

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE FOSTER PARENT:  
A NEED IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROJECT  
FOR THE FOSTER PARENT SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

BY

PATRICIA A. ZACHARIAS

A Practicum Report  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

School of Social Work  
University of Manitoba  
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## ABSTRACT

### THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE FOSTER PARENT: A NEED IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROJECT FOR THE FOSTER PARENT SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

In the past, foster parents have been regarded as "surrogate parents", "nurturers", and "volunteers" who chose to share their homes with unfortunate children. Their motivation was altruistic; to have the chance to help those in need and to make a difference in another's life.

Current social and family pressures seriously challenge this traditional idea of foster parenting. Foster parents are now being asked to adopt a professional role to provide temporary, specialized care for children who can no longer be supported in their own home. Role confusion within the foster care system has been identified as a major issue leading to voluntary foster parent withdrawal from service.

This study sponsored by the Foster Parent Society of Ontario examined the impact of this changing role on foster parents and examined ways their organization can meet the challenge of transition. The study utilizes a need identification and assessment framework to examine motivational processes such as stress, self concept, compensation, family support, advocacy, role discrepancy, and training.

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## PREFACE

The foster parent has existed as long as the foundling child. This intimate relationship was forged in our prehistory and continues to this day. The role of the foster parent has remained essentially the same, with few modifications, until relatively recently. Recent changes to this role have been heavily influenced by an evolving social policy which both relies upon families to be self sufficient care providers and permits the state to intervene in families where the best interests of the child are determined to be at risk.

Foster families are now placed in the role of professional care providers who provide temporary services for children whose welfare is ultimately managed by the state. The state maintains primary responsibility for protection of the child's best interests.

This report examines some of the consequences and implications of the foster parents' changing role in co-operation with the Foster Parent Society of Ontario. I am indebted to the Society for sponsoring my efforts to understand and communicate the needs of the foster parents in Ontario. Special thanks go to Ken Shaw, Mike Beauregard, and Barb Ptashynski for their assistance and guidance.

This study could not have occurred without the support of the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. Doug Hayman, Area Manager of the Northwest Area Office and Sue Braun, District Manager with the Kenora/Rainy River District Office provided encouragement and opportunity to pursue this research. I wish to thank them for their generous contribution.

My advisor, Professor Don Fuchs, added his insight, wisdom, and humour to make my learning experience both enjoyable and rewarding. My thanks is also extended to my committee members Professor Dennis Brachen and Phil Dickman, Program Supervisor, Ministry of Community and Social Services, whose expertise contributed to improve my research activities.

I am especially and eternally indebted to Dr. Beulah Roberts Compton who urged me to take up Social Work. Dr. Compton modeled the best attributes of the Social Work profession and her example has been a source of constant inspiration.

The acquisition of knowledge is a complex, demanding and, at times, solitary process. In this world of competing pressures, words cannot sufficiently acknowledge the contribution of my family who supported me in so many ways throughout my learning process, thank you Leo and Pete.

## INTRODUCTION

In the past, foster parents have been regarded as "surrogate parents", "nurturers", and "volunteers" who for little financial compensation chose to share their homes with those children who were less fortunate. Their motivation was essentially altruistic, to help those children who were in need and to make a difference in another's life.

An overwhelming majority of foster parents believe that their role is very close to that of an adoptive or natural parent. This has been expressed repeatedly in several studies (Gottesfeld, Jaffe & Kline, 1970; George, 1970). Indeed, child placement agencies have reinforced this view tending to relate to foster parents in either a parenting or client role. (Wiltse, 1985)

Society's response to social problems, and to family dysfunction in particular, is changing. Increasingly, child welfare practice places emphasis upon the responsibility of the family to resolve its own problems with the support of social services. Children's service providers are also reconceptualizing their relationships with other social service stakeholders. This has tended to blend the service missions of education, health, and social service (Carbino, 1980). As child and family services focus upon the maintenance and strengthening of the natal family, removal of the children to an out of home placement is viewed as a last resort to be utilized only for a limited duration.

A change in emphasis from child saving to family support within child welfare has had significant implications for the conflicting roles of the foster parent. Holman (1975) has differentiated these two roles within the categories of exclusive and inclusive fostering. The primary assumption within the exclusive fostering model is that neither the natural parents nor social workers play a significant role in the child's life. The children are integrated within the foster family and treated as a family member. These are, in effect, pseudo-adoptions.

Inclusive foster parenting assumes that there is active participation of both natural parents and social workers during the child's placement. The role of the foster parent is to provide care for the child in trust for the natural parents. The notion of "shared care" is viewed as both appropriate and necessary. Inclusive fostering provides children with a family upbringing while not closing the door to family contact with the natural parents or to return to them when possible.(Holman, 1975, 224)

Within the inclusive fostering model, the child retains his own name and keeps an identity separate from the foster family and has access to information about his origins. Professionalism, openness, and lack of possessiveness are thought to be characteristics of inclusive foster parents.

The practice of maintaining long term foster care placements within exclusive fostering arrangements is also being seriously

questioned. Fanshel and Shinn (1978) emphasize the need for permanency planning which goes beyond stable foster arrangements. They describe the need for permanence as follows:

"It is no longer considered sufficient that a child be afforded a placement situation in which his basic needs are cared for...A newly emphasized criterion is being used to assess the adequacy of an Agency's performance, namely whether a child can be assured permanency in his living arrangements and continuity of relationships. It is not enough that he might be placed in a foster family home that offers him family-like care. If he cannot regard the people he is living with as his family on a permanent basis, his situation is increasingly regarded as reflecting something less than an adequate resolution of his life situation."  
(Fanshel & Schinn, 1978).

They go on to support a vision of permanency planning which excludes the long term foster care placement:

"We are not completely sure that continued tenure in foster care over extended periods of time is not in itself harmful to children...We fear that in the inner recesses of his heart, a child who is not living with his own family or is not adopted may come to think of himself as being less than first-rate, as an unwanted human being."

These shifts in practice emphasis from the traditional exclusive fostering role in which foster parents have functioned as the sole care provider to a model emphasizing family support, inclusive fostering, and permanency planning challenge the foster parent's role. Foster parents are currently being asked to adopt a professional role while their traditional exclusive fostering stance becomes eclipsed by these new policies and practices.

Their current ambiguous role status is noted as one of the important reasons for frequent turnover in the foster parenting field.

Changes within the foster parents role have been cited recently by the B.C. Federation of Foster Parents Association (1987, 119) and the provincial government study in Saskatchewan (1988, 42) as well as the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies' Foster Care Training Assessment Project Report, Part II (1989, 5-6).

These findings correlate with Agrawal's notion (1978) that the self concept influences an individual's conception of his or her role in a given social system. Where opening their home and family to a child is viewed as insufficient or even inappropriate, foster parents view their contribution as under-valued or misunderstood. Since adaptation to their social system is vital for role enactment, the role of the foster parent is currently alienated from the mission of the present social system.

Increasing role alienation leads to low worker morale, strikes, etc. (Pareek, 1967). With the growth of provincial and national Foster Parent Associations, these divergent points of view have become more visible through strike threats and demands for increased financial compensation, recognitions, training, and support.

Weber (1947) argues that role making and taking operates within a dynamic framework which has the appearance of stability only when the countervailing forces are in balance. Change is experienced when these forces become out of balance. Rapid change within the field of child welfare has no doubt contributed to a significant extent the ambiguity and imbalance foster parents are experiencing during this transitional

period.

While an examination of the numerous features of child welfare which affect fostering practices was beyond the scope of this research project, this study examined the role discrepancy identified within the literature and examined means by which foster parents could assume the preferred role and reveal barriers to the intended role transition.

The objectives of this study were to:

- describe the nature and extent of the role discrepancy currently experienced by foster parents;
- identify the needs and options available to achieve role transition among foster parents; and,
- communicate the research project results through a consultation report to the Foster Parent Society of Ontario, FPSO, and practicum report to the University of Manitoba.

The attainment of these objectives required the following activities:

- Review the history of out of home placements and the relationship of natural and surrogate parent models;
- Survey the literature regarding role making and taking;



- Review Social Work literature regarding the current theory and practice of foster parenting;
- Develop a model to synthesize and analyze data;
- Identify and assess the needs of foster parents. The Ontario Foster Parent Association assumed the role of client and provided the foster parent sample and key informants.

The following chapter will review foster care's historical precedents in order to develop an understanding the evolution of the foster parenting role. This role will be placed within our current social context in Chapter II utilizing Jonathon Turner's behavioural theory of social structure.

Chapter III provides a discussion of the need identification and assessment design and methodology employed within this study. The results of this information gathering exercise are reported in Chapter IV.

An evaluation of the foster parent need identification and assessment project is contained within Chapter V. The appendix includes the Executive Summary of the research findings presented to the Foster Parent Society of Ontario.

## CHAPTER 1

### HISTORY OF CHILD ABANDONMENT AND ALTERNATE CARE

Scholarly interest in the history of child care is only beginning to emerge. One noted historian, John Boswell, contributed a seminal work on this subject with his book, The Kindness of Strangers (1988). Exploring primary source material in six languages, Boswell surveyed the attitudes and beliefs connected with the practice of child abandonment and placement from early Roman times to the later Middle Ages.

Many of our current attitudes to child care have been significantly influenced by Roman law, the emergence of Christianity, a fertile Judaic tradition and the beliefs of Islam. The motif of abandonment and rescue is common within classical myth and literature which contributed to Roman thought.

The founding of the Roman state was the result of the abandonment of children. A vestal virgin who had been raped bore twin sons, Romulus and Remus. The harsh monarch Amulius ordered them abandoned on the Tiber. Left in a basket which floated to shore, they were found by a wolf and suckled by her until a shepherd took them home to his wife and the couple brought them up as their own.

Central to Western religious consciousness are two famous

instances of child abandonment in scripture, Moses and Ishmael. In the case of Moses, the mother's aim was not to dispose of an unwanted child, but to preserve him from death. The evil ruler commanded that all male Israelite children be cast into the river. Moses is left in a basket along the river bank, only to be found by Pharaoh's daughter, who hires the child's own mother to nurse him (Exodus 2).

Ishmael, the son of Abraham was also an abandoned child who made good and became the founder of a dynasty. Ishmael is associated with the origins of Islam. Boswell notes that the Christian scriptures discount the importance of lineage and descent. Jesus was raised by a foster father, not a biological father (1988, 155).

Common among the abandonment motif are the following features: the children are of lofty though complicated ancestry; a male figure orders the abandonment, to the regret of the mother; they are actually taken away and left by servants; they are found by shepherds and reared by foster parents, and; they subsequently rise to greatness.

There are no moral sanctions upon the act of abandonment contained within these early vignettes, however, there is universal approval and admiration for those who rescued the children. "He was born of my kindness" states a foster father in Quintilian's *Declamations minores* 278 (in Boswell, 1988, 120). Foster caring drew its strength from personal ties of love and kindness. There was no duty by law to bind this relationship which became recognized as an expression of

selfless love.

Roman government had little interest in regulating personal moral behaviour. Laws were formulated to enforce public obligation to the state or to facilitate civil litigation regarding status, property or damages. Within families (which included slaves as well as wife and lineal descendants) the authority of the Roman father was absolute extending to life and death.

Abandonment of children was legal. A set of declamations attributed to Quintilian includes six cases about exposed children. Where the abandoning parent is mentioned, it is never hinted that he or she is in any way liable or wrong for having exposed a child. Indeed, in one of the cases the father claims paternal right to a reward the son had earned while under the care of a foster parent. Quintilian ruled that "Anyone who can identify an abandoned child may reclaim him if he repays the cost of rearing" (in Boswell, 1988, 62).

The child's relationship to natal parents under Roman law, like free status, survived abandonment. Children born as slaves remained slaves, even if they were reared as free after abandonment. The natal father owned his child and could reclaim him or her as long as he repaid the expenses incurred by the person who had picked the child up.

The poignancy of the familiar struggle between legal and moral guardianship is reflected within the following passage from Quintilian's

Declamations Minores 278 as a foster father argues to the court his right to his foster son who was reclaimed by his biological parents:

"During the time when our son...was away at war, whose was he? was it not I who hung from the city walls in suspense? Not I who, desperate, fell upon the messengers? ...Who bandaged his wounds when he returned? Who washed away the blood? Who took him to the temple and gave thanks?"(in Boswell, 1988, p.120).

At the opening of the fourth century Constantine, the first Christian emperor, removed the irrevocability of natal status. Constantine's edict of 331 declared:

" Anyone who picks up or nourishes at his own expense a little girl or boy cast out of the home of its father or lord with the latter's knowledge and consent may retain the child in the position for which he intended it when he took it in-that is as child or slave, as he prefers. Nor may those who willingly and knowingly cast out of their home newborn slaves or children bring any action to recover them." (in Boswell, 1988, p.71)

This edict changed the legal position of abandoned children not only among the Romans but throughout the realms in which Roman law would be known for the next millennium.

Boswell concludes that at no point within the history of child abandonment did European society place serious sanctions against the practice. Early Christian moralists reproached parents more for the irresponsibility of bringing unwanted children into the world rather than for the act of abandonment itself (1988, 429).

The Church in the Middle Ages may have controlled or regulated the disposition of foundlings; however, the fundamental features of the

process remained unchanged until the rise of foundling homes in the 13th Century. State foundling hospitals quickly emerged within every major European city. These were presumed to be safe, secure facilities for the child's well being and removed the problem of abandonment from the eyes of the public.

In a class conscious, family dependent society, the foundling homes produced "classless, familyless, unconnected adolescents (if they survived) with no claim on the support or help of any persons or group within the community"(Boswell, 1988, 421). The fate of the survivor was to become a non-person though only 13% reached age 6. Few were aware of the dangers of crowding infants in unhygienic surroundings before the discovery of bacteria, nutrition, and pasteurization.

The child care experience in Canada was similar to that of its European contemporaries. The Orphans Act of 1799 provided for the education and support of orphans deserted by their parents through the provision of apprenticeship. Where a child was over fourteen, no indenture for his apprenticeship could be made without his consent. Apprenticeship as a method of child placement appeared to become a well established practice.

This Act failed to make any continuing provision to guard against the exploitation or abuse of the child or ensure the provision of adequate care. It also lacked any provision for public support of a

child who could not be placed as an apprentice. Consequently, although the Legislature admitted public responsibility for protective action for the orphaned or deserted child, it neglected to provide any means for discharging its responsibility in cases where no apprenticeship could be secured.

The Militia Pension Act of 1813 provided for the maintenance of persons disabled and the widows and children of such persons as may be killed in "His Majesty's Service" . The public recognized a responsibility for the support of children of deceased soldiers though this sentiment was not generalized to those children without parents.

In 1827, The Guardian Act was passed to address the issue of guardianship. A judge of a probate or surrogate court could appoint a guardian for a child until the child's twenty-first birthday unless the guardianship was terminated earlier by the same type of judicial procedure.

The Act took for granted that the mother would not be appointed guardian as she was generally accorded few rights to her children. Nevertheless, the mother came to be recognized as the obvious guardian for her children.

A small number of voluntary associations received small grants for the care of immigrants, the poor, or the sick. Only where children fit within these categories would they benefit from any community

action to meet their needs. A census of Upper Canada taken during the mid-1800's revealed that over half the population of the province was under sixteen years of age (Splane, 1965, 221).

By the end of the 1840's the public began to insist upon better means for the care and maintenance of children without parents. The Apprenticeship and Minors Act of 1851 extended the terms of the Orphans Act by clarifying the relationship of the apprentice and master. The House of Industry was established in Toronto by private citizens to provide a program for placing children as apprentices. It was reported that by 1850 the House had placed 275 children with good results (Splane, 1965, 223).

The Orphan's Home and Female Aid Society of Toronto was organized to offer "relief and support to friendless orphans and destitute females" and to afford "religious and moral instruction" to them. Although the institution did not originally include among its purposes the placement of children as apprentices, it took this step a year later.

Apprenticeship continued to be the principal method of providing for orphaned or abandoned children though adoption and institutionalization became alternative forms of care. No separate legislation existed which identified the legal status or responsibilities entailed in adoption. These issues were resolved through the application of common law.



The establishment of institutions to provide long term care for children reflected the limitations of apprenticeship to effectively care for young or handicapped children and its acceptance as an alternative. Children's institutions received grants from the provincial government though there were no provisions for provincial inspection until 1857. The Prison and Asylum Inspection Act of 1857 authorized the Board of Inspectors to inspect institutions on the direction of the Governor.

In 1874, the Apprentice and Minors Act was improved by defining the rights and the responsibilities of minors who became apprentices and their relationship to all caretakers: the person(s) accepting a child as an apprentice, the parent(s), the charitable societies, and officials authorized to bind children as apprentices. The procedures for dealing with complaints by an apprentice against his master and by a master against his apprentice were also enacted to strengthen the means of protecting an apprentice against exploitation or abuse.

The Act also recognized the role Charitable Societies were playing in apprenticeship and the requirement for the provincial government to maintain control over these Societies. The lieutenant governor-in-council could confer the right to bind children as apprentices on a Society and could therefore exercise a protective interest in the children after placement.

The Charity Aid Act of 1876 regulated public aid to charitable

institutions. The amount of provincial support was inadequate since the rates were not based upon the actual costs of maintaining a child or an unmarried mother in an institution, nor the appropriate proportion of the total cost the province should pay to ensure adequate standards.

The Industrial Schools Act of 1874 ranks with the Charity Aid Act in its importance to institutional care for children during the post-Confederation period. The Act provided for the establishment of a type of institution to bridge the public school, which neglected children generally failed to attend, and the reformatory, which was utilized for those children identified as delinquents.

A child could be detained in an industrial school for any period of time thought necessary by the magistrate for his training, but not beyond his sixteenth birthday. Although the residence within the school was regarded as the normal practice, the act made provision for a child "to live at the dwelling of any trustworthy and respectable person," providing that the chief superintendent was informed of the arrangement. In special circumstances, the school board could "bind him, with his own consent, apprentice to any trade, calling, or service." (Splane, 1965)

The Industrial Schools Act was amended in 1884 to permit a board of school trustees to delegate its "powers, rights and privileges" respecting industrial schools to any philanthropic society. The first of the schools, established at Mimico in 1887 was one result of the growing

concern for social welfare problems felt by some of the influential citizens of Toronto.

There was also a growing public concern about the effectiveness of prolonged institutional care as preparation for adulthood. By the latter part of the 1880's attention turned to the possibility of developing or extending other types of arrangements that would give children the opportunity of growing up within a family setting. The work of Charles Loring Brace in the United States and Mrs. Nassau Senior and Miss Florence Hill in England was becoming known.

At the meetings of the National Prison Association in Toronto in 1887, the members discussed the work of state boards of charities in Massachusetts whose agents had placed many children in foster homes. Warren Spalding, in referring to the work of child placement by a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in the same state, expressed the view "that the last thing that should be done for any person, young or old, is to put him into an institution".

Francis Wayland referred to Connecticut's laws on neglected and abused children which included a strict prohibition upon maintaining children under three years of age in alms houses and encouraged their placement in families. By the early 1890's, reports of the success of foster home placements in Australia had gained some currency and were to influence J.M.Gibson, the provincial secretary, in the formulation of child protection legislation of 1893 (Splane, 259-260).

Within Ontario, projects for the immigration of children from the British Isles to Canada displayed the potential for placing children in homes. Under these projects, homes were found in Ontario for nearly 23,000 children during the period from 1868 to 1893. This demonstrated the interest of philanthropic groups in Great Britain, not only in "rescuing children from poor surroundings, including the English work-house but in also in seeking to secure for them the best possible future" (Splane, 261).

The Canadian government provided support through financial aid and visits of inspection by its immigration agents to the homes in which children were placed. The children were usually brought to reception centres and rapidly sent forward to preselected farm families chosen by the staff of the centres on the basis of written applications that were supplemented by references from a minister or public official.

The basis upon which the children were placed is vague though some formal contract or indenture was arranged. The agents occasionally referred to the adoption of the children. However, the use of the term adoption is referred to the condition in which the child was "treated in all respects as one of the master's and mistress's own children,"... a girl could be said to be adopted when she took her meals with the family and otherwise joined in its activities. Early workers commonly used words such as adoption, foster care, and placement interchangeably. This led to ambiguity in matters of family privileges, such as inheritance rights. The term adoption finally received a clear

legal definition in 1921 with the Act Respecting the Adoption of Children. (Ontario Statutes, 1921, chapter 55)

J.J. Kelso established the Humane Society of Toronto in 1887 modeling it after the American Humane Association. This relationship exposed Canadians to the knowledge of child welfare developed in the United States. It also influenced the formulation of The Act for the Protection and Reformation of Neglected Children in 1888, the appointment of the Royal Commission on the Prison and Reformatory system in 1890, and the establishment of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto in 1891.

The child protection legislation reaffirmed the authority of the courts to commit neglected children to industrial schools and to the refuge for girls, and extended the authority to other types of institutions. The child could be kept by a Society or Institution until he attained the age of eighteen years, with the cost of his care, up to a maximum of two dollars a week, being paid by the municipality where he was resident at the time of his committal. It established public responsibility for the maintenance of neglected children in all types of children's institutions which had received provincial recognition.

This Act was the first to place the well-being of society ahead of the rights and privileges of individuals within the family unit. The legislation provided for the judgment of moral behaviour and intervention to protect children from undesirable influences. It also

recognized that children required institutions and programs which were designed specifically for their unique needs.

The Royal Commission of 1890 was directed to investigate problems within the correctional system and make recommendations to resolve them. The commissioners identified seven principle causes of crime. One of these was "the want of parental control; the lack of good home training and the baneful influence of bad homes, largely due to culpable neglect and indifference of parents and the evil affects of drunkenness."

The commissioners recommended that the establishment of industrial day schools should "be made compulsory" in every large city and town and where ever possible, the schools should place the children committed to their care "in a private family, either as apprentices or boarders." All children "not thoroughly vicious" should, indeed, "be so placed out even before they have received their literary instruction." Provision would be made in such cases for them to attend a local school from their new homes, where they would continue to be under "the vigilant and kindly supervision" of officers of the industrial school. These officers would be authorized, with provincial approval, "to recall any child so placed out, or remove him or her from one family to another."

They also suggested that municipal and provincial authorities should extend the "most cordial encouragement and assistance" to the charitable and philanthropic bodies engaged in practical measures for

the saving of children. A second was that the province defray "the actual expenses incurred" by the proposed voluntary association which would place and supervise children (Splane, 1965, 168-170).

An essential prior step to the formulation of the legislation was the development of the prototype of the kind of association which would form the administrative core of the new measure. This was the Children's Aid Society of Toronto which was organized in 1891. The Society was viewed as offering a potentially flexible instrument for protecting neglected children in their own homes and for arranging the care of those lacking proper homes.

In 1893 "An Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to, and better Protection for Children" was passed. Ontario's Act borrowed the British provisions on the removal of neglected children to places of safety and on the "disposal of children", but went further by adding to those under whose charge a neglected child might be placed "any duly authorized children's aid society".

This Act was further strengthened in 1895 when the "Act for the Further Protection of Children" was passed by the Ontario legislature. There were provisions to promote the foster home model while strengthening the powers of the institutions. Orphanages, industrial schools, and other children's shelters could now transfer children to a local CAS which would place them in a foster home.

Bullen (1990) observes that the latter 19th century reforms demonstrated both change and continuity in the structure and ideology of child welfare in Ontario:

Most late century child-savers, and many later historians, emphasized the positive aspects of the changes: a greater recognition of the special needs and malleability of children as individuals and as a social group; the establishment of agencies and procedures designed specifically for children; an emphasis on environment over heredity as a determinant of social behaviour; the weakening of absolute parental discretion in favour of a code of moral behaviour defined and enforced by the state; the transition from unsystematic philanthropic voluntarism to uniform state regulation; and the onset of professionalism, including the eventual introduction of trained, paid social workers (109).

While these developments led to significant changes in the treatment of abused and neglected children, the constants of social order prevailed. Reform was dominated by the middle class which promoted its own goals for the good of the "lower classes" and welfare programs were viewed as a cost benefit to minimize the potential for future crime, violence and more costly corrections facilities by diverting troubled youth. The belief remained that work provided the corrective approach to training which would yield a youth to support society and feed its demands through the production of "industrious and compliant workers" (Bullen, 1990, 109).

Voluntary Societies were given broad powers to remove children from neglectful parents with foster care as the preferred method of caring for these children. By 1912 there were sixty Societies in existence in Ontario. The Associated Children's Aid Societies of Ontario was founded, which later became the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS). The OACAS was established to co-ordinate the



work of all the Societies and promote the welfare of children.

Foster homes, like the Societies, functioned on a voluntary bases. The foster home provided for the child's basic needs while the child's own work and industry was considered sufficient preparation for adulthood. It wasn't until the 1930's that attempts were made to select specific foster homes for individual children and foster parent received payment for the cost of care provided to the foster children (MCSS, 1979, 3).

The CAS searched for suitable foster home through advertisements in religious and philanthropic newspapers. Placement arrangements focussed upon the maternal and nurturing aspects emphasizing consultation with the foster mother. The foster father was treated as a consenting party (Bullen, 1990, 119).

Early foster contracts required the family to provide food, clothing, shelter, and training in work, religion, and hygiene. The child was expected to perform chores with the Society reserving the right to negotiate wages should the child's productivity increase. In practice, the Society tended to demand little or no wages for the children in order to ensure maintenance of the placement.

The issue of reliance on work to mold the foster child and the lack of remuneration for foster parent expenses provided opportunity for exploitation of foster children. The work ethic was combined with

the notion that good Christian love would provide for the needs of the neglected children with no expectation of payment. Indeed, the potential of financial support was feared as a detrimental attraction to selfish people who would care for children only for the money.

The Children of Unmarried Parents Act and the Adoption Act were passed in 1921 to provide for the welfare of unwed mothers and their children and for the adoption of children. The theme of removing children from the debilitating affects of pauperism did not change until the late 1940's when it was reported by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services that:

"the governing principle is that only after all other measures have failed, should the child be removed from its own home. Even then, many children are given temporary care only, until other means are found to reestablish them with their own family" (MCSS, 1981, 13).

In 1954 and 1965 a new Child Welfare Act was passed which provided for the provincial government's direct responsibility for the delivery of child welfare services. Local, provincial, and national foster parent associations began to develop in the late 1960's. The Associations provided channels for concern, support networks, and advocacy for changes within the foster care system.

Since the 1940's, child welfare has become both child centered and family centered (Hartman and Laird, 1985). However, the tradition of child welfare practice which has emerged this century continues to be one of delivering services to the needy with only recent acknowledgment of the possibility of systemic abuse or the loss of

rights among its client group. Rappaport (1981) points out that "the helping professions were the front-line soldiers in an army that would benevolently care for the poor, the retarded, the mentally ill, and the downtrodden" (10-11).

Attempts to reorient child welfare's approach to a family support model has required a redefinition of foster care from that of being parent replacements to parent partners. This reorientation was presumed to proceed without recognition of the foster parent's prior parental role and the reliance upon a philanthropic motivation which permitted only financial compensation for basic expenses.

Foster parents are currently withdrawing from service in sufficient numbers to undermine the entire child care network. Patricia Cautley (1980, 17) contends that one of the child welfare system's greatest limitations has been the withdrawal of foster parent's themselves from the system, necessitating replacement of the child. Malluccio (1973, 12-17) regards the entire system as dysfunctional because of this turnover, which contradicts the essential purpose of the placement: that is to give the child a secure home until return to their natural parent, if possible.

Cautley's observations are reinforced when examining the rate of foster parent withdrawal from service in Ontario. In 1982, there were approximately 6,619 foster homes open in Ontario. By 1989, the number of homes decreased to 4,919 representing a 33% decline. In 1988, 5436 children, 55% of all children in care, were placed in foster homes. This

represents a total of 2,120,346 foster days care for an approximate average of 431 days care for each open foster home ( OACAS/MCSS Working Group, 1989).

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The scholarly literature addressing the practice of foster parenting and child placement is quite extensive. Unfortunately, this literature tends to focus upon the "technology" of child placement rather than theoretical or conceptual issues which may have a fundamental impact upon practice. There are numerous methods of natal and foster family assessment, risk identification, separation and integration management, supervision, and child placement strategies which are reported. However, studies which assimilate current scholarship from related social science disciplines to develop relevant theoretical frameworks which have practice applications are much fewer. Consequently, this study was guided by literature borrowed from a number of disciplines in order to attempt to capture the vital concerns within the foster care arena.

The theoretical framework utilized for directing this study was a modified structural-functional approach. This approach has cross-disciplinary application relying upon contributions from the fields of History, Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, Political Science, and Social Work. The structural-functional approach is essentially a method of organizing information within a relational framework. It is a self-regulating, sociocultural equilibrium model which was first promulgated by anthropologists Emile Durkheim, Spencer, Radcliffe-Brown, Malinowski, and Marcel Mauss. (Harris, 1968)

This approach was introduced to Sociology through the extensive writing of Talcott Parsons and Gregory Bateson, an anthropologist by training who is credited with amalgamating structural-functionalism with cybernetics and general systems theory. This has provided the bases for the majority of systemic family therapies. (Leupnitz, 1988)

The structural-functional approach has been modified to address two conceptual weaknesses. These are its inability to address the issues of time and power. While the primary efficacy of the structural-functionalism is its ability to describe inter-relationships, it fails to concisely explain how the relationships came to be and how they are apt to look in the future. Indeed, it has been argued persuasively that outcomes cannot be predicted when change, either random or intended, occurs within the dynamic framework (Luepnitz, 1988, 160-167). Consequently, the structural-functional approach remains a static representation of current relational states and promotes an unrealistic sense of timelessness.

The preceding historical review of child abandonment and provisions for child care is intended to correct this flaw and place current child care practices within an historical context.

Secondly, structural-functionalism reflects the structural power paradigm prevalent within Sociological theory. Structuralists tend to support variations of the Elitist approach which contends that power

can only be considered within the context of a community where there are recurring relationships which limit the choice process. This stance, through emphasizing the macrosystem, ignores the equally compelling arguments of the behaviouralist school which promote a pluralistic perspective focussing upon the nature of the political choices made by individuals and groups, or the microcosm (Spruill, 1983).

The inability of structural-functionalism to identify with the individual motivating "forces", the microcosm, limits its ability to explain the affects of individual behaviours within social phenomenon. Addressing this behaviouristic aspect of the dynamic strengthens the framework enabling it to encompass features of the two prevailing power paradigms within political science literature, the structural and behaviouralist models.

Jonathon H. Turner (1988) has proposed a behavioral theory of social structure which addresses this weakness and provides a useful framework for organizing the motivational, interactional, and structuring processes within which role formation is linked. Turner's model accounts for the dynamic inter-relationships posited within the ecological literature by Bloom (1984), Germain and Gitterman (1980), Maidman (1984), and Hartman and Laird (1983). This study utilized the motivational and interactional processes within Turner's theory.

## TURNER'S MODEL AND MOTIVATIONAL PROCESSES

Most explanations of social behaviour contend that humans have a fundamental set of need-states which are viewed as the principle source of personal satisfaction. Behaviour is explained by its capacity to meet these basic needs. Extensions of this view provide for the creation, maintenance, and revision of social interactions and structures according to their ability to bestow gratification (1988, 356). Turner synthesizes a number of theoretical approaches in order to :

- (1) specify humans' basic need-states (motivational processes),
- (2) denote the emergent interpersonal processes that humans use to meet these needs, and
- (3) delineate how humans employ these interpersonal processes to create emergent social structures (1988, 357).

## MOTIVATIONAL PROCESSES

Snyder and Williams (1982) have categorized need satisfaction theories into three types: laundry lists, short lists or lists with a single member. The laundry list theories are defined as those with twenty (20) or more needs. Murray's (1938), for example, includes a number of common but non-universal needs.

The "shorter lists", such as Maslow's hierarchy and Alderfer's (1972) ERG (Existence, Relatedness, and Growth) theory, suggest a five or three tier hierarchy of needs. Lawler (1973) argues that a two tier



hierarchy consisting of physical self and phenomenal self are the most convincing delineations within self-theory.

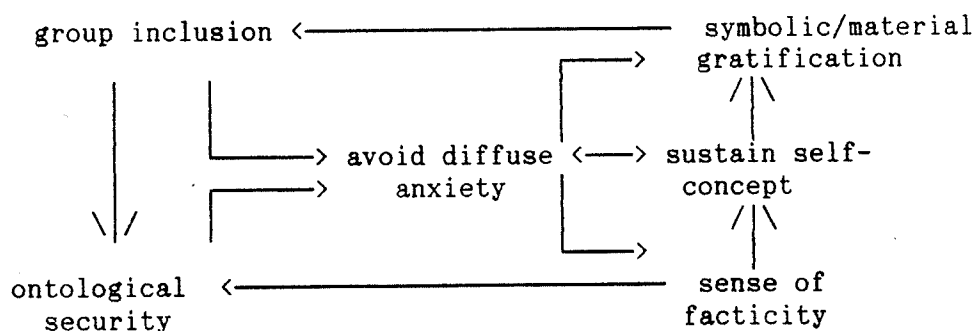
The "single member" lists include one dominant need which is attributed to initiate, focus, or maintain behaviour. Examples are the need for affiliation (Schacter, 1959), need for achievement (McClelland, 1961) and the need for efficacy or competence (White, 1959).

Turner has identified six motivational factors which, if unfulfilled during an interaction, produce a sense of deprivation and thereby mobilize individuals to act. These are (1) group inclusion, (2) ontological security, (3) facticity, (4) self-confirmation/affirmation, (5) material and symbolic gratification, and (6) avoidance of anxiety. Their definitions and inter-relationships are elaborated below:

The inter-relationship of these six motivational processes are illustrated below in Figure 1:

FIGURE 1

MOTIVATIONAL PROCESSES



(Turner, 1988, 360)

The feedback arrows indicate that there is a complex set of direct and indirect inter-relationships which describe some of the more important features of the behavioral bases for social interaction. Due to the interactional process, a change in one need state will ultimately affect the levels in the other five to a greater or lesser degree.

The need to avoid diffuse anxiety is positioned centrally and connected by a two-way feedback arrow to the need to sustain self-concept. The self-concept is pivotal in reducing or increasing anxiety levels. Anxiety is further mediated by the need for symbolic/material gratification and facticity.

Deprivations in these two need states "produce immediate frustration and anger, mobilizing cognitive reflection and the conscious expenditure of emotional and physical energy" according to Garfinkel (1967). Further, any reductions experienced in the needs for facticity and material/symbolic gratification will affect the needs for group inclusion and ontological security, their internal and external social worlds. As the diagram indicates, these two need states then increase the diffuse anxiety experienced by individuals.

The feedback arrows indicate that the basic needs of group inclusion, ontological security, and self-confirmation are mediated by the need to avoid diffuse anxiety. Need arising within these three areas may be revealed as discomfort or "free floating" anxiety with no determination that anything was "wrong"( Turner, 1988, 360).

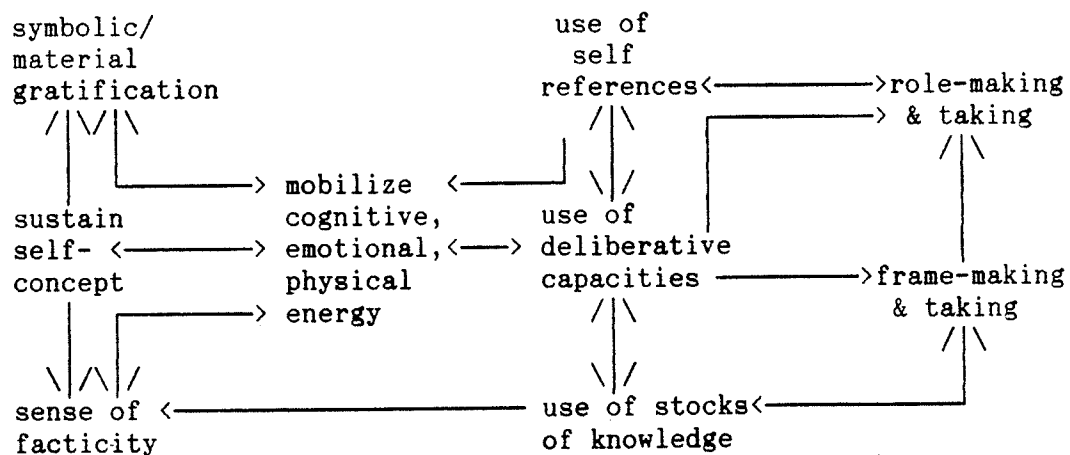
As the diagram indicates, the self is central to the social structuring process. Anxiety produces self doubt and this sense of failure will reduce the individual's capacity to feel a "goodness of fit" with their "world view". This feeling of incapacity or incompetence will affect the individual's need for symbolic/material gratification, facticity, and mobilize cognitive, emotional, and physical energy.

### INTERACTIONAL PROCESSES

The mobilization of cognitive, emotional, and physical energy affects the processes of role-making and taking as well as frame-making and taking. Turner (1988, 362) extrapolates the affects of the six motivational needs to five interactional processes illustrates below in Figure 2:

FIGURE 2

### INTERACTIONAL PROCESSES



(Turner, 1988, 360-361)

The individual's deliberative capacities modify and utilize stocks of knowledge and self references to achieve appropriate states of awareness and action to achieve a sense of affirmation. Role-making and taking are complementary to these actions as are frame-making and taking. Role-making and taking refers to the complex process of assuming a perspective which entails:

"co-presence, gestural perception and interpretation, inferential reasoning...cognitive restructuring of imagery, affective arousal, testing against further information derived from gestures and behaviour, and readjustment until the social act is complete" (Schwalbe, 1988, 416).

Frame-making and taking interacts with this process to create the:

"cognitive enclosuring of signaling and interpreting activities of individuals within delimited boundaries such that the range of relevant behavioural options in an interaction is reduced" (Turner, 1988, 363).

Social structure is simultaneously preserved and modified through this interaction.

Peter Marris identifies this process as a "conservative impulse." operating within human adaptation which allows for "structures of interpretation," which serve to categorize the world and placing meaning on the people and events from an individual's earliest cognitive moments. As a result, "We grow up as adaptable beings, able to handle a wide variety of circumstances, only because our sense of the meaning of life becomes more certainly consolidated" (1975, 13).

This conservative impulse, Marris argues, resembles the traditional notion of homeostasis, the body's attempt to maintain a balanced or steady state. Represented in this view is a basic inclination to preserve a core of familiarity in the midst of demands for change. However, he notes a paradoxical twist to this urge for stability:

" Without confidence in the continuity of our purposes and sense of the regularity of social behavior, we cannot begin to interpret the meaning of any event. But unless we are also ready to revise our purposes and understanding we may be led to actions which are fatally misconceived."

This leads to a fundamental principle regarding change: healthy adaptation requires one to establish boundaries but to see those boundaries as changeable. Weick (1983) observes that change is affected, but not controlled by social roles. Roles may enhance the opportunity for change by presenting challenges. They may also interfere with growth by disguising the personal self to such an extent that change is seen as possible only within the confines of a social role, or squelched because of social dictates (131-137).

Whereas there is simultaneous feedback hypothesized among the interactional processes noted above, the cognitive component is emphasized through a feedback arrow from the use of stocks of knowledge to the motivational need for facticity. This underscores the value of cognitive activity to link the macro world with the individual.

## SOCIAL STRUCTURES

### Group Inclusion

Foster parents are members of families, organizations, and associations. While it is implicit that all family members are affected by the presence of foster children, the literature is silent about the nature of this involvement (Carbino, 1980). It is believed that the foster father does play a significant role within foster care activity with regard to decision-making and disciplining the foster child. An understanding of the balance of responsibilities between spouses is important to any considerations of the future of foster care (Davids, 1980).

Each spouse could affect the foster placement significantly depending upon their level of involvement in foster care decision-making such as commencing or terminating a placement, disciplining the child(ren), planning and or participating in extra-curricular activities, training, or case conferences. Their self-perceptions and perceptions of social workers and the child's biological family affect the sense of group inclusion (Jones, 1975).

The placing agencies tend to continue to view foster parents as parents rather than colleagues or team members (Benson & Kline, 1970). The Future of Foster Care Report (B.C.F.F.P.A.,1988, p.119) concludes that the "team approach" to child care is an often quoted expression that is, many times, not followed.

Foster parent organizations are credited with increased professionalization and use of collective power on behalf of their membership. Their goals tend to focus upon foster care standards, education, support, remuneration, and foster parent rights (Andersen, 1971; Close, 1971; Hunzeker, 1973). The level of support foster parent organizations experience at the grass roots level has not been documented. Consequently, the influence of the Association's activities on foster parents has yet to be documented (Carbino, 1980).

#### Ontological Security

Carbino (1980, 17) notes that though foster parent education and training programs are prevalent, the variation in content, quality, availability, and utilization is significant. She questions the purpose, design, evaluation and outcomes of foster parent education.

In addition to the concerns regarding curriculum, issues regarding accessibility require exploration. Barriers to acquiring training include time and location, level of financial support, and availability of child care. While it is acknowledged that training is crucial to role maintenance and development, no training need surveys or comprehensive education strategies have been identified. The OACAS report (1988, 5-7) acknowledges that role identification and clarification must be addressed prior to a coordinated approach to foster care training.

## Facticity

Facticity is a term used to express a sense of common objective and subjective worlds. Role ambiguity occurs when there are perceptual differences between these worlds. This ambiguity was reflected throughout the foster care literature (Maluccio, 1973). Factors involved included the actual role definition as well as professional attitudes, board rates, legal rights, and placement agreements. The conception of the foster parent's role ranged from adoptive parent (Jaffee & Kline, 1970), social work colleague to client (Mcfadden, 1985).

The literature is silent about the role of the foster father. This phenomenon has also been noted within family therapy literature by feminist family therapists. Many contend that family theory does not adequately address the role of the father within the family dynamic. (Luepnitz, 1988)

New roles are being introduced for foster parents which emphasize the development and management of foster care services. These include recruitment, orientation, and support of new foster parents through foster parent associations. Foster service activities include provision of treatment home services, support for biological parent(s), and integration with Agency operations through Board or committee involvement (Carbino, 1980).



### Self-Confirmation/Affirmation

Compton and Galloway (1975) have identified the use of the self as one of the crucial skills as a practitioner within the human services. Feelings of self worth are thought to have a positive affect upon job performance (Spector, 1985). Objective situations are perceived by self-theorists as opportunities or threats to the fundamental enhancement of the self (Snyder & Williams, 1982). Foster parent research literature is silent about the relationship of self-satisfaction or self-esteem on the fostering experience.

### Symbolic and Material Gratification

There is considerable variation in the valuation of foster care services. Payments tend to fluctuate according to local conditions, agency policy, and subjective assessment of the child(ren)'s or foster parent's requirements. While the financing of foster care has been characterized as inconsistent, it is generally acknowledged that payments are generally below the actual costs of care and do not address compensation for the actual parenting service (Culley, Settles, & Van Name, 1977; Specht, 1975).

### Avoidance of Diffuse Anxiety

Anxiety and stress has not been examined within the context of foster parenting. However, considerable research has focused upon the impact of stress within the helping professions (Barrett & McKelvey,

1980; Daley, 1979; Freudenberg, 1977; Harrison, 1980). Since stress is an underlying bases for adaptive change; stress, in itself, is not a negative factor. The capabilities of the motivational and interactional processes are enlisted to meet demands which are viewed as stressful. The consequence of an effective coping response is the reduction or elimination of stress. If coping is ineffective, then stress may persist or even increase. Continued severe stress can lead to psychological, physiological, or social impairment (Germain, 1981).

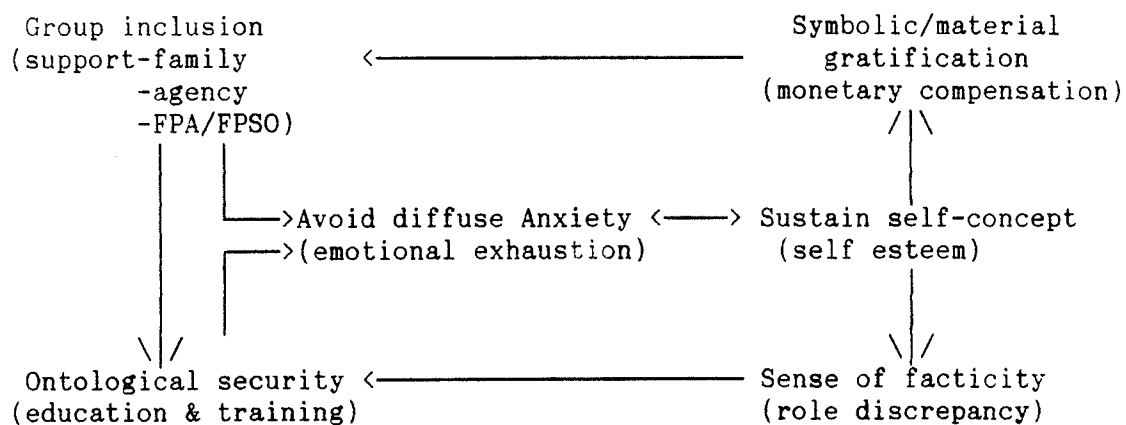
The British Columbia Report on the Future of Foster Care (1987) states that the current child welfare practice of maintaining the family unit and only removing children under the most serious circumstances, coupled with complex and multiple societal problems, has resulted in "an increasingly larger proportion of more "damaged" children being placed in care. These children exhibit more difficult behaviours requiring more skills in special care giving" (119).

The Saskatchewan Child in Care Review (1988) cites the "need to take a temporary break from foster parenting" as one of the two most frequent reasons for leaving fostering. The high stress level and potential negative impact of fostering upon the foster family were emphasized in foster parent interviews (46).

These six foster care categories can be integrated within Turner's theoretical framework as shown on the next page in Figure 3:

FIGURE 3

MOTIVATIONAL PROCESSES AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES



The foster parent's role is hypothesized to reflect a composite of the six fundamental elements in an equilibrium as described above. The influence of these elements on the production and reproduction of structured social relations which we identify as roles will be examined in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A need identification and assessment model was adopted as it has the capacity to reflect the six motivational processes discussed in the previous chapter. Due to its interactive nature with the target population, it also had the potential to contribute to the development of feasible solutions to any need discrepancies identified. This model recognizes a need where there is a discrepancy between intent and outcome. An assessment of the extent of need discrepancy also examines the options available for adjustments within the six motivational forces in order to attain role stability.

The primary stakeholder of this research project was the Foster Parent Society of Ontario, FPSO. The Society became officially incorporated in July 1990. Prior to that time the organization had operated under the corporate umbrella of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS). While there were diverse reasons for choosing to form a separate corporation, the fundamental issue was the need for foster parents to maintain a distinct identity with a different mission from that of the OACAS. The mission of the FPSO was to represent the interests of foster parents as care providers within the provincial child care system.

The new Society was able to utilize this study's findings to make decisions about program priorities and implementation strategies. The

assessment can also be utilized for advocacy in report preparation and funding proposals.

This study contributed to a definition of the foster parents role, identified some of the need dynamics to achieve role stability, and explored a scholarly research approach to understand the role of the foster parent.

## METHODOLOGY

Any one method of need analysis is considered to provide a partial view of the problem area. Many recommend a convergent analysis which depends upon more than one instrument or methods of identifying needs (Siegal, 1978; Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Crano, 1981). More methods can identify the need more fully and off set biases inherent to every approach in an effort to enhance accuracy.

The survey gathered data from foster parents who were members of local Foster Parent's Associations or were Regional representatives. A key informant survey was also conducted to provide additional foster parent information regarding their leaderships' concerns. Key informants are defined as opportunistically connected individuals with the knowledge and ability to report on community needs. Hagedorn (1977) suggests that a sample of 10-15 is adequate for this type of survey.

The survey utilized a non-probability sampling approach which explored the views of the Association and Regional representatives regarding issues which affect all foster parents. While the entire population of foster parent leadership within the provincial Society was surveyed, the results cannot be generalized to the complete membership due to their unavoidable exclusion from the sampling process.

## INSTRUMENTATION

The Foster Parent Need Identification Survey utilized Turner's relational framework for the six motivational forces which he had identified as contributing to role formation. These motivational forces formed the bases for the need identification model. The variables were operationally defined as the scores within specific motivational categories of the survey instrument.

The survey consisted of three 8" x 14" double-sided pages. Each page requested information from either the foster family or each spouse where applicable. The first section requested demographic information which described the marital status, location, family size, and accommodation of the foster family.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status:  single  
 common-law  
 married

Residence:  apartment  
 house:  rent  
 own  
 other: \_\_\_\_\_  
(specify)

How many children do you have for which you are the legal guardian (natural, adopted, custody)? \_\_\_\_\_

Success in fostering is associated with a constellation of factors rather than one specific criterion. Indicators of success are the length of fostering, the willingness to make long-term care commitments, and to assume responsibility for special-needs children or to become

specialized (George, 1970; Kraus, 1971; Cautley & Aldridge, 1975). The following questions attempt to model these criteria for success:

How many years have you been open as a foster home? \_\_\_\_\_ Yrs.

Approximately, how many foster children have you cared for during that time? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of foster care do you presently provide? Check as many as applicable:

Regular                       Receiving  
 Treatment                     Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you plan to continue fostering on a long term bases?

Yes  No  Don't know

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of Agency usually places children with you? (Mark as many as applicable)

Children's Aid Society  
 Children's Mental Health Centre  
 Association for Community Living  
 MCSS - Probation Services (YOA)

The need for symbolic or material gratification was assessed in the following questions. There are various rate structures and compensation approaches provided to foster parents. These questions attempted to gain a direct assessment of the foster parent's perspective of the adequacy of their compensation package from a global perspective. More specificity was requested in determining whether the foster parent should receive additional compensation for the type and age of child receiving care.



Do you think that the current foster care rate covers the actual costs of maintaining a foster child? (Mark one)

Yes  No  Don't know

What amount do you think is a realistic rate? \$ \_\_\_\_\_/DAY

Should the foster rate vary for the child's age? (Mark one)

Yes  No If yes, what should the age groups and rates be?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Should the foster rate vary for the child's special need? (Mark one)

Yes  No If yes, how much more? \$ \_\_\_\_\_/DAY or  
 negotiable dependent upon need. (Mark one)

The need for group inclusion and ontological security was reflected within the following questions. The perceptions of the foster parents were requested regarding the number within their family who were actual participants within the fostering experience. This revealed the level of involvement each family member has as partners in care taking. The number involved within the family identified those who required training or support as the actual fostering unit.

The availability and location of the training courses indicates the degree and level of support for skill acquisition within the community. This is a measure of the level of facticity and ontological security foster parents were apt to experience.

Who should attend foster parent training sessions? (Mark one or more)

Father  Mother  Children  Family

Are there foster parenting courses available in your community?

Yes  No  Don't know

If your answer was YES, what organization(s) delivers the courses?

(Mark one or more)

Community College

University

Agency

Foster Parent Association

The following questions focused upon key fostering activities and identified the level of involvement and dynamics between family members who shared in the fostering experience. These questions attempted to clarify the roles of all family members.

In your family, who makes the final decision about beginning or terminating a foster placement? (Mark one)

Mother  Father  Both  Whole Family

As a rule, who deals with the foster child(ren)'s unacceptable behaviour? (Mark one)

Mother  Father  Varies equally  Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Generally, who takes the foster child(ren) to appointments ie. medical, therapy, court etc.? (Mark one)

Mother  Father  Varies equally  Agency worker

Who attends Agency meetings to discuss the foster child(ren)'s placement and future plans for care? (Mark one)

Mother  Father  Varies equally  Both  Neither

Who takes the foster child(ren) to extra-curricular activities such as sports, youth groups, or visits? (Mark one)

Mother  Father  Varies equally  Both  Other

The role of the Foster Parent Association as a potential or current source of support, leadership, or protection as identified in the need for group inclusion was examined below. Key activities were suggested which may be broadly grouped as educational, political, and administrative.

Do you support your local Foster Parent Association? (Mark one)

Yes  No If not, why: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What issues do you think the provincial Foster Parent Association should address?

Below are some suggested responses. Please mark in the space provided how much you agree or disagree with each suggestion. There are five possible responses; 1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Undecided 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree:

1. Develop educational materials and training opportunities for foster parents.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
SA A U D SD

2. Develop provincial policy to guide local Association activity.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
SA A U D SD

3. Lobby government to protect and promote foster parents' rights.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
SA A U D SD

4. Advocate for increased foster rates.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
SA A U D SD

5. Design and implement accreditation standards to increase foster parent professionalization.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
SA A U D SD

6. Clarify the foster parent's legal status to the foster child.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
SA A U D SD

Please add any other suggestions that have not been included above: \_\_\_\_\_

Each spouse maintains an individual perspective of the fostering experience which impacts the family's experience. The following questions were intended to provide brief demographic information and information regarding the foster parent's perceived role and interest in training activities.

SPOUSE

Gender: \_\_\_Male \_\_\_Female Year Born: \_\_\_\_\_

Education: \_\_\_High School Year Completed: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_University Degree(s) Obtained: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_Other: Specify \_\_\_\_\_

GENERALLY, HOW DO YOU PERCEIVE YOUR ROLE AS A FOSTER PARENT ?

Below are some possible responses. Please mark in the space provided the response which best matches your viewpoint. There are FIVE possible responses;

1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Undecided 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree:

1. I am a parent to the foster child. The foster child is treated the same as I would treat my own children.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
SA A U D SD

2. I am a service provider in partnership with the Agency to deliver child care services for foster child(ren)'s who need special care and support.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
SA A U D SD

3. I am a member of the Agency's child care team which shares responsibility for the foster child(ren)'s care.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
SA A U D SD

4. I am an assistant to the foster child(ren)'s natural family. When times are difficult, I help out by taking care of the their child(ren) and providing whatever support I can to them.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
SA A U D SD

Please enter any additional comments about your foster parent role in the space provided \_\_\_\_\_

The following questions focused upon the specific issues of self-esteem, anxiety, burn-out, and self-concept which were identified in Turner's motivational model as crucial within the process of role-formation.

The item "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself" was selected as a global indicator of self esteem. A correlational study of self esteem item scores (Zacharias, 1985) indicated that self satisfaction registered the strongest correlation with a global score of .8759.

Jayaratne, Chess, and Kunkel (1986) measured burnout by the single item "Are You burned out?" and a 7-point response format excluding the never category. This item originally formed part of the Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment subscales of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1979, 59-62). As this item has a factor loading of .81 with the full scale of Emotional Exhaustion, this item stood alone within the questionnaire as a reasonable rating of emotional exhaustion. The item was reframed within the first person as "Generally, I feel burned out." with a four point likert scaling excluding the neutral response.

Please mark in the space provided how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. There are FOUR possible responses; 1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Disagree 4 Strongly Disagree

1. As a foster parent, my services are valued by the placing Agency.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Strongly Agree      Agree              Disagree      Strongly Disagree

2. The Agency Social Worker(s) provide the support I need as a foster parent.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Strongly Agree      Agree              Disagree      Strongly Disagree

3. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Strongly Agree      Agree              Disagree      Strongly Disagree

4. Generally, I feel burned out.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Strongly Agree      Agree              Disagree      Strongly Disagree

The following questions were intended to identify specific training barriers noted by the foster parent including the individual's interest in training. The training options which were listed may be grouped into the broad categories of (traditional) parenting, collegial, fostering, and treatment/specialized roles.

Have you taken any foster parenting courses? (Mark one)

Yes  No

ARE THERE ANY DIFFICULTIES IN ATTENDING FOSTER PARENT TRAINING COURSES ?

Below are some possible responses. Please mark the response which best fits your experience. There are FIVE possible responses: 1 Strongly Agree 2 Agree 3 Undecided 4 Disagree 5 Strongly Disagree

1. The subjects in the training courses are not relevant to my needs.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
SA A U D SD

2. The training sessions are not offered at a convenient time or location.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
SA A U D SD

3. Child care is not available to permit my attendance.

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
SA A U D SD

Please enter any additional comments in the space provided \_\_\_\_\_

Listed below are some suggested training topics. Please indicate your interest in them by marking the appropriate response. There are five possible responses: 1 Very Interested 2 Interested 3 Undecided 4 Disinterested 5 Very Disinterested

1. Child Development and Age Appropriate Behaviour

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
VI I U D VD

2. Disciplining Your Child

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
VI I U D VD

3. Separation and Attachment

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
VI I U D VD

4. Blended Families: Natural and Foster Children Issues

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
VI I U D VD

5. Ethnic Identity (culture specific)

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
VI I U D VD

6. Communicating with Other Professionals: Teachers, Physicians,  
Social Workers

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
VI I U D VD

7. Working with the Natural Family

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
VI I U D VD

8. Specialized Foster Care: Specific Treatment Topics (emotional  
disturbance, developmentally handicapped, physical abuse, sexual  
abuse, substance abuse)

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
VI I U D VD

9. Understanding Agency Policy

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
VI I U D VD

10. Legal Aspects of Fostering: Rights and Responsibilities

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
VI I U D VD

The instrument was designed to be brief, easy to complete and understand, as well as affordable to administer and process. These factors were balanced with the need to meet the project's study objectives.

## SAMPLE SURVEY AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The Foster Parent Society of Ontario represents 56 local foster parent associations sharing the same boundaries as the 56 Children's Aid Societies operating within Ontario. The local foster parent associations are organized into 21 regions. Each region has one representative which sits on the FPSO Board of Directors.

There were 51 functioning local foster parent associations and 19 functioning regional representatives at the time of the survey. All regional representatives and local association Presidents were included in the survey. In addition, three survey forms were forwarded to each of the 51 local association Presidents, one form was to be completed by themselves and the other two forms were for distribution to two additional members chosen at the discretion of the President. Membership lists remain the property of the local association and are not directly accessible to the regional representatives.

The total number of surveys distributed were as follows:

19	Regional
150	Association
169	Total

A three part survey was mailed with a letter of transmittal from the President of the Foster Parent Society of Ontario. The first part dealt with the families fostering experience and was to be completed jointly by the family. The second and third parts were to be completed by each spouse or co-foster parent, where applicable. These parts



addressed the individual experiences of each foster partner. A stamped return envelope was included with the survey forms.

Two follow-up letters from the FPSO President were mailed at one week intervals following the initial mailing.

The survey emphasized the anonymity of the respondents and urged honest and frank answers. No identifying material was requested and the forms were not pre-coded other than the separation of regional and local association responses by form colour.

All association and regional representatives received a summary of the survey responses and had the opportunity to provide any additional relevant information or observations.

The questionnaire was pretested on two occasions with the Executive of the Foster Parent Association. As a result of the pretesting, the survey was reduced in scope and content due to its length and difficulty to complete. The final survey form was judged by all Regional representatives to reflect the key issues which concerned their organization.

CHAPTER IV

SURVEY RESULTS AND NEED IDENTIFICATION

The survey responses was entered into a data base utilizing a Quatro Pro software package. The data base was sorted and combined utilizing descriptive statistical methods. The actual survey response rate is listed below in Table One according to the respondent's organizational category.

TABLE ONE

SURVEY RESPONSE RATE

ORGANIZATIONAL REPRESENTATION BY MARITAL STATUS

Marital Status	Regional	Association	Total
single	2	5	7
c/l	0	2	2
married	10	44	54
Total	12	51	63
Response rate	12/19	51/150	63/169
Per cent	63%	34%	37%
Spouse response			
male	10	44	54 (45%)
female	12	53	65 (55%)
Total	22	97	119 (100%)

The male respondents' average age was 45 and the female respondents' average age was 43.

## FOSTER PARENT EXPERIENCE

Success in fostering is associated with a constellation of factors rather than one specific criterion. Indicators of success are the length of fostering, the willingness to make long-term care commitments, and to assume responsibility for special-needs children or to become specialized. (George, 1970; Kraus, 1971; Cautley & Aldridge, 1975)

The 63 foster parent families who responded have cared for a total of 3238 children over a cumulative total of 623 years. On average, each family had cared for 51.4 foster children during a period of 9.8 years. Foster families also cared for, on average, three additional children for whom they were legal guardians. Figure 4 below illustrates this distribution.

FIGURE 4

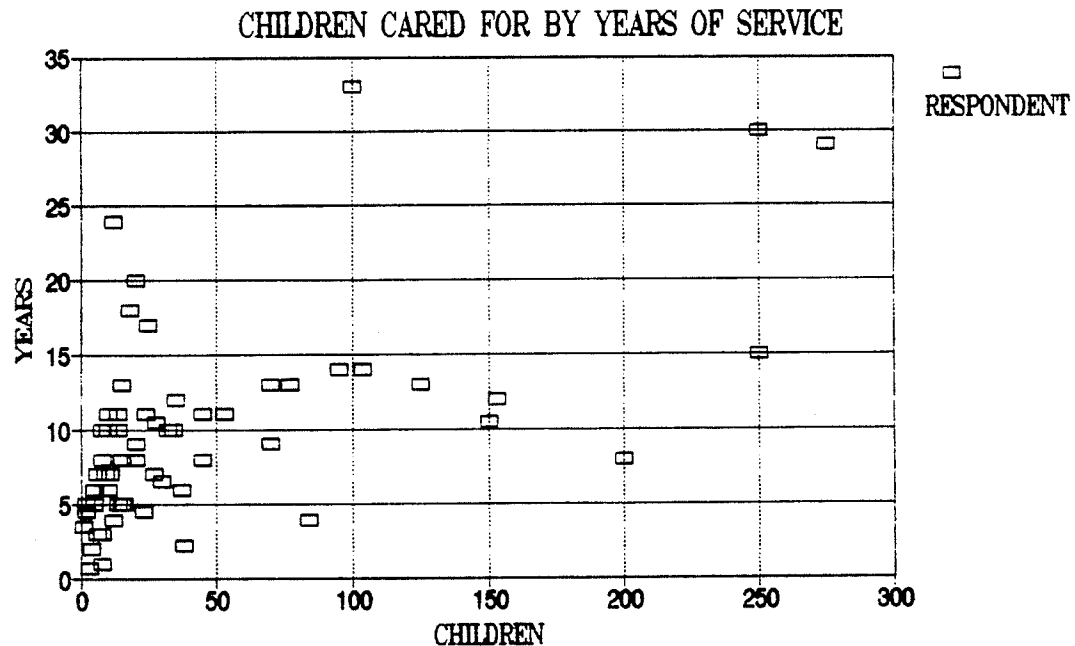
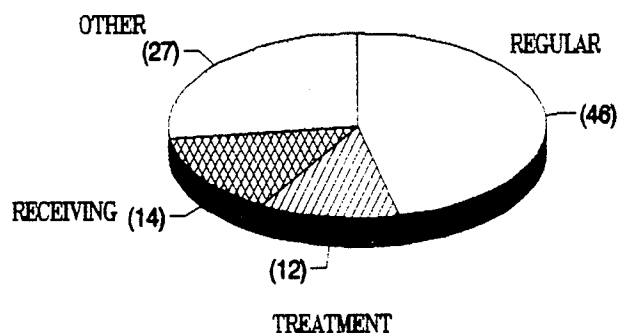


Figure 5 below shows the type of foster care respondents provided. The largest category of care was regular foster care; however, the majority of foster parents provided specialized services such as receiving and treatment. The category "other" includes caring for handicapped, teen, and/or sexual abused children.

FIGURE 5

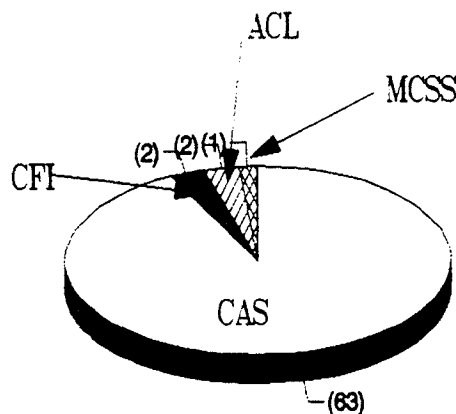
TYPE OF FOSTER CARE



The major placing agency was the Children's Aid Society (CAS) as Figure 6 on the next page indicates. The other potential placement agencies were Child and Family Intervention (CFI), Association for Community Living (ACL), and Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS). These client groups were negligible in their representation as potential client groups. Child welfare placement policy remains a dominant influence upon the foster parents role due to the significant participation of the CAS as their "client".

FIGURE 6

TYPE OF PLACING AGENCY



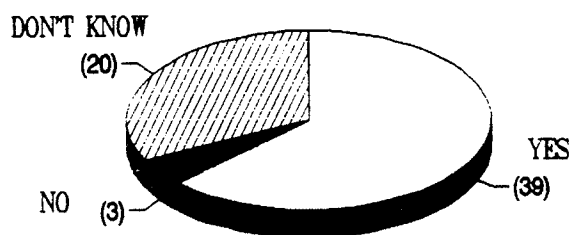
When asked if they planned to continue fostering on a long term bases, Figure 7 on the next page shows that 39 foster parents said they would while 20 didn't know. Only three foster families stated that they did not plan to continue. Comments explaining the ambivalence some had expressed about remaining in foster care were related to their age, increased personal concerns due to risk false allegations, and inadequate financial or personal compensation.

The foster parents average age is 45 for males and 43 for females. At this point in their life span, couples are beginning to plan for the future. Their own children tend to be in their teens and the prospect of retirement or sharing these last years with the immediate family assume greater meaning. There is also increased pressures

associated with taking in more severely disturbed children while having little legal protection in the event of an allegation of physical or sexual abuse. Foster parents feel vulnerable to such charges which could lead to expensive litigation and potential loss of employment.

FIGURE 7

DO YOU PLAN TO CONTINUE FOSTERING  
ON A LONG TERM BASES ?



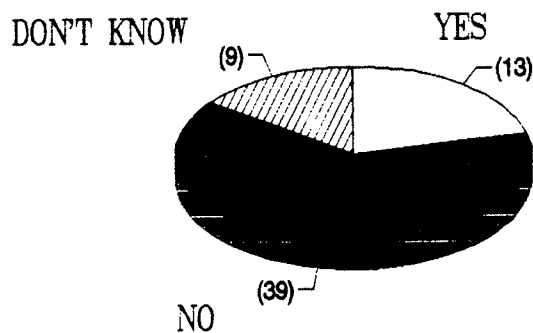
MONETARY COMPENSATION

The need for symbolic or material gratification was assessed by global questions about the level of compensation experienced by foster parents. There are various rate structures and compensation approaches provided to foster parents. These questions attempted to gain a direct assessment of the foster parent's perspective of the adequacy of their compensation package. More specificity was requested in determining

whether the foster parent should receive additional compensation for the type and age of the child receiving care.

FIGURE 8

DOES THE FOSTER CARE RATE  
COVER YOUR ACTUAL EXPENSES ?



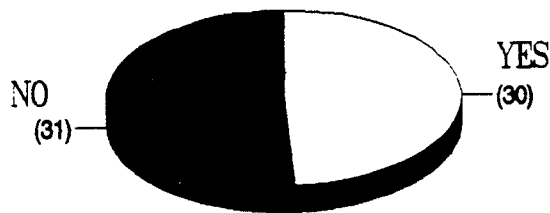
As figure 8 indicates, 64% of the respondents believed that they were not adequately reimbursed for their actual expenses associated with raising the foster child. An additional 15% were not sure if the foster care rate was adequate.

In 1989, foster parents received a rate increase to bring the minimum floor rate up to \$14.00 per day per child. The rate had been as low as \$7.45 per day previously. Even with these efforts in of pay policy, a strong perception remains that foster parents are undervalued.

Solutions to adequate monetary compensation are not as evident as Figure 9 below demonstrates. Half of the respondents believe that the rate should vary with the child's age while the other half believes it should not. Those that believed the rate should vary cited the specific demands of the developmental stages: infancy, latency, adolescence, and the teens. Others viewed each stage as representing its unique challenges and demands which required a uniform, adequate base rate.

FIGURE 9

SHOULD THE RATE VARY  
FOR THE CHILD'S AGE ?



Of the 62 families who responded to the question "Should the rate vary for the child's special need?", all but one agreed that the rate should vary and 53 believed that the rate should be negotiable dependent upon the nature of the need. Flexibility at the local level to



negotiate rates while ensuring adequate rates, indicates the need to develop uniform criteria for identifying and defining special needs on a provincial bases.

The need for flexibility to negotiate rates dependent upon need at the local level and the division regarding the influence of the child's developmental stages upon work load contributes to the dilemma of achieving a uniform provincial payment policy for the FPSO, placing agencies, and the Ontario government.

#### FAMILY SUPPORT

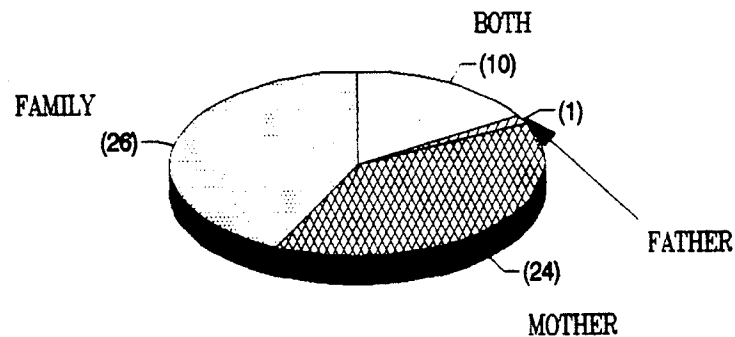
Features of group inclusion and ontological security were gathered through the perceptions of the foster parents who reported the number within their family who were actual participants within the fostering experience. All family members are considered, in varying degrees, to be partners in care taking. Those identified within the family as participants should be the focus for training or support as the identified fostering unit.

Key fostering activities were examined to identify the level of involvement between family members who share in the fostering experience. These questions attempt to clarify the contribution of all family members.

One of the most crucial decisions foster families make is the decision to accept or terminate a foster placement. As Figure 10 below indicates, whereas the mother maintains significant influence in this area, the family contributes to this decision. It would appear that the affect of the opinions voiced by the entire family must be recognized as affecting the viability of any foster placement.

FIGURE 10

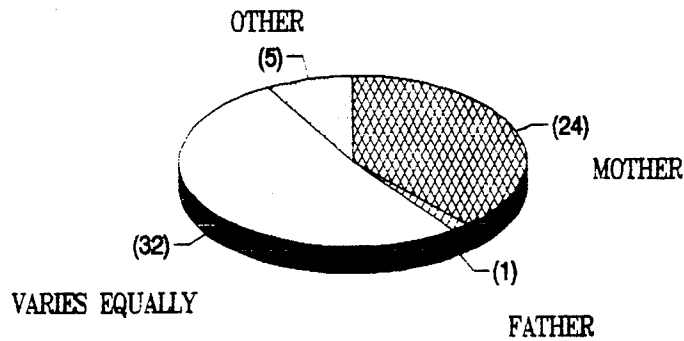
### FOSTER PLACEMENT DECISION MAKERS



The foster parents share behaviour management responsibility in the majority of situations as Figure 11 on the next page indicates. The mother maintained the greatest individual responsibility in this area. Others who participated were identified as other family members who shared in the delivery of behaviour management programs.

FIGURE 11

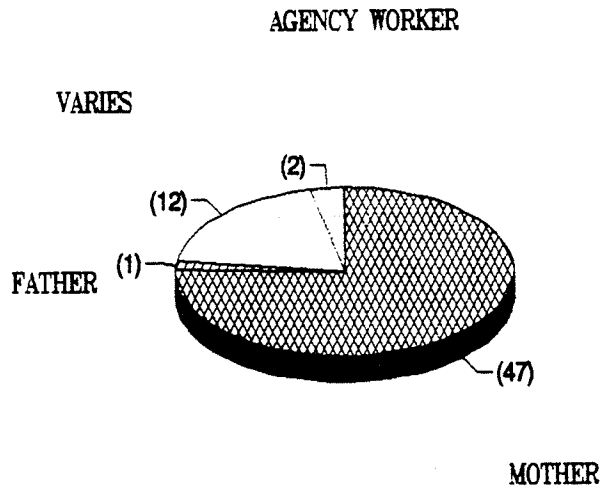
WHO DEALS WITH THE FOSTER CHILD(REN)'S UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR ?



The mother maintains most of the responsibility for taking the foster child(ren) to any appointments as Figure 12 below indicates.

FIGURE 12

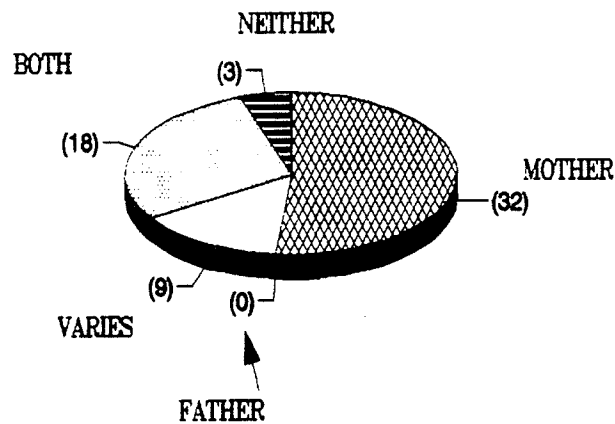
WHO TAKES THE FOSTER CHILD(REN) TO APPOINTMENTS ?



The mother also assumes the greatest responsibility for attending agency meetings to discuss the foster child(ren)'s plan of care. Figure 13 below does indicate that the father participate up to 46% of all occasions. Three respondents stated that neither foster parent attended agency meetings as they were never invited.

FIGURE 13

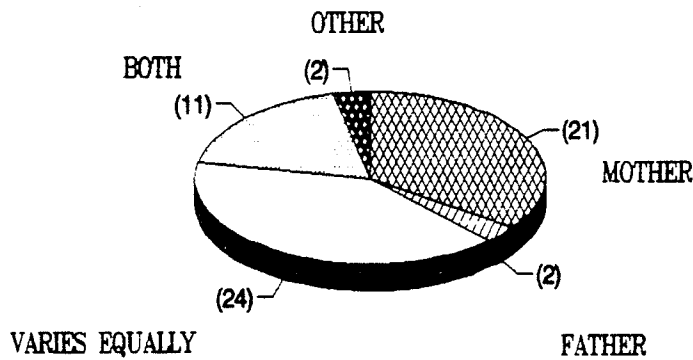
WHO ATTENDS AGENCY MEETINGS  
TO DISCUSS PLAN OF CARE ?



Both foster parents are involved in taking the foster children to extra-curricular activities. Figure 14 on the next page indicates that the mother continues to generally assume prime responsibility for this activity; however, there is sharing between the spouses on half of the occasions.

FIGURE 14

WHO TAKES THE FOSTER CHILD(REN)  
TO EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ?

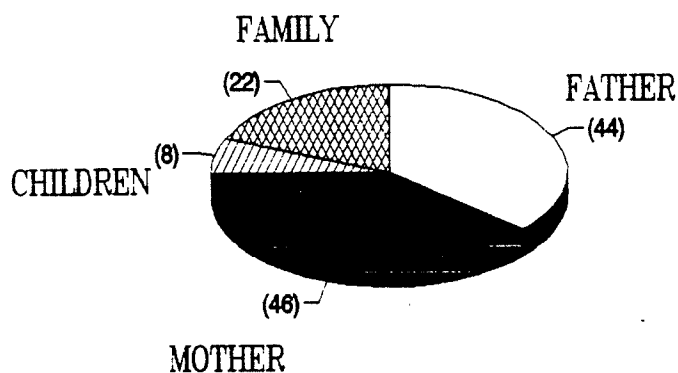


Generally, the mother tends to assume the leadership role in all fostering activities reviewed. However, the father and the family provide a significant contribution in decision-making, managing behaviour, reviewing plans of care, and participating in extra-curricular activities.

Figure 15 on the next page indicates that most respondents believed that the father and the mother should participate in training classes. A significant minority (18%) felt that the entire family should also participate in training. In view of the contribution of the foster family to the child care effort, this view should receive support.

FIGURE 15

### WHO SHOULD ATTEND FOSTER PARENT TRAINING ?



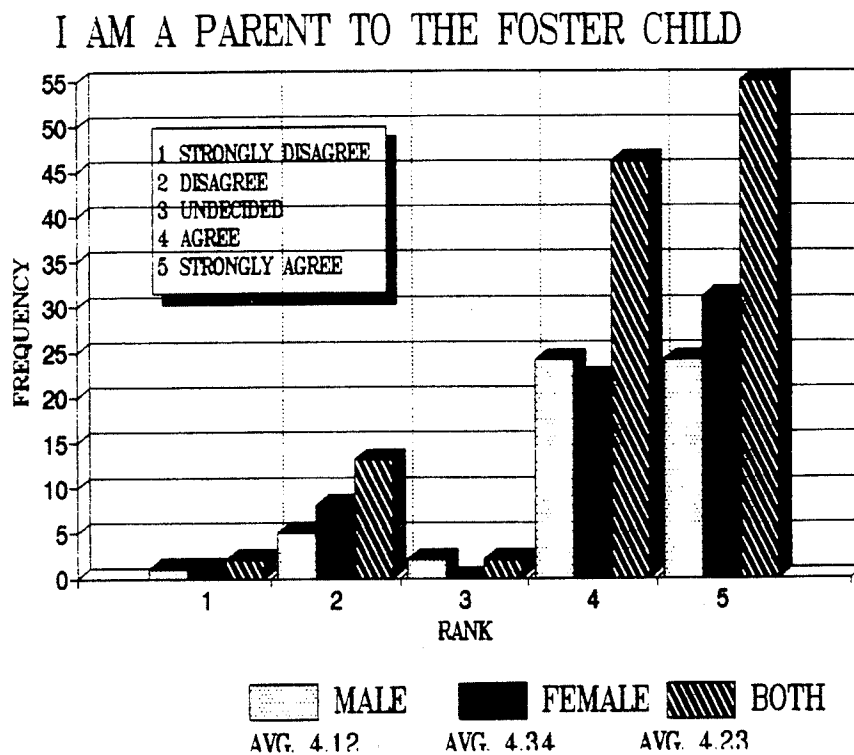
### FOSTER PARENT SELF PERCEPTIONS

Each spouse maintains an individual perspective of the fostering experience which affects the family's experience. These views were examined within the context of the foster parent's perceived role, self-concept, agency relationship and interest in training activities.

Spouses were asked to rank their level of (dis)agreement with four common foster parent roles. These roles were parent, service provider, child care team member, and assistant to the natural family. These roles represented the continuum from the inclusive to exclusive fostering views described earlier.

The responses to the statement, "I am a parent to the foster child. The foster child is treated the same as I would treat my own child." are illustrated in Figure 16 below.

FIGURE 16

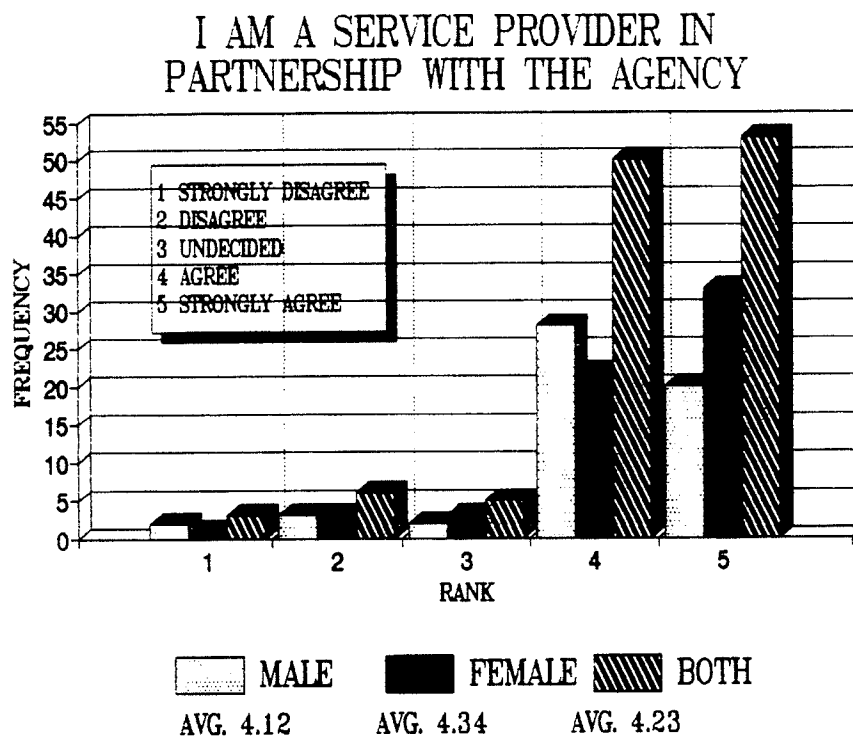


This view receives a solid approval rating of 4.17 out of a maximum of 5. Both spouses, on average, agree with this view though the female respondents have fewer undecided responses.

The spouses reported the greatest agreement for the statement, "I am a service provider in partnership with the agency to deliver child care services for foster child(ren) who need special care and support" reported in Figure 17 on the next page. The average

response was 4.23. However, the female respondents were most enthusiastic with this foster approach with approval at 4.34 whereas the male respondents were less enthusiastic with an average response of 4.12.

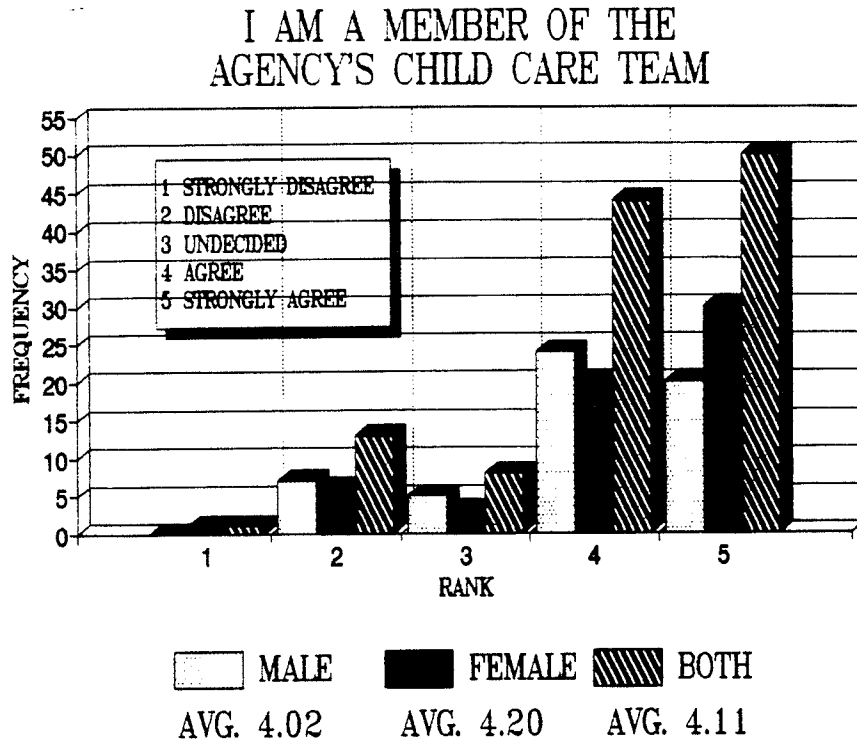
FIGURE 17



Foster parents remain in agreement with the statement "I am a member of the Agency's child care team which shares responsibility for the foster child(ren)'s care." The average approval rating in Figure 18 on the next page is a little lower at 4.11. The male respondent rating continues to decrease to 4.02 while the female respondent rating is similar to the parenting response at 4.2.

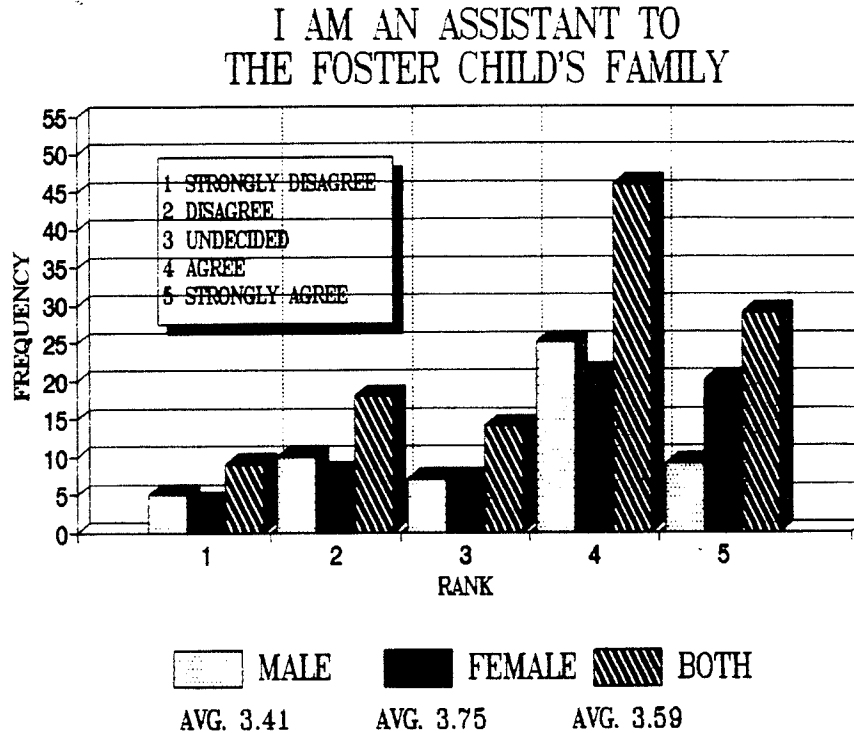


FIGURE 18



The lowest approval rating was received for the following statement, "I am an assistant to the foster child(ren)'s natural family. When times are difficult, I help out by taking care of their child(ren) and providing whatever support I can to them." The average rating was 3.59 with male respondents averaging 3.41 and female respondents 3.75. The responses are illustrated in Figure 19 on the next page.

FIGURE 19



While this role statement did receive marginal approval from all respondents, there is a tendency of male respondents to be more cautious in accepting this approach. The female respondents remain more positive in accepting all role options; however, there is a significant reduction in their enthusiasm for this view.

The variation in role preferences needs to receive careful consideration when developing child placement policy which may emphasize the notion of "shared care" or support to the natal family. The findings indicate that this model is the least preferred by the

foster parents. It is also important to note that eleven of the 62 female respondents or 18% commented that they experienced a sense of powerlessness within their role.

The following Figures 20 and 21 show the separate role responses of female and male respondents. Among female respondents, the role of service provider is the most favoured followed by child care team member, then parent, and finally assistant to the natural family. The male respondents demonstrate their preference for the role of parent followed by similar ranking to that of the female respondents.

FIGURE 20

FOSTER PARENT ROLES: FEMALE RESPONDENTS

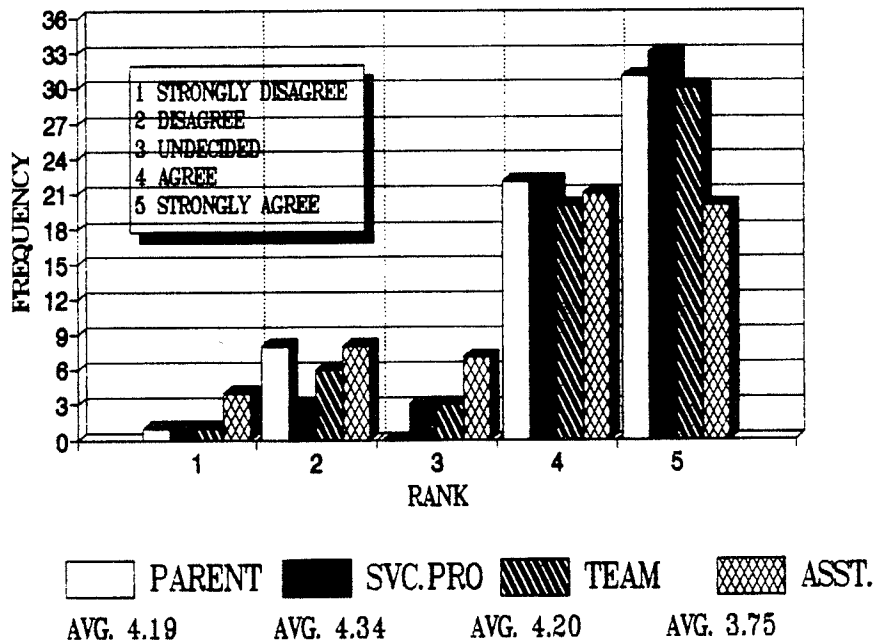
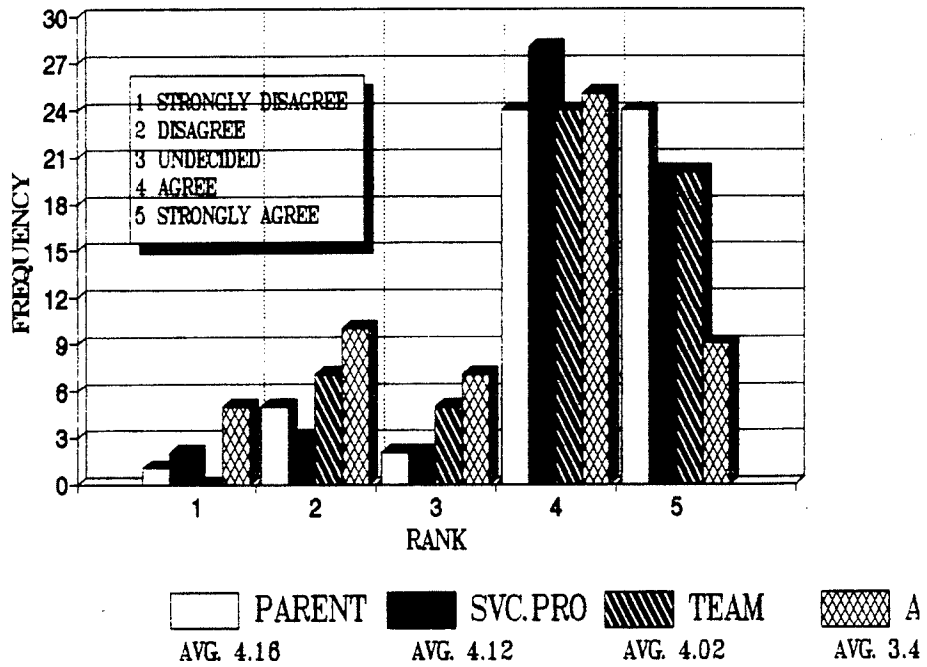


FIGURE 21

FOSTER PARENT ROLES: MALE RESPONDENT



Specific issues such as the degree of agency support, amount of perceived service value, self-esteem, and burn-out were examined. These factors are identified in Turner's motivational model as crucial within the process of role-formation.

Foster parents expressed a positive view of the degree their services are valued by the placing agency as figure 22 on the next page indicates. The average response was 3.08 out of a maximum of 4.00.

FIGURE 22

MY SERVICES ARE VALUED BY THE PLACING AGENCY

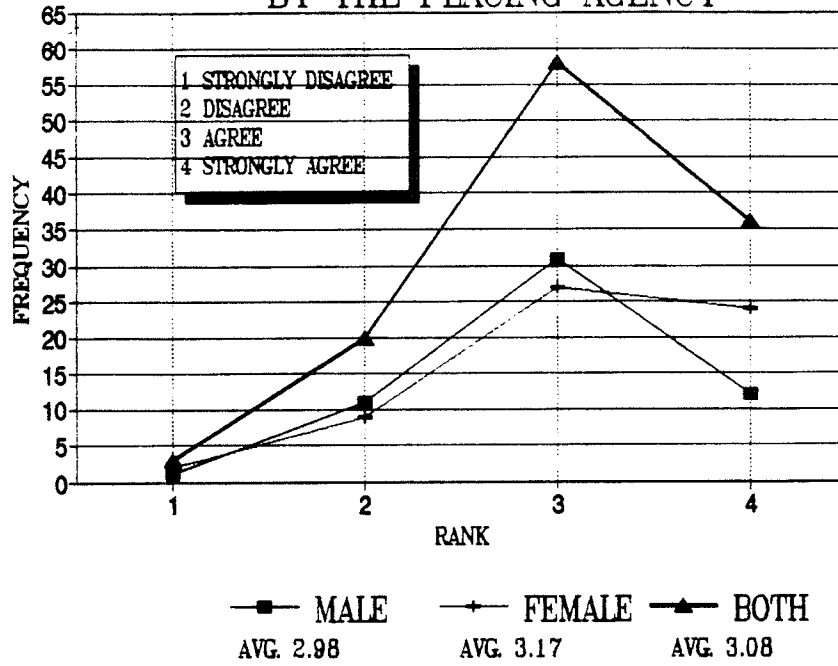
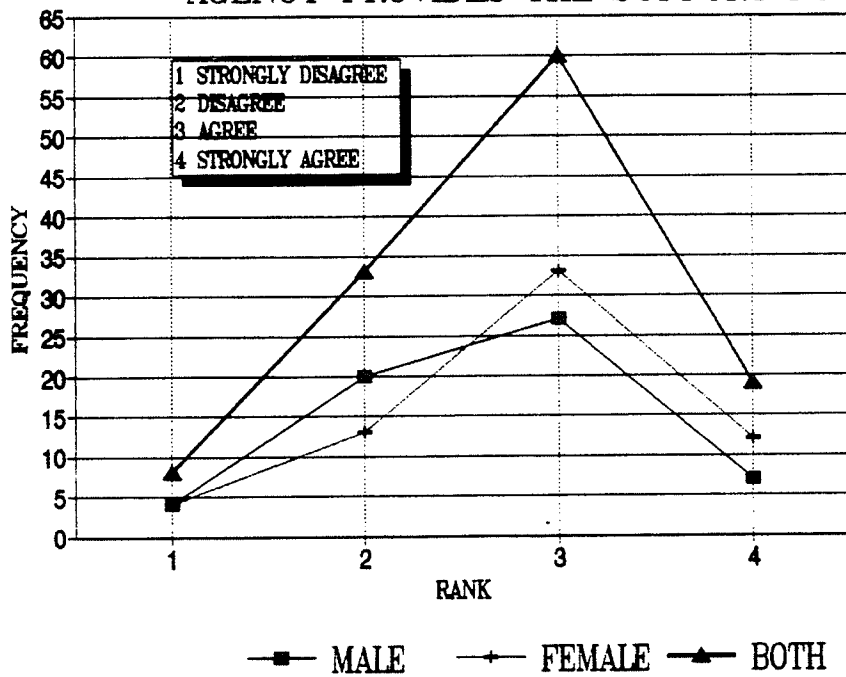


FIGURE 23

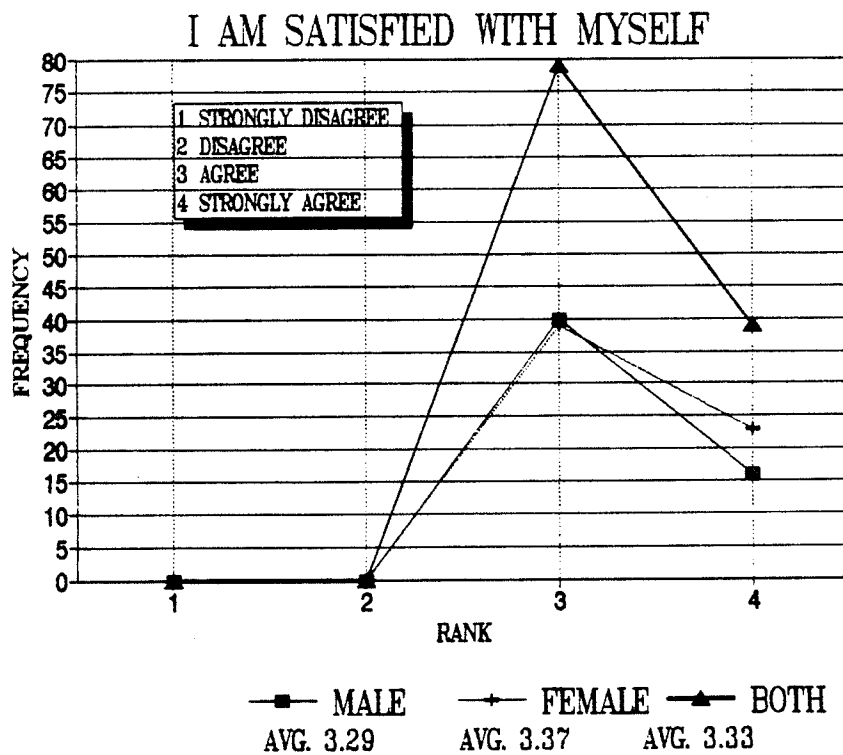
AGENCY PROVIDES THE SUPPORT I NEED



Agency social workers generally provided the support respondents needed with an average response of 2.75. There is more variation between gender responses as Figure 23 on the previous page illustrates.

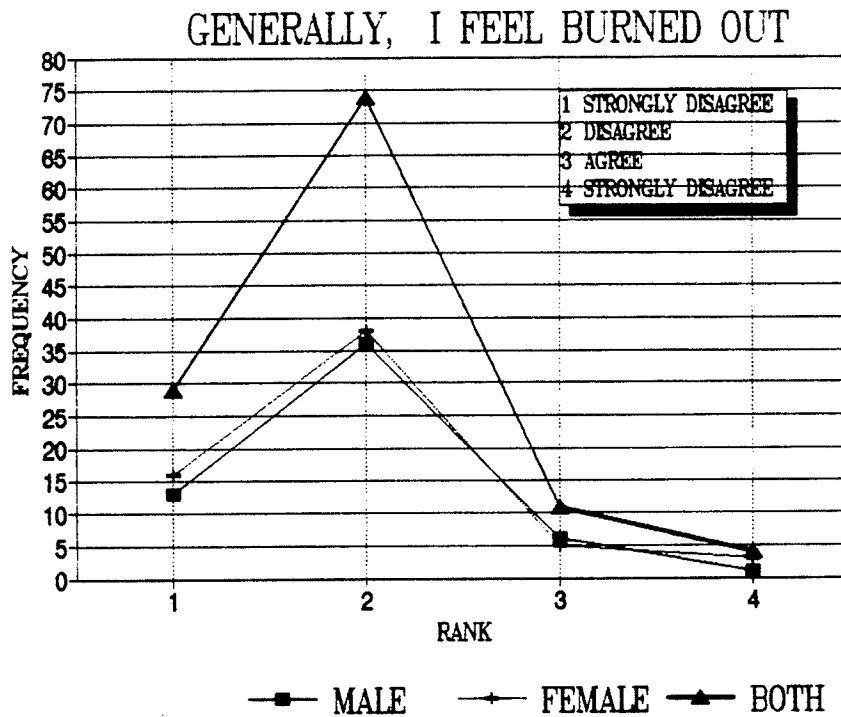
Figure 24 below indicates that no foster parents reported a lack of self-esteem with an average response rate of 3.33. The item "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself" was selected as a global indicator of self esteem. This confirms the earlier observation that these respondents reflected the criteria for successful foster parents.

FIGURE 24



Neither male or female foster parent respondents felt burned out. Their average response of 1.92 clearly indicated that the respondents were not experiencing a significant amount of emotional exhaustion. Figure 25 below reports their responses.

FIGURE 25



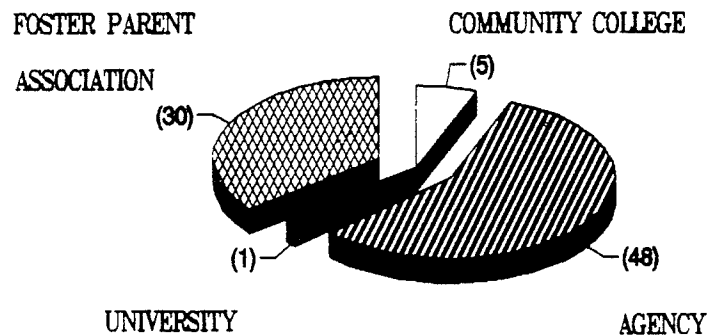
While these results cannot be generalized to the entire foster parent membership, it is encouraging to note that their leadership views their activities and their relationship to the placing agency in a positive manner.

## TRAINING ASSESSMENT

Training is integral to role formation. Effective training must be relevant to the identified needs, focussed to the appropriate audience, and available. Most respondents (89%) did have training opportunities within their community and 85% had taken training courses. Figure 26 below indicates that the sponsors of this training are the foster parent association or the agency. Traditional educational facilities have little involvement in providing the required training.

FIGURE 26

### ORGANIZATIONS WHICH DELIVER TRAINING COURSES

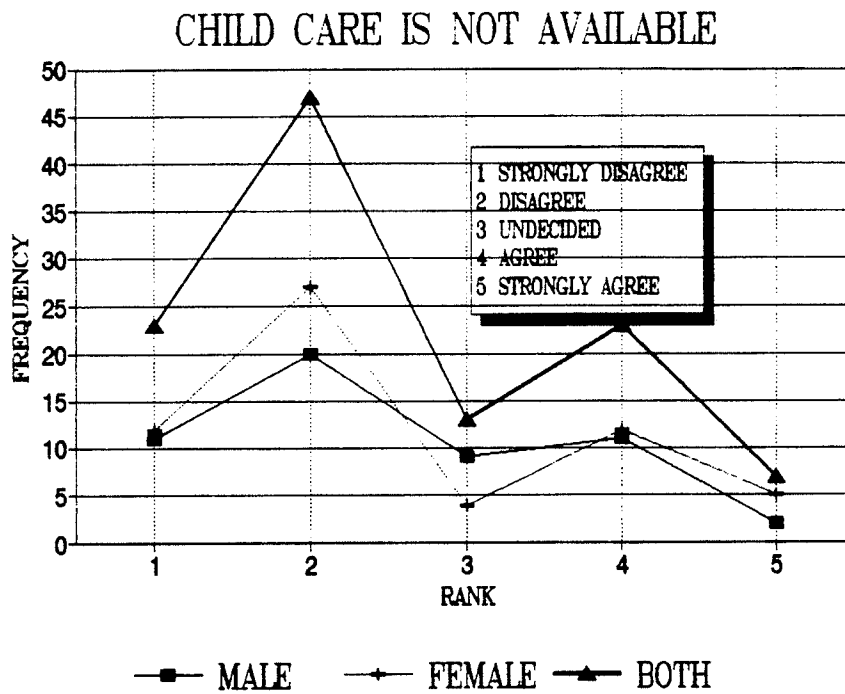


The availability and location of the training courses indicate the degree and level of support for skill acquisition within the community. Specific training barriers such as availability of child care, inconvenient location or time, and subject relevance were examined.



Foster parents indicated that child care was generally available with an average response rate of 2.5. Those that commented upon child care availability stated that the quality of child care was a concern due to the special needs of the foster children. The responses to the question " Child Care is not available to permit my attendance" are illustrated in Figure 27 below.

FIGURE 27



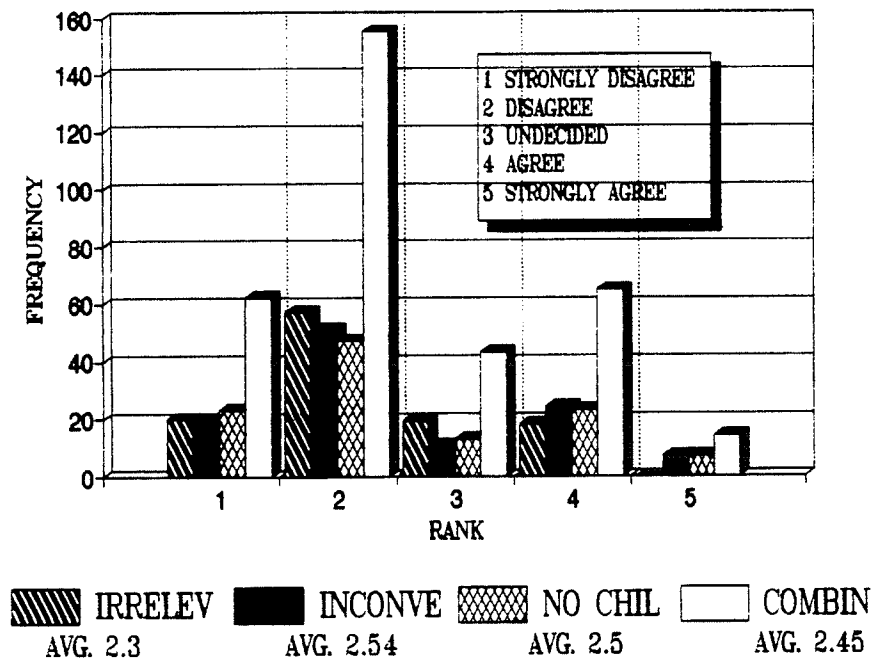
Foster parents also felt that training subjects were relevant to their needs with an average response rate of 2.31. Sixteen of the 62 female respondents, or 26%, commented that there were an insufficient number of course types.

Classes were considered by the respondents to be offered at convenient times and places. Their average response rate of 2.54 indicates that there was room for improvement in reducing this accessibility barrier.

Figure 28 below details the combined responses to the three training barriers. The overall average of 2.45 suggests that though respondents are experiencing fewer barriers to training, some concerns remain.

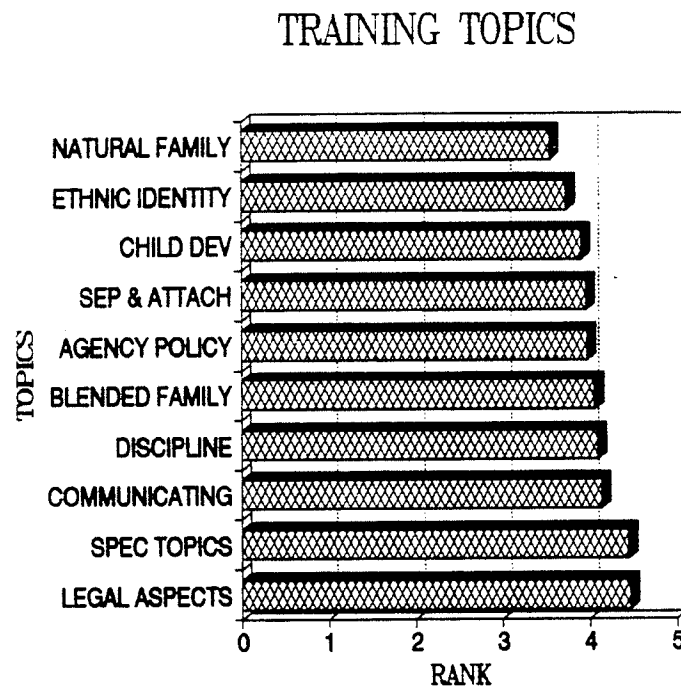
FIGURE 28

### TRAINING BARRIERS



The training topics which were listed may be grouped into the broad categories of (traditional) parenting, collegial issues, and specialized/treatment information. The foster parents' responses to these topics is contained in Figure 29 below.

FIGURE 29



1 V. DISINTERESTED 2 DISINTERESTED 3 UNDECIDED 4 INTERESTED 5 V. INTERESTED

The greatest interest was shown in the topic: "Legal Aspects of Fostering: Rights and Responsibilities" with an average response rate of 4.5 out of a maximum of 5.0.

Information which could assist foster parents address complex care and rights situations received the strongest interest. Parenting

information such as child development, ethnic identity, separation and attachment, and working with the natural family was not as high a priority generally with interest ranging from 3.5 to 4.0.

There were some differences between the training priorities of male and female respondents. Male respondents demonstrated a strong interest in Specialized Foster Care topics while female respondents prioritize Blended Family Issues within the top three subject areas.

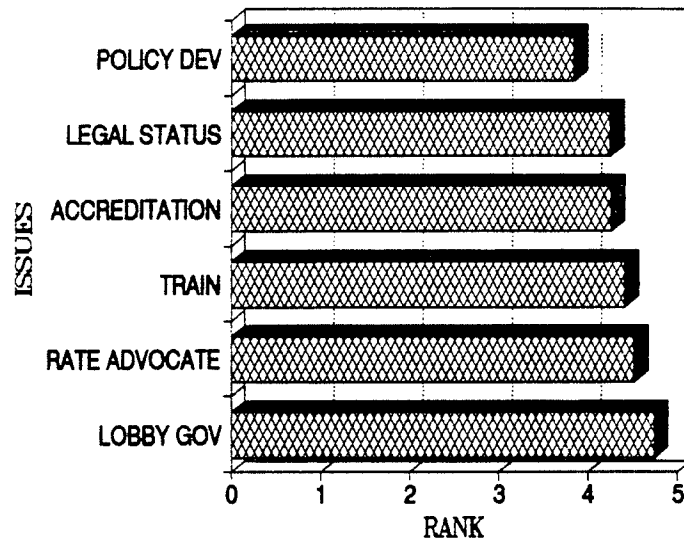
#### ROLE OF THE FOSTER PARENT SOCIETY

The Foster Parent Society of Ontario as a potential or current source of support, leadership, or protection was identified in the discussion regarding the need for group inclusion. Key activities in which the provincial Society may become involved were suggested to the respondents. These suggestions which may be broadly grouped as educational, political, and administrative.

The respondents were enthusiastic about five of the six options presented with ranks ranging from 4.25 to 4.75. The only option which received relatively mild approval at 3.84 was the suggestion to "Develop provincial policy to guide local Association activity". As Figure 30 on the next page indicates, lobbying government to protect and promote foster parent rights and advocating for increase foster rates were ranked high at 4.75 and 4.52 respectively.

FIGURE 30

### ISSUES PROVINCIAL FOSTER PARENT SOCIETY SHOULD ADDRESS



1 STRONGLY DISAGREE 2 DISAGREE 3 UNDECIDED 4 AGREE 5 STRONGLY AGREE

The local association respondents have indicated that they wish to maintain flexibility and independence at the local level while the provincial society acts on their behalf within the provincial forum. In order to achieve commonly held objectives, the provincial society will require a strong mandate from the local associations. Due to the distinct diversity among the local associations, a significant amount of dialogue and consultation will be required between all organizational levels.

This chapter has summarized the survey results of six general areas which affect foster Parents. While these findings cannot be generalized to all foster parents due to its non-probability sampling method, the information gathered can guide the development of policies and priorities within a broader consultative framework.

The next chapter will synthesize the results in order to develop an operational decision-making framework for the Foster Parent Society of Ontario.

## CHAPTER V

### NEED SYNTHESIS AND ASSESSMENT

Jonathon Turner defines frame-making and frame-taking as the "cognitive enclosuring of signaling and interpreting activities of individuals within delimited boundaries such that relevant behavioural options... is reduced" (1988, 363). Need assessment is a method of frame-making which combines a number of responses in order to develop some reasonable options for decision-makers to consider.

Need analysis cannot end with the assembly of a list of needs or problems and related supporting information. Need analysis requires evaluation and integration of information for use in decision-making.

Where there is complex multi-dimensional information, a method is required to integrate the existing data in a form that enables decision-makers to make judgments. Need identification provided a model for decision-making and attribute scores for each of the options under consideration. The quantification and synthesis stages constitutes a needs assessment.

The Multittribute Utility Analysis (MAUA) was utilized to develop an assessment of need. Its principle technique is to break up global judgments into simpler judgments for the decision-maker, the Foster Parent Society of Ontario. These simpler judgments can then be integrated into global recommendations.

The strengths of MAUA are that it utilizes the values of the Society which increases the probability that the analysis will be useful in decision-making (Weiss & Bucuvalas, 1980) . The value judgments are explicit within the assessment and the index of need is comparable across options being considered and reflects differences in magnitude as well as rank order (McKillip, 1987, 108). MAUA consists of three stages: modeling, quantification and synthesis.

### MODELING

A model was constructed of the decision(s) that were to be made. A feature of the model were options which represented the needs confronting the Society. Table Two models these needs:

TABLE TWO

MEAN ATTRIBUTE SCORES FROM FOSTER PARENTS  
NEED IDENTIFICATION STUDY

Potential Problems (Options)	Data Sources (Attributes)	
	Foster Parents	Key Informants
monetary compensation	2.40	2.54
role confusion	1.64	1.86
lack of support	1.85	1.60
lack of training	1.30	1.62
emotional exhaustion	1.12	1.22
self esteem	1.00	1.00



The mean attributes are the sources of the information required for need identification. They provide the measurement of the problem which forms the numerical data which the Society considers. Each option receives a score on each attribute. Scores range from 1 (not a problem) to 3 (a very important problem). The attribute scores were derived from summing and averaging the relevant likert scales contained within the survey instrument.

#### QUANTIFICATION

The attribute scores were rescaled to reflect how much need each represents and were given weights that reflected the relevance of the source of information for the decision. The process of rescaling yielded a numerical value termed utility.

Where attributes are the raw measurements, utilities are the decision maker's evaluation of these scores as measures of need. Once the matrix was completed in Table One, utility scores for each attribute were derived utilizing the following equation:

$$n_{ij} = (X-L)/(H-L)$$

where  $n_{ij}$  is the utility of option  $i$  on attribute  $j$ ,  $X$  is the intermediate attribute score,  $L$  is the score of attribute assigned the utility of 0.0, and  $H$  is the score of attribute  $j$  assigned 1.0. Utility values range from 0.0 to 1.0. A value a little more extreme than the lowest attribute score is assigned the utility value of 0.0 and a value a

little more extreme than the highest attribute score is assigned the utility value of 1.0. The utility formula assumes a linear function.

Once the utility scores are determined, a relevance weight is derived for each attribute. Weights do not reflect general importance but the relative value of attributes within the context of the decision being made. The decision-maker makes this determination according utilizing beliefs and judgment.

Firstly, attributes were ranked from most important to least important according to their utility values. Each attribute source, foster parent and key informant, was then assigned a weight by the decision-maker which reflects its relative importance. Foster parents may be accorded a value of 100 whereas key informants could be assigned a value of 50. This would mean that foster parent responses are twice as important as key informants. Weights are then standardized by adding all weights and dividing each weight by the total. In this model, foster parents and key informants were weighted equally at .5.

#### SYNTHESIS

MAUA integrates utilities and weights to create a Need Index ( $N_i$ ) for each option. This index has interval scale properties revealing both order and magnitude of need. An additive integration rule is utilized in the Need Index equation below:

$$N_i = \sum (W_j * n_{ij})$$

where the Need Index for each option  $i$ ,  $N_i$ , is equal to the sum over all attributes of the product of the weight of the attribute,  $w_j$ , and the utility of the attribute score for the option,  $n_{ij}$ .

For example, the  $N_i$  for the option monetary compensation is calculated as follows:

$$(.90 \times .50) + (.99 \times .50) = .945 \text{ or } .95$$

The Need Index integrates need identification information with the decision-maker's values and beliefs. Due to its interval properties, the rank order and the relative difference between the index values have meaning. Table Three below reports the results of these calculations.

TABLE THREE  
UTILITY VALUES, WEIGHTS, AND NEED INDEX FOR  
FOSTER PARENT NEED ASSESSMENT STUDY

Potential Problems (Options)	Data Sources (Attributes)		Need Index ( $N_i$ )
	Foster Parents (.50)	Key Informants (.50)	
monetary compensation	.90	.99	.95
role confusion	.76	.64	.70
lack of support	.58	.39	.49
lack of training	.19	.40	.30
emotional exhaustion	.08	.14	.11
self esteem	.00	.00	.00

## MONETARY COMPENSATION

64% of the respondents believed that they were not adequately reimbursed for the actual expenses associated with raising a foster child while another 15% were not sure. The average base rate suggested was \$30.33 with a standard deviation of \$8.94.

All but one respondent agreed that foster care rates for children with special needs should be negotiated on a case by case basis at the local level. Currently, there is no uniform definition of special need within the province nor an equitable method of resource valuation. It is therefore recommended that:

1. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario initiate research to determine the actual costs of fostering children and to develop funding models for a range of foster placement alternatives.
2. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario, in consultation with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and other stakeholders, develop a definition of special need; and,
3. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario participate with relevant stakeholders in the formulation of a funding model which establishes basic minimums and ranges for special needs resources to support local negotiations between placement agencies and foster parents.

## ROLE CONFUSION

Role confusion ranked second to monetary compensation as a key problem area for foster parents. Respondents ranked their level of (dis)agreement with four common foster parent roles described within child care literature. These roles were parent, service provider, child care team member, and assistant to the natural family. Each represented part of the continuum from inclusive to exclusive foster parenting.

Table Four on the next page provides a separate item analysis of foster parent responses to the four role states. The role of "service provider" is most acceptable to all of the respondents while that of "assistant to the natural family" is least favoured. Between these extremes, the roles of "team member" and "parent" receive support from foster parent association respondents. These same roles receive a significant degree of rejection from the regional key informants.

As service providers, foster parents provide specific personal and residential services. The placing agency assumes the role of client who negotiates these services on behalf of their foster child(ren). The service provider role promises to reduce the degree of enmeshment foster parents are apt to experience in their relationships with foster child(ren), their natal family, and the placing agency. It may also empower the foster family to balance their own needs with the placing agency's requirements in order to sustain a viable family life while providing a valued service.

TABLE FOUR

UTILITY VALUES, WEIGHTS, AND NEED INDEX FOR

FOSTER PARENT ROLE CONFUSION

Potential Roles (Options)	Data Sources (Attributes)		Need Index (Ni)
	Foster Parents (.50)	Key Informants (.50)	
assistant	.94	.72	.83
team member	.19	.99	.59
parent	.15	.78	.50
service provider	.19	.01	.10

There exists considerable disparity in the foster parents' acceptance levels of the other three roles. Clearly, the respondents were least prepared to act as assistants to the natal family, during occasional periods of crises through the provision of child placements and/or support. This role is complementary to the family support model where the natal family maintains responsibility for primary care while the foster family ensures continuity by providing "back-up" child care services.

In order to ensure development of foster care placement policies which are consistent with foster parents' preferred roles or provide for acceptable role transition, it is recommended that:

4. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario begin a consultation process with provincial representatives of placing agencies to identify and affirm the preferred role for the provision of foster care services; and,

5. Once an acceptable foster parent role is defined, the financial and human resources necessary for role maintenance or transition are established in consultation with child care stakeholders.

#### SUPPORT

On average, the need for support was not significant with a need index score of .50. However, there were fluctuations of opinion between each group. The foster parent association respondents expressed a greater need for support than the regional representative key informants. Male respondents were the least satisfied with the amount of support the placing agency provided to them.

A similar division of responses occurs with the issue of role confusion where key informants, on average, score lower than association respondents but differ markedly in their opinions about each role option. While a causal relationship cannot be concluded, it is reasonable to assume that increased role confusion would likely result in a greater need for support. It is therefore recommended that:

6. The Foster Parent Association of Ontario advocate for increased supports which are sensitive to role transition and gender issues experienced by foster parents.

## TRAINING

The survey focussed upon training barriers such as course relevancy, accessibility, and child care availability. While some dissatisfaction was noted, there was general acceptance of the current training approach though some strengthening of some key features were identified.

The training sponsors are either the local Foster Parent Association or the placing agency. Traditional educational facilities have little involvement in the delivery of foster parent training courses. It is therefore recommended that:

7. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario review the current method of delivering training programs to foster parents and establish a training approach which reduces duplication and ambiguity while ensuring efficient and effective delivery of relevant training programs.



Respondents indicated that the entire family contributed to the fostering experience. 43% of the foster families identified the family as assisting in the decision to accept or terminate a foster placement. Due to this significant influence, it is important that training be provided for all family members. It is therefore recommended that:

8. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario ensure that relevant training modules are developed for youth and family foster training programs.

The respondents ranked ten training topics by their level of interest. Their responses are listed below in order of preference:

1. Legal Aspects of Fostering: Rights and Responsibilities
2. Specialized Foster Care: Specific Treatment Topics  
(emotional disturbance, developmental handicaps, physical abuse, sexual abuse, substance abuse)
3. Communicating with Other Professionals: Teachers, Physicians, Social Workers
4. Disciplining Your Child
5. Blended Families: Natural and Foster Children Issues
6. Understanding Agency Policy
7. Separation and Attachment
8. Child Development and Age Appropriate Behaviour
9. Ethnic Identity (culture specific)
10. Working with the Natural Family

The greatest interest was shown in the "Rights and Responsibilities" topic, information which could assist foster parents address complex care and rights situations. Parenting information such as child development, ethnic identity, separation and attachment, and working with the natural family was not ranked as high.

It is recommended that:

9. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario ensure that course modules reflecting the preferences cited by the respondents are developed for inclusion with future training modules.

#### EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION AND SELF ESTEEM

All respondents reported high levels of self esteem with few indications of emotional exhaustion. While these responses cannot be generalized to the foster parent membership, it is noteworthy that these stress indicators are not a factor in the needs identified. The foster parents' emotional health continues to reflect the earlier observation that these respondents meet the foster parent standard of success.

#### FOSTER PARENT SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

There are numerous issues which confront the provincial Society. Foster parents ranked the following six issues which they felt the Foster Parent Society of Ontario should address. They are listed on the next page by response frequency:

1. Lobby government to protect and promote foster parents' rights
2. Advocate for increased rates
3. Develop educational materials and training opportunities for foster parents
4. Develop and implement accreditation standards to increase foster parent professionalism
5. Clarify the foster parent's legal status to the foster child
6. Develop provincial policy to guide local Association activity

The respondents have selected foster parent rights, rates, and education as their leading priorities for advancement by the Foster Parent Society of Ontario. It is recommended that:

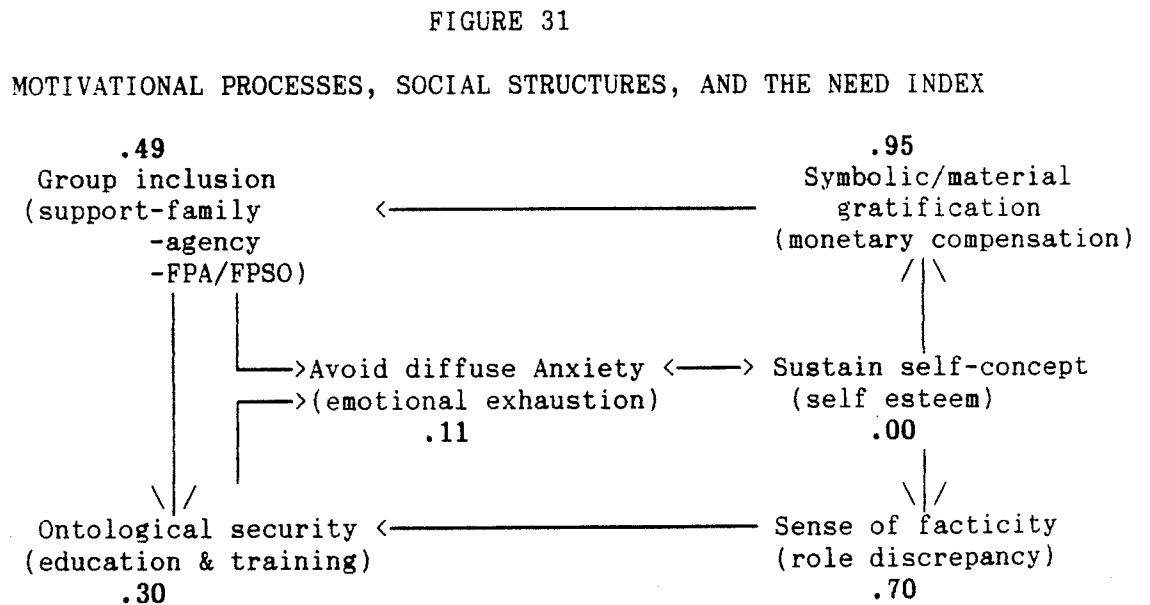
10. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario review the prioritize issues and develop an implementation strategy which includes significant prior consultation with the local associations for guidance and support.

The Children's Aid Society was the sole placing agency for 94% for the foster parent respondents. The placement, support, and payment policies of the Children's Aid Societies have a significant influence upon the capacity of the Foster Parent Society of Ontario to meet its objectives. It is therefore recommended that:

11. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario consult with representatives of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies regarding establishment of joint planning forums for issues of mutual interest; and,
12. The Foster Parent Association of Ontario review its membership base and determine whether it should broaden its membership to include foster parents of other placing agencies or remain with a specific child welfare focus.

MOTIVATIONAL PROCESSES, SOCIAL STRUCTURES,  
AND THE NEED ASSESSMENT

It was hypothesized in earlier chapters that the foster parent role reflects a composite of six fundamental motivational processes in equilibrium. Figure 31 below illustrates this dynamic when the need index scores are included:



The motivational elements, avoidance of diffuse anxiety and the sustained self-concept, remain central and strong within this dynamic. Though a sustained self-concept is hypothesized to mediate both a sense of facticity and symbolic or material compensation, the need index values for both these elements are the highest. Three possible conclusions can be made: 1) the foster parent is essentially reliant upon their own sense of self-esteem which is mediating significant need; 2) the self-esteem measure lacks validity and is not accurately measuring need; or 3) Turner's original hypothesis is faulty.

Recognizing the considerable reliance upon altruism and the rewards of "people making" upon which the practice of foster caring has evolved, it is possible that the first conclusion is correct. More research is required to answer this question conclusively.

Symbolic or material gratification and facticity mediate the motivational elements group inclusion and ontological security. Since the need indexes for these elements are within the mild to mid-problem range, the social structures which these elements represent appear to be addressing the pressure presented by the higher need indexes. From group inclusion and ontological security there is a feedback loop to the avoidance of diffuse anxiety. The need index remains within a very low problem range.

Turner's hypothesis of motivational processes was utilized to organize diverse information about the condition of the foster parent's role. Through need identification and assessment procedures additional

information was introduced to clarify this role and develop a direction for change. This project's findings did provide additional information and direction along the lines of inquiry explored. In the next chapter, an evaluation of the project and the researcher's experience will be reviewed.

## CHAPTER VI

### PROJECT EVALUATION

The Foster Parent Society of Ontario regional representatives had assumed the roles of both key informant and client. Upon completion of the project and submission of the final report, they were asked to complete a brief evaluative questionnaire about the project. The need to evaluate performance following a significant service engagement is necessary not only to assess the value of the service rendered, but also to gain critical information to strengthen project techniques and researcher capability.

The evaluation examined seven major themes and requested the subjective responses of the key informants. These themes surveyed their likes, dislikes, suggestions, understandings and recommendations about the study. The role and effectiveness of the researcher was also assessed.

A total of seven key informants completed the evaluation form. The most valuable part of the research project, from the perspective of the key informants, was the clarification of the major issues confronting foster parents and the Foster Parent Society in particular. The study provided clear guidance for the provincial Society as it seeks to enact its leadership role. The differentiation between the local foster parent associations and the provincial society priorities contributed to an understanding of the occasional variation between these groups.

Some of the key informants commented that "it enabled them to see a good breakdown of the different needs, which areas to look for improvement". They also noted that "there (is a) significant difference between the priorities of the FPSO group and other foster parents. It is very helpful to determine areas we should concentrate on".

Project limitations identified by the respondents included difficult survey wording and questions about some inferences concerning role concepts. Does a rejection of the teamwork model mean a rejection of the concept by choice or from its lack of availability ? The use of likert scaling methods frustrated some respondents. They felt constrained by this grading method which forced specific responses to each question. The statistical section was confusing to some and did not seem to clarify, in layman's terms what the study's findings were.

Comments to the question "What bothered you, or what didn't you like about the project?" included statements such as:

"People were handpicked at the local level";

"Most foster parents were not happy with the degree of grading of answers from 1-5";

"(It is) not clear in layman's terms of what is found out. Some of the results are not clear".

Recommendations for changes to future studies included increasing the sample size, utilizing random sampling techniques, and weighting the foster parent association responses greater than that of the key informants. There was also a desire for more qualitative



information about gender differences and the nature of support foster parents require. As one respondent stated: "The differences of opinion between the association and key informants about support need to addressing. Support includes not only having workers available when the need arises but also as a monetary issue, ie. having the means to hire outside help when foster parents are unable to handle routine chores such as housework".

When asked what new understanding the research project had provided, the key informants reiterated the positive features of the study. One respondent stated that "It put in writing exactly what we needed to know". Another indicated that "gender differences are very important and should be considered carefully when developing new supports, reports, or suggestions".

The role discussion clarified the various relationships in which an agency and foster parent were apt to engage and that these could even vary from situation to situation. It appeared to sensitize and inform the regional representatives about the need for role recognition and clarification of responsibilities. An understanding of gender differences and their potential impact upon foster parenting program initiatives, was also identified. Like role identification, gender differences were recognized as key issues in future policy or program plans.

Comments about the role and effectiveness of the researcher were fairly positive. As one respondent stated; "So when do you start

fostering? You certainly have a good understanding of the issues". The research project was viewed as thorough, appropriate, and reflective of a good understanding of the issues. One respondent was concerned that while the report was satisfactory, the credibility of the Foster Parent Society would need improvement in order to be an effective change agent with the local foster parent associations, agencies, and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies.

When asked if this project had completed its purpose of providing the FPSO leadership and members with useful information and practical assistance to strengthen their foster care network, the average response on a likert scale was 3.5 out of 5 (1-not met, 3-somewhat met, 5-completely met).

Additional comments the key informants provided included the need to develop an implementation strategy to address the study's recommendations. As one respondent stated, "Studies are great if their findings are actually acted upon..." Some anxiety was expressed about the significant task which lay before the Foster Parent Society and the need for local associations and agencies to participate in program implementation.

## PROJECT RETROSPECTIVE

Conducting this study has brought me in to contact with numerous roles. These roles have included consultant, technician, broker, student scholar, and the most ubiquitous role of all, social worker.

As a consultant, I learned to listen to my client carefully and to attempt to understand the information, either spoken or unspoken which was presented. Communication between a client and their consultant relies upon sensitivity, expertise, and trust. This relationship is formed over the life of the project and changes through the phases of implementation to final closure.

I was fortunate to be working with an organization of service deliverers who specialized in parenting. Nurturance, vigilance, and assistance were evident in every encounter. This generosity was, in fact, related to the current dilemma in foster care. The child care system has historically depended upon generosity for child placements. Examining the future of foster care can become, in the abstract, the future of generosity within our human services. Is there such a thing as a professional family? Is this a contradiction in terms? Can a modern child care network function on altruism alone? Can it afford not to, in real and symbolic terms? These philosophical questions were never too far from the project's terms of reference.

The role of scholar was certainly equal in importance to that of consultant. There have been numerous scholarly studies about foster care and the practice of placing children. Knowledge about these studies was important as they have been utilized extensively in recent child and family policy and program development,

A recurring problem with these studies was the apparent reification of the foster parent. In my attempt to learn more about foster parents, I began to learn more about the child care system or placement and assessment practices, but came no closer to understanding the foster family as care provider. The foster family appeared "frozen" as a term interchangeable with family placement or resource.

History, anthropology, psychology and sociology all contributed to the development of my understanding of foster parents. Knowledge of previous social movements, small group study techniques, role theory, and motivational factors was utilized to craft a potentially relevant method of analysis.

As a technician, I learned to manage large amounts of historical and social information. This project has taught me computer literacy in word processing and data management. My statistical and instrumentation skills have certainly advanced in the process. My goals are now tempered (somewhat) by practical knowledge of human resources, computer memory, communication costs, and intervening variables.

Of course I dream of more...more time, assistants, larger, faster computers, more sophisticated software, more communication funds for better and more frequent consultation...and so on. Many of this projects limitations identified by the Foster Parent Society of Ontario in the preceding section reflect decisions made in design and process to "fit" the resources available.

A broker is one who acts as an intermediary. As a consultant, student scholar, technician, and social worker, my efforts were mainly focussed upon the interface of these roles. While brokering can be stressful and, at times, frustrating; it can also be very rewarding. I am fortunate to have always received excellent support and practical assistance from all partners in my learning process.

Social work practice relies upon the use of self, through any number of activities, to provide assistance to those who are deprived or disadvantaged in some manner. Through the use of my self, I have attempted to contribute to the development of a service organization and advancement of child care knowledge. While the client in this project was the Foster Parent Society of Ontario, the target of my intervention, as with the foster parents, was the foster child. We worked as a team to develop capability to provide a little better, or a little more, service for the child in care.

APPENDIX

**FOSTER PARENT  
NEED IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**FOSTER PARENT SOCIETY OF ONTARIO**

**OCTOBER 1990**

## THE PROBLEM

The current "crisis in foster care" is not new. The decline in the number of foster homes available was identified as a major issue in a 1979 discussion paper released by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services entitled Foster Care in Ontario. The trend is continuing, with fewer new foster parents recruited to provide homes and fewer willing to stay in service.

In 1982, there were approximately 6,619 foster homes open in Ontario. By 1989, the number of homes had decreased to 4,919 representing a 33% decline. In 1988, 5436 children, 55% of all children in care, were placed in foster homes. This represents a total of 2,120,346 foster days care for an approximate average of 431 days care for each open foster home<sup>1</sup>. The continued decline in available homes is acknowledged to be one of the most crucial issues in the field of child care today.

Alternate placements have been, and largely remain, the mainstay of child welfare practice. Indeed, Kadushin (1980)<sup>2</sup> describes child welfare as attempting to restore or enhance the parental role. When these goals cannot be achieved, when the family cannot or should not be restored, substitutes are provided for the family. The substitute care role remains a major component of child welfare along with the protective services. These two prime functions provide the practice context within which efforts to reform the parental role performance are made.



Child welfare is attempting to change its practice by emphasizing treatment and support within the natal family in order to reduce the number of out-of-home placements. Known as the *family support model*, the intention is to address problems within dysfunctional families "at their source" reducing the reliance upon alternate "out of home" placements. It is believed that family support practice fosters development within the family of origin and reduces the amount of financial and human resources dedicated to the maintenance of children in foster or group homes.

Unfortunately, this ideal has coexisted within a system where children are removed from their natal home for the safety of either themselves or others. These children continue to rely "on the kindness of strangers"<sup>3</sup> for nurturing and guidance.

Child welfare institutions are stretched as never before. They are attempting to reconcile the prerequisites of mandatory child welfare legislation while both promoting family support practice and maintaining foster and group care resources, in the event of complete family breakdown. This duality of purpose within child welfare practice has placed a heavy burden upon all participants of the child care process.

These problems are experienced on a most intimate basis with both the child in care and his or her care provider, the foster parent. It is little wonder that foster parents, viewed as volunteers and paid only "out-of pocket" expenses are among the first casualties of an already taxed child care system.

The Foster Parent Society of Ontario recognizes that only with strong foster homes can the children of Ontario receive the care to which they are entitled when they are removed from their natal family. The Society undertook to identify and assess the needs of its membership in order to develop a plan which could support the role of the foster parent as the prime service provider to the child in care. Provincial Foster Parent Associations throughout Canada have recognized the need to understand the role of the foster parent in order to develop relevant child care placement policies.

The study undertaken by the Society involved polling the opinion of two groups of foster parents. These were the regional representatives and three representatives including the President from each local foster parent association. Both groups were asked to comment on key features of their role as foster parents derived from an extensive literature review<sup>4</sup>. The six major areas examined were:

- monetary compensation
- support
- self esteem
- emotional exhaustion
- training
- role confusion

Role theorists have identified these six areas as providing the framework for role identity and development. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario survey has provided valuable information regarding the

current "fit" of the foster parent's role with existing placement practices. Difficulties identified with this "fit" are viewed as needs which require recognition and resolution in order to achieve stability within the child care placement sector.

## THE SURVEY

63 foster families responded out of the 169 surveys circulated resulting in a total response rate of 37%. Those that responded had cared for a total of 3238 children over a cumulative total of 623 years. On average, each family had cared for 51.4 children during a period of 9.8 years. The foster families had also cared for, on average, three additional children for whom they were legal guardians at the time of the survey.

The majority of the respondents provided specialized services such as receiving, treatment, and special needs. In fostering, length of fostering, willingness to make long term care commitments and willingness to become specialized are considered indicators of success. The respondents were representative of successful foster parents.

Nevertheless, when asked if they planned to continue fostering on a long term basis, 1/3 of the foster parents stated that they didn't know or would not. The reasons cited included their advancing age, increasing personal concerns regarding risk of false allegations, and inadequate personal or financial compensation.

Utilizing a Multiattribute Utility Analysis (MAUA) the survey responses are summarized in the following table. The utility scores range from 0.0 (not a problem) to 1.0 (a significant problem). Due to the interval properties of the data, the rank order and the relative difference between the index values have meaning.

TABLE ONE  
UTILITY VALUES, WEIGHTS, AND NEED INDEX FOR  
FOSTER PARENT NEED ASSESSMENT STUDY

Potential Problems (Options)	Data Sources (Attributes)		Need Index (Ni)
	Foster Parents (.50)	Key Informants (.50)	
monetary compensation	.90	.99	.95
role confusion	.76	.64	.70
lack of support	.58	.39	.49
lack of training	.19	.40	.30
emotional exhaustion	.08	.14	.11
self esteem	.00	.00	.00

#### MONETARY COMPENSATION

64% of the respondents believed that they were not adequately reimbursed for the actual expenses associated with raising a foster child while another 15% were not sure. In 1989, foster parents received a rate increase to bring the minimum floor rate up to \$14.00 per day per child. The rate had been as low as \$7.45 per day previously. Though there have been recent significant efforts in the area of pay policy, there remains a strong perception that foster parents are

under-valued.

The development of an adequate compensation schedule will be difficult. The responding membership is evenly divided with 50% believing that the compensation rate should vary with the foster child's developmental stage and the other half believing that one adequate base rate is sufficient. The average base rate suggested was \$30.33 with a standard deviation of \$8.94.

All but one respondent agreed that foster care rates for children with special needs should be negotiated on a case by case basis at the local level. Currently, there is no uniform definition of special need within the province nor an equitable method of resource valuation. It is therefore recommended that:

1. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario initiate research to determine the actual costs of fostering children and to develop funding models for a range of foster placement alternatives.
2. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario, in consultation with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and other stakeholders, develop a definition of special need; and,
3. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario participate with relevant stakeholders in the formulation of a funding model which establishes basic minimums and ranges for special needs resources to support local negotiations between placement agencies and foster parents.

Role confusion ranked second to monetary compensation as a key problem-area for foster parents. Respondents ranked their level of (dis)agreement with four common foster parent roles described within child care literature. These roles were parent, service provider, child care team member, and assistant to the natural family. Each represented part of the continuum from inclusive to exclusive foster parenting. (See Appendix B for question format)

Table Two below provides a separate item analysis of foster parent responses to the four role states. The role of "service provider" is most acceptable to all of the respondents while that of "assistant to the natural family" is least favoured. Between these extremes, the roles of "team member" and "parent" receive support from foster parent association respondents. These same roles receive a significant degree of rejection from the regional key informants.

TABLE TWO

UTILITY VALUES, WEIGHTS, AND NEED INDEX FOR

FOSTER PARENT ROLE CONFUSION

Potential Roles (Options)	Data Sources (Attributes)		Need Index (Ni)
	Foster Parents (.50)	Key Informants (.50)	
assistant	.94	.72	.83
team member	.19	.99	.59
parent	.15	.78	.50
service provider	.19	.01	.10

As service providers, foster parents provide specific personal and residential services. The placing agency assumes the role of client who negotiates these services on behalf of their foster child(ren). The service provider role promises to reduce the degree of enmeshment foster parents are apt to experience in their relationships with foster child(ren), their natal family, and the placing agency. It may also empower the foster family to balance their own needs with the placing agency's requirements in order to sustain a viable family life while providing a valued service.

There exists considerable disparity in the foster parents' acceptance levels of the other three roles. Clearly, the respondents were least prepared to act as assistants to the natal family, during occasional periods of crises through the provision of child placements and/or support. This role is complementary to the family support model where the natal family maintains responsibility for primary care while the foster family ensures continuity by providing "back-up" child care services.

In order to ensure development of foster care placement policies which are consistent with foster parents' preferred roles or provide for acceptable role transition, it is recommended that:

4. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario begin a consultation process with provincial representatives of placing agencies to identify and affirm the preferred role for the provision of foster care services; and,

5. Once an acceptable foster parent role is defined, the financial and human resources necessary for role maintenance or transition are established in consultation with child care stakeholders.

## SUPPORT

On average, the need for support was not significant with a need index score of .50. However, there were fluctuations of opinion between each group. The foster parent association respondents expressed a greater need for support than the regional representative key informants. Male respondents were the least satisfied with the amount of support the placing agency provided to them.

A similar division of responses occurs with the issue of role confusion where key informants, on average, score lower than association respondents but differ markedly in their opinions about each role option. While a causal relationship cannot be concluded, it is reasonable to assume that increased role confusion would likely result in a greater need for support. It is therefore recommended that:

6. The Foster Parent Association of Ontario advocate for increased supports which are sensitive to role transition and gender issues experienced by foster parents.



## TRAINING

The survey focussed upon training barriers such as course relevancy, accessibility, and child care availability. Some dissatisfaction was noted by the respondents with 26% of the female respondents commenting that there were an insufficient variety of courses offered. However, there was general acceptance of the current training approach though some strengthening of some key features were identified.

The training sponsors are either the local Foster Parent Association or the placing agency. Traditional educational facilities have little involvement in the delivery of foster parent training courses. It is therefore recommended that:

7. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario review the current method of delivering training programs to foster parents and establish a training approach which reduces duplication and ambiguity while ensuring efficient and effective delivery of relevant training programs.

Respondents indicated that the entire family contributed to the fostering experience. 43% of the foster families identified the family as assisting in the decision to accept or terminate a foster placement. Due to this significant influence, it is important that training be provided for all family members. It is therefore recommended that:

8. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario ensure that relevant training modules are developed for youth and family foster

**training programs.**

The respondents ranked ten training topics by their level of interest. Their responses are listed below in order of preference:

1. Legal Aspects of Fostering: Rights and Responsibilities
2. Specialized Foster Care: Specific Treatment Topics  
(emotional disturbance, developmental handicaps, physical abuse, sexual abuse, substance abuse)
3. Communicating with Other Professionals: Teachers, Physicians, Social Workers
4. Disciplining Your Child
5. Blended Families: Natural and Foster Children Issues
6. Understanding Agency Policy
7. Separation and Attachment
8. Child Development and Age Appropriate Behaviour
9. Ethnic Identity (culture specific)
10. Working with the Natural Family

The greatest interest was shown in the "Rights and Responsibilities" topic, information which could assist foster parents address complex care and rights situations. Parenting information such as child development, ethnic identity, separation and attachment, and working with the natural family was not ranked as high.

It is recommended that:

9. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario ensure that course modules reflecting the preferences cited by the respondents are developed for inclusion with future training modules.

## EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION AND SELF ESTEEM

All respondents reported high levels of self esteem with few indications of emotional exhaustion. While these responses cannot be generalized to the foster parent membership, it is noteworthy that these stress indicators are not a factor in the needs identified. The foster parents' emotional health continues to reflect the earlier observation that these respondents meet the foster parent standard of success.

## FOSTER PARENT SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

There are numerous issues which confront the provincial Society. Foster parents ranked the following six issues which they felt the Foster Parent Society of Ontario should address. They are listed below by response frequency:

1. Lobby government to protect and promote foster parents' rights
2. Advocate for increased rates
3. Develop educational materials and training opportunities for foster parents
4. Develop and implement accreditation standards to increase foster parent professionalism
5. Clarify the foster parent's legal status to the foster child
6. Develop provincial policy to guide local Association activity

The respondents have selected foster parent rights, rates, and education as their leading priorities for advancement by the Foster Parent Society of Ontario. The local association respondents have also indicated that they wish to maintain flexibility and independence at the community level. In order for the provincial Society to negotiate effectively on behalf of their membership, a strong mandate is required from the membership. It is recommended that:

10. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario review the prioritize issues and develop an implementation strategy which includes significant prior consultation with the local associations for guidance and support.

The Children's Aid Society was the sole placing agency for 94% for the foster parent respondents. The placement, support, and payment policies of the Children's Aid Societies have a significant influence upon the capacity of the Foster Parent Society of Ontario to meet its objectives. It is therefore recommended that:

11. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario consult with representatives of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies regarding establishment of joint planning forums for issues of mutual interest; and,

12. The Foster Parent Association of Ontario review its membership base and determine whether it should broaden its membership to include foster parents of other placing agencies or remain with a specific child welfare focus.

The Foster Parent Society of Ontario became incorporated in July 1990. With incorporation, the Society has assumed responsibility to lead Ontario's foster parents and to increase their contribution to society through the promotion of supportive, nurturing families. Recognition of foster parents needs is essential. The value of foster parents should reflect the value of society's greatest asset, our children.

#### Notes

(1) Statistics were provided by OACAS Info '88 and OACAS March 1989 Mini-Survey reported within the Background Paper on Foster Care prepared for the Ministry of Community and Social Services and Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies Work Group.

(2) A. Kadushin, Child Welfare Services (3rd edition) New York: MacMillan Pub. Co., Inc. 1980.

(3) John Boswell is a noted historian who has turned his attention to the history of child abandonment and neglect from late antiquity to the Renaissance. His book The Kindness of Strangers New York: Pantheon Books, 1988 lends perspective to our current child care practices.

(4) Refer to the Foster Parent Society of Ontario, Foster Parent Need Identification and Assessment Final Report, October, 1990.

## APPENDIX

### Summary of Recommendations

1. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario initiate research to determine the actual costs of fostering children and to develop funding models for a range of foster placement alternatives.
2. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario, in consultation with the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and other stakeholders, develop a definition of special need; and,
3. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario participate with relevant stakeholders in the formulation of a funding model which establishes basic minimums and ranges for special needs resources to support local negotiations between placement agencies and foster parents.
4. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario begin a consultation process with provincial representatives of placing agencies to identify and affirm the preferred role for the provision of foster care services; and,
5. Once an acceptable foster parent role is defined, the financial and human resources necessary for role maintenance or transition are established in consultation with child care stakeholders.

6. The Foster Parent Association of Ontario advocate for increased supports which are sensitive to role transition and gender issues experienced by foster parents.
7. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario review the current method of delivering training programs to foster parents and establish a training approach which reduces duplication and ambiguity while ensuring efficient and effective delivery of relevant training programs.
8. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario ensure that relevant training modules are developed for youth and family foster training programs.
9. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario ensure that course modules reflecting the preferences cited by the respondents are developed for inclusion with future training modules.
10. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario review the prioritized issues and develop an implementation strategy which includes significant prior consultation with the local associations for guidance and support.
11. The Foster Parent Society of Ontario consult with representatives of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies regarding establishment of joint planning forums for issues of mutual interest; and,

12. The Foster Parent Association of Ontario review its membership base and determine whether it should broaden its membership to include foster parents of other placing agencies or remain with a specific child welfare focus.



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