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Development and validation of a self-assessment tool to assess resource parents' personal attributes, knowledge, attitudes & behaviors around caring for teens (RPSAC-T): an exploratory study

Angelique Day[a], Alanna Feltner[a], Cheryl Somers [b], Lori Vanderwill [a], Kim Stevens[c], Tamarie Willis[d], Kris Henneman[e], Sue Cohick[e], Debra Patterson[d], and Stella Resko[d]

[a]School of Social Work, University of Washington Seattle, Seattle, WA, USA; [b]College of Education, Wayne State University, Michigan, Detroit, USA; [c]North American Council on Adoptable Children, St. Paul, MN, USA; [d]School of Social Work, Wayne State University, Michigan, Detroit, USA; [e]Spaulding for Children, Southfield, MI, USA

ABSTRACT

The current study develops and evaluates the psychometric properties of a tool to assess resource parents' (the collective term used to refer to kinship/foster/adoptive parents) knowledge, perceptions, attitudes, and skills to care for teens placed in their homes.

After first engaging 34 resource parents informally for feedback on initial item creation and selection, the internal consistency and reliability of the Resource Parent Self-Assessment on Caregiving for Teens (RPSAC-T) was examined across two samples of resource parents. including an initial validation (n = 170) sample, and cross-validation (n = 329) sample. This three-stage process revealed 17 characteristics and 10 competencies retained for a total of 27 constructs measured by 161 items. The RPSAC-T tool shows promise as a meaningful, potentially reliable, and valid measure.

Introduction

As of September 2019, the Children's Bureau reported that 128,381 youth between the ages of 12–18 resided in foster care (Children's Bureau, 2019). Teens comprise 28% of the foster care population and face unique challenges and placement concerns. These concerns include disproportionate rates of placement instability and placement in group homes as compared to their younger peers in care (Children's Bureau, 2019; Freundlich & Avery, 2005; Oosterman, Schuengel, Slot, Bullens, & Doreleihers, 2007). While serving as a resource parent (the collective term used to refer to kinship/foster/adoptive parents) for a child of any age can prove difficult, fostering teens can be particularly challenging. Teens in foster care face the typical challenges

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associated with teenage development as well as instability during a developmental period when stability is essential to mental and emotional wellbeing (Backes & Bonnie, 2019). These factors can lead to an increase in internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Greeson et al., 2011), which can be difficult for foster parents to manage (Rock, Michelson, Thomson, & Day, 2015). It is essential that resource parents are equipped with the skills and knowledge to support teens in their care.

Despite the need for prepared resource parents, there is little insight as to which specific characteristics, attitudes, and skill-based competencies lead to successful resource parenting of teens. Limited information also exists regarding how to effectively measure those factors among prospective and current resource parents. Having a better understanding of the characteristics, attitudes, and skill-based competencies of successful resource parents for teens will help in tailoring effective trainings for resource parents of teens. The current study develops and evaluates the psychometric properties of a tool to assess resource parents' knowledge, perceptions, attitudes, and skills to care for teens placed in their homes. This tool, titled the Resource Parent Self-Assessment of Caring for Teens (RPSAC-T), addresses the absence of a validated measure for those who foster teens. This manuscript describes the development of the RPSAC-T and the methodology used to evaluate its psychometric properties.

Background

Previous approaches to measurement and assessment with resource parents

Previous researchers have evaluated effective resource parent characteristics and competencies using a variety of measurement tools (Harden, Meisch, Vick, & Pandohie-Johnson, 2008; Cherry et al., 2009; Crum, 2010; Orme, Cuddeback, Beuhler, Cox, & Le Prohn, 2007; Orme, Buehler, McSurdy, Rhodes, & Cox, 2003). For the sake of brevity, this paper addresses just two examples of research efforts to measure resource parents as well as the strengths and weaknesses of those approaches. These two examples were selected as they were found to be representative of the general strengths and limitations of measurement tools in this field. These examples provide measurements of resource parents in general, as no tool could be located that specifically focused on resource parents of adolescents.

First, Harden et al. (2008) developed a useful tool for understanding resource parent attitudes, titled the Foster Parent Attitudes Questionnaire (FPAQ). The FPAQ uses a 40-item scale to measure foster-parent attitudes regarding the motivation to foster, foster children, relationship with a foster agency, child problems, the relationship between the child in care and their biological relatives, and the foster parents' experiences with caring for children

(Harden et al., 2008). The FPAQ also incorporates items for those who identify as kinship caregivers. Strengths of this tool include its test–retest reliability and internal reliability and resource-parent specific nature of the questions (2008). While parental attitudes are essential to serving as an effective resource parent, this scale does not assess skills and competencies. This is a limitation, as resource parents may have positive intentions and attitudes toward parenting but lack the necessary skills and competencies to manage the difficulties associated with this role.

The Available Time Scale (ATS), developed by Cherry, Orme, and Rhodes (2009) also provides a measurement tool for resource parent population. This tool examines the amount of time that resource parents can devote to their caregiver responsibilities, and Cherry and colleagues found that it positively correlated with the amount of children resource parents cared for, their length of time as a caregiver, and their intention to continue caregiving (2009). This ATS has good reliability and external validity and measures factors such as psychosocial development, ability to access resources, and ability to work on teams, all of which are important to serving as a resource parent (2009). The tool has 20 items, and all are answered on a Likert-scale. Similar to the limitation mentioned in FPAQ, one drawback of this scale is the lack of comprehensiveness. There are numerous factors associated with serving as a resource parent (such as cultural responsiveness) that are not captured in this tool.

The strengths and weaknesses of the scales used above highlight a need for a comprehensive tool to assess readiness and capacity of resource parents who are interested in parenting teens. The tools found capture important pieces of resource parenting, but do not provide a holistic assessment of the characteristics and competencies needed for this role. We chose to use a self-assessment model with Likert-scale responses, building on the previous approaches used by researchers to understand effective foster parenting. Self-assessments have many strengths, such as their feasibility and their ability to prompt self-reflection. However, two primary drawbacks of this approach that should be noted. First, self-assessments may result in biased responses where caregivers respond how they hope to be perceived or as their ideal selves. Second, even if respondents answer in a manner they believe to be accurate, those responses may not reflect reality. For example, someone may believe that they have high levels of cultural awareness, unaware of unconscious biases that may impact how they relate to other cultures.

Self-assessment development: what concepts should be included in a measurement tool?

Successful parenting requires certain characteristics, the development of supportive parental attitudes, knowledge of child and adolescent development,

and the ability to apply appropriate learned parenting skills/competencies when needed (Buehler, Cox, & Cuddeback, 2003; Price et al., 2008). Resource parents should have the social, personal, and relational characteristics likely to promote the behavioral and emotional adjustment of children in care (Orme et al., 2004). Although no list of characteristics, attitudes, and skill-based competencies could be comprehensive enough to cover all the intricacies of foster parenting, the domains identified in this literature review and confirmed with resource parents in the tool development phase incorporate many of the major tasks involved in parenting foster teens.

Identification of critical characteristics

A literature review revealed numerous characteristics associated with effective resource parenting and caregiving for teens in particular. Seventeen primary characteristics emerged, and they can be organized into three main categories. The first category of characteristics can be described as those that involve warmth and nurturance – acceptance, appreciation, compassion, and supportiveness (Berrick & Skivenes, 2012; Blacke-Hansen, Egelund, & Havik, 2010; Brown, 2008; Buehler et al., 2003; Dubois-Comtois et al., 2015). These characteristics stem from findings such as those from Buehler et al. (2003), which found that deep concern/love for youth and acceptance of a teen's differences are essential characteristics for parenting. Berrick and Skivenes (2012) reported that treating teens with love and respect promote positive outcomes for those in care. Blacke-Hansen et al. (2010) identified stable foster homes as those that were full of love, nurturance, and demonstrated warmth toward the child. Dubois-Comtois et al. (2015) also found that teens who reported supportive and pleasant interactions had greater levels of social adjustment than those who reported more chaotic interactions with caregivers.

The second category of characteristics involves those that enable resource parents to persist in their role, despite hardships that they may experience. These characteristics include patience/perseverance, resilience, security/self-confidence, commitment, being realistic, self-awareness, a sense of humor, and spirituality (Day, et al., 2018 ; Buehler, Rhodes, Orme, & Cuddeback, 2006; Rhodes, Cox, Orme, & Coakley, 2006). Resource parents are expected to offer guidance, help youth in developing a positive sense of self, impart life skills and independence, and consistently evaluate their foster/adoptive youth's growth, all while being the primary advocate for services and needed resources (Yates, 1996). This can prove rather wearisome, as they must also consider the difficulties of balancing the demands of their own personal lives with the high expectations of the foster agency (Cooley & Petren, 2011). Characteristics that allow a resource parent to be aware of their own needs and persist in their

desire to care for their children can promote placement stability (Preston, Yates, & Moss, 2012).

The third type of characteristics are those that enable a resource parent to engage in responsive parenting for teens. These characteristics include attunement, adaptability/flexibility, predictability/consistency, trustworthiness, and honoring relationships/attachments (Berrick & Skivenes, 2012; Brown, 2008; Buehler et al., 2003; Crum, 2010; Doelling & Johnson, 1990). Responsive and proactive parenting involve characteristics that allow resource parents to treat teens with love and respect while being mindful of the teen's temperament and developmental needs (Berrick & Skivenes, 2012). These characteristics also involve establishing rules and limits in order to develop environments that reduce risks and foster development (Berrick & Skivenes, 2012).

Identification of critical skill-based competencies

In addition to characteristics that promote positive outcomes for youth in foster care, researchers have also found that a variety of competencies contribute to positive outcomes. Our literature review revealed 10 skill-based competencies, which include trauma-informed parenting, promoting continued connections for youth, encouraging relationship development, behavior management, self-regulation, parental adaption, parental resilience, having cultural awareness, managing transitions, and knowledge of sexual orientation and gender identity (Brown, 2008; Buehler et al., 2006; Day et al., 2018). Trauma-informed parenting and behavior management involve understanding the most appropriate way to take a child's trauma into account when creating structure and responding to possible outbursts (Brown, 2008). Promoting continued connections involves supporting relationships between children and their biological families (Buehler et al., 2006). Parental adaption and parental resilience allow resource parents to view successful fostering as a process, instead of an outcome (Rhodes et al., 2006). Cultural awareness includes respecting, valuing, and teaching cultural norms that would honor the beliefs, customs, and traditions associated with the race and ethnicity of the youth (Goode, 2001). Managing transitions involves understanding how change impacts youth and families and working to minimize the negative emotional effects of that change (Schofield & Beek, 2009). Finally, knowledge of sexual orientation and gender identity can help resource parents support and accept youth who express a sexual minority orientation or gender identity (McCormick, Schmidt, & Terrazas, 2016).

Evidence that training improves foster parenting

Research indicates that training resource parents may effectively increase the skills and competencies of foster caregivers to manage children in their care

(Dorsey et al., 2008; Whenan, Oxlad, & Lushington, 2009) For example, researchers found that the Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) training resulted in positive effects on parenting strategies, reduced placement disruptions, and children's behavioral adjustment (Fisher, Burraston, & Pears, 2005). Children whose foster parents participated in the Keeping Foster Parents Trained and Supported Program (KEEP) also experienced fewer placement disruptions than their peers (Price et al., 2008). While these results are promising, the foster children were younger than age 12 in both studies and no research evidence could be found to support whether foster parent training reduced placement disruptions for teens in care or impacted resource parents' attitudes and skillsets. Rok and McNeil (2011) reviewed 17 studies over a 27-year period regarding the effectiveness of foster parent training and found that the body of literature they reviewed included many methodology limitations. They argue that these limitations make it difficult to ascertain the true effectiveness of these training programs. Thus, while research findings do indicate promising aspects of resource parent training, a lack of literature still exists regarding the impact of foster parent training in general, and specifically for resource parents of teens.

In order to address the disproportionate number of foster teens who experience placement disruptions as well as the unique experience of teens in foster care, it is important to develop targeted trainings and screenings. The current subjective nature of resource parent recruitment, pre-approval assessment, training, and support all may lead to increased rates of placement disruption (Orme et al., 2004). By developing a comprehensive tool that can provide information regarding prospective resource parents' characteristics and competencies, this study aims to address the subjective nature of selecting resource parents and improve placement outcomes for teens.

Method

Development of the RPSAC-T tool

The RPSAC-T tool was designed to examine resource parent knowledge, attitudes and behaviors reflecting competencies associated with successful caregiving of teens. The items included on the surveys were developed based systematic review of the literature (Day et al., 2018), the authors' previous collective experience in measurement development (Crosby et al., 2016), a review of existing instruments that measure characteristics and competencies in other populations, results from interviews with 44 resource parents (foster, adoptive and kin) and child welfare practitioners who provided feedback on what they deemed to be the characteristics of successful caregivers (Patterson et al., 2020), and feedback obtained from the results of a Delphi process conducted with a national stakeholder group (Patterson et al., 2018).

The list of items developed for the self-assessment were reviewed by five of the coauthors and several other content experts to assess content and face validity as well as to assure clarity and conciseness. The content committee (which was comprised of content experts who were members of the national stakeholder group) reviewed the tool as a group, who were independent from researchers. We conducted informal testing of the self-assessment, which included 30 characteristics and 17 competencies, with 34 resource parents who provided immediate feedback about the meaning of each item and how they would interpret them in real time. Items that seemed repetitive or unclear based on this feedback were either deleted or reworded.

The draft of the tool completed by the initial validation sample involved 305 total questions. Lack of survey completion by the initial sample indicated survey fatigue, and the tool was subsequently revised. The revised version of the tool completed by the cross-validation sample included 161 items for the competencies and characteristics (not including the demographic questions). The final revised RPSAC-T tool includes two surveys, a 90-item instrument designed to examine the level of innate characteristics that successful resource parents possess, and a 71-item instrument (with 27 total constructs) designed to examine resource parent knowledge, attitudes and behaviors reflecting competencies associated with successful caregiving of teens. The final version of the tool is the result of further revision based on feedback collected from the cross-validation sample. The comprehensive nature of this tool was designed to allow organizations the freedom to modify the survey based on differences in their curriculum and the needs of their resource parent population.

The self-assessment tool includes a characteristic section and a competency section. The characteristics portion of the self-assessment includes a demographic section with 9 items, and the 17 specific characteristics evaluated (see Table 1). The competency portion of the self-assessment includes 10 competencies (see Table 2). Each survey item that comprised the characteristics and competencies were measured using a six-point, Likert style scale that ranged from "not at all like me" to "a lot like me" (see Table 3). Definitions of the characteristics and competencies that were utilized in the development of the specific constructs and their associated items are in Tables 1 & 2. To maximize validity of the instrument, reverse scored items were included, as reverse scored items reduce acquiescence response bias Schriesheim & Hill, 1981). An example of a reverse-scored item captured under the characteristic "Attunement," is "I have a hard time knowing what people are feeling unless they tell me directly." The scale is available in an open access format and all survey items can be accessed by visiting the Spaulding website (Spaulding for Children, 2020).

Table 1. Characteristic definitions used to guide item development in self-assessment.

Characteristic	Definition
Attunement	Being aware of and sensitive to a youth's physical and emotional needs and moods
Acceptance	An understanding of and acceptance for a youth's values and opinions
Adaptability/Flexibility	Willingness and ability to make changes in their parenting style/responses to be accommodating, encouraging, and supportive to the needs of the youth.
Appreciation	Ability to identify and recognize a youth's good effort or good work
Compassion	Ability to perceive/feel the anguish of the youth
Committed	Ability to be dedicated to a youth, sticking with them no matter how difficult the journey
Honoring Relationships/ Attachments	Ability to recognize and value the importance of all prior relationships to the youth
Patience/Perseverance	Ability to wait for answers/solutions without giving up
Predictable/Consistent	Ability of caregivers to be reliable, dependable, stable and unswerving
Resilient	Ability to withstand youth's testing behaviors and rejections while continuing to give love without the expectation of it being returned
Realistic	Understanding that there will be varying degrees of success with different situations and with different youth and adjusting expectations accordingly
Security/Self-Confidence	Capacity to feel you can successfully parent differently, regardless of outside opinion
Self-Awareness/Self- Regulation	an understanding of and ability to manage their own feelings and behaviors; understanding the impact of their own loss history; tolerance for ambivalent feelings toward the youth
Sense of Humor	Ability to use humor to cope with stress and to model joy for the youth
Spiritual	Spirituality is a broad concept with room for many perspectives. It can include a sense of connection to something outside of ourselves, a belief in something greater than ourselves (e.g., a higher power), and/or a search for meaning in life. Your belief system includes whether you believe in one God, or many Gods, or no Gods. Some people also believe in a spiritual connection to nature, ancestors, reincarnation, or crystal healing. Others find spiritual meaning through simply being kind to people, and so on. All of these are different types of spiritual practices and/or beliefs. As such, how spirituality is felt and expressed or not differs significantly for every individual and across cultural groups. At the core of this characteristic is a respect for and acceptance of the diversity of spiritual values in others.
Supportive	Ability to redirect and support the development of new behaviors through sympathy, empathy, and thoughtful and respectful transactions with youth
Trustworthiness	Based on honesty, consistency, routines, and rituals

Data collection procedures

The University of Washington Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study. Two convenience samples of resource parents were drawn from the use of a membership listserve maintained by the North American Council for Adoptable Children (NACAC). The eligibility for participation in the study included any resource parent who has ever fostered or adopted a teen. NACAC sent an e-mail to their membership listserve with a link to the electronic consent form and survey, which they completed via the agency website using survey monkey. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants received a 20 USD gift card as compensation for their participation. Basic information was collected on gender, age, race, marital status, number of years of experience caring for a teen, and type of placement experience (foster/adoptive/kinship) in order to understand the generalizability of the results. All surveys were anonymous, and as such it is possible that a few participants may be duplicated across both sample populations. It took participants in the initial sample an average of 47 minutes to complete the

Table 2. Competency definitions used to guide item development in self-assessment.

Competency	Definition
Behavior Management	Skills to empower youth to manage their own behavior while modeling and teaching alternative methods
Continued Connections	Honoring the teen's former attachments and supporting ongoing connection
Culture	Respecting, valuing and teaching cultural norms that would honor the beliefs, customs, and traditions associated with the race and ethnicity of the youth
Parental Adaption	Based on the idea that the targeted youth cannot be parented in the same manner as "traditional" parenting It targets how and what parents will need to adjust/adapt (behaviors and responses to increase their ability to respond to multiple new and challenging parental situations tasks/situations) to successfully respond to the needs of the youth
Parental Resilience	Process of maintaining positive self-efficacy, managing stress (coping and problem solving) and family functioning (communication and support) even when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma
Relationship Development	Reflects the critical tasks and skills required to engage, increase commitment and positive connection, and develop a supportive/healing relationship
Regulation	Cognitive, emotional, physiological and behavioral regulation speaks to the ability to calm oneself down when upset and cheer oneself up when disappointed and/or saddened
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)	Youth who are expressing a sexual minority orientation need to be supported and guided through their sexual identity process with understanding and acceptance
Trauma-Informed Resource Parenting	An approach that includes understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma in order to help the youth heal and regain a sense of control and empowerment
Transitions	Focuses on what change does to youth and families and how to minimize the negative emotional impact of; targets the parent's ability to manage transitions and change

survey. Participants in the cross-validation sample completed the competency and characteristics sections in separate sessions for a total of 54 minutes on average. They completed the competency and characteristics sections in an average of 26 and 28 minutes respectively. Data from the self-assessments were collected between September 2017 and January 2018.

Sample characteristics

Resource parents in the two validation samples are those that identified as being a foster, adoptive parent or kinship caregivers. As many resource parents identify with more than one of these roles, they were asked to select the role that best identified their relationship with a teen in their home. Of the 170 participants in initial validation sample, 55% completed the entire characteristic survey and 65% of the participants completed the entire competency survey. Because of the high level of survey fatigue, several items were deleted from the self-assessment before it was administered to the cross-validation sample and the survey was divided into two different portions: the characteristic survey and competency survey. Items prioritized for deletion were those respondents identified as unclear/confusing and those that produced an alpha score of lower than .5. For the cross-validation sample, the characteristic survey (N = 329) and competency survey (N = 165) were completed separately and the listserv e-mail to participants included two separate links (as opposed

Table 3. Sample questions for each characteristic/competency.

Item type	Item	Sample question
Characteristic	Attunement	I have a hard time knowing what people are feeling unless they tell me directly (reverse score)
	Acceptance	I respect other people's values and opinions, even if they are different than mine)
	Adaptability/Flexibility	I am able to recognize and adjust when a parenting technique isn't working.
	Appreciation	I make it a point to show appreciation for even small gains.
	Compassion	I know how to support and empathize with a teen who is feeling pain and grief
	Committed	I can remain committed to a youth, even if I don't feel loving toward them
	Honoring relationships/ Attachments	I am careful never to say negative things to my child about other people who are important in his or her life
	Patience/Perseverance	I know that youth may require numerous attempts at mastering ways of acting/responding
	Predictable/Consistent	I make rules for my foster child that are appropriate to his or her abilities and maturity level
	Resilient	I am able to detect signs of "burn out" in myself.
	Realistic	I recognize that my foster child's success may look different than other children
	Security/Self-Confidence	I rate my success as a parent by the way others view me (reverse score)
	Self-Awareness/Self- Regulation	I know how to keep from overreacting when somebody pushes my buttons
	Sense of Humor	I use humor and wit to help me get through difficult situations
	Spiritual	I am comfortable talking openly with youth about whatever is their preferred spiritual beliefs and practices
	Supportive	When my foster child talks to me about difficult topics, I offer support and don't judge
	Trustworthiness	I try not to make promises I can't keep
Competency	Behavior Management	I am able to respectfully direct behaviors
	Continued Connections	I know specific ways to help youth maintain birth sibling relationships
	Culture	I believe when youth learn too much about their cultures, they are more likely to feel confused (reverse code)
	Parental Adaption	I can adjust what I expect of a youth based on his/her developmental level
	Parental Resilience	I can support youth, even when they are acting negatively toward me or a member of our family
	Relationship Development	I know how to discuss difficult topics with teens
	Regulation	I am aware of specific strategies to help a youth regain their composure after they have been triggered
	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)	I am able to comfortable discuss issues related to sexual orientation/ gender identity
	Trauma-informed resource parenting	I can use specific parenting strategies that will be effective with youth who have experienced trauma
	Transitions	I know specific strategies to support a youth before, during, and after he/she comes to my home

to the initial validation sample, when participants only received one link). Of the 387 participants who started the characteristic survey, 77% completed the entire portion. Of the 194 participants who started the competency survey, 84% completed the entire portion. While the levels of completion are promising, it is important to note that these completion rates cannot be directly compared to the original sample as some participants who completed first survey, did not start the second survey.

Table 4. Demographics of participants who completed self-assessment tool.

		Initial Validation Sample		Cross Validation Sample	
		N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Gender	Male	19	11%	35	10.6%
	Female	152	88.4%	294	89.4%
Race	African American	10	5.8%	32	9.7%
	American Indian/Alaskan Native	6	3.5%	6	1.8%
	Asian American	1	.6%	4	1%
	Hispanic	3	1.7%	8	2.4%
	Caucasian	*156*	90.7%	288	87.5%
Marital Status	Married	118	68.6%	258	78.4%
	Co-habitating, but not married	9	5.2%	5	1.5%
	Divorced	17	9.9%	23	7%
	Widowed	4	2.3%	5	1.5%
	Single	21	12.2%	39	11.8%
Age	20–35	30	19.2%	75	22.8%
	36–45	68	39.5%	106	32.2%
	46–55	43	25%	98	29.7%
	56–65	23	13.4	37	11.2%
	65+	5	2.9%	12	3.6%
Current Role	Adoptive Parent	81	47.1	81	24.6%
	Foster Parent	46	26.7	192	58.3%
	Kinship Caregiver	26	15.1	41	12.5%
	*Other	16	9.3%	15	4.5%
Time Caring for Teen	Less than 6 months	15	8.7%	55	16.7%
	Six months to a year	19	11%	71	21.6%
	More than a year	13	7.6%	42	12.8%
	More than two years	113	65.7%	149	45.3%
Total		170		329	

*Other = Participants identified as having multiple roles

As summarized in Table 4, females comprised the majority of the participants in both the initial validation (N = 170) and the cross-validation samples (N = 329) (88% and 79%, respectively). The majority of the participants in both samples identified as White (91% and 75%). The participants ranged in age from 20 years to 65 and older, with the largest percentage of respondents in both groups identifying as part of the 36–45-year age range. Most resource respondents stated that they had been caring for teens two years or longer. In the initial sample, most respondents identified as adoptive parents. In the cross-validation sample, the NACAC targeted different people on their list serve in order to have a higher representation of foster parents to ensure that the self-assessment was tested with sufficient population sizes to ensure it could be equally effective with both types of resources parents. NACAC includes a smaller population of kinship caregivers in its membership, and thus increased efforts to recruit kinship caregivers through this agency did not result in a larger percentage of kinship caregiver participants in the cross-validation sample.

Analytic approach

The distributional properties (mean, standard deviation, range) of participants' responses to each of the construct items by each characteristic and

competency (i.e., means & standard deviations) were examined in each itera-tion. Scores in the range of 5 or 6 indicate high levels of skill or competence; scores in the 3 and 4 range indicate moderate levels of competence; and scores in the 1 and 2 range indicate low levels of competence in a particular char-acteristic or competency area. Only items that appeared on both surveys were included in the analysis. Following these item-level analyses, correlation matrices were examined for associations among items to determine overlap between items and total constructs. Cronbach's alphas were computed to assess the internal consistency of each of the constructs of the RPSAC-T Tool. Given that the aim of the current study was to evaluate the internal consistency reliability of the RPSAC-T tool and assess the replicability of those results, data analyses were conducted separately on each sample.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was planned for the analysis of the cross-validation sample of both the characteristic and competency portions of the tool. In order to have enough statistical power to conduct a CFA, at least 200 participants are recommended (Brown, 2015). Not enough participants completed the initial survey or both sections of the cross-validation survey to have enough statistical power for a CFA analysis (while 339 participants did complete the characteristics portion, only 165 participants completed the competency portion in the cross-validation sample). As a result, Cronbach's alpha results are reported for the items.

Additionally, it is critical to note that the overarching goal of this project was not to identify independent (orthogonal) constructs with no overlap between each other. This research team's goal was to create a comprehensive list of constructs that could be used to measure a broad array of characteristics and competencies identified as important for quality resource parenting. This team understood that there would be some overlap between constructs, as this is most realistic in actual life and parenting. Thus, moderate correlations between constructs were acceptable to this process, so long as each construct demonstrated its own acceptable internal consistency. All data were analyzed using SPSS Statistical Software Version 21.0.

Results

The results of the distributional analysis of each construct indicate that both population samples scored in the moderate to high range of competence on all of the constructs, although there was still a fair degree of variability in responses (see Table 5 for means and standard deviations for each of the 27 constructs). Each construct was analyzed independently. Those that answered all of the questions associated with a particular construct were included in its respective analysis. Given that the vast majority of participants have been parenting two or more years, and all have successfully completed some level of pre-service training to prepare them for their caretaking role, this is not

Table 5. Descriptive statistics & internal consistency scores reported by characteristic and competency.

		Initial Validation Sample			Cross Validation Sample		
		M	SD	α	M	SD	α
Characteristic	Attunement	4.951	.715	.845	5.349	.655	.731
	Acceptance	4.682	.791	.869	5.486	.580	.743
	Adaptability/ Flexibility	4.721	.689	.835	5.412	.630	.740
	Appreciation	5.394	.793	.863	5.549	.609	.837
	Compassion	4.894	.637	.744	5.194	.684	.432
	Committed	4.961	.652	.776	5.171	.678	.569
	Honoring Relationships/ Attachments	5.461	.880	.849	5.513	.598	.620
	Patience/ Perseverance	5.231	.778	.867	5.438	.619	.599
	Predictability/ Consistent	5.231	.735	.877	5.441	.562	.619
	Resilient	4.757	.767	.830	4.968	.040	.588
	Realistic	5.315	.775	.891	5.484	.597	.816
	Security/Self-Confidence	5.010	.792	.837	5.231	.657	.571
	Self-awareness/ Self-regulation	4.705	.712	.730	5.075	.606	.756
	Sense of Humor	5.115	1.01	.896	4.487	.045	.823
	Spirituality	4.301	1.43	.849	5.330	.933	.808
	Supportive	4.591	1.79	.930	5.565	.032	.843
	Trustworthiness	5.623	.960	.909	5.763	.435	.770
Competencies	Trauma-Informed Resource Parenting	5.028	.624	.866	5.4	.593	.681
	Continued Connections	5.015	.696	.837	5.568	.589	.821
	Relationship Development	5.453	.730	.848	5.689	.464	.787
	Regulation	5.456	.666	.862	5.432	.603	.721
	Parental Adaptation	5.487	.705	.893	5.727	.461	.831
	Parental Resilience	5.297	.691	.793	5.217	.639	.695
	Culture	5.553	.718	.832	5.625	.537	.737
	Transitions	4.983	.691	.679	5.486	.597	.784
	Behavior Management	5.243	.708	.835	5.467	.551	.714
	Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity	5.34	.880	.913	4.549	1.164	.867

a surprising finding. Nonetheless, this leads the research team to examine whether differences in self-perceptions existed between three potentially unique subgroups of resource parents: Foster parents, adoptive parents, kinship caregivers. Interestingly, only marginal differences in scores were observed by specific type of parenting role (foster, adoptive or kinship caregiver).

In the initial sample, none of the characteristics were significant by type of resource parent. Two characteristics were noted as being statistically different by parenting role in the cross-validation sample. These characteristics included self-awareness/self-regulation and sense of humor. Specifically, kinship caregivers (20%) reported being less confident about self-awareness/self-regulation than foster (12%) and adoptive parents (14%) (X^2(df) = 11.63 (4); $P < .05$). Kinship caregivers (61%) and foster parents (56%) felt less confident in their ability to draw on sense of humor in parenting than adoptive parents (35%) (X^2(df) = 11.63(4); $P < .02$). It is important to note that kinship caregivers are under-sampled in both of these populations. Statistically significant differences were observed among the competencies titled trauma

Table 6. Characteristic correlations by subscale for cross-validation sample.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Attunement	1																
2. Acceptance	.474**	1															
3. Adaptability Flexibility	.509**	.570**	1														
4. Appreciation	.509**	.559**	.584**	1													
5. Compassion	.303**	.243**	.326**	.366**	1												
6. Committed	.424**	.412**	.441**	.470**	.301**	1											
7. Honoring Relationships Attachments	.459**	.347**	.383**	.379**	.292**	.386**	1										
8. Patience/Perseverance	.425**	.533**	.529**	.528**	.362**	.619**	.444**	1									
9.Predictability/Consistent	.473**	.414**	.441**	.403**	.344**	.413**	.386**	.497**	1								
10. Resilient	.407**	.374**	.427**	.332**	.235**	.477**	.335**	.469**	.412**	1							
11. Realistic	.359**	.352**	.408**	.388**	.343**	.416**	.432**	.463**	.409**	.423**	1						
12. Self-awareness/Self-regulation	.369**	.244**	.339**	.330**	.362**	.295**	.434**	.377**	.433**	.357**	.414**	1					
13. Security/Self-Confidence	.488**	.533**	.470**	.458**	.287**	.459**	.410**	.545**	.499**	.528**	.352**	.271**	1				
14. Sense of Humor	.156**	.135*	.199**	.196**	.215**	.228**	.169**	.201**	.131*	.156**	.359**	.167**	.079	1			
15. Spirituality	.100	.055	.066	.135*	.161**	.037	.079	.192**	.221**	-.025	.131*	.063	.132*	.061	1		
16. Supportive	.550**	.523**	.591**	.551**	.440**	.530**	.483**	.584**	.512**	.473**	.550**	.441**	.531**	.227**	.102	1	
17.Trustworthiness	.363**	.266**	.318**	.294**	.287**	.292**	.483**	.465**	.395**	.258**	.437**	.317**	.310**	.141*	.170**	.478**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 7. Competency correlations by subscale for cross-validation sample.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Trauma-Informed Resource Parenting	1									
2. Continued Connections	.535**	1								
3. Relationship Development	.491**	.515**	1							
4. Regulation	.701**	.633**	.596**	1						
5. Parental Adaption	.568**	.570**	.550**	.678**	1					
6. Parental Resilience	.536**	.557**	.628**	.629**	.699**	1				
7. Culture	.459**	.568**	.638**	.554**	.565**	.522**	1			
8. Transitions	.583**	.649**	.510**	.657**	.532**	.562**	.544**	1		
9. Behavior Management	.675**	.617**	.580**	.689**	.671**	.617**	.479**	.603**	1	
10. Sexual Orientation & Sexual Identity	.296**	.368**	.395**	.392**	.326**	.393**	.341**	.432**	.296**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

informed resource parenting, parental adaptation, and parental resilience. Specifically, foster parents (21%) and kinship caregivers (29%) reported lower confidence in their knowledge of trauma informed parenting than adoptive parents (3%) (X^2(df) = 14.70(4); $P < .01$). Foster parents (6%) reported lower levels of confidence in their skills related to parental adaptation than adoptive parents (0%) and kinship caregivers (0%) (X^2(df) = 63.21(8); $p < .01$). Finally, foster parents (8%) and kinship caregivers (7%) reported lower levels of confidence in their skills related to parental resilience than adoptive parents (3%) (X^2(df) = 18.63 (8); $p < .05$). These differences did not remain significant in the cross-validation sample. Thus, potential differences were generally ruled out and subsequent analyses combined all three groups.

At each iteration of the development of these measures, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficients were computed for all of the characteristics and competencies constructs. Items that made up constructs with weak coefficients were dropped. Low performing constructs underwent revisions to improve their use in subsequent revisions. Scales with alphas above .60 were considered acceptable, with alphas of .7 and higher the most common. The survey encapsulates 17 characteristics and 10 competencies. See Table 5 for Cronbach's alphas.

Finally, correlations are included in Tables 6 and 7 to demonstrate associations across the 17 characteristics and 10 competencies. As expected by the research team, the results indicate moderate overlap between constructs. The goal for this research team was not to discover a series of constructs that were orthogonal to each other and thus would load as separate non-overlapping constructs. This moderate overlap between constructs reflects the realities of resource parenting life, in which many competencies interrelate with one another.

Discussion

Reliable and valid measurement tools can provide child welfare agencies with the ability to accurately assess the needs of potential and current resource parents. The aim of the current study was to develop the RPSAC-T Tool, a new instrument designed to measure the attributes, including knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of resources families providing care to teens ages 12 to 20 years of age. Several steps were taken in order to establish the psychometric properties of the RPSAC-T Tool. The instrument contains 17 Characteristics constructs and 10 Competency constructs for a total of 27 constructs comprised of 161 of items. Many of the findings conducted in the initial validation were confirmed in the cross-validation sample with only a few exceptions. Additional survey items may need to be generated for some constructs. The reduction in internal consistency in the cross-validation sample could be attributed to the reduction in number of survey items included in some of the constructs on the survey. The Cronbach's alpha estimates for the other characteristic and competency constructs across samples indicate that the overall questionnaire is relatively stable. The initial validity and reliability of the RPSAC-T was established and for the most part was replicated in the current study, indicating that in general the results were not an isolated occurrence.

Sustained and systematically rigorous research is needed to better understand the characteristics and competencies that maximize the success of resource parents, which then can be promoted through intervention and programming and lead to positive outcomes for the teens placed in their care. The implementation of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act and the Family First and Prevention Services Act increased opportunities for teens and young adults with any involvement in care after the age of 16 to continue to be supported with federal resources and supports up to their 26th birthdays (Beltran, 2017; Stoltzfus, 2008). Additionally, for the first time, kinship caregivers who are caring for teens informally will now have access to critical resources and supports. Resource parents, if properly trained and supported, can provide critical stable and caring relationships to teens that last long into adulthood. Partnerships with foster parents that are adequately trained to parent teens can also support state goals to reduce reliance on congregate care settings. It is incumbent upon child welfare agencies and their associated curricula developers to ensure that prospective and current resource parents are trained to advocate for and provide the most appropriate, high quality and effective services to teens placed in their care.

Despite the strengths of this study in building a standardized instrument, there are limitations that must be acknowledged. First, this study includes a self-selected convenience sample, an underrepresentation of male resource

parents as well as resource parents of color. In addition, we were unable to determine the level of participation of LBGTQ resources parents in the study. This is an important subpopulation of resource parents with unique needs, and their success is critical to the success of the teens placed in their care (Perrin, 2002). Another limitation in this study is the under-representation of kinship caregivers in the samples. The use of kinship caregivers as resource parents is growing nationwide, and it is critical that these families, both formal and informal, are supported to prevent placement disruption (Farmer, 2009; Winokur, Holtan, & Valentine, 2009). The length of this survey may be considered both a strength and a limitation. The comprehensiveness of the survey indicates that the measure can capture the multifaceted nature of resource parenting. However, the time it takes to complete the survey may result in survey fatigue and lack of survey completion. While reducing the number of constructs may increase its use in the field, it may also limit its comprehensive nature.

Due to the sheer volume of characteristics and competencies that were required to be developed, factor analysis was not possible. However, it is important to note that we were also not expecting or desiring that the constructs would be orthogonal to/independent of each other due to the natural overlap that is expected between constructs. Indeed, these attitudinal and behavioral variables were found in this preliminary development of the measure to have solid internal consistency and face validity. In any case, though, at this early stage of development, the RPSAC-Teen tool would benefit from further development and item refinement. Despite the limitations, the creation of the RPSAC-T tool is a step toward developing an empirically sound measure to assess resource parent attributes including knowledge of, attitudes about, and behaviors regarding caring for teens. A third limitation of this measure stems from the limitation of self-assessments in general. While the goal is for responses to indicate one's true attitudes and behaviors, it is possible that responses may reflect one's ideal self. Thus, while the psychometric properties of a self-assessment may be reliable and valid, one must always critically evaluate the answers in a self-assessment.

Development and validation of instruments designed specifically for use with child welfare populations is a relatively recent phenomenon in the field. It is through using reliable and valid tools that child welfare agencies can better understand the impact of training and other supports being offered to resources parents. The use of self-assessment tools can also increase caregiver awareness of their own strengths and challenges they will/have faced in their caregiver responsibilities and can assist them to proactively seek out subsequent training opportunities that can address skill deficits in competency areas that were identified by the self-assessment as areas of need for future growth and development.

Notes on contributors

Angelique Day, PhD, MSW, Associate Professor, School of Social Work, University of Washington, Seattle

Alanna Feltner, MSW, MPP, Research Scientist, School of Social Work, University of Washington, Seattle

Cheryl Somers, PhD, Professor, College of Education, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan

Lori Vanderwill, PhD, MSW, Research Scientist, School of Social Work, University of Washington, Seattle

Kim Stevens, Program Manager, North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)

Tamarie Willis, MSW, PhD Candidate, College of Social Work, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan

Kris Henneman, MSW, Vice President, Spaulding for Children, Southfield, Michigan

Sue Cohick, MSW, Site Infusion Manager, Spaulding for Children, Southfield, Michigan

Debra Patterson, PhD, MSW, Associate Professor & Associate Dean of Academic & Faculty Affairs, College of Social Work, Wayne State, University, Detroit, Michigan

Stella Resko, PhD, MSW, Associate Professor, College of Social Work, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan

ORCID

Cheryl Somers http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3177-301X
Lori Vanderwill http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3526-2644

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