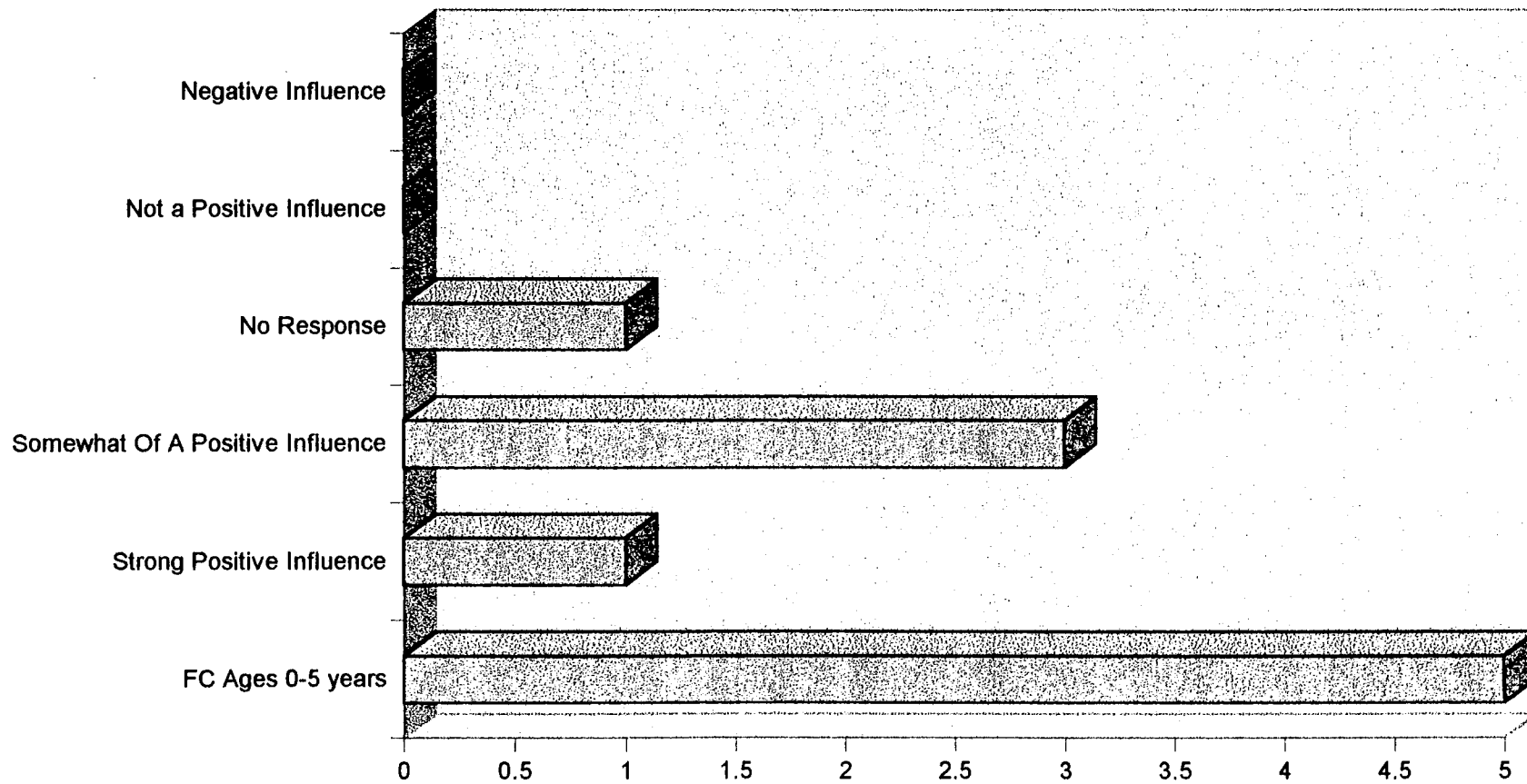
Did Foster Children Teach Biological Children Unacceptable Behaviors?



Charts 12, 13, 14, and 15 reviewed the influences of foster children's behaviors by age groupings (age groupings were 0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, and 16-18 years). The numbers on the bottom of the charts indicate the number of households that worked with foster children in the identified age category. Foster parents working with children from all four age groupings have identified foster children as having positive impacts on the biological children. It is noteworthy to point out that there were no negative behaviors from foster children impacting biological children in the foster children age groups of 0-5 years, 6-10 years, and 16-18 years. There was, however, one household that identified that foster children in the 11-15 year age group did "not a positive impact" on their biological children.

Foster Children 0-5 Positive Influence on Biological Children

Chart 12



N=5

Foster Children 6-10 Positive Influence On Biological Children
N = 6

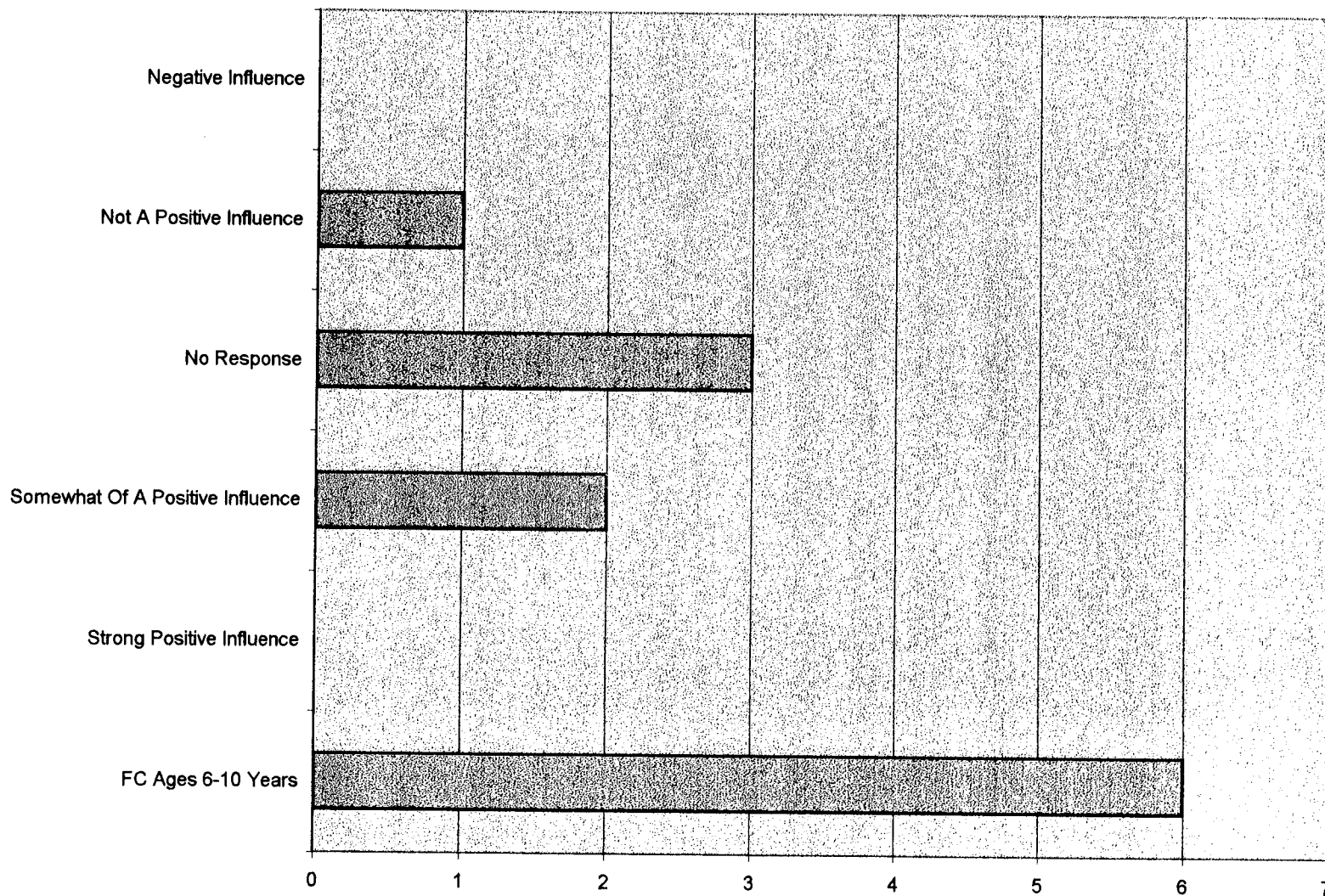
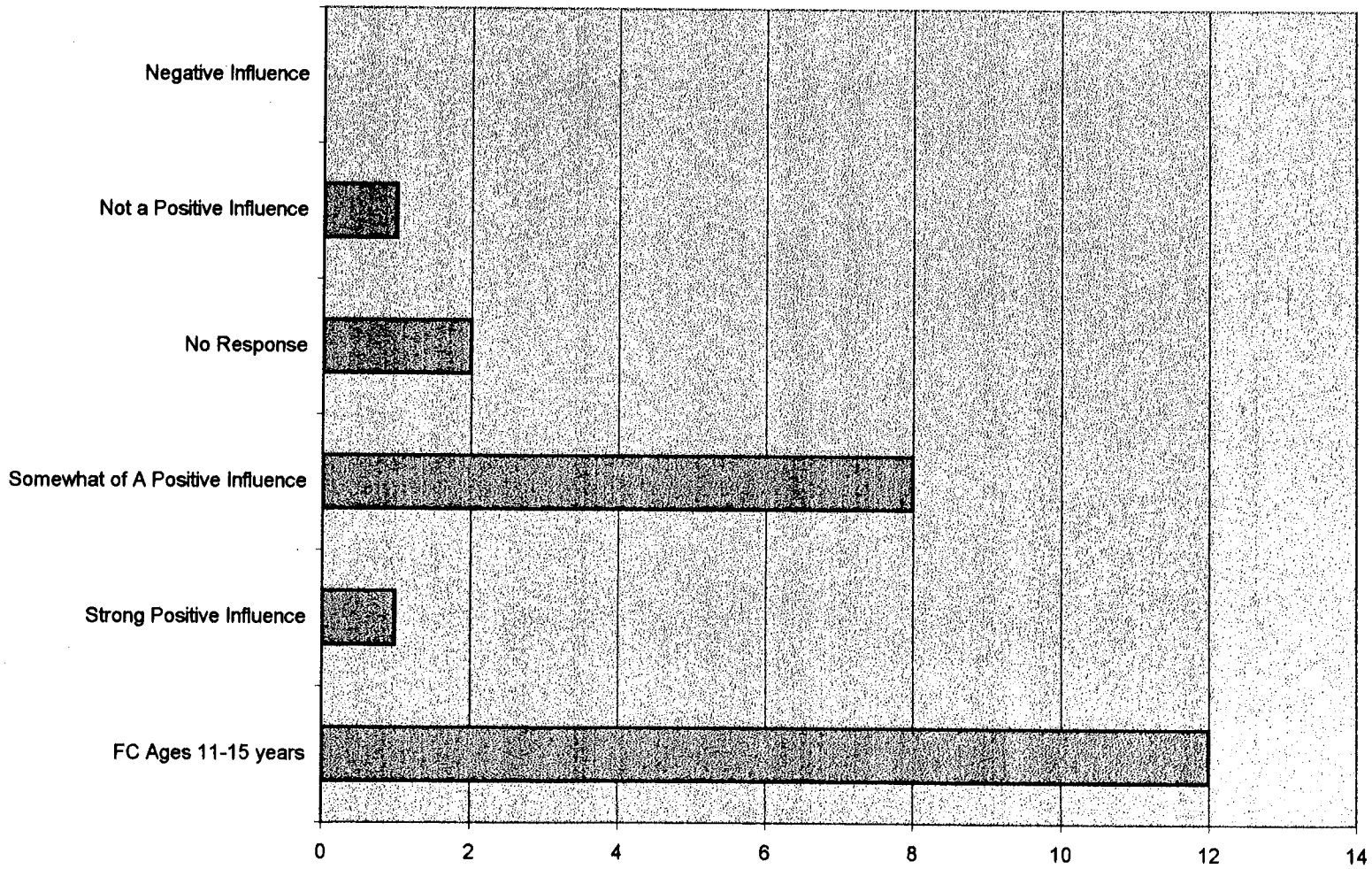


Chart 13

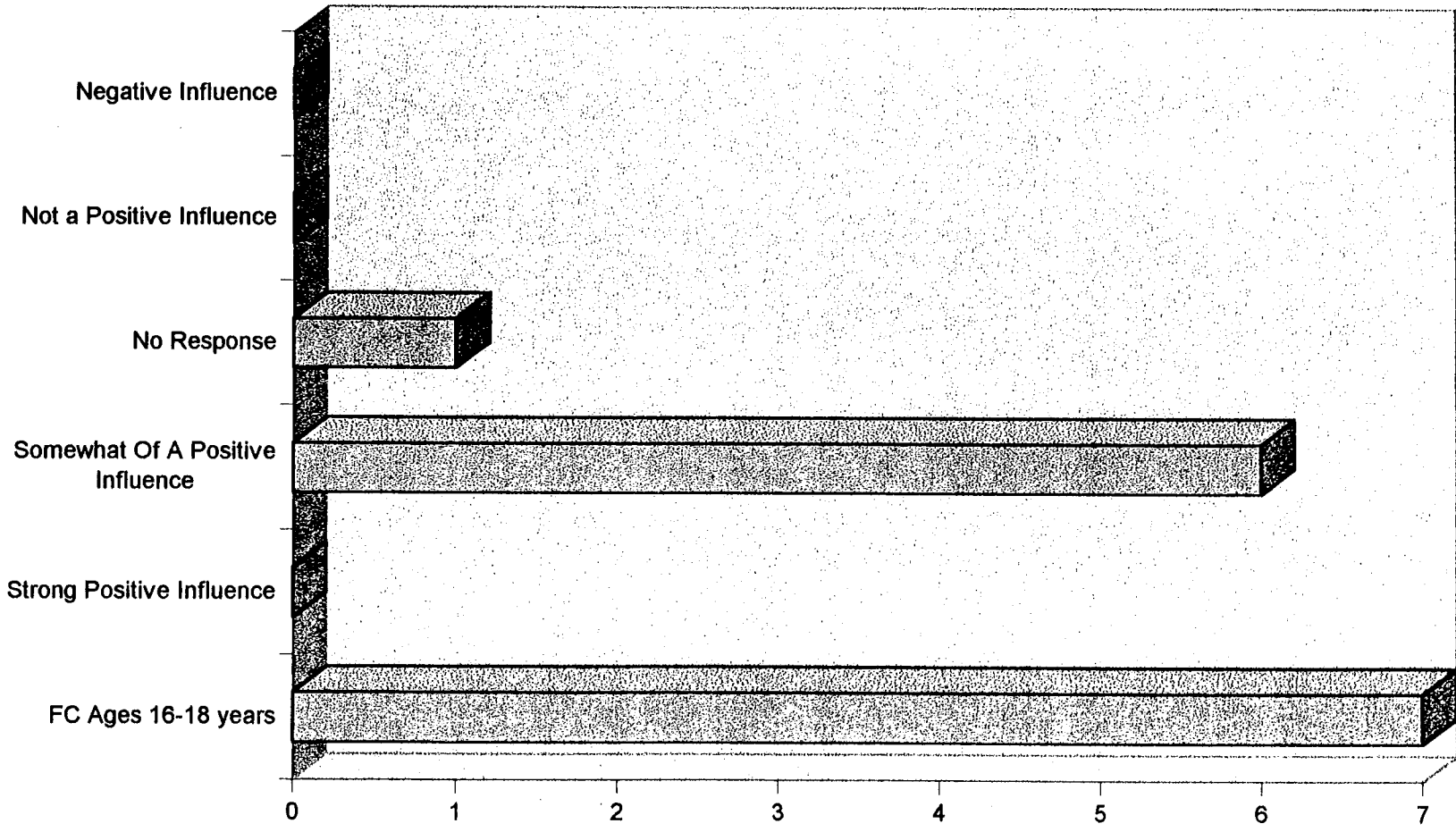
Foster Children 11-15 Positive Influence on Biological Children
N = 12



Foster Children 16-18 Positive Influence on Biological Children

Chart 15

N=7



Responses to open-ended Questions

Foster parents reported recurring themes in response to the open-ended questions on the survey. Many reported similar feelings, experiences, and advice. The discussion below identifies the themes and answers from each of the four open-ended questions.

The first question asked respondents to report on their perception of key elements for successful placements of foster children. Thirteen respondents answered this question. There were three primary themes, with a secondary one noted. Clear and consistent boundaries being set by the foster parents at the beginning of the placement was reported necessary by almost all respondents. Foster parents reported that showing affection and listening to the foster children were also always necessary, as was treating the foster child as part of the family, and making them feel welcome in the home. Some of the respondents said that support from the social worker was essential. They said they needed to feel that there were resources for them to depend on, and without the social worker's support and availability problematic behaviors from the foster children were difficult to deal with. One foster parent felt that a necessary element for a successful placement is that thorough background information about the foster child be provided to the foster parents prior to placement.

The second question asked respondents to report on their perception of key elements in problematic placements of foster children. Twelve respondents answered this question, and there were three primary themes. Most foster parents reported that

defiance by the foster child is problematic and the most significant factor. Several reported that a minimal support system made placements very difficult, specifically lack of support from social workers. Other respondents identified uncooperative biological parents of the foster children, negative peer interaction, and potential harm to biological children. One respondent reported the most problematic element is drug use by the foster child.

The third question asked foster parents to look back and discuss what they would do differently in support of their biological children. All fifteen respondents answered this question, and there were five dominant themes. Most reported that they would spend more time with their biological children alone. They would utilize respite for the foster children more often, and pay attention to their own children more closely. They would reinforce love and security for their biological children. Several foster parents said they would give their biological children more “full communication.” They would talk with them more prior to the foster care placement, and discuss ongoing problems related to foster care. One foster parent stated that there would be more reassurance to the biological children that it is not their fault if a foster child does not work out in their home. Three foster parents reported that they would change nothing, and that the foster children in the home had positively influenced their biological children.

The final open-ended question asked for any additional comments in regards to foster children and biological children relationships. Again, there were several

themes throughout the surveys, and all fifteen respondents commented on this question. Some foster parents reported that it is difficult to deal with biological children and foster children developing attractions to each other. This data revealed that they would recommend foster children be the same gender as their biological children, and yet most families had children of both genders. Several reported that their extended family was a great source of added support in dealing with child issues within the family, and the added responsibilities. Also another theme reported by more than one respondent was that the biological children have become more mature and compassionate through the foster care experience, and the family has used negative experiences to learn and grow as a cohesive family system. One respondent said that follow up by the social worker and foster child post placement is very important, especially to the biological children who have formed attachments to the foster child. After a foster child integrates into the family system, the biological children think of them as siblings, and therefore ongoing communication with the foster child, especially after the foster child leaves the home, remains very important to the biological siblings in the home.

CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The findings indicate that the foster care experience has a positive impact on the family system, as perceived by fifteen foster family respondents from a rural Minnesota county. Foster homes over the past two years have served an average of 8.7 foster children. Foster care had been provided for an average of 5.5 years. The overall responses from the respondent foster parents reported positively about foster children in their homes. They consistently reported that foster care has had a positive impact on their family system, and more specifically on their biological children. These findings are consistent with the literature review.

Areas of strengths identified by foster parents

Throughout the responses of the questionnaire two recurring themes surfaced. The first theme was the positive impact social worker involvement has on the foster care intervention. The second theme was that foster care in general had been a positive experience for foster families. The families identified foster children's impact on the family system as being a generally positive dynamic.

Areas of concerns identified by foster parents

There were several areas of concerns that foster parents identified in terms of problematic behaviors of foster children. These concerns included aggressive behavior, defiant behavior, school problems, and lying. Foster parents reported that they were able to better deal with these issues with social worker support, and support from extended family members. Also, respite time out was identified as a useful technique in addressing issues foster children brought into the family system. Several foster parents reported concerns about their foster children and biological children developing attractions towards each other. It is reasonable to assume that they would prefer same gender placements due to these issues. Further research in this area is necessary, however, because there were no clear correlations from the respondents to support this, and the foster parents that identified the concerns did not clearly indicate they would prefer or request only same gender placements.

As identified above, in the open-ended survey questions there was strong agreement that social worker support is essential to help foster children adjust to the foster family system. Social worker support is also necessary for the foster family in adjusting to the foster children's needs and integration into the family system. Foster families felt that without social worker support behavioral issues would be difficult to deal with, and the placement of the child should be reconsidered.

Biological Children and Foster Children

There was significant correlation between biological children providing input in the decision about taking foster placements, and their satisfaction with the foster care experience. Most foster care respondents reported that their biological children had a voice in foster placement decisions, and as a result the biological children did not request that foster children be removed from the home. There was also a correlation between those where the biological child did not provide input, and their request that the foster child leave the home.

The majority of respondents reported that foster children did not teach their biological children unacceptable behaviors, and in fact had positive influence on their biological children. There were no foster parents that reported that foster children had a “negative impact” on their biological children. Noteworthy to point out, however, is that there was one respondent with foster children who were 11-15 years old that said foster children did “not have a positive influence” on their biological children. The only age group that accrued these responses were foster children 11-15 years old. This brings up a question about the attributes this age group may possess that is problematic. For example, is there a gender mixture, or just a time of adolescence.

There were no significant correlations between satisfaction of the foster care experience and the number of biological children in the home. There were also no significant correlations between placement satisfaction and bedroom arrangement between foster children and biological children.

Conclusion

It is evident that most of the foster parents that participated in this study believe that allowing foster children to become a part of their family is worthwhile. They believe that foster care has had a positive impact on their family system.

Regardless of number of years taking care of foster children, aggression and defiance appears to be of most significant concern for foster parents. It is likely that foster parents with more than 5 years experience have learned the skills necessary to work with the school systems, and secure the resources necessary to deal effectively with school problems, so that it becomes less concern to them.

There were no significant correlations between foster care placement satisfaction and the bedroom arrangements.

There was a significant correlation between initial input provided by biological children regarding foster child placements, and their satisfaction with foster children living in their home. There was also a significant correlation between those children that provided "very little" input into the family decision

about taking foster children, and their requests that foster children leave their home. Biological children's input appears to be important to the successful impact foster care has on the family system.

Strengths and Limitations to the Study

Strengths of this research study include the following: 1) There is research now in the area of how the foster care intervention impacts the family system, as perceived by the foster parents; 2) The results begin to give some information regarding the elements in successful placements of foster children in family settings; 3) The study begins to address what types of children are a match for what types of families; 4) There is retest availability of the survey, as other foster care agencies can use the surveys to further research this subject in other geographic areas; 5) Foster care providers were offered an opportunity to comment on open-ended questions.

The following limitations to the study are noted: 1) The surveys were limited to a rural Minnesota county, and generalizability is difficult beyond this county; 2) There was no second mailing to encourage respondents; 3) There was a lack of interviewer involvement to explain the questions on the survey; 4) Foster parents may have reported what they thought the researcher wanted to hear; 5) Participation in the study was voluntary, and the results do not represent those who chose not to be involved; 6) There was no way of knowing the views of foster parents that are no longer providing foster care; 7) Due to a relatively small population size, and the need

to guard for anonymity, attitude differences between county foster families, and therapeutic foster families were not studied.

Implications for Social Work Practice

This study addressed the questions of how foster children affect the family system. It begins to develop some groundwork guidelines for child placement, and begins to not only focus on matching the foster child to the family, but the family to the foster child. Social workers play a key role in placements of foster children. Of basic importance to the practice of social work is the preservation, enhancement, and empowerment of foster family. Social workers need to be aware of and knowledgeable about the impact foster care has on the family system. Through this study, one could conclude that foster parents want social workers to take them seriously, respect the difficult job they do, and be supportive of them. Good communication, especially during problematic times, appears to be key expectations held by foster parents. Effective service delivery to children is largely dependent on the quality of service provided by the foster care workers. Social workers in foster care practice must strive to meet the needs of the clients who include not only foster children, but also the foster family as a whole working with these children.

Implication for Future Research

Future research could look at a larger number of foster family systems and determine additional correlations between family type and foster children. It could

also look at other areas, and consider the environment in which the family is living. For example, is there a difference in foster family functioning and perceptions between those families in rural areas and urban areas? Research could also address more detailed questions about the family system, and study the perceptions of specific family members, for example points of view of the biological children.

Another area for future research is a qualitative analysis interviewing one foster family, including their biological children, regarding their foster care experiences is. It is evident through this research that foster parents have a lot to say and many opinions regarding what makes foster care a positive intervention for both the foster child, and the foster family as a whole. Much could be learned from detailed descriptions from one family.

Foster care is an important intervention for children in need of a stable family. There are many areas to look at in the use of the foster care intervention. The family system is one area that is changed and molded through the intervention of foster care. This research has shown evidence that overall, families believe the change has a positive impact on their family system, and foster children, for the most part, add positive dynamics to the foster family.

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APPENDIX A

Survey

PARENT SURVEY

Background information:

1. Number of years taking care of **foster** children _____

2. Number of total **foster** children served in the home
in last two years _____

3. Number of **foster** children currently in the home _____

4. Ages of **foster** children served
(place number of children for each age group)

_____	0-5 years
_____	6-10 years
_____	11-15 years
_____	16-18 years

5. Check the gender of all **foster** children served
in the home. **Male** _____ **Female** _____ **Both** _____

6. Number of **biological** children currently living
in your home (8years-18years) _____

7. Ages of all **biological** children
(place number of children for each age group)

_____	0-5 years
_____	6-10 years
_____	11-15 years
_____	16-18 years

8. Gender of all **biological** children(8-18) **Male** _____ **Female** _____ **Both** _____

BESIDE EACH OF THE STATEMENTS PRESENTED BELOW, PLEASE CIRCLE whether you strongly agree(SA), agree(A), are undecided(U), disagree(D), or strongly disagree(SD).

	-Strongly Agree	-Agree	-Un- decided	-Dis- agree	-Strongly Disagree
	SA	A	U	D	SD
9. Overall, taking care of foster children has been a positive experience					
10. Most foster children served were successful placements	SA	A	U	D	SD
11. Foster children had a positive impact on my biological children	SA	A	U	D	SD
12. Foster children had behavioral issues of significant concern	SA	A	U	D	SD
13. Foster children taught my biological children unacceptable behaviors	SA	A	U	D	SD
14. Foster children requested to leave my home more than once	SA	A	U	D	SD
15. My biological children had a positive impact on foster children	SA	A	U	D	SD
16. My biological children have behavioral issues of significant concern	SA	A	U	D	SD
17. My biological children were happy to see the foster children leave	SA	A	U	D	SD
18. My biological children felt sadness when the foster children left	SA	A	U	D	SD
19. My biological children had input in taking in the foster children	SA	A	U	D	SD
20. My biological children requested that the foster children leave the home	SA	A	U	D	SD

BESIDE EACH OF THE STATEMENTS PRESENTED BELOW, PLEASE CIRCLE whether they are true(T), false(F), OR other(O). IF YOU RESPOND OTHER, PLEASE WRITE IN YOUR ANSWER.

21. My biological children and foster children attend the same school T F O _____

22. Biological children and foster children shared the same bedroom T F O _____

23. Biological children and foster children play well together most of the time T F O _____

24. Foster children younger than my biological children is a criterion I have employed for placements in my home T F O _____

25. Biological children took foster children to social activities outside of the house T F O _____

26. Please check all the behaviors or attributes the foster children exhibited while living in your home. Rate the three behaviors that were of the most significant concern (1=the highest concern).

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. _____ aggressive behavior | i. _____ humor |
| b. _____ isolating | j. _____ lying |
| c. _____ affection | k. _____ school progress |
| d. _____ running away | l. _____ disrespect to adults |
| e. _____ defiant behavior | m. _____ disrespect to peers |
| f. _____ compliance with house rules | n. _____ laughter |
| g. _____ school problems | o. _____ respect for the family |
| h. _____ shouting | p. _____ truancy from school |
| q. _____ other _____ | |

**PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOW QUESTIONS, IF YOU NEED MORE ROOM
ATTACH A SHEET OF PAPER**

27. In your opinion, what are key element for successful placements of foster children in your home?

28. What are the key elements for problematic placements of foster children in your home?

29. Looking back, what would you do differently in support of your biological children?

30. Do you have any additional comment in regards to foster children and biological children relationships?

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