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Foster Parenting...Why Not?

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FOSTER PARENTING...

WHY NOT?

A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

by

Michelle Yvonne Marley

June 2016

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ABSTRACT

Every day, children are removed from their homes of origin by Children & Family Services and placed into foster care. When the county foster homes become full, private foster family agencies are relied upon to take in the overflow. For a variety of reasons, private agencies are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of foster parents to house all of these children. This is a pressing problem in the social work field as, without proper placement options, many children will simply fall through the cracks in the system. The purpose of this research was to explore and address the many concerns surrounding foster parenting, thereby improving foster parent recruitment and retention. Surveys were completed by foster family agency staff (both private and county), current and former foster parents, and people who have considered foster parenting but later changed their minds. Qualitative data gleaned from these surveys revealed improvement that could be made in foster parent recruitment and retention for both private and county agencies. This research has the potential to increase the pool of available foster homes and save the lives of many children.

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CHAPTER ONE

ASSESSMENT

Introduction

The focus of this project was what could be done to address the current lack of available foster parents for children who have been removed from their home of origin by Children & Family Services (CFS). County foster homes, while numerous, eventually become full and private foster family agencies must take up the slack. It has become increasingly difficult in recent years for private agencies to recruit and retain suitable homes for these children. There are many reasons given by families for their decision not to host foster children. These reasons were explored. A constructivist paradigm was originally planned for this research. However, during the course of the project, a post positivist approach was found to be more feasible. The reasons for this change is also discussed herein. The researcher gathered qualitative data through surveys of key informants such as foster family agency staff (both private and county), current and prospective foster parents, and those who have chosen not to follow through with the foster parenting process. Data gathering allowed the researcher to gain insight into the main concerns among prospective foster parents and how best to address those concerns to increase the available and appropriate pool of homes for children in need. The literature on this subject acknowledges that there are many valid concerns facing potential foster parents. The psychological theory which can possibly

explain much of their reticence is also presented. The results of this research can contribute to social work practice by developing an action plan that will potentially increase the pool of available private foster homes and consequently prevent vulnerable children from falling through the cracks in the system.

Research Focus

The focus of this research project was to explore different perceptions of foster parenting which may have caused the current lack of available homes for children in need. The majority of these children have been removed from their home of origin due to abuse. Some have entered into the foster care system through the death, chronic homelessness, or incarceration of both parents. Others have been relinquished by their parents, who were unable to care for them any longer. In most cases, there are no available or appropriate relatives for these children to be placed with, so foster care is the only option. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding each child's entry into the system, appropriate homes must be found for them.

Family foster homes, as opposed to group home facilities, provide planned, time-limited, substitute family care for children who cannot be adequately cared for at home. These homes also provide social services to children and their families in an effort to help resolve the problems that led to the need for placement (Blumenthal, 1983). According to the National Commission on Family Foster Care, "The goal of family foster care is to

provide opportunities for healing, growth, and development leading to healthier infants, children, youth, and families, with safe and nurturing relationships” (1991, p. 51).

In recent years, it has become increasingly difficult for private agencies to recruit suitable foster parents for these children. There are a variety of reasons people give for deciding not to foster, among them being fear of becoming too attached to the child only to have to return them to their parent, concern over the effects on their own biological children, concerns about money, concerns about accommodating differing racial/ethnic backgrounds of the children, and the difficulty of navigating the foster parent approval process (Randle, Miller, Dolnicar, & Ciarrochi, 2014). This project will allow foster family agencies to address and alleviate these concerns, thereby improving their recruitment methods and ultimately saving the lives of children.

Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm

The constructivist paradigm was originally thought to be the best fit for this project because, unlike the other paradigms (positivist, post positivist, and critical theory), it does not assume an objective reality. Instead, it recognizes that everyone sees the world from their own perspective, allowing the researcher to gather subjective information from those most directly involved in the issue. This paradigm was originally chosen based on the description: “Figure out what the issue is as you go along with input from the participants. Understand how the client sees what’s going on. What do they think should be

done?” (Morris, 2014). Subjective data is the key to this type of study as it is the only data that can truly show the range of human experience and emotions involved. Key informants can come together to build a joint plan of action regarding how to improve recruitment and retention of quality foster parents. This type of collaboration is called a hermeneutic dialectic. Hermeneutic means that individual interpretations, or constructions, are sought out. Dialectic means that those individual constructions are compared and contrasted which may result in changes in the direction of the study (Morris, 2014).

However, over the course of the project it became increasingly obvious that this method was not feasible. Due to time constraints, as well as the physical distance between key informants and the researcher, emailed surveys were used in place of in-person interviews. The hermeneutic dialectic aspect was lost. For that reason, a post-positivist approach became more advantageous and efficient.

In contrast to constructivism, post positivism accepts that an objective reality exists but suggests that the ‘immutable laws and mechanisms driving that reality can never be fully comprehended. Quantitative measurement and hypothesis testing only offers a part of the picture; the rest must be discovered through open exploration. Post positivism’s associated epistemology suggests that one can never step completely outside human experience to study it. However, since objectivity is the

ideal, a good researcher must strive for objectivity by being aware of his or her biases, paying attention to the intellectual traditions of the field, and attending to the observations and judgments of key players through peer feedback. The post positivist takes an inductive exploratory approach to understanding an objective reality. (Morris, 2014)

The post-positivist approach still relies on subjective information gathered from the people closest to the issue. However, the participants in the study do not come together to discuss their individual views. Data is collected in the form of words and is analyzed using qualitative analysis procedures. The “bottom up” analysis approach was used in this study. In this approach, the framework emerges from the data, and is used when one is interested in developing theories about a particular topic (Morris, 2014).

This research required the input of previous literature on the topic, foster family agency personnel (private and county), current and former foster parents, as well as individuals who have considered foster parenting but subsequently changed their minds. Each of these sources were equally important.

Literature Review

There is an extensive body of research showing that recruitment of foster parents is becoming increasingly difficult all over the world. There are many reasons for this.

Some people who could potentially become wonderful foster parents are never introduced to the concept, so it does not even cross their minds. On the other hand, many people become interested in foster parenting, but have concerns that deter them from inquiring further, for example “Taking in a child is too big a commitment to make”, “I do not think I could cope with a foster child”, “It would be too upsetting if I had to give the child back to their birth family”, and “It would negatively impact/disrupt my own family” (Randle, Miller, Dolnicar, & Ciarrochi, 2014).

Some people investigate the possibility but are deterred in some way. One study (Keogh & Svensson, 1999) found that over half of the individuals who had called to inquire about foster care did not proceed due to “changes in their personal circumstances.” These circumstances were broad ranging and included changes in marital status, financial situation, work arrangements, and issues to do with their own children. Other reasons for not becoming a foster parent after inquiring included failure of the agency to follow up with the individual after their enquiry, the agency deciding that the person would not be a suitable candidate, and the lack of suitable placements available at the time of the enquiry (Keogh & Svensson, 1999).

As of 2002, foster parents cared for about 75% of the 56,000 children in state care in the USA (Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2002). This number has grown quickly since then. As part of their preparation for fostering, foster family applicants participate in a learning and review

process that includes pre-service training and a home study (Administration of Children, Youth, & Families, 2012). While learning about the challenges of fostering, applicants might change their minds and decide that it simply is not right for them. Also, during the review process, the agency worker might decide that a particular applicant is not a good match.

A large part of the selection decision concerns both the applicant's and the worker's perceptions of what it takes to foster successfully and how various factors within the family, the foster child, and the environment promote or inhibit successful fostering. (Buehler, Cox, & Cuddeback, 2003)

An important point to be made here relates to the challenge of presenting a realistic picture of the complexities associated with foster caring while not presenting such a negative picture that individuals who might be very capable of being foster parents are turned off foster caring all together (Randle et al., 2014).

There are also instances of foster parents quitting due to reasons such as lack of agency support, poor communication with caseworkers, lack of input regarding foster children's future, and difficulty with foster children's behavior (Mullins Geiger, Hayes, & Lietz, 2013).

While there is abundant information regarding the reasons people give for not being foster parents, there is a lack of information on what to do about this problem. The shortage of foster homes limits the ability of social workers

to provide appropriate case planning and jeopardizes the quality of services provided to foster children. It contributes to placement disruptions, placement in unnecessarily restrictive and otherwise inappropriate environments, overcrowding, and mismatched children and foster families (Rhodes, Orme, & Buehler, 2001). This researcher hoped to find ways to address and alleviate the presenting concerns and thereby increase the available pool of foster parents.

Theoretical Orientation

Psychological and social theories can be used as a framework for clarifying assumptions being made by the researcher about underlying motivations of the study participants. The theories may or may not have a guiding influence on the research as the study progresses, depending on the input of the participants during development of the shared construction.

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1993 [1950]) breaks the life cycle down into eight stages, the seventh of which is generativity vs. stagnation (or self-absorption). According to Erikson, at this stage of life, people have an innate need to make a meaningful contribution to the next generation. They may consider foster parenting at this point. What better way to help the neediest of the next generation? However, the fear of the unknown often overwhelms them with thoughts of "What if I get a child so deeply disturbed I can't handle it?" "What if they are physically aggressive to my biological children?" "What if they are of a different race or ethnicity?"

“What if I can’t afford it?” “What if I can’t pass the approval process?” “What if I get attached to the child and have to give them back to their parents?” and so on. It is the hope of this researcher that those people who are best suited to be foster parents – the very ones who care deeply enough to have so many concerns – can be educated and made to feel confident in their ability to do this important work.

Contribution of Study to Macro Social Work Practice

The results of this research are valuable to social work practice on both micro and macro levels. Foster parents have been given the opportunity to voice their concerns and contribute to the discussion of how best to alleviate them. Social workers will be better prepared to address these concerns as they arise. By addressing these concerns on a large scale and making improvements in the foster care system as a whole, this research could potentially increase the pool of available foster homes and prevent untold numbers of children from falling through the cracks.

Summary

The focus of this research project was the barriers that deter people from becoming foster parents and how to overcome those barriers. A post-positivist paradigm was determined to be the necessary approach to this research. The literature review confirmed that there is a worldwide shortage of quality foster parents and that the reasons people give for not fostering are

widely varied. Most of these reasons, however, seem to be based in the fear of the unknown, hence the adoption of Erikson's Stage Theory of Psychosocial Development as a theoretical orientation for this study. This research has the potential to contribute to social work practice by improving foster parent recruitment and saving the lives of children.

CHAPTER TWO

ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

Engagement in this particular study was accomplished by first becoming immersed in the research site and then slowly building rapport and trust with the gatekeepers. Questionnaires were developed and distributed to all key players. Self-preparation for this study included many aspects, such as acknowledging any personal biases, not only of the researcher, but the other participants as well. It was also important to determine if there were any diversity, ethical, or political issues which could have impacted the research.

Research Site

The main research site for this study was Childhelp, a private nationwide non-profit organization devoted to the prevention of child abuse (see Agency Permission Slip – Appendix A). Childhelp provides children with safety in their foster homes and group homes. They also provide therapy for the children and extensive training of their foster parents. They operate their own child abuse hotline, which county social workers can call for emergency placement of children. Their website states:

Our goal is to meet the physical, emotional, educational, and spiritual needs of abused, neglected and at-risk children. We focus our efforts on prevention, intervention, treatment, and community outreach. Our

programs and services help children from any situation and let them experience the life they deserve: one filled with love. The principal theme across all of our programs is to provide children we serve with an environment of compassion and kindness (Childhelp, 2016).

Questionnaires were also distributed to San Bernardino County Children and Family Services staff in order to get their perspectives and how their department is working to improve recruitment and retention.

Additional questionnaires were provided to interested parties who volunteered to participate via the Facebook page set up for this purpose.

Engagement Strategies for Gatekeepers at Research Site

Engagement in the development of the research focus involved input from the gatekeepers at Childhelp. These gatekeepers were particularly invested in the outcome of this research for it was they who suggested it to the researcher. They were engaged through regular face-to-face contacts with an emphasis on building good rapport and a trusting relationship. With their expertise in the field, the gatekeepers were able to provide the researcher with invaluable information on the daily operation of the agency. They were also able to put the researcher in contact with other key informants, such as current and former foster parents. The gatekeepers were aware of the research process in the post-positivist paradigm. According to Morris (2014), gatekeepers should have verbal and written competency in their respective positions, be committed to the study and be willing to share power. By being

well informed of the research paradigm being utilized, gatekeepers were able to greatly streamline the data gathering process.

Self-Preparation

In a study of this kind, it was necessary that the researcher was fully aware of her own potential impact on the participants. Because of the qualitative data gathering involved, there was more personal interaction with the participants (albeit online) than there would be in a positivist study. The researcher was prepared for the high level of commitment required for this type of study. More specifically to this particular study, the researcher needed to become familiar with the foster care system in general as well as the inner workings of individual foster family agencies. That was why it was important to also talk to County staff. It was also necessary to have a general idea of the common reasons given by people for their decision not to become foster parents. Personal biases needed to be examined. These included the researcher's own feelings about the adequacy of the current foster care system and the prevalence of children being abused in out-of-home care. The researcher investigated the validity of these opinions before allowing them to influence perceptions and decisions related to the study. A trusting relationship was developed within the research site so that gatekeepers felt free to express any personal biases of their own. The perceived anonymity of the questionnaire process assisted others in being able to express their true feelings.

Diversity Issues

It was important to consider the diverse backgrounds of both foster parents and foster children throughout the course of this study. Race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, age, and physical/mental health status are all factors that played a part. Racial/ethnic disparities in the foster care system are well known and needed to be taken into consideration. The majority of children in the system are children of color. However, there is no corresponding number of foster homes of similar racial/ethnic background to take them in (Nasuti, York, & Sandell, 2004). Some potential foster parents had specific concerns regarding race/ethnicity which needed to be addressed separately. Level of religiosity, sexual orientation, and age are other diversity issues that impact foster parenting. Finally, the fact that many children come into care with physical, medical, and/or mental health issues needed to be examined to see how this affects the difficulty of finding appropriate homes for them.

Ethical Issues

The main ethical issue in this study was maintaining the confidentiality of the individual study participants. In this particular study, potential foster parents needed to feel free to express their opinions even if they were unpopular ones (i.e. "I don't want a child of a different race," or "I don't want a LGBT child"). Gatekeepers at the agency also needed to be able to express negative opinions about their agency's policies and procedures. The

questionnaires were designed in such a way as to allow participants to express these types of opinions without fear of recrimination. The Informed Consent form (see Appendix B) was created before data gathering began and referred to the constructivist paradigm. Under that paradigm it was necessary to make clear to the participants that, while the researcher's goal was to keep their information private, complete confidentiality could not be guaranteed. When the study turned to a post positivist approach, all participants were notified via email or text of the change. They were also informed that, since the researcher would be the only person viewing the questionnaire results, their confidentiality could be assured.

Political Issues

The political issues internal to the research site and study participants were addressed before the study began. The gatekeepers at the research site agreed to the terms of the post positivist approach and were willing to share power in order for the plan for change to be effective. The goal of this study was to assess the opinions of all key players, leading to solutions to the problems involved in recruiting and retaining quality foster parents. The gatekeepers of this agency were eager to facilitate the data gathering process and showed no resistance to sharing power whatsoever. The findings of this research were not expected to have any negative impact on the agency's reputation or standing in the community. The only readily apparent external political issue was the possibility that government funding and public support

of the foster care system could be affected by a more conservative political and economic climate.

The Role of Technology in Engagement

The need for face-to-face contact is critical in the initial engagement phase of this study. Establishing a basis of trust and commitment with the gatekeepers was essential. After forming a strong rapport, electronic means were utilized for further contacts. The appropriate and effective use of current technology was very important to the success of this study. A Facebook page was established at the following link for data gathering and meeting purposes: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/696388467110157/>. It became a great source of participants with experience in the foster care system.

Summary

Engagement of the study participants was critical, especially in the beginning stages of the research, when a trusting relationship was being built. Prior to beginning the project, self-preparation was considered in order to avoid any personal biases impacting the study. Also, any issues of diversity, ethics, and politics were identified and addressed.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

The research was done primarily at Childhelp, a private non-profit agency that provides foster family services in the Inland Empire area of Southern California. The study participants included agency personnel, current and former foster parents, potential foster parents, and people who have inquired about foster parenting but did not follow through. Participants were chosen through snowball sampling. Data was recorded and a qualitative analysis was done.

Study Participants

The initial sources of information for this project were the researcher, administrative personnel and clinicians at Childhelp, and the existing literature. In order to expand the pool of participants, agency staff connected the researcher with current, former, and prospective foster parents that they felt had important contributions to make. As more people were added, they were invited to recommend other people as well. The participant pool was also expanded to include San Bernardino County Children & Family Services social workers and administrative personnel.

Selection of Participants

The selection of the participants began with interviews of the agency's director, assistant director, and clinicians. With their knowledge of their current and former foster parents, they were able to recommend which ones would likely have important contributions to make. They were also able to facilitate contact with people who had previously begun the foster parent certification process but dropped out. As each of these individuals completed their questionnaires, they were given the opportunity to suggest other people they felt would be appropriate to add to the pool of study participants, thereby utilizing snowball sampling. Some had friends and family members who have provided foster care. Others knew of people who have considered foster parenting, but never pursued it in any way. County staff members were also interviewed. All of these people provided valuable information to this study. Members of the general public also participated in the research utilizing the previously mentioned Facebook page.

Data Gathering

The majority of the data came from the study participants themselves in the form of qualitative information gleaned from questionnaires. Participants were given either a hard copy or an electronic version of the informed consent form, which was signed and agreed upon before the questionnaires were distributed. There were separate questionnaires for agency staff, current foster parents, former foster parents, and those who either dropped out of the

process of certification or never inquired at all (see Appendix A). The questions encouraged participants to discuss their involvement with and their opinions about the foster care system. Once a participant had completed their questionnaire, they could recommend others that they felt could contribute. In this way, the participant pool expanded.

Phases of Data Collection

During data collection, the researcher was the primary research instrument. Once the gatekeepers at the research site were engaged and consent was given to proceed (see Agency Permission Slip – Appendix A), questionnaires were sent via email. As each questionnaire was returned, it was scrutinized to see if follow up questions were needed. Once all questions and follow up questions (if any) had been answered, the participant was thanked for their input and termination was completed.

As the completed questionnaires were analyzed via open and axial coding. Tables were constructed giving a visual representation of the responses of each group questioned. Several potential solutions were suggested directly or extrapolated from the gleaned information. This was the end of the data analysis process. Since a constructivist model had not been used, there was no member checking meeting, and the debriefing statement (see Appendix A) became unnecessary.

Data Recording

Due to the large amount of information being gathered, the researcher kept two journals throughout the data collection process. One of these was the Narrative Account Journal which was used to record the researcher's intended plans for the research methodology. It also included all of the data collected. The other journal was the Reflective Journal. It included the researcher's reflections on each questionnaire for future reference. It also included the researcher's thoughts and concerns as the project progressed.

Data Analysis Procedures

Microanalysis tools were used to interpret the data to facilitate open coding, which is the process of identifying concepts, categories of concepts, properties of concepts, and dimensions of properties. For the topic of this research, the lack of foster parents, that meant scanning the completed questionnaires for specific concepts that showed up, and then categorizing them (Morris, 2014).

Summary

The foster family agency allowed the research study to take place. The participants of the study were identified and selected through snowball sampling. The data was gathered through questionnaires and analyzed using open coding. It is the hope of this researcher that the results of this study will be of benefit to foster family agencies and foster children everywhere.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION

Introduction

Questionnaires from four groups of study participants were analyzed. Two of the groups, former and current foster parents, were combined into one group simply called Foster Parents. The resulting qualitative data was separated into units of information and then the categories that they fit into developed. The results were interpreted, resulting in implications for micro and macro practice.

Data Analysis

Four different groups of people completed questionnaires designed for their specific group. These groups were Agency Staff, Former Foster Parents, Current Foster Parents, and Past Interest. Since very few current foster parents completed questionnaires, they were grouped with the former foster parents with the new group name becoming simply Foster Parents. The demographics of each group are detailed below (See Tables 1, 2, and 3).

Table 1. Agency Staff (Group A)

Participant #	Educational Background	Position/Duties	Type of Agency
A1	B.A. in Sociology	Office Manager, PRIDE trainer	Private
A2	MSW, LCSW	Assistant Director, Adoption Supervisor, PRIDE trainer, home study writer	Private
A3	MFT	Program Director, Adoption Supervisor, Program Management & Development	Private
A4	MSW	Clinician, home study writer	Private
A5	B.A. in Psychology	MSW Intern, home study writer, foster parent recruitment	Public
A6	MSW	Home study writer, PRIDE trainer	Public

Table 2. Foster Parents (Group B)

Participant # and Gender	Type of Agency	Former/ Current	Experience Fostering
B1 female B2 male	Private	current	3 years- 8 children: 2 sibling sets, 4 individual children placed
B3 female B4 male	Public	former	12 months- adopted the 3 children placed
B5 female	Private	former	18 months- 1 child placed
B6 female B7 male	Public	former	Foster parents for one child until adopted
B8 female B9 male	Public	former	3 years- 9 children- 3 sibling set of 2, 3 individual teen/young adults

Table 3. Past Interest (Group C)

Participant # and Gender	Married/Single	Bio-children in home?
C1 female	married	yes
C2 female	married	no
C3 female	single	no
C4 female	married	no
C5 male	married	yes
C6 male	married	no
C7 female	single	yes
C8 female	married	yes
C9 female	single	no
C10 female	married	no
C11 male	single	yes
C12 female	single	no

Once the data from all three groups of participants was analyzed, it became apparent that certain issues plagued both private and public foster family agencies. However, certain issues were specific to each type of agency. It is also interesting to note that, in the more specific areas, private and public agencies appear to suffer from the opposite issues (see Table 4).

Table 4. Issues Affecting Foster Family Agencies

Foster Care Issues	Private	Public
Recruitment	X	
Retention		X
Quality of training	X	
Length of application process		X
Inadequate staffing		X
Possible discrimination	X	
Impact of foster child on existing household members	X	X
Rules & regulations too strict	X	X
Foster child's behavioral issues	X	X
Financial impact		X
Personal circumstances	X	X

Agency Staff

In analyzing the responses given by agency staff from both county and private agencies, the units of information were found and categories began to develop. In the end, the findings were as follows.

County

The County currently has so many foster homes awaiting approval it is hard pressed to complete the required home studies and training for them all with the limited number of employees available. The training the County provides, however, is intensive and is able to equip foster parents to deal with child trauma and resulting troublesome behaviors.

The number of potential foster parents needing training will nearly double when the new Resource Family Approval (RFA) legislation is enacted January 1, 2017. This legislation requires that all placement homes, whether they be foster, adoptive, or relatives of the children, be assessed under the same stringent standards. Previously, relatives were spared the intensive home study process required of foster and adoptive homes. This adds several hundred new homes per year that must go through the home study and training process.

Being a government agency, the County cannot discriminate on the basis of race, religion, creed, sexual orientation, etc. As one staff member put it, “We are willing to assess just about anyone as foster parents. Criminal background is usually the only factor in denying someone. Therefore, we have plenty of homes to choose from. This will increase with RFA” (Participant A5, Survey Interview, November 2015). The home approval process is currently taking the county approximately one year to complete, but under RFA standards will need to be within 90 days of application. So the problem for the county is not so much with finding enough homes – it is with getting those homes approved quickly enough to house the ever increasing influx of children into the system, and then retaining those homes to be reused many times.

Retention of existing foster homes is difficult, largely due to the inaccessibility of the child’s social worker. Visits with the family are only monthly and families very often cannot reach their worker by telephone. This

occurs because county caseloads are far above the number that can be given proper clinical oversight and support.

County staff stated that there were multiple reasons people had given them for not fostering. These reasons included difficulty complying with rules and regulations, struggling with saying goodbye to the children when they return to their parents, and inaccessibility of the child's social worker.

Private Agencies

Private agencies receive requests to find placement for children the county was unable to place. These children are to be placed in the agency's existing foster homes. These are homes that the agency recruited themselves. They have their own foster parent orientations and trainings that are based on the same training provided by the County. However, the researcher's experience while observing both training methods, was that the private agency lacks the same level of trauma informed practice, resulting in foster parents ill-prepared to deal with the behaviors often displayed by foster children. This view was confirmed by one Childhelp staff member who stated, "Foster parents don't know what to do under certain crisis or emergency related incidents" (Participant A1, Survey Interview, November 2015). There were further concerns, expressed by more than one staff member, that all of the required information is not being given to potential foster parents, leading them to feel misled when things do not turn out as planned once a child is in their home. One staff member admitted, "Foster parents often don't get the

information even when training frequently” (Participant A1, Survey Interview, November 2015). This could be caused by the agency being over-eager to approve homes and not wanting to “scare people away” (Participant A4, Survey Interview, April 2016).

Since they are a small local branch of Childhelp, they are able to spend more time with each applicant/foster parent. They have a very detailed and comprehensive foster home certification process and approval of the home can easily be accomplished within 90 days. They are often eager to approve every home possible. This can backfire however, as one staff member said, “we need to make sure we address all concerns that we have with the home before certifying it and later regretting making the decision to do so” (Participant A2, Survey Interview, November 2015).

However, private agencies are often owned and/or operated by faith-based organizations and are sometimes more selective in the sorts of homes they are willing to recruit from. One Childhelp staff member stated, “For example, we don’t actively recruit from the LGBTQ community, but we do not discriminate either. I think it impacts us because that is a missed opportunity to recruit from a large population” (Participant A2, Survey Interview, November 2015). So, while they will not turn away an individual applicant based on sexual orientation, they are not encouraged by the larger organization to actively seek these individuals out.

Retention of existing homes is usually better than with the County, due in part to the private agency's ability to visit with the family on a weekly basis and remain accessible to them at all times.

Agency staff stated that there were multiple reasons people had given them for not fostering. These reasons included difficulty complying with rules and regulations, struggling with saying goodbye to the children when they return to their parents, having State and County officials coming into their home, and dealing with the unexpected behavioral issues of the children.

Foster Parents

Former and current foster parents discussed their initial concerns, the application process, orientation/training, experiences with agency staff and CFS in general, reasons for quitting, and advice for future foster parents.

Concerns

When they first considered serving as foster or adoptive parents, all of the participants questioned mentioned having had concerns about dealing with the behavioral issues of foster children and how it might impact their household. They also worried about how to include a foster child as a member of their family, rather than "an outsider" (Participant B3, Survey Interview, March 2016).

Another major concern expressed by several participants was how difficult it might be to return children to their parents when it does not appear to be in their best interest. Two participants mentioned being worried about the

financial impact and having to provide transportation for all of a child's visits, doctor appointments, court dates, etc. One couple, who are in a same-sex relationship, said that initially they were afraid they would face discrimination based on their orientation (Participant B5, Survey Interview, March 2016).

Participants stated that their respective agencies, whether private or county, addressed their concerns in a number of ways. Several participants felt that their agency handled their concerns quite well. One of them stated it this way, "The agency was very informative and provided an explanation and or extra training (grief/loss training for children going back home). Our agency (Childhelp) has always been supportive of this process for us" (Participant B1, Survey Interview, March 2016). Another said,

After the (county) orientation, we were left feeling confident that we would be educated and supported in the fostering adventure. I didn't feel like the presenters candy coated anything in the orientation, and everyone had an idea of what they were signing up for. (Participant B4, Survey Interview, March 2016)

The same-sex couple were assured of the county's non-discrimination policy and made aware that there were already a number of LGBT foster parents who had been approved and children placed with them (Participant B5, Survey Interview, March 2016).

Application Process

Nearly all of the foster parents characterized the application process as being lengthy, time consuming, and as one put it “grueling” (Participant B4, Survey Interview, March 2016). The process from application to approval took, on average one year for the county and sixty days for private agencies. One couple said their county approval process took close to eighteen months (Participant B6, Survey Interview, March 2016). Only one of the couples described their experience as “Easy, painless, and appropriate” but they went on to describe the rest of their experience with their private agency in mostly disparaging terms (Participant B3, Survey Interview, March 2016). The most positive thing any of the participants had to say about this process came from one of the county foster parents who said,

I felt the application process really helped us to decide if this venture really was something we wanted to follow through on because it was so thorough and delved deep into our histories. It really made us think, in regards to what we could maybe expect or prepare for. (Participant B4, Survey Interview, March 2016)

They suggested that perhaps if more staff were available, the county would be able to complete their home studies sooner.

Orientation/Training

Foster parents with a private agency overall expressed that they were not comfortable with the level of training they had received. One stated, “No

training was received; social worker just guided us through the process if needed” (Participant B2, Survey Interview, March 2016). Another stated that they had “one weekend training and some online trainings.” They expressed wishing there had been training on “understanding cultures or different ethnicities” and “the legal adoption process” (Participant B1, Survey Interview, March 2016).

Those who had participated with a county however cited having had two to three months of training. Their comments included, “all day orientation (TCBD) followed by about 2 months of PRIDE training. And ongoing training on specific issues we might encounter” (Participant B6, Survey Interview, March 2016). They overall felt very comfortable with the amount of training received, saying things like

yes, I felt our training was good at preparing you for what the child may be feeling when placed. There was a lot of emphasis on their losses, and behaviors that may arise because of certain scenarios. The behaviors or struggles that can pop up later can be tough, because your support sources can’t always understand or relate. I think our training was a great overview. (Participant B4, Survey Interview, March 2016)

Experiences with Agency Staff and Children and Family Services in General

Private agency staff were universally praised for always being available and supportive. County social workers, on the other hand, were much harder

to contact when needed and were often too overworked to provide proper case management. As one former county foster parent put it,

It was difficult to get proper information to and from the worker, and the bio-parents often gave me the info of visitation changes and I was left to confirm with the worker and having no calls returned would get frustrating. The amount of paperwork for every communication with the parents was too much considering it appeared the workers would often not even care to pick up the logs that I spent hours working on.

(Participant B3, Survey Interview, March 2016)

Another said,

It was almost impossible to contact the kids' social worker outside of scheduled visits between kids and their parents. Even then half the time a substitute person would come to observe the visit so we couldn't see the worker then either. Very frustrating whenever behavioral issues came up and we had questions. Just had to figure it out for ourselves.

(Participant B5, Survey Interview, March 2016)

Several complained about the high turnover rate of county social workers, stating "huge changeover of social workers and it seems like every time that the social workers begins to understand the kids and their history we get a new one and it takes a few months to get on the forward path"

(Participant B1, Survey Interview, March 2016), "when we get a new social worker, they never read the case file so I feel that they truly don't know what

these kids have gone through or understand what they are going through” (Participant B6, Survey Interview, March 2016), and “workers changed very often, which would disrupt everything when we got someone new who didn’t even know the kids” (Participant B5, Survey Interview, March 2016).

Reasons for Quitting

Several reasons were given for foster parents quitting. One couple said, We felt that being foster parents was not for us. We did not like the idea that every move regarding the children needed to be handle through juvenile court. Doctor’s appointments and medications need to be approved by the judge, before meds could be dispensed. Too many restrictions. (Participant B2, Survey Interview, March 2016)

Another said, “Our fear is that we might fall in love with the children, and they would be taken away. The last thing that we want is for the children and for us getting hurt. This is not a good feeling” (Participant B1, Survey Interview, March 2016). Two other couples cited personal circumstances: “We moved to a house in a different county and did not want to have to start over in the process” (Participant B4, Survey Interview, March 2016) and

My wife got sick and was no longer able to care for kids. I was working full time, so I wasn’t available for them. We took a break and just never called back to get our name back on the list for placements.(Participant B5, Survey Interview, March 2016)

The couple who are still fostering were asked if they had ever quit. They said

Yes. Our first sibling set (Foster son 10 months old when we got him and his sister at the hospital when she was born 4 months later). Both children were returned to mom on the last court hearing because they (DCFS) ran out of time (18-month hearing). We never got a chance to say good bye... DCFS changed visitation to unsupervised only a month and a half before they went home. Previously all we had was 2 hour supervised visits once a week and mom only made it to less than half of them. (Participant B1, Survey Interview, March 2016)

When asked what inspired them to keep going after that, they said, We took some time after the went home to really think and talk about can we go through this again... and after about 3 weeks we decided that we still have the heart to help children that need our help and love (The original reason that we got into foster parenting in the beginning). (Participant B2, Survey Interview, March 2016)

When the former foster parents were asked what would be needed in order to feel comfortable doing it again, they stated, "The need, and my heart to feel that it was time" (Participant B3, Survey Interview, March 2016) and "We would do it again, only if a quick adoption process could be possible" (Participant B2, Survey Interview, March 2016) and

It may be something we do again in the future, but for now our daughter's needs are taking priority, and our other two children still want to be around us, so we are going to eat up this time, while it lasts. We also need to build up a support system before we jump back into this venture. (Participant B4, Survey Interview, March 2016)

and "now that our situation has stabilized, we would actually like to start getting kids again. I think we're looking towards adoption now though in addition to just fostering" (Participant B5, Survey Interview, March 2016).

Advice for Future Foster Parents?

"You need to have patience... Your life is no longer your life... You will have someone from your FFA in your house once a week. You will have bi annual home inspections and lots of paperwork to complete monthly" (Participant B1, Survey Interview, March 2016).

You need to have a good support system between you and your spouse (if you have one). Some children can be extremely difficult and you have to be able walk their walk or turn in your notice when that child becomes so disruptive to your home it no longer is a healthy environment for anyone to live in. (Participant B2, Survey Interview, March 2016)

You have to understand that you must document EVERYTHING to protect yourself.... At any given time, a foster child can say something bad about you and then you lost all the children in your home and get

investigated when nothing happened in the first place. Very sad to be treated that way when you have given up your life to support the lives of those foster children. (Participant B1, Survey Interview, March 2016)

Prepare for lots of appointments, visits (mom and dad potentially separate long distances), doctors' appointments, dentist appointments, CFS social work visits, therapy appointments, and specialists. Clear as many helpers to drive the child as you can (my mom was the only other person for me). (Participant B3, Survey Interview, March 2016)

I would say to make sure they not only have a large support base, but also one that is full of many different cultures. It makes a huge difference when your children have at least one person to relate to, or that can help you relate to your child better. That is the only thing stopping us. The support system can make or break it. (Participant B4, Survey Interview, March 2016)

“Be ready for an emotional roller coaster. You need patience, dedication, and lots of love for all those beautiful children. These children only need someone to love them, and give them a sense of belonging” (Participant B2, Survey Interview, March 2016).

“Be prepared for emotions and habits...Have a set routine in place with naptime for toddlers, potential actions of the child that may need researched (hoarding was big)” (Participant B3, Survey Interview, March 2016).

These kids have been through a lot, be patient. We were lucky enough to get a couple of our kids who were LGBT teens... very troubled and had been abused for their orientation. It was very rewarding to be able to make things normal for them so they felt accepted just as they were. It was hard to see them go back to their parents. (Participant B6, Survey Interview, March 2016)

Past Interest

The researcher contacted twelve people who had previously considered foster parenting but had not followed through with it. Of the twelve, eight made no formal inquiries of foster family agencies, private or public. Of those eight, two consulted with other foster parents before making their decision not to foster. One looked up information online.

Concerns that some participants had up front included

I was fearful that it would be traumatic to my family to have foster children rotate through my home. I also worry about having to interact with the parents and/or family of the child as I would not want to bring any negativity into my home (Participant C1, Survey Interview, April 2016)

and “Getting attached then having them sent back to a bad situation, emotional problems, fear of causing more harm” (Participant C9, Survey Interview, April 2016). Some were worried about the potential impact on their own children already in the home. The others cited personal circumstances

such as not having enough space in their home, being single and not financially stable, being in the middle of graduate school and unable to devote the time and energy necessary to support a foster child, as well as health concerns.

Two of the participants had actually started the application process, but did not follow through due to, what they felt were unreasonable rules and requirements.

One said that she was trying to provide foster care for her son's friend, who was in a group home. She spoke to the social worker and frequently visited the child. She completed the application, some home visits, and a meeting with a social worker. She was ultimately discouraged from proceeding by the county social worker himself, who reportedly "did not think a single mother with three birth children, a full time job, and too many pets was a better home for a troubled 15 year old than an actual institutional group home" (Participant C11, Survey Interview, April 2016). She stated that the worker would not approve her home unless she got rid of her animals (four dogs and six cats, which had been rescued from shelters) and quit her job.

The other participant said that they had completed the application and were part way through the training when they realized it was not going to work for them. She said that she

wanted several times to be a foster parent but everyone in the house has to be onboard for it to be a success. Plus, they want you to alter

your whole home and the way your house runs for the child. I wanted to welcome the child into our family and that would not have been possible by the way they run things. (Participant C12, Survey Interview, April 2016)

Some of the participants gave other reasons for ultimately deciding not to foster, as well as what it would take to change their minds. Reasons included fear of attachment, personal circumstances, lack of family support, and bad experiences with the foster care system.

I felt that the attachment to a child would be too rough on my entire family once the child would leave my home. Not to mention in the event that another child might not get along with my children, it wouldn't be good for either party in that case. The only thing that might change that for me would be if it was a confirmed adoption case. (Participant C3, Survey Interview, April 2016)

We travel a lot and I understood you have to have permission if you would like child to go with you. You cannot just get up and go, you have to have court permission. I would only consider doing it now if I were able to travel with the foster child without permission. (Participant C4, Survey Interview, April 2016)

Went through a rough divorce and was sharing custody of the kids. Too much turmoil at that point to add more kids to the mix. I would still

consider doing it, but would have to wait until my kids are grown and out of the house. (Participant C7, Survey Interview, April 2016)

“My husband didn’t want to get involved and I believe I would need his support to make it happen” (Participant C12, Survey Interview, April 2016).

I have 3 small children who deserve my undivided attention. I choose to bring them into this world and it would not be fair to my children to shift my attention to other child. I don’t think I could do both. Most foster children don’t know what a loving home looks like and that’s where my attention would be re-directed. I will go back and look into my decision once youngest has reached at least 12 years old. (Participant C8, Survey Interview, April 2016)

Time and stress of being in a graduate program. I’m very interested in looking into this after graduation. There are so many foster children that need a safe place so they can build trust. I want to be able to do that for the older child who feels like they got looked over. (Participant C10, Survey Interview, April 2016)

“No extra bedroom for a child. I would have to move to a larger place” (Participant C5, Survey Interview, April 2016).

My personal experiences with the system. It’s so broken. There is no support what-so-ever. A person who wants to have a child can get pregnant and do so with no government intervention. A person who wants to adopt or foster are scrutinized in so many ways to determine if

they are 'fit' to do so. I would not consider doing it at all now. I will not put my health, physical and mental, at risk because of the stress and issues that can occur because of these incompetent agencies.

(Participant C12, Survey Interview, April 2016) (note – this person's experience was with Los Angeles County)

Data Interpretation

After analyzing and interpreting all of the data, several important conclusions were reached. The county has problems with completing home studies in a timely manner, maintaining appropriate social worker contact with their families due to lack of staff, and retention of existing homes. However, their anti-discrimination policies allow them to have a wide pool of foster parents to choose from and their foster parent training is effective, thorough, and provides a good background in trauma-informed care.

Private agencies can have problems with recruiting enough homes if they limit their applicant pool due to faith-based decision making. They also need improvement in their delivery of foster parent training, adding more information about childhood trauma and dealing with behavioral issues. However, they are able to have frequent, quality engagement with their clients and, consequently are much more successful in retaining their existing foster homes.

It would be in the interest of all foster family agencies, whether they be county or private, to work together. Each type of agency has what the other is

lacking, so if they could share best practices and learn from each other, the foster parent recruitment and retention problem could begin to be solved.

Implications of Findings for Macro Practice

Agency Staff

Solutions suggested by County staff included, “hire more staff to handle foster parent training” (Participant A5, Survey Interview, November 2015), “hire more social workers for case management - will help with retention” (Participant A5, Survey Interview, November 2015), and “hold trainings at more locations - make it more accessible” (Participant A6, Survey Interview, November 2015).

Solutions suggested by private agency staff included “Hire people with the children & their well-being as their focus instead of numbers” (Participant A1, Survey Interview, November 2015), “More volunteers” (Participant A3, Survey Interview, March 2016), “Bring in more information to the pre-cert training so that our foster parents are well informed and can handle children with behavior issues” (Participant A2, Survey Interview, November 2015), “standardize orientation and training process - quality currently depends on who is doing it” (Participant A1, Survey Interview, November 2015), “find ways to actively recruit from more diverse populations (LGBTQ)” (Participant A2, Survey Interview, November 2015), and “Attending more community events (to gain access to new pools of applicants)” (Participant A1, Survey Interview, November 2015). One staff member stated, “We are re-doing our training to

incorporate dealing with behavior issues and to incorporate changes that are happening in the state (RFA)” (Participant A2, Survey Interview, November 2015).

Although not mentioned by any of the agency staff, both the county and private agencies are working together to improve recruitment through a program called Faith in Motion. This is an alliance between child welfare agencies, public and private, and local faith-based organizations. It is intended to harness the compassions and energies of the church to help foster children in need.

The obvious over-arching need of all child welfare agencies, whether they be private or public, is the addition of more staff. With the current influx of foster children, new homes to approve, and foster parents to train, there is simply no way the current numbers of social workers can handle it.

There are ways that the county and the private agencies could exchange best practices for the benefit of all. For example, the county could learn from the agencies how to streamline their home study process to have it completed within the required ninety days. Likewise, the agencies could benefit by sitting in on county orientations and trainings in order to augment their own processes.

Foster Parents

Foster parents with private agencies mentioned feeling like they had received inadequate training. County foster parents overwhelmingly stated the

need for more contact with their social workers. As noted by agency staff, the over-arching need in all of this is the addition of many more social workers.

Past Interest

There were many reasons given by this group for not fostering. Some were worried about the potential impact on their own children already in the home. Others cited personal circumstances such as not having enough space in their home, being single and not financially stable, lack of family support, being in the middle of grad school and unable to devote the time and energy necessary to support a foster child, as well as health concerns. Some were afraid of becoming attached to a child and having them return to their parents. Others had bad experiences with the foster care system, or felt that the licensing requirements were too stringent.

The troubling thing with this group was that the vast majority of them, after becoming interested in fostering, had made no formal inquiry of a foster care agency, private or public, before making the decision not to foster. Their decisions were largely based on hearsay and misinformation. If they had only made a phone call, perhaps their concerns could have been addressed and alleviated.

Summary

Questionnaires from all participants were analyzed. The resulting qualitative data was then separated into units of information. Then the categories the units fit into began to develop. The results were interpreted,

leading to confirmation of the reasons people give for not fostering, and implications for macro practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

Introduction

This chapter will explain the termination of the study and communication of findings to the research site.

Termination of Study

The relationship with the research site was terminated at the end of the data gathering process. Any ongoing contact will be at the request of the research site for purposes of clarifying information or initiating consultation with county agency staff for future collaborative efforts.

Communicating Findings to Study Site and Study Participants

The researcher has been in contact with the research site (Childhelp) and forwarded them a copy of this project. A poster, illustrating the results of this research, will be prepared for CSUSB Poster Day and also forwarded to the agency.

Ongoing Relationship with Study Participants

A debriefing statement (see Appendix C) was emailed to all participants. The researcher has made herself available for further questions or conversation about the study results via email or through the Facebook page, which will remain operational through the end of this year.

Dissemination Plan

Any participant requesting details of study results will receive an electronic version of the poster via email.

Summary

The study has been concluded with results and findings being forwarded to all interested parties. The researcher has made herself available to serve as a liaison between county and agency staff for any future collaborative efforts.

APPENDIX A
DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

Agency Permission Slip



Founded in 1959
by Sara O'Meara and Yvonne Feddersen
PREVENTION and TREATMENT of CHILD ABUSE

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
OF CALIFORNIA
1743-A Orange Tree Lane
Redlands, California 92374
T 909-335-1164
F 909-793-7466

Human Subjects Committee
School of Social Work
CSUSB
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, CA 92407

Date: March 18, 2015

Dear Committee Members:

This is to confirm that Michelle Marley has permission to carry out her research project "Foster Parenting...Why Not?" at Childhelp FFA. She will be gathering qualitative data from members of our staff as well as current and former foster parents via in-person and/or online interviews and data gathering from Foster-Trak. The data will be gathered from March 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016. Michelle Marley will ensure confidentiality by not using any identifying information of the foster parents (i.e. full names, addresses, or phone numbers). Michelle Marley will provide interview documents to Childhelp.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Diana Correa".

Diana Correa
Childhelp, Executive Director Programs Operation California

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
15757 North 78th Street, Scottsdale, Arizona 85260 T 480-922-8212 F 480-922-7061

"For The Love of A Child"

Interview Questions – agency staff

What is your position at the agency?

What are your job duties?

How long have you worked here?

What is your opinion of your agency's process for foster home certification?

What parts of the process work well?

What parts could be improved?

How?

What is your opinion of your agency's foster parent orientation and training?

What parts of orientation and training work well?

What parts could be improved?

How?

What reasons have people given you for their decision not to be foster parents?

What are some concerns about foster parenting that you have heard?

Is there anything your agency could do to better address those concerns?

Do you have ideas of how to improve your agency's foster parent recruitment?

Interview Questions – Former foster parents

When you first started thinking about being a foster parent, did you have any concerns?

What were they?

Did you discuss these concerns with the agency?

How did the agency respond?

What was the application process like?

What went well?

Were there things that could have been improved?

Did you have an orientation and/or training?

What went well?

Were there things that could have been improved?

Did you feel comfortable with the amount of training you received?

Were there areas where you felt you needed more training?

How long were you a foster parent?

How many children were placed with you through this agency?

Were you satisfied with your communication and interactions with agency staff?

Were you satisfied with the involvement of Children & Family Services?

What made you decide to stop foster parenting?

What would it take for you to do it again?

Do you have any advice for people who are currently considering being foster parents?

Interview Questions – current foster parents

When you first started thinking about being a foster parent, did you have any concerns?

What were they?

Did you discuss these concerns with the agency?

How did the agency respond?

What was the application process like?

What went well?

Were there things that could have been improved?

Did you have an orientation and/or training?

What went well?

Were there things that could have been improved?

Do you feel comfortable with the amount of training you have received?

Are there areas where you feel you need more training?

How long have you been a foster parent?

How many children have been placed with you through this agency?

Are you satisfied with your communication and interactions with agency staff?

Are you satisfied with the involvement of Children & Family Services?

Has there ever been a time when you considered quitting?

If so, what prompted that thought and what convinced you to keep going?

Do you have any advice for people who are currently considering being foster parents?

Interview Questions – past interest in foster parenting

Have you ever considered being a foster parent?

Did you have initial concerns that prevented you from pursuing it further?

Did you make inquiries to agencies asking how to become a foster parent?

Did you start the application process? How far into the process did you get?

What went well?

What could have been improved?

What was the reason you ultimately decided not to be a foster parent?

What would have to happen for you to consider foster parenting now?

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT



College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

Informed Consent Form for Interviews

Foster Parenting...Why Not?

Michelle Marley
909-723-3184
marleym@coyote.csusb.edu

Laurel Brown
Social Work Faculty Advisor
lbrown@csusb.edu

I am a student in the Master of Social Work program at California State University – San Bernardino. I am studying the lack of sufficient appropriate foster homes for children removed from their homes by Children & Family Services. It is hoped that by exploring the reasons people give for not being foster parents, this research will result in better methods of recruiting and retaining foster parents, thereby saving the lives of children.

During this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview regarding your knowledge of and/or participation in foster parenting. This interview was designed to be approximately a half hour in length. However, please feel free to expand on the topic or talk about related ideas. Also, if there are any questions you feel you cannot answer or that you do not feel comfortable answering, feel free to indicate this and we will move on to the next question. This interview will be audio taped and transcribed into a written document.

This interview is designed to learn first-hand information about this topic. The data collected during the interview will be kept in a password protected Dropbox (online storage) account. Only the researcher and faculty advisor mentioned above will have access to this information. Upon completion of this project (June 30, 2016), all data will be destroyed. There will be a meeting of all participants where information will be shared in order to come to a group consensus defining the problem and possible solutions. The confidentiality of any information you personally share at this meeting cannot be guaranteed.

Participation in this study is expected to carry no more than minimal risk, meaning no more risk than you would experience in everyday life. The benefit of participating in this study is contributing to an important body of knowledge intended to improve lives of foster children.

Participant's Agreement:

I am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary. If, for any reason, at any time, I wish to stop the interview, I may do so without having to give an explanation. I understand the intent and purpose of this research.

The researcher has reviewed the individual and social benefits and risks of this project with me.

I am aware the data will be used for a report and a group meeting of study participants. I have the right to review, comment on, and/or withdraw information prior to the report's submission. I have the right to attend the group meeting. The data gathered in this study are confidential and anonymous with respect to my personal identity unless I specify/indicate otherwise. I grant permission for the use of this information for a

report
 group meeting

I grant permission to use one of the following:

My first name only
 My full name
 Just a pseudonym

I will be given a copy of the:

report, transcribed interview

I understand that all data will be destroyed by June 30, 2016.

I have read the above form, and, with the understanding that I can withdraw at any time, and for whatever reason, I consent to participate in today's interview.

Participant's signature

Date

Interviewer's signature

APPENDIX C
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT



College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Foster Parenting... Why Not?

Michelle Marley

California State University San Bernardino
Department of Social Work

You recently participated in a research study of ways to improve foster parent recruitment. You were selected as a participant because of your experience with and/or prior interest in foster parenting. The purpose of this debriefing statement is to inform you about matters of confidentiality and provide contact information in case you should have any questions. Your participation in this study has been very valuable and is much appreciated.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any report that is published, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records (including written notes and audio/video recordings) will be stored securely and only the researcher and research advisor will have access to the records. All records will be destroyed by June 30, 2016. The researcher cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information that you might share with other participants at the member checking meeting.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Michelle Marley. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at marleym@coyote.csusb.edu. Her faculty research advisor, Laurel Brown, can be contacted at laurelbrown213@aol.com

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, Office of Academic Research UE-108, 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA. 92407.

APPENDIX D
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee

Researcher(s) Michelle Hernandez
Proposal Title Feasibility study on the impact of
SWISS

Your proposal has been reviewed by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board. The decisions and advice of those faculty are given below.

Proposal is:

- approved
 to be resubmitted with revisions listed below
 to be forwarded to the campus IRB for review

Revisions that must be made before proposal can be approved:

- faculty signature missing
 missing informed consent debriefing statement
 revisions needed in informed consent debriefing
 data collection instruments missing
 agency approval letter missing
 CITI missing
 revisions in design needed (specified below)

[Signature]
Committee Chair Signature 8/15/15
Date

Distribution: White-Coodinator; Yellow-Supervisor; Pink-Student.

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