

**FOSTER CARE AS A FORM OF SUBSTITUTE CARE IN THE
BLACK COMMUNITY**

An exploratory-descriptive study

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Kinship care is increasingly supplementing the more traditional forms of out-of-home care. Because related foster care has potential great value, the possibility of placement with relatives needs to be explored first. At its best it provides the child love and security with known people and possibly in a familiar environment. Yet, important as it is, this area of practice is seriously underdeveloped - few publications especially in South Africa exist on how children fare in this arrangement. This situation exists in spite of the fact that many children find themselves in both legal as well as privately arranged related foster care placements. Equally, of course, no comprehensive study has been undertaken to study the black family's perception of formal foster care and their adjustment to formal foster care practice which for many is a new encounter in their lives. More clarity on these issues pertaining to kinship care will not only improve our understanding but can lead to a better service.

Socio-political influences have weakened the mutual aid system in African families. This has resulted in needs and problems which the African family find it difficult to deal with. This has prompted families to make use of non-family support particularly services from specialized and other welfare agencies.

Formal foster care is a foreign practice to the black community as a result of their tradition and custom. It offers a new method of coping with child care problems and indicate a shift from the conventional patterns among South African blacks. As a result there is often confusion and a lack of understanding, making the community not to make proper use of this service.

This study is exploratory-descriptive. The sample comprised thirty foster parents. The main objective of this study was to investigate the nature and practice of formal foster care in the black community (with specific emphasis on related foster care) and its perception.

The study has raised a number of issues for practice and policy consideration. Notable findings were: the need to (1) promote much more active involvement of foster parents, foster child and their families (2) educate the community about foster care (3) prepare, train, support and supervise foster parents. The study revealed that these placements have become indistinguishable from natural parenthood and the foster children have become absorbed into the foster family. A need exists for permanency planning in foster care.

It is hoped that the research findings will contribute to the existing body of knowledge, and that more studies will be undertaken in future.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Throughout the world foster care is rated as the best kind of alternative care if adoption is not possible or advisable particularly because it affords the child the opportunity to enjoy the warmth and security of family life. In spite of the undeniable advantages that foster care offers, serious deficiencies in the present foster care system have been identified universally. The Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:1) identifies the legal aspects as embodied in the Child Care Act, 1983; the interpretation of parental rights in respect of children in foster care; and the services rendered by social workers to biological parents, foster children and foster parents. Research evidence suggests that foster children are negatively affected by these deficiencies in the present foster care system.

Foster care is acknowledged as one of the areas of specialized social work practice. In spite of the numerous developments that have taken place in the field not all areas are equally well researched. Evidence of this is reflected by the dearth of articles on related foster care. Yet many children find themselves in both formal as well as privately arranged related foster care placements. The result is that little empirical information about its dynamics exist. In view of the large number of black children in related foster care the area warrants more intensive research. With regard to related foster care the Guide to Foster Care practice in S.A. (1987:150) reads:

"The pro's and con's of related foster care need therefore to be thoroughly researched. This kind of placement, has potentially great value, but there are also many pitfalls. Not only is non-related foster care better researched, but in our ordinary service delivery programmes we also seem to be inclined to spend less time on selecting the best possible placement within the extended family. Neither do we prepare these related foster parents sufficiently or support them sufficiently."

Dubowitz, Feilgelman and Zuravin (1993:155) believe that Kinship care requires attention for several reasons, namely:

- The already substantial number of children in kinship care is likely to increase given the increasing number of children needing out-of-home care and the worsening shortage of foster homes.
- Several evaluations of the foster care system have identified major shortcomings, including inadequate monitoring and support of both foster children and foster parents. Concern that similar problems may pertain to kinship care is justifiable.
- The state policies concerning the placement of children should be guided by knowledge of the foster and kinship care systems.

The concept of formal foster placement is new and foreign to the Black community as a result of their tradition and custom. Formal foster care offers a new method of coping with child care problems and indicate a shift from the conventional patterns among South African blacks. The researcher realizes that the cultural background of the black family contributes to their perception of official foster care. These tend to conflict with the underlying premises of official foster care. For example, culturally, disclosing the child's identity, discussing the issue with him is generally unheard of,

and or is an infrequent practice. However, in statutory foster care, this is considered important for a successful foster placement and essential for the foster child's healthy personality development.

Literature on foster care identifies various critical philosophical, policy and programmatic elements needed for an effective foster care system. At the moment these ideals among South African blacks seem beyond realization. On the whole, foster care practice among blacks deals primarily with basic survival needs. The black family does not understand that formal foster care involves more than the provision of financial or material assistance but entails commitment and cooperation with the welfare agency.

Mistrust tends to be a key factor resulting in the black family not making proper use of available expertise and advice from professional social workers. The result is that neither the social worker nor foster families really get beyond the fundamentals of acceptable foster practice. The existing gap in knowledge appears to present problems. Certainly the introduction of elements essential for sound foster care practice can make the future outlook much more promising.

The issues discussed above have an effect on the quality of foster placements. In conclusion, it is thus, not clear how formal foster care is perceived in the Black community because it has not been fully investigated. More clarity on the problem can only improve our understanding about the problem and consequently lead to a better service. Also, information is crucial for the fuller understanding of the

strengths and weaknesses of kinship care for guiding policies as well as practice concerning foster children and their families.

1.2 THE STUDY AREA

Fort Beaufort is the oldest town north of Grahamstown and east of the Fish river. The present Fort Beaufort reflects a unique amalgamation of commercial farming and academic activities (Fort Beaufort Child Welfare Society report, 1992/93:1). It serves the rural areas in many respects.

The township lies \pm 2km east of Fort Beaufort. It comprises the following locations, namely: Tinis; Dorrington, Tinis extension, New Tinis, Job creation and self-help areas. There is an infrastructure below Tinis where another location is being built with few subsidy houses and self-help housing. The township is a slum and overcrowded with background shacks. Most of the houses are made of mud and old corrugated iron.

The community has a poor economic structure. There is only one seasonal factory for oranges namely KATCO (Katrivier Cooperation). Members of this community are generally employed as shop assistants, garage attendants, domestic workers at both privately owned houses and boarding schools.

KwaTini Dubu has a population of 35 000 and an unemployment rate of \pm 90% (Fort Beaufort Child Welfare report, 1992/93:1). The high unemployment rate, poor job

opportunities can be seen as the main cause for socio-economic problems such as poverty, infant mortality, teenage pregnancies, and so on. Some members of the community engage themselves with hawking for their income due to inadequate job opportunities. According to the Fort Beaufort Child Welfare Society report (1992/93:2) the community can be described as deprived with people feeling powerless, hopeless and depressed.

The most common problems mentioned in the Fort Beaufort Child Welfare Society Community Profile report (1991:8) are:-

- Unmarried motherhood - teenage pregnancies and single parenthood.
- Non-maintenance - natural parents deserting and neglecting their children with relatives especially grandparents.
- Families exposed to ill health because of poor housing, sanitation, diet resulting to high death rate, leaving a number of children parentless.
- Poor upbringing of children as there is usually a lack of proper discipline.

The Child Welfare Society is an important resource in the community. In 1993, the Society had 85 children in foster care. The majority of these children have spent their childhood years in foster care as their parents are either deceased or have abandoned them. Most of these children are in the care of elderly grandparents who find it difficult to provide for their needs, as well as exercise proper control and discipline of the foster children.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The main purpose of this study is to gain knowledge and to analyze the facts that pertain to formal foster care in the Black community (in particular related foster care).

Specifically the objectives are to:

- establish foster parent's perceptions and experiences of formal foster care.
- obtain information with regard to nature and practice of foster care.
- identify from the literature the main trends and tendencies as far as the practice of foster care is concerned with a view to evaluate the present mode of intervention, and,
- recommend practices by which the present system of foster care can be adjusted to make it more relevant to the needs of the Black community and possibly formulate questions for future research.

1.4 ENVISAGED VALUE OF THE STUDY

It is hoped that the study will contribute information to the available body of literature for the understanding of formal foster care in the black community, thereby enabling practitioners in the field to adjust their approaches in order to make their services more responsive to the needs of the black community. The study will attempt to provide a pedagogic base from which the black community can be educated about the practice and implications of foster care. The study hopes to provide helpful guidance for future study.

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A discussion of the limitations is done in Chapter Six. These relate to the size of the sample and the paucity of literature on related formal foster care.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

FORMAL FOSTER CARE: Statutory substitute care for the provision of physical care and family environments for children who are unable to live with their biological parents.

RELATED FOSTER CARE PLACEMENTS: Placements with relatives. The terms "related foster care" and "kinship care" are used interchangeably in this study.

PERMANENCY PLANNING: Systematic process of carrying out within a brief time-limited period, a set of goal directed activities designed to help children live in families that offer continuity of relationships with nurturing parents or caretakers and the opportunity to establish lifetime relationships Maluccio and Fein (1983:197).

AFRICAN: The term African is used in this study to refer to South African blacks and is used interchangeably with the term 'black'.

KINSHIP: Social relationships deriving from blood ties and marriage.

The following terms are defined in the Child Care Act, 1983 (Act.No.74 of 1983.)

FOSTER CHILD - any child who has been placed in the custody of any foster parents in terms of Chapter 3 or 6 of the Child Care Act, 1983, or section 290 of the Criminal Procedure Act, 1977 (Act No.51 of 1977).

FOSTER PARENT - any person, except a parent or guardian, in whose custody a child has been placed in terms of Chapter 3 or 6 of the Child Care Act, 1983, or section 290 of the Criminal Procedure (Act, No.51 of 1977).

CHILD CARE ACT NO.74 OF 1983

The legal provisions for formal foster care are embodied in this Act as well as Section 290 of the Criminal Procedure (Act No.51 of 1977).

1.7 ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

The study is arranged as follows:

The present Chapter is an introductory Chapter. It includes a statement of the problem, aims of the research, envisaged value and definition of terms.

Chapters 2 - 5 concentrate on the theoretical framework.

Chapter 2 examines traditional African family life with specific reference to the place of the child in the family, substitute care arrangements and the effects of socio-political influences on the African family.

In **Chapter 3** attention is given to the nature of foster care as a form of substitute care. Focus here is on the underlying philosophy, principles and characteristics.

Chapter 4 gives a description of the placement process.

Chapter 5 deals with foster care legislation in South Africa. It identifies elements that militate against the effective provision of foster care services. Foster care law and the placement process are closely interwoven but for clarity purposes these are dealt with separately.

Chapter 6 and 7 deal with the empirical research.

Chapter 6 discusses the research design and methodology used in the study.

Chapter 7 deals with the presentation and analysis of the data; and lastly,

Chapter 8 deals with conclusions and recommendations. Areas of possible future research are also suggested.

The final section contains appendices consisting of the interview schedule and a bibliography.

CHAPTER 2

AN OVERVIEW OF THE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN FAMILY LIFE, VALUE OF CHILDREN AND CHILD REARING PRACTICES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of traditional African family life with specific emphasis on the significance of the child. Particular attention is given to child-rearing practices; socialization patterns, substitute care arrangements and inter-family relationships which indicate the relationship structure of children with various family members. The discussion of the extended family is presented within the framework of its importance in promoting individual and family functioning. The discussion of socialization patterns extend beyond the role of the family to the value of age sets, the neighbourhood, ritual and ceremonial activities. Socio-political influences on the African family are looked at briefly.

2.2 THE EXTENDED FAMILY SYSTEM

The African family was the most important social institution in African private life. The extended family system incorporated the tendency to merge an individual into a group to a greater level of importance than the individual. It thus, stressed the importance of group character, its maintenance as well as the pursuit of group goals as opposed to individual goals.

It has been repeatedly stressed in the literature that traditional African marriage was in the first place a collective relationship - marriage primarily arranged with the interest of the wider kinship group. The individualistic relationship between the spouses took second place.

The type of behaviour expected of family members towards one another was clearly defined. The survival of the unit was only possible if the rules of conduct and obligations were complied with and the rights maintained. Through a set of prescriptions and socialization patterns, a sense of social obligation for mutual assistance of dependent family members was created and exercised (Nzimande, 1987:35). Thus, the extended family system in African society provided a structural base through which helping behaviour was exercised (Nzimande, 1987:35).

The child grew up accustomed and socialized to this way of life. The attitude of his parents to their relatives by blood and by marriage undoubtedly forms an important basis for the behaviour patterns built between the children and their kin (Schapera, 1937:70). Looking out of the world from his own home, the Bantu child knows where he may seek hospitality and succour of every kind; where also he may of right be called upon to render assistance in case of need (Schapera, 1937:73).

The extended family system provided an in-built social security system. It gave its members a sense of belonging and security and was the source of love and affection

that was needed by its dependent family members. All dependent family members were absorbed and cared for in a family group.

Barker, as quoted by Murray (1980:101) describes the welfare function of the extended family as follows:

'the extended family has proved a marvellous security for those for whom, otherwise, there was no security at all. The extended family is a net wide enough to gather the child who falls from the feeble control of neglectful parents, it receives the widow, tolerates the batty, gives status to grannies.'

Socio-political influences on the African family have led to the development of various support systems in order to cope with the demands of modern living. The African family today shares some of its helping and supporting functions with other specialised institutions such as schools, churches and social service agencies. Even though the extended family has lost some of its cohesive force essential for its survival as a unit most people still consult with the family first before seeking help outside the family system. For some people especially in urban areas, it is the non-family support system that is increasingly replacing the hitherto strong influence of the extended family (Tshabalala, 1986:77). Because the extended family is not equipped with all the economic resources to assure members complete success and security people utilize non-family support as well.

Perhaps the availability of outside help caused people not to heed the advice of the availability of the extended family so strongly any more. According to Tshabalala (1986:76) financial support from kin is less stigmatized and the well being of an

individual is likely to be enhanced with the help of kin than that of social service agencies. This might help to explain why the mutual aid system of the extended family has not disintegrated completely.

2.2.1 INTER-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

2.2.1.1 Parent-Child Relationships

There was generally a marked condition of restraint on the behaviour of the children in the presence of their parents. The father as the head of the household had complete authority and strict control over his children as long as they lived with him and even afterwards to some extent. The child's behaviour towards his father was characterized by respect and esteem. According to Tshabalala (1986:74) respect, deference, and even awe were noticeable in the behaviour of the children towards him. Vilakazi (1962:32) in describing the father-son-relationship among the Zulu mentions the "intenseness of the atmosphere in the house when the father is there which nearly always means that the sons must leave the house; and in the severity with which he talks to them and the general happiness in the whole family when the father is away." In contrast Vilakazi (1962:40) found the father-daughter and mother-son relationships marked by a tenderness that is altogether absent in the father-son and mother-daughter relationship. Whilst the literature portrays the father as excessively authoritarian, he was expected to treat his children as humanely as possible. The bond between the mother and children was much closer and affectionate. Obedience and respect are also demanded by the mother, but her attitude towards her children is characterized by pure unselfish love (Steyn and Rip, 1968:509).

Men and women fulfilled distinct, yet complimentary uncompetitive roles. In traditional society, the task of adult rearing was mainly in the hands of women. The extended family system prevented natural parents from bringing up the children single-handed. The father was less involved in the day-to-day details of child rearing and disciplining than the mother. Initially, children of both sexes, associated and identified more with the mother. However, later on in childhood the father became a strong identification figure for the boy.

2.2.1.2 Sibling Relationship

Among the children a strict hierarchy prevailed based on seniority. This served as a fundamental principle of behaviour among the African people. The privilege of age was maintained between brothers and sisters. According to Schapera (1937:71) the elder brother always takes precedence between brothers and sisters the privilege of age is maintained. Generally, children associated freely with one another. They spent most of their time together, with elder children responsible in guiding and supervising the young.

2.2.1.3 Grandparent-Grandchildren relationship

Grandparents occupied a very special position in the household. Children were taught subservience to their elders as the fount of all wisdom and experience. As a result, grandparents were treated with special care and respect by all members of the household.

Both maternal and paternal grandparents were to be much more indulgent towards their grandchildren than were the biological parents. The normal relation between grandparents and grandchildren can be described as close, showing open affection and familiarity. There was very much less restraint on the behaviour of the children in the presence of grandparents. Grandparents, especially the grandmother, gave unlimited love and devotion, and protection against excessive punishment by the father (Mbatha, 1960:274). To illustrate this Vilakazi (1962:126) states that when a child is being punished it ought to cry and run away to the grandparents' hut where it will get safe sanctuary. Once there it is not expected that anybody will follow and continue to administer punishment. Mbatha (1960:276) points out that even when at first grandparents were able to discipline their grandchildren, they became progressively too weak to impose their expectations and fell back on indulging in empty threats. In this way children grew up emotionally secure in the love of their grandparents. There is no doubt that children were aware of the influence grandparents had on their parents. The grandparent's behaviour obviously interfered with the parent's disciplinary methods.

2.3 THE VALUE OF THE CHILD IN TRADITIONAL AFRICAN FAMILY LIFE

The African community placed the highest value on fecundity and procreation. Consequently, a fundamental requirement of the African marriage was that it should produce children for the procreation of the father's lineage and in compensation for the lobola the husband had paid. Children were a source of pride and prestige to their

parents. Whilst the status of a man was measured largely by the size of his kraal, the woman really enjoyed a full and honoured position when she became a mother.

Failure to conceive was a source of concern in the family, especially for the wife. Social attitudes towards barrenness were harsh and undermining. Pakati (1984:14) states that if barren the woman and family of orientation experienced great humiliation and unhappiness. This was even worse for the woman as she was often ridiculed and despised since cultural attitudes invariably attributed childlessness to the woman. According to Greer (1984:34) the reason why male sterility is seldom recognized is precisely because its recognition would strike at the heart of morality, all order and coherence would be put to jeopardy.

The sororate and levirate customs were used to solve the problems of the childless couple. In the case of the levirate custom the children were regarded as the children of the dead man and had the same status as those begotten by him. Fostering, too, fulfilled important needs of the childless couple.

For the young bride, the child was awaited with great anxiety. The birth of the first child, especially a boy, was a very special occasion since this meant the perpetuation of the father's lineage. Especially if she was a mother of several sons, she might in time attain to an honourable and respected position (Schapera, 1934:21). Various ritual ceremonies from childhood to adulthood were performed to signal the child's acceptance into the family and community.

Children, thus, had a psychological significance for the wife in that it elevated her to a certain status in the family and community as a whole. Children not only validated her relationship with the husband, but gave her a sense of worth and boosted her self esteem as an individual.

2.4 SOCIALIZATION PATTERNS

2.4.1 Early Socialization

The family, in addition to its procreation function provided for their education in early years. This was not the exclusive responsibility of the biological parents. In the household where the child grew up there were numerous adults and older children who took an active part in the upbringing of the child.

Children were taught subservience to their elders as the source of all wisdom and experience. Respect for one's elders was extended beyond the family towards the community as a whole. Any insolence or disobedience was strictly punished. According to Schapera (1934:49) children who were known to be unchaste or who had been disobedient or insolent towards their elders were treated with special severity in the initiation schools, which accordingly served as a powerful disciplinary force. Parents would exercise every possible control over the behaviour of their children, and the latter acted with restraint, for fear of the additional hardships and tortures they would otherwise have to suffer when being initiated.

The parents, especially the father inculcated discipline and respect through scolding and corporal punishment. Despite this insistence upon decorous behaviour towards their elders children on the whole led carefree lives (Schapera, 1934:21).

The parents functions were also enforced by social expectations and ritual sanctions against undesirable behaviour. Accepted values and expectations were also embodied in folk tales told as bedtime stories by their parents especially the grandparents. Krige (Schapera, 1937:99) in describing the importance and value of these states:

'The riddles and folk tales recounted on dark nights not only give full play to imagination, but inculcate the values and moral ideas obtaining in their society.'

Children accepted these as authorities and their precepts were taken seriously.

Children were an important economic asset. The family was responsible not only for the socialization of the child but also for his preparation in the economic life of the group. From an early age they started playing an important part in the family economy, increasing gradually until they were capable of doing all the work that was done by adults. Children, were therefore assigned tasks and chores to match their perceived levels of competence and maturing sense of responsibility.

2.4.2 The influence of age groups

Whilst still young children became part of a group found in a particular village. At first not wider than the immediate family circle, this group as the child grows and comes into contact with an ever-wider circle of people, includes first other children

in the neighbourhood and finally at circumcision or enrolment into a regiment, (Schapera, 1937:96). Members of the same group were very close to one another, played an important role in the child's life and throughout life they formed a cohesive group.

In these age groups there were strict control measures of a primary nature which compelled group members to conform to prevailing rules. These groups played a vital role in the creation and maintenance of organised community life. Members of such groups had rights and privileges towards one another, and if one commits an offence the whole group was held responsible (Steyn and Ripp, 1968:59).

Krige (Hellmann, 1967:3) illustrates the above by stating that among the Mpondo and Zulu defloration brought shame on the whole group of girls who would maltreat the guilty girl as punishment. Taunts, mockery and other forms of punishment were inflicted by the age group on the guilty party. Older members of the children's own generation in the kraal and neighbourhood provided a society where the children lived out their lives under guidance and supervision (Mbatha, 1960: 274).

2.4.3. Preparation for adulthood

African life emphasized communalism. For children this meant performing roles which promoted not only the welfare of their individual families but also that of the community as a whole. The obligations that children had towards their families and

community resulted in a developed sense of responsibility in children (Pakati, 1984:19).

The social education they received prepared them for adulthood, particularly marriage and family life for girls. There was uniformity in the manner in which they were trained and all members of the community shared similar aspirations and values (Pakati, 1984:19). Boys and girls on attaining the age of puberty were separated and ceremonially initiated into the ranks of adults, and thereby to some extent released from the immediate tutelage of their family and drawn into the wider sphere of tribal life (Schapera, 1934:21). Here they learnt about tribal history, laws and beliefs, sexual matters, married life etc. Girls learnt much the same thing as the boys but formal instruction in matters concerning womanhood (fertility and procreation) domestic and agricultural activities, sex and behaviour towards men were emphasized. What was learnt helped them to become mature and responsible citizens.

Neither boys nor girls were permitted to marry until they had been initiated. It was only after initiation they are regarded as adults. After marriage the individual was recognized as a full member of the community with all the duties and privileges that this entails.

2.5 PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Among the African people fostering has been a valued traditional practice and an institutionalized aspect of African culture. Goody (1982:38) illustrates this by

referring to the Gonja when she states "The institutionalized pattern is for the daughters to go to the father's sister and son to the mother's brother." Among many other ethnic groups it is common practice to send children to grow up away from home. However, children remained permanently linked to their kinsfolk. Where fostering was practised, the foster home was but one of the several possible homes for the child.

Traditions incorporated within the family system among the African people included the practice of parental role sharing. Children were jointly owned by the entire lineage. Therefore, kinsmen were expected to be ready providers of anchorage and care to young children. This had the advantage of ensuring that in cases where the child's parents were deceased or otherwise unable to carry out full parenting responsibilities, the responsibility would be taken over by the group as a whole. The communal way of life accentuated sharing and cooperation, thereby entrenching a mutual aid system. Accordingly, in these cultures the informal fostering and adoption of children was not an exceptional occurrence nor did it carry any stigma or opprobrium (Thomas and Mabusela, 1991:121). Child fostering was simply an accepted means of raising children. To foster out a child was not an acknowledgement of the parents inferiority and or inadequacy or that of the child. A fostered child may return to the biological parents in anything from a couple of days to many years, and may be an important source of wealth transfer to the parents or of sound mobility for the clan or kin group, at an older age (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985:71).

In South Africa formal fostering of black children occurs primarily in urban townships. Informal fostering still continues to a large extent in rural areas and is rarely formalized.

Formal fostering takes place through the mediation of a social welfare organisation and is more crisis oriented. On the other hand, informal fostering differs not only in terms of the laws and policies used, "but because it is rooted in kinship structures and traditions. Children are fostered not only in the event of family crisis or when one or both parents cannot for some reason manage to bring them up" (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985:57). Rather, fostering is practised by both stable and unstable families, married and single mothers, wealthy and poor parents etc. (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985:57).

In Western societies children are generally raised by their parents in a family setting. The nuclear family is the primary vehicle through which the child's developmental needs are supposed to be met. Only in exceptional cases does fostering take place. Sinclair (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985:54) states 'from this point of view, the kinship term "mother" or "parenting" involves an idealized combination of behavioral roles expected to be assumed or performed by a single person or couple biologically related to the child.' In contrast, where child fostering is normal and widespread to distinguish the practising from the biological mother of the child one would have to ask both "who bore you" and "who reared you" (Goody, 1973:182). Thus a woman may achieve prestige and recognition by giving birth to many children without necessarily raising all of them herself. The result being that the child's foster parents

may be more crucial to the child's present and future experience than the natural parents. Fostered children looked up to their foster parents for daily affection and nurturing and in turn gave them the obedience and services.

Under traditional foster care systems there were no formal rules or regulations which governed social responsibilities for needy children nor were there legal formalities which confirmed the arrangement.

Communalism further entitled children for protection from any community member.

2.5.1 TYPES OF FOSTERING

Isiugo-Abanihe (1985:56-58) identifies five types of child fostering in West Africa. These exist among various ethnic groups in South Africa but their practices vary from one group to the other.

2.5.1.1 Kinship fostering and kin rearing

This is the predominant type of child fostering among many ethnic groups. Kinship fostering can be considered as a consequence of the need to reallocate resources within the extended family or kin group. This had the advantage of ensuring maximum survival for the unit and strengthening kinship ties. It was customary for children to be sent to live with relatives of either parent or exchanged among kinsmen who share kinship obligations and assistance. As Okore (1977:323-324) notes "within

the family such mutual obligations are effective in minimizing the burdens of many children and making the burden (if any) of raising children independent of one's own fertility".

Closely related to kinship fostering is kin rearing. The term according to Mayer (1961:273) implies that the natural parents are only one element in a more inclusive set of kin who jointly provide routine and training and are entitled to the child's obedience or services. This type of care differs from Kinship fostering since it does not involve a change of residence and the complete transference of parental roles. It was also accepted that children did not always sleep in their parents' hut but often go to their grandparents or some other relatives.

2.5.1.2 **Crisis fostering**

Child relocation resulting from the dissolution of the family of origin by divorce, separation or death of a spouse is termed crisis fostering. Children fostered as a result of being born out of wedlock also belong to this group especially where illegitimate children are being stigmatized. Pakati (1984:17) argues that although premarital pregnancy and the birth of a child out of wedlock were abhorred in traditional society, once the child was born, he was accepted and received protection. According to Mayer (1961:276) a truly "illegitimate child" is the one whose genitor defaults or deserts him by failing to pay the seduction fee or otherwise honour the obligations of his position. The child will then be affiliated exclusively to its mother's group. A

child who grew up without male guardianship was regarded as something more than an anomaly - as an actual or potential social danger.

The extended family furnished a male guardian in the absence of a father. The person who provided care was one of the male kin of the mother in whose kraal the child was most likely to reside. Thus, the unmarried mother never regarded the child as her own but as belonging to her kin. According to Nkomazana (1985: 22-23) although the child was given the family name, he was never regarded as a full member of the patrilineage. Generally two customs were used in cases where one of the parents died, to ensure "socio-economic" support for the children.

- i) **The levirate:** Schapera (1970:138) explains that the aim of this practice is to bring up the children of the dead man and to ensure that the widow is not neglected after the death of her husband.
- ii) **The sororate** custom allowed the man to marry the sister of the deceased wife or other relative of the wife who would then look after the children or bear her own if the deceased did not have them.

The two customs ensured that the children grew up in a normal family setting where both parents were present. By bringing in someone already known to the children it was hoped to reduce the traumatic effects of losing one or both parents. In death and other grievous misfortune (such as poverty) group responsibility and sharing was expected of all kinship members. The overriding factor was the maintenance of group cohesion through the extended family systems. Thus, the inadequacy of the

parents on the children were off-set by protection provided by the extended family and the substitute relationships that were available in the family owing to the existence of grandparents, uncles etc. In this sense the extended family became the source of love, affection and security vitally needed by the child.

2.5.1.3 Alliance and apprentice fostering

Children were generally sent to the homes of non-relatives. Since alliance fostering and wardship often involve the responsibility of training and sponsoring of young children, they go hand in hand with apprentice fostering. Children were sent away at an early age to homes where they could be disciplined or where they could learn a trade. A surrogate parent was believed to be in a better position to inculcate acceptable forms of social behaviour thereby enabling the children to develop better characters. According to Isiugo-Abanihe (1985:57) the motivation for this type of fostering is social mobility, and is commonly believed that children raised under the supervision of surrogate parents are more sophisticated than those raised by their own parents.

2.5.1.4 Domestic Fostering

Children especially girls are an important source of domestic help; fetching water, washing dishes and clothes, minding children, sweeping the compound, running errands etc.

Children were generally given to a kinswoman in another homestead (related or unrelated) in cases where her own children were all grown up, or the couple had no children or had children of one sex only. This arrangement was, however, not conclusive and biological parents could reclaim the child at any time. In these cases, children were fostered to redistribute the availability of services between households with many children and those with few. Not only were children sent away to redistribute their domestic services, sometimes they were sent out to provide emotional support to elderly or childless women for companionship.

2.5.1.5 Educational fostering

Fiawoo (1978), Goody (1975) and Sinclair (1972) among others have argued that schooling is the main motivation of modern West-African fostering. For example Goody (1975) contends that rights vested in kinship roles become less compelling than the need to help children acquire the new skills required for full participation in a continually diversifying economy. Hence, children are increasingly being raised by non relatives. Mbatha (1960:279) points out that sometimes parents loan their children to relatives and friends on condition that they are kept at school as long as possible. At times, the battle between the two families starts when the children have finished their training and are beginning to earn their wages.

Mbatha (1960:279) relates the case of a woman who loaned her daughter to another woman to help her in domestic duties in return for school fees. Once qualified the foster mother expected the girl to refund her the money she had paid towards her

school fees, whilst the natural mother expected her daughter's full wages. There was virtually an undeclared battle between these two.

2.6 SOCIO-POLITICAL INFLUENCES ON THE AFRICAN FAMILY

The discovery of diamonds and gold in South Africa in the last part of the nineteenth century set in motion changes which had a profound and qualitative effect over the whole of the Southern African sub-continent (Legassick, 1974:17). Rankin (1992:17) argues that when socio-political developments in South Africa are considered, it is not so much the process that is significant, but the effects of this process.

2.6.1 Migrant Labour

Migrant labour has been a feature of the South African economy. The process of urbanization and industrialization saw millions of people flocking to almost every city in search of employment. This has resulted in serious overpopulation and social decay - the very people who came in, in search of prosperity have been trapped in poverty and squalor with the result that children suffer most. Deprived of stable family life and proper upbringing hundreds of children fall prey to the dangers and evils they are constantly exposed and subjected to.

Influx control regulations which initially prevented the migrant from bringing his family to town meant that the father had to support two families from the low wages that he was earning. Undoubtedly, he found it difficult to do this. Concomitant, with

the separation of the father from his family is possible deprivation of the children unless he sends money for their upkeep. In the absence of the father, the main disciplinarian, corrective treatment of the children is neglected. This situation weakened the man's overall authority with the father's role being taken over by women, resulting in women gaining experience in managing family matters independently. When he eventually comes home for a short visit children might think of him as a stranger and cannot relate to him very well.

Malaka (1982:103) elaborates on this by stating that whenever for some reason one or other one of the parents is missing and the entire responsibility has to be borne by only one parent, then the task becomes enormous and may even become problematic to the extent that the development of the children within such a family may be affected negatively.

2.6.2 Settlement in urban areas

Influx control measures introduced by the National Party (NP) government represented a more stringent application of the law to regulate migrancy and prevent African settlement in urban areas. However, these policies to counteract urbanizing were ineffective.

Housing for Blacks has long been a problem which the authorities have been unable to overcome. The shortage of proper housing only adds to the expanding squatter

camps with underlying variables such as poverty, unemployment and so on. This contributes much more to the disruption and undermining of stable family life. The existing conditions in urban Black townships have a detrimental effect on the child. The child is exposed to negative effects of overcrowding and other social evils which often result in low morals. The urban socio-economic conditions impose heavy burdens on the task of child-rearing especially if one considers the high unemployment rate among Blacks, their low economic status and the large family households. Hence, some parents resort to alcohol and drug abuse due to frustration and feelings of inadequacy.

2.6.3 FAMILY STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

Research on the changes in the Black family system tend to postulate that the urban Black family is tending more and more in the direction of a nuclear family type consisting of husband, wife and the dependent children. Although residentially this may be considered a separate unit, it does not normally sever relations with the family of origin and other significant relatives.

The contraction in the size of the family means greater emotional interdependence within the family nucleus. Parents are now expected to accept responsibilities and functions that were formerly carried out by a group of kin in the bringing up of the children. The task of child rearing is now more demanding for the working parents with the result that extra help has to be hired in order to relieve the pressure from the natural parents.

2.6.3.1 Inter-family relationships

New patterns of behaviour have emerged in urban areas. Previously the father as the head of the family had complete authority over all family members. Generally, the relationship between husband and wife is freer and more informal than in tribal times. The wife is less subservient to her husband. In the household there seems to be close cooperation between husband and wife. However, Hellmann (1967:8) notes "It is far more common to find families under strain because of the unresolved conflict between the husband's patriarchal conduct and the wife's new role as wage earner, manager of the household budget and educator of the children."

We are, however, still living in an era in which child care is primarily with the woman. Hellmann (1967:8) further states that the cry of many women is that husbands continue to exercise an aloof authority and demand unquestioning obedience from wife and children, while at the same time refusing to cooperate in bringing up children. According to her there is little evidence of desire by women to usurp the man's position as the head of the home, but what they want is more communication and cooperation particularly in regard to the children's upbringing.

2.6.3.2 Parent-child relationships

Contrary to tribal life the parents are solely responsible for the discipline and bringing up of their own children. They no longer depend on the support of the relationship

structure in this respect. Even if members of the extended family live in the same area, they may be unable to offer help as they have to work too. Consequently parents now have to rely on help outside the family system in this regard.

The fact that both parents work has a weakening effect on the relationship between parents and children. The strict control by the father over his children has almost ceased since he spends most of the time away from home as a result of employment. This means that the discipline and model of the father with whom to identify is missing. The mother who may come home early, may find it difficult to be a figure of authority and as a result discipline may be poor (Radebe, 1983:71). Rip (1960:191) found that parents in urban areas often complain that they cannot control their teenage children.

The parent-child relationship has been changed by the new economic system. Contact with Whites led to a gradual integration with their economic system which contributed to a change in the traditional division of labour. Hellmann (1967:1) points out that this new impersonal medium of exchange is replacing the traditional system of personal reciprocities and stimulating an individualism which is characteristic of the modern world.

Parent-child relationships are warmer and more democratic than in tribal times. However, Hellmann (1967:11) mentions that relations between parents and children suffer from the carry-over of traditional roles into a new and changed family situation.

2.6.4 Kinship relations and support in urban areas

Socio-political influences have weakened the web of social responsibilities in many African communities. According to Tshabalala (1986:25) urbanization and industrialization has not disintegrated the mutual aid system in African families, instead they have developed new support systems like burial societies, child care arrangements in order to survive the inequalities of the economic political system of the country.

Migrant labour has given the individual greater freedom and demonstrated chances of survival away from the family group. Whereas the family group would have at its disposal means of accumulating economic wealth, the new economic system made it an individual affair (Nzimande, 1987:41). Family life under these circumstances has been placed under considerable strain. The influence of the cash economy and the dependence on wage earnings to support households seems to have influenced the breakdown in cooperation. Nzimande (1987:39) found that 42% of the household heads in the nuclear type of families were of the opinion that since they worked alone it would be an economic burden to support and care for relatives in the household. In turn, Murray (1980) found that workers restricted support to what they considered the core members for which they as household members felt "legally" obligated. Nzimande (1987:39) concludes that the traditional obligatory contacts among kin members involving their participation in these practices and actions which regulated and maintained their lives now take place with varying degrees of commitment and distance.

Cooperation tends to be between neighbours, especially since non-relatives live near one another in urban areas. Besides relying on newly acquired social supports in urban areas, they occasionally touch base with their kin when the situation demands (Tshabalala, 1986:75).

Although a breakdown of the extended family system bonds and loyalties has been witnessed, the tendency still exists for families to take the responsibility towards its indigent children. This is more so for families in rural areas, which have not changed at the same speed as the urban family.

2.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the traditional African family as a social unit, protection of children, custody arrangements were discussed. The importance of kin, its resourcefulness in promoting the welfare of its members and sharedness of child caretaking was stressed. The issues discussed represent important areas of the specific knowledge base the social worker should possess in order to become a competent practitioner. Knowledge of the African cultural background is regarded as essential for the purposes of understanding as well as establishing a service delivery system which is responsive to the needs of the Black community.

An attempt was made to provide an overview of the impact of socio-political influences on their social structure. Migrant labour is regarded as a factor responsible for the decline of the family structure and the beginning of many other problems. The

decline of the kinship support system has produced needs and problems that are associated with the migrant labour system. The significance of this social transformation is enormous and indicate a need for the development of professional service.

Although social change is making its impact strongly felt and causing manifold innovations, customs and traditions have not been abandoned completely.

In the next three chapters, the formal process of foster care will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3

THE NATURE OF FOSTER CARE AS A FORM OF SUBSTITUTE CARE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the nature of foster care as a form of substitute care. Areas of discussion include the meaning, philosophy, goals, reasons, duration of foster care, preventive services and permanency planning. These lay a foundation for sound foster care practice. The philosophy knowledge base and to some extent the procedures of foster care may be said to have universal applicability.

Over the past decade new trends have emerged in foster care. These include inter alia the provision of in-home services to prevent entry in substitute care. Similarly, shifts in focus and emphasis have occurred, viz: the perception of the foster parent role, the need for permanency planning, making foster care responsive to the needs of special population of children, etc. These changes have altered the role of foster parents and social workers alike, and have pointed to creative ways in which they along with biological parents can work together to better serve children.

3.2

THE FOSTER CARE PHENOMENON

3.2.1

Foster care as a Child Welfare Service

Child welfare services seek to promote the physical, social, and mental well-being of children and their families. Much of the focus in child welfare services has been on the needs of the families and children when family functioning particularly, parental functioning, has broken down, or when children's developmental, emotional or behavioural functioning has made it impossible for them to remain within the family setting (Johnson and Schwartz, 1988:141).

In assisting parents to promote the well-being of their children, the basic functions of child welfare involve involves supportive, supplemental, and substitute services (Brown and Swanson in Gilbert and Specht, 1981:153). They define substitute services as:

"designed to substitute for parental care when parents are not able to carry out their functions and the child must be removed from the home. Such a decision is held to be in the child's best interest and return to the home is predicated on improvement being shown in the home conditions."

According to the CWLA (1975:8) foster family service is the child welfare service that has as its distinctive component the provision of a substitute family for a planned period of time for a child who has been separated from his natural or legal parents; this service also includes social work and other interventive services needed by the child, his parents and foster parents.

Blumenthal, McGowan and Meezan (1983:295) define foster care as the provision of planned, time-limited, substitute family care for children who cannot be adequately maintained at home and the simultaneous provision of social services to those children and their families to help resolve problems that led to the need for placement.

Foster care is further defined by the Committee of Inquiry into Foster Care of Children (1990:3) as:

"Statutory substitute care within the context of the family for the child who cannot be cared for by his parents in short, medium or long term, while services to the parents are continued with the purpose of restoring the child to their care within a certain period of time. The purpose of foster care is to promote permanency in a child's life either by restoring him to parental care or by achieving continuity in foster care placement."

The above three definitions emphasize the time-limited nature of foster care, as well as the provision of a wide range of services to children and their families to remedy the situation that led to the need for placement or the development of alternative permanent plans for the children.

Foster care is one of the three principal substitute care services including adoption and institutionalization. Unlike adoption which entails a change in the legal custody of the child foster care implies a temporary arrangement based on the expectation that the child will be enabled to return to his parents or alternative permanent plans be made for him.

Foster care is one of society's ways of assuring the well-being of children who otherwise lack adequate parental care. According to Polansky et al. (1981:235) foster care can in a sense be regarded as "the ultimate form of parental prosthesis". The state through a network of child welfare agencies and other social institutions assumes this responsibility.

Theoretically foster care is regarded as a temporary measure, yet various studies have shown that most of the children remain in foster care for prolonged, indefinite periods. Research studies on this phenomenon include Maas and Engler, 1959; Wiltse and Gambrill, 1974; Fanshel and Shinn, 1978.

For example the Maas and Engler study predicted that more than half of the children were likely to spend a major part of their childhood in foster homes and institutions. They concluded that the longer the child remains in foster care the less likely that he will return to his biological family.

Foster care forms a very vital part of the total child welfare service programme to children whose well-being is in some way or the other threatened. Placement of children in foster care brings with it the opportunity to parents to apply more of their energy to the resolving of problems that prevent them from functioning as well-adjusted adults and as parents to their children (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:1). To a child it provides the opportunity to be cared for during this period within a family setting.

Fostering embraces many different kinds of substitute care along a continuum from the quasi-adoptive situation to the provision of short-term care in an emergency (Guide to Fostering Practice, 1976:125). Inclusive and exclusive fostering have been identified as the two distinct concepts of fostering. The inclusive model describes the kind of situation which embraces not only the child but also his family, and promotes the sharing of his care with his family and the agency. It recognizes the importance of the child's background and actively attempts to keep this alive and meaningful for him as well as facilitating contact and rehabilitation with his family where possible. The exclusive model, on the other hand, describes the situation which tends to exclude the child's family, and knowledge of his origins, possibly denying the reality of fostering altogether and sometimes the role of the agency (Guide to Fostering Practice, 1976:125). It is believed that this approach is the only way to provide a child with security and continuity.

3.3 THE PHILOSOPHY OF FOSTER CARE

The Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:5-9) identifies the following philosophy of foster care:

3.3.1 The Natural Bonds Between Parent and Child

The Committee recognizes the religious and moral importance of the natural bonds between parent and child. It is of the opinion that such bonds should not be disrupted

in the absence of serious harm or the imminent threat of serious harm to the physical, psychological, emotional and moral health or well-being of the child.

The family is regarded as the natural and logical place for the child to be cared for and educated. For this reason it is of primary importance that everything possible be done to improve and develop family bonds through a process of education and knowledge in order to assist the family to function effectively as a unit in a desirable manner (The Committee, 1990:21).

Foster care implies that if the parental home is inadequate a substitute home should be found where the child can be transferred to until the parental home can resume the care of the child. Foster care rests on the belief that the child's psychosocial growth and development is better achieved within the context of the nuclear family.

The underlying philosophy of foster care is further indicated in McKay's statement (1980:19) which reads thus "no child should grow up without people whom he looks on as his parents, either his own natural parents or permanent parent substitutes." The above statement is explained better by the permanency planning approach which emphasizes the child's need for stability, security, and permanent meaningful relationships with those caring for him, for his healthy growth and development. According to the Committee (1990:11) the first step towards ensuring permanency in a child's life is therefore, to promote, by means of the timely, planned, family-directed provision of a service, the quality of care he is given and to prevent the child from experiencing the trauma of removal from his parental home.

3.3.2 The Return of the Child to Biological Parents

According to the Committee (1990:5) the acceptance of the first standard implies that the child must be returned to his biological parents as soon as it is reasonably certain that there is no longer any threat of serious harm to his physical, emotional or moral health or well-being. This ensures that the child is not withheld from his/her parents any longer than is absolutely necessary. The Committee (1990:5) is of the opinion that it would be necessary to insert a further proviso to Section 16 (2) of the Child Care Act, 1983, ie that the order may not be extended in the absence of proof that there is a reasonable certainty that return would occasion serious harm to the well-being of the child. To withhold a child from his biological parents in the absence of such proof is believed to be an immoral and improper exercise of the power of the state.

3.3.3 Removal for Financial Reasons

A child may never be removed from his parents because they are unable to maintain him. Gauntlet (Joubert, 1977:237) states that a child is not in need of care simply because domestic conditions are adverse. Furthermore, children who are found to be in need of care need not necessarily be removed from parental care. Removal must be based on evidence that serious harm will be inflicted on the child if left at home. In addition, Section 14 (4) (b) states precisely the grounds upon which a child may be removed.

3.3.4 The contents of the Court Order

The lack of specificity of the court order has been noted by Middleton (1989:8).

According to the Committee (1990:8) the court order should be specific in relation to the following matters:

- The purpose and duration of the placement;
- The role and nature of contact with the biological family during placement;
- The extent and nature of contact with the biological family during placement;
- The conditions upon which, the child will be restored to his biological parents.

3.3.5 Regular Review of the placement

It is necessary that all placements be subjected to a process of regular, periodic, formal review in order to ensure that children do not drift into unplanned indeterminate foster care and to ensure that foster care programmes keep pace with existing needs. The Committee (1990:9) found that most organisations do not have planned internal review of cases.

The result is that the provision of the service continues in an unplanned manner.

The only form of periodic formal review is the consideration by the Minister with a view to the extension of the existing order. The Guide to Foster Care Practice in

South Africa (1987:126) recommends that cases should be reviewed every three months and whenever the case goal changes.

3.4 GOALS OF FOSTER CARE

The ultimate objective of foster family service should be the promotion of healthy personality development of the child, and amelioration of problems that are personally or socially destructive (CWLA, 1975:8). The CWLA (Fanshel, 1966:3) further describes the objectives of foster care as:

'the provision of experiences and conditions which promote normal maturation (CARE); which prevent further injury to the child (PROTECTION); and which correct specific problems which interfere with healthy personality development (TREATMENT).'

McFadden (Laird and Hartmann, 1985:568) notes that although the CWLA standards for foster care emphasize the objectives of "healthy personality development of the child and the amelioration of problems that are personally or socially destructive", the importance of the family is explicit - workers are to maintain and enhance parental functioning to the fullest extent and "bring about the child's ultimate return to his natural family whenever desirable and feasible."

Foster care seeks to provide care in a normal family environment for a child who has been removed from his parents and to enable him to develop as normally as possible. Depending on the circumstances of the child and his family, foster care seeks to provide an alternative living experience which will provide for one or more of the following (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:55):

- A safe, secure nurturing environment for children who will be separated from their parents for a definite foreseeable future, due to the temporary absence or inability of their parents.
- A restorative environment, which will enable the child to overcome earlier hurts and deprivations.
- A stable, secure and nurturing environment which will enable children in long-term care to develop as normally as possible.

The initial goal of foster care remains the re-establishment of the family through the provision and utilization of the needed services. For this goal to be realized, restorative work with the biological family must be ongoing, so that the child can be returned to an improved situation as quickly as possible. Therefore, foster care allows parents with the help of the social worker and or other service providers to deal with these problems that necessitated the placement.

The goals of foster care can only be realized if proper cooperation between foster parents, natural parents and social workers exists. Services must be clearly planned, maintained and monitored.

3.5 REASON FOR PLACEMENT

It is difficult to identify a single principal reason for each placement as many families whose children are in foster care have multiple problems and needs. According to

Stein (1981:90), this is further complicated by the absence of universally accepted typologies for classifying problems.

According to Kadushin (1980:322) research studies of the reasons that precipitate the need for foster care show that these fall into three general categories, namely:

- (A) **PARENT RELATED PROBLEMS:** neglect, abuse, abandonment, physical and mental illness.
- (B) **CHILD-RELATED PROBLEMS:** mental retardation, delinquent behaviour, physical handicaps.
- (C) **ENVIRONMENTAL CIRCUMSTANCES:** serious financial need, inadequate housing, chronic unemployment, etc.

Research evidence suggests that the primary reasons for the placement reflects problems of parenting rather than child-related problems. These tend to be exacerbated by the presence of environmental factors. Also, section 14 of the Child Care Act, 1983, clearly sets out conditions under which a child can be deemed in need of care, as a result of parental failure or where a child has no parent or guardian.

3.6 **PERMANENCY PLANNING IN FOSTER CARE**

3.6.1 **Defining Permanency Planning**

Permanency planning is a relatively new concept in the field of child welfare and is considered one of the most significant concepts in child welfare.

A review of literature indicates that permanency planning has been applied to different things, including: a philosophical commitment to the vital role of the family in a child's development, continuity of care, ongoing problem solving, a case management method, systematic case review, a program to reduce the number of children in temporary care (Maluccio et al., 1980:519). Cutler and Bateman (1980:46) suggests that permanency planning "can mean anything from 'planning' to 'facilitating' to 'achieving' permanent plans for children."

Using knowledge from recent research findings and drawing from varied orientations Maluccio and Fein (1983:197) propose the following integrative definition of permanency planning:

"is the systematic process of carrying out, within a brief time-limit period, a set of goal directed activities designed to help children live in families that offer continuity of relationships with nurturing parents or caretakers and the opportunity to establish lifetime relationships."

In essence, permanency planning can be described as an effort to remove children from temporary foster care placements either by facilitating the child's return to his biological family or by achieving a permanent status through adoption, legal guardianship or long-term foster care. It involves inter alia clarifying the reason for the placement, facilitating foster parent, natural parent and child relationships, encouraging parental visitation, ongoing case review.

3.6.2 The meaning of permanency planning

According to the Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:11) the point of departure in permanency planning is that a child needs stability, security and a permanent meaningful relationship with those caring for him, for his healthy growth and development. In order to ensure this, children must have a home in which they feel a sense of belonging and permanent membership (Meezan in McGowan and Meezan, 1983:11-12).

Permanency planning suggests that the biological family is primary to the care and upbringing of a child. As a result of this the Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:11) recommends that the first step towards ensuring permanency in a child's life is to promote by means of the timely planned, family - directed provision of a service, the quality of the care he is given and to prevent the child from experiencing the trauma of removal from his parental home. In cases where removal is unavoidable, systematic and purposeful permanency planning for the child is essential.

3.6.3 Historical evolution

The need for permanency planning has been recognized in the literature. Practitioners have been concerned about the large number of children who remain in a temporary status for a long period. Awareness of the state of these children has raised questions about the effectiveness of foster care. Words like "drift", "orphans of the living" are short-hand phrases used to describe the instability and uncertainty of the placements. Recognition of the problem of drift has resulted in the in depth study of the foster

care phenomenon itself. Research literature ranges from studies analyzing and comparing the duration of foster care with several variables e.g. parental visits, to longitudinal assessments of the effects of foster care on children (Maluccio et al, 1980:519-520).

Maluccio et al. (1980:516) believe that permanency planning was first mentioned in the literature by Epstein and Heymann (1967) in an article on adoption planning for older children. However, the Maas and Engler study (1959) is considered a benchmark in the realization of the problems of children in placement. They documented that children often enter care unnecessarily and once in the system are likely to remain there until they reach maturity. Their findings have been supported by many subsequent studies including Fanshel (1971), Fanshel and Shinn (1978), Gruber (1978), and Wiltse and Gambrill (1974).

Permanency planning has also been promoted through the activities of the Oregon and Alameda Project. These went beyond identifying the problems of the foster care system to actually designing and testing specific methods of intervention and measuring the results (Wiltse in Laird and Hartmann, 1985:580). These projects demonstrated that continuity and permanence can be achieved for children in foster care.

In South Africa limited research has been conducted in the area of permanency planning. One of the most significant contributions in this regard is the report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990). The Committee noted

the lack of permanency planning and that children remain in unplanned foster care for years. It attributed the problem to a number of factors including legislation as embodied in the Child Care Act, 1983, welfare organisations that render foster care and Commissioners of child welfare. According to the Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa (1987:148) much more attention needs to be given to the development of policies and procedures which would aim at ensuring more permanency of care for children. In addition, the entire programme should be geared at reaching as early as possible more clarity on the future permanent care of the child.

3.6.4 Impact on service delivery

According to Maluccio et al (1980:522) there is no systematic empirical evidence documenting the impact of permanency planning on service delivery in the field as a whole. There is no doubt, however, that the concept is influencing service delivery and is being increasingly adopted in the field. The concept has not only increased awareness about the needs and problems of children in care but has also influenced agencies to restructure their services.

Maluccio et al (1980:524) believes that there are indications that the thrust towards permanency planning is leading towards significant changes in child welfare programmes and methods, including:

- More emphasis on carefully evaluating a child's needs in the context of the family situation;
- Careful planning of the child's placement to achieve continuity of care and assure stability in his life;

- Careful planning of the child's placement to achieve continuity of care and assure stability in his life;
- More explicit attention and intensive help to the parents; and greater awareness of the importance of after care services.

In contrast, McGowan (McGowan and Meezan, 1983:46) is very doubtful about the positive effects of permanency planning when he states: "although the concept seems to offer the most promising route for service provision in the next decade, it would be naive to assume that movements in this direction will meet all the needs of the child welfare population without creating or drawing attention to still other problems."

Even though the goal of permanency planning seems difficult to achieve and far from being realized for a large number of children, the movement holds great promise for a majority of children. However, the relative effectiveness of permanency planning needs to be evaluated through further research and experience.

3.7 DURATION OF FOSTER CARE

Although foster care is generally regarded as a kind of temporary care, in practice foster care is a predominantly long-term situation. Malaka (1982:144) points out that whilst the exact duration of the placement cannot be predicted, the ultimate return of the child to his biological parents can be planned in advance. Planning for the child

immediately after placement offers a promising opportunity for the family to be reunited quickly.

However, the presence of contributory factors introduces complications which tend to interfere with the successful outcome of advance planning and prolong the duration of foster care. (Kline and Overstreet, 1972:44). They recommend that the identification of contributory problems at the outset may lead to the recognition of the need for a different service plan.

The duration of foster care may fall into one of the following major categories. These include:

- (1) Short-term foster care.
- (2) Intermediate and indeterminate foster care.
- (3) Planned long-term foster care.
- (4) Permanent foster care.

The nature of the parenting capacity seems to be associated with the estimated duration of the placement. By assessing the nature of the impairment in capacity the social worker can get an indication of the probable duration of the placement.

3.7.1 Short-Term Foster Care

It can be described as a service aimed at providing temporary custodial care for children whose parents are unable to care for them either temporarily or for an

extended period of time. It can also be used in cases when the child is prepared for adoption. The time span for short-term foster care is difficult to determine. It can range from a few days to several months. Because of this, Shireman (McGowan and Meezan, 1983:351) concludes that it is difficult to assess when temporary foster care begins to drift toward unplanned, long-term care. Therefore, the decisive factor is not so much a definite time period, as the potential of the parents to overcome their inabilities to care for the child (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:13).

3.7.2 **Intermediate and Indeterminate Care**

This is considered the most difficult of all forms of foster care for the child, biological parents, foster parents and social worker because of the complex and ever-changing nature of the biological parents and their family situation. Whilst the placement is not intended to last indefinitely, it can stretch from a few months to several years. The tendency to drift into unplanned long-term care is not uncommon. Just as in the case of short-term care it is necessary to determine whether it's a medium-term failure in a family's ability to cope or whether it is more indicative of a more fundamental breakdown in the family which will prevent the parents from ever assuming their parental abilities (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:14).

3.7.3 Planned Long-Term Care

Theoretically foster care is regarded as a temporary measure. In spite of this, research from a number of studies indicate that most children in foster care remain in it indefinitely on an undefined long term basis.

There are circumstances when neither returning home nor adoption for the foster child is possible. Long term foster care is thought to be particularly appropriate if children have established roots in a foster home where there is indication that they can remain (Shireman in McGowan and Meezan, 1983:409). Generally, it is believed that if the child has remained in the foster home for a long time there is a possibility that a "Psychological parent-child relationship" has developed. As a result a continuation of this relationship is preferred than its disruption.

The rationale behind planned long-term care is to stabilize the position of the child whose parents are still, to some extent, in the picture, but are clearly not capable of resuming his care on a long term basis (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:16). Although this arrangement seems to offer the foster child a sense of family it does not provide a sense of permanent membership. The foster child still shares two sets of parents which might be rather confusing to him.

3.7.4 Permanent Care

Permanent care is designed primarily as an alternative to legal adoption for those children who are unlikely to return home. Unlike intermediate, unplanned and

planned long-term foster care, it provides the foster child with continuity of care, a sense of belonging, permanent membership and security.

3.8 PREVENTIVE SERVICES

The Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:21) identifies three levels of preventive services, namely:

3.8.1 Primary Prevention

The Committee (1990:21) defines primary prevention as the general level of prevention where individuals, families, groups and communities are trained, given guidance and assisted in acquiring the knowledge and life skills necessary to function adequately, deal with the demands of life, fulfil roles satisfactorily and solve problems.

Preventive services related to a foster care service may be directed at the following:

- Education, guidance and the dissemination of information in respect of matters such as family environment, child care and education; and,
- Community work with the emphasis on the prevention of factors that encourage poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, etc. and on the development of job opportunities and healthy recreational facilities.

3.8.2 Secondary Prevention

With regard to foster care, secondary prevention begins where the family at risk has been identified and preventive services have to be provided to prevent the removal

of the children from parental care and their placement in substitute care (Committee of Inquiry into the foster Care of children, 1990:21). Active help, including counselling supportive and supplementary services have to be rendered to a family to prevent its disintegration. Even if the rendering of services cannot prevent the disintegration of the family, the social worker would be enabled by this prior contact to plan a more appropriate restorative service to the parents as well as a more suitable placement for the children, than would be the case where comparatively little had been known about the family besides the current family crisis (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:31). In addition, prior contact has the advantage for development of trust which is necessary for restorative work with parents.

3.8.3 Tertiary Prevention

This begins when the secondary prevention fails and statutory action is necessary.

Two kinds of cases fall into this category.

- 1) where secondary prevention has failed; and
- 2) cases resulting from crisis intake.

3.9 CONCLUSION

The foster care system still continues to be one of the best alternatives of substitute care. A major area of concern seems to be the large number of children entering the foster care system compared to those exiting it. This has led to the questioning of the effectiveness of foster care as a form of substitute care. The provision of in-home services appears a promising approach to alleviating this problem in spite of the

limited and conflicting evidence on their effectiveness. The extent to which these services are utilized in South Africa, especially among the black population, seems rather limited.

Foster care has undergone changes in recent years in order to improve the quality of the service. Under sharp criticism as an often unplanned service which kept children indefinitely, foster care has been redefined a service which is integrated into an overall permanency planning initiative. The development of permanency planning over the past years has sparked significant research into methods of reducing the length of stay in foster care. Permanency is an important concept which should be comprehended and applied.

CHAPTER 4

THE PLACEMENT PROCESS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Foster care is often described as a social system consisting of interdependent parts, all linked together in common concern for the child. As in most relationships potential exists for difficulty and conflict. The essence of success in foster care is in the recognition by all those concerned both of their interdependence and of the value of the contribution each has to make towards the quality of life experienced by the child. As in all her work, the social worker's effectiveness will depend upon his relationship in the foster care system. The chapter emphasizes that placing a child in foster care calls for skilled management and a high degree of competence in the social worker(s) involved. It further stresses the social worker's role in linking the child, natural parents and foster parents in the foster care situation through the provision of services. At the same time, the impression created is that open discussion, early decision making and planning at the beginning lays the foundation for continuing work throughout the placement process.

4.2 HELPING THE FAMILY TO RETAIN CARE OF THEIR CHILDREN

Profound changes have occurred in the family that effect its ability to bear primary responsibility for child rearing. There is growing concern among various sections of the population about the increasing breakdown of the family system.

It is widely acknowledged that families may require services to maintain and/or strengthen their functioning for a variety of reasons. The thrust toward providing services to the biological family in order to prevent the placement has gained support not only from the increased awareness of the limitations of foster care but also from an appreciation of the meaning and importance of the family and the growing awareness of the importance of continuity in the development of human beings.

According to the Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa (1987:29) the preservation of family life should always be a top priority in child welfare in order to save the family for the child and to promote the present functioning of the society at large, as well as prevent a second generation failure in the sphere of parental functioning. To achieve this welfare organisations need to direct their efforts on two levels: to develop and advocate the development of those services and facilities in the community which would promote family life and raise the functional parenting capacity of its members; secondly to develop programmes aimed at detecting families at risk of separation. It seems that efforts to preserve, strengthen and enhance family functioning have lagged.

Research results indicate that preventive services do not receive sufficient attention and that children are too readily removed from the care of their parents. As the Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:49) found in its investigation:

"Priority is not given to preventive services that are aimed at improving the family's functioning and in keeping the child in the care of his parents. It appears that the assistance given to parents before removal was concerned mainly with the investigation and was not so much directed at treatment with a view to preventing the removal of the child."

4.3 SELECTING THE PLACEMENT

It is only after all efforts have failed to keep the family together, that alternative care for the children is considered.

The Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:8) states that unless there is absolute clarity regarding the purpose of the placement, there can be no justification for removing the child from the custody of his biological parents and placing him in foster care. The decision to remove apart from imposing a considerable financial burden upon the state is fraught with the potential of grievous suffering and stress for both the child and his parents.

Ideally, the choice of placement facility should be influenced primarily by the child's needs rather than by available resources. When separation from parents becomes inevitable the alternative resources that are available are foster care, residential care and adoption. When it has been assessed that foster care is the appropriate choice, a home should be selected in which the needs of a specific child are matched with the assessed qualities of an approved foster home (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:63). Selection of the most appropriate foster home involves variables such as location, ethnic and cultural similarity, availability of community resources for the child and self assessment by the foster parents of their ability to meet the needs of the child, sibling groups or parents (McFadden in Laird and Hartmann,

1985:594). Furthermore, the matching of the personalities and lifestyle of the foster child and foster parents should be considered.

Consideration of the above variables when selecting a placement seeks to ensure and promote the adjustment of the child in the foster home, whilst at the same time preserving his sense of identity.

4.4 **FOSTER CARE AS A TREATMENT AND PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS**

Perlman (1957:4-5) defines a social casework process as a:

"Progressive transaction between the professional helper and the client. It consists of a series of problem-solving operations carried on within a meaningful relationship".

With regard to foster care the intervention process involves the participation of the social worker and the placing agency, the foster child, biological parents, the foster parent and the family members and the simultaneous provision of a range of services to children and their families. The purpose is to help biological parents remedy the situation that led to the need for placement and result in the reunification of families or the development of alternative permanent plans for children.

4.5 **FOSTER CARE SERVICES FOR BIOLOGICAL PARENTS**

Biological parents are critical to the success of the foster care service. Without their active involvement it is unlikely that the reunification of the family can be achieved within a reasonable time period or alternative permanent plans can be made for the

child. For the child who is placed, the continuing involvement of the biological parents changes the quality of the pain that the placement engenders (Watson, 1982:17). Since parental involvement is considered paramount, services to parents constitute an important part of the total foster care programme. It is worth noting that parental involvement is not always possible or desirable because of their unavailability or the threat that they may pose to the child's well being.

Earlier accounts of foster care practice reveal that biological parents received less attention once children were removed from their care. Efforts were always concentrated on insuring that the child received the best kind of care. The practice had disastrous results for all involved. In essence, continuity of care and stability of the placement were not achieved. The goal of permanency planning was unrecognized resulting in children drifting in care for many years.

4.5.1 Preparing Parents for placement

The preparation of parents for placement is an essential and important part of the placement process. One valuable way of preparing the family for placement is to arrange for the natural family and the foster family to meet beforehand, whenever possible (Guide to Foster Care Practice In South Africa, 1987:41). This has several advantages including:

- Provides an opportunity for natural parents and foster parents to share information about the child;
- A successful preplacement visit can lead to the development of a natural parent-foster relationship;

- Gives natural parents an opportunity to learn more about the foster family and their home environment;
- Reassures the child that his/her whereabouts will be known, thereby reducing the feeling of abandonment and rejection.

The above advantages indicate the placement of children with non-relatives. The placement of children with non-relatives is a relatively new venture among South African blacks. In cases where a child is placed with relatives a pre-placement visit as a means of preparing the family, child and foster family may not be necessary since they may generally be familiar with each other and possibly the child's circumstances. Sometimes the child has been living with relatives when given the status of a foster child.

4.5.2 Developing a working relationship

It is axiomatic in social work that a sound worker-client relationship is a prerequisite for any effective intervention action with parent (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:39). Social work literature suggests that the ideal conditions of a good collaborative, working relationship are trust, mutuality, acceptance, positive sentiments, caring and respect. The initial encounter (especially with involuntary clients) tends to be characterized by hostility, resistance, avoidance and strong negative feelings such as anxiety, anger, suspicion, guilt, or despair. A working relationship with this group although difficult is not impossible. Empathy and concern for the needs of the parents provide a climate in which partnerships can emerge.

4.5.3 The Parent's experience of separation from their children

When a child is placed, parents experience not only the physical loss of their child, but a loss of parental power and self-esteem (Watson, 1982:16). Their feelings can range from relief to sadness to anger. It is essential to provide parents with the help needed to resolve their conflicts about the placement and their feelings about separation from their child. The role of the worker is to help the parents express their feelings, to convey a sense of hope, reinforce parental competence and to join the parents in active problem-solving (McFadden in Laird and Hartmann, 1985:591).

The proper-handling of the parents' separation experiences is associated not only with the development of a sound working relationship but also parents' cooperation with the agency during the placement and their renewed interest in the child which can result in the reunification of the family within a short period of time.

4.5.4 The importance of the contract in working with natural parents

The contract is considered an important aspect for practice and a promising approach in the delivery of child welfare services. Its use with the natural parents is a relatively new development which aims at greater clarification of the roles and responsibilities of both the social worker and the natural parents (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:40). With regard to foster care Stein (Gambrill and Wiltse, 1974:20-25) feel that written contracts between parents and social workers can serve

as a tool to encourage parental participation in planning for their children and early decision-making. They view the parents' willingness to sign a contract as an early indication of their commitment to participation in efforts to have their children returned to their care. According to Stein and Gambrill (1977:148-149) the contract approach has produced positive results in significantly reducing foster care drift.

4.5.5 Management of visits

The facilitation and encouragement of parent-child contact during placement forms an important part of the treatment process. Watson (1982:17) regards visits as probably the most significant element of the placement. Hess and Proch (1988:11) too, feel that visiting is more than just an agency requirement but is an essential component of the service plan. Used properly, it becomes a planned intervention strategy.

Discussion and agreement about visiting should take place at the earliest possible moment, preferably when placement is being planned. What is agreed upon is likely to determine the future contact between parents and child in foster care. Careful attention to detail such as frequency of contact, venue, etc. is essential. Research studies Fanshel and Shinn (1978); Hess (1988); Proch (1986) show that frequent visiting is not only important for the child's well-being and development progress of children in placement but is also related to successful reunification of the family. These findings demand that efforts be made to influence the frequency and quality of visiting.

4.6 THE CHILD IN FOSTER CARE

Many children who enter foster care are often disrupted children not only because of separation from their families but also as a result of earlier suffering to which most of them were subjected. Consequently, they are emotionally, socially, physically and scholastically vulnerable; they are prone to anxiety and they feel uncertain and rejected (Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children, 1990:29). As a result they require special attention and specialized treatment services too.

The preparation of the child for placement rests mainly with the parents, social worker and future foster parents. Depending on the child's age, the child should be actively involved throughout the intake, preplacement visits and the entire placement process. Yet, the Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:29) found that in many cases work is done around the child and about the child without any discussion with the child himself or any dealings with him personally or without consulting the older child in connection with decisions that affect him.

4.6.1 The meaning of separation for the child

The separation process is a crisis and traumatic experience for the entire family system. When a child is separated from his parents and placed in substitute care he is faced with a series of difficult psychological tasks which result from the two experiences (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:65).

The process leading up to the separation may have been filled with confusing events. He may try to interpret these events and may need help in sorting out faulty information and ambivalent feelings. The social worker's first task in foster care should, according to Littner, (Malaka, 1982:163) be to help him complete the grief process which has resulted from his separation from his biological parents as well as to help him overcome all his fears and anxiety so that he may live within his foster care status with the least amount of bitterness. The assistance, support and understanding the child gets at this stage can enable him to use foster care as a healing and growth experience. How the child handles or experiences the actual separation depends on many variables including age at the time of separation, quality of care prior to separation and during the foster care experience, character of the relationship with own parents during separation, and the duration of the separation.

4.6.2 Supporting the child to adjust to the new environment

Often the foster child enters foster care in a state of confusion, uncertainty, needing time to assimilate the change in circumstances. The Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:31) notes poor preparation for placement with the result they cannot understand why they are being removed from their families or what the expected duration and purpose of the placement will be.

These deficiencies undoubtedly hinder the child's adjustment in the new environment. However, placement with relatives is likely to be a less frightening experience because of the familiarity of the foster home, thereby adjustment problems reduced. Nevertheless, the social worker must remain alert to some of the negative feelings the

child might experience as a result of the placement, as removal is likely to trigger negative feeling of varying degrees. Failure for the child to resolve separation feelings may result in adjustment problems which may hamper growth and deny the child the opportunity to establish a healthy relationship with foster parents. At the same time the child at this stage is still faced with several tasks which include adjustment to new surroundings, routine and relationships.

A child placed with relatives may have more need than a child placed with non-relatives, to talk about his parents and the reasons for their not being able to care for him (Guide to Fostering Practice, 1976:138). A valuable way in which the social worker can help the child is to develop with the child a socially acceptable and logical explanation of what foster care is, why the child is in the care of another family (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:67). Fostering this understanding is an ongoing process that requires the social worker to use many different individualized techniques. Blumenthal (McGowan and Meezan, 1983:311) states that the more completely children understand what foster care is, why they are there and what will happen to them, the easier their adjustment and the more valuable the entire substitute care experience.

4.6.3 Ongoing Service Provision

Ongoing service provision to the child during placement forms an essential part of the placement process. Through maintenance of continuous relationships with social workers, children understand the need for separation from their biological parents,

discuss parent-child relationships, visiting and monitor progress towards goals specified in the service agreement (Blumenthal in McGowan and Meezan, 1983:314).

4.7 THE FOSTER FAMILY

The foster family is regarded as the basic resource in foster family care. It makes it possible for a child who has been removed from parental care to be cared for in the normal family environment thereby enabling him to develop as normally as possible.

The debate surrounding the conceptualization of the foster parent role is a long standing one. Whilst it is difficult to define the foster parent role there is a general agreement that the role is unique, challenging child rearing experience which requires parenting skills as well as additional skills related to the complexity of foster care. Without agency support, consultation, guidance and reinforcement foster parents are unlikely to meet the needs of the children in their care. Social work with foster parents involves several tasks including careful screening, evaluation, selection and support throughout the placement process.

4.7.1 The process of selecting foster parents

The success of foster care in general rests upon careful screening, evaluation, selection and support of foster parents. Sometimes the social worker becomes involved in the case after the child has been residing with relatives for a long time. Consequently selection is made more difficult as the child might have already formed

a bond with the foster family. At the same time the prospective foster parents tend to regard it as a foregone conclusion that they have a claim to the child they are related to. Regarding the choice of relatives as foster parents, the Guide to Fostering Practice (1976:136) reads:

"Whether the social work agency approaches relatives with a view to their becoming foster parents or whether relatives offer themselves as foster parents, it is essential that early in discussion the social worker should explain to them the full implications of fostering. In particular, the role of the agency in approving and supervising the placement and the agency's power of removing the child."

The practice of considering placement with relatives first is regarded as a suitable alternative whenever it becomes necessary to find an alternative way of caring for a child. This alternative provides the child with a substitute living arrangement with familiar people and a familiar environment who know and understand the child's circumstances. To remain with familiar adults undoubtedly lessens the natural unhappiness which most children feel on being separated from their parents. Thus, placement with relatives is one way in which a child may be cared for without removing him completely from his family. A word of caution from the Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa (1987:10) is that the social worker when considering relatives as foster parents should be aware of the complicating factors present in a situation which could adversely affect the placement of the child. At its worst the child may become a vehicle for bitter jealousies and disputes and the object of a tug-of-love where neither side can win (Guide to Fostering Practice 1976:136). It is only when a child cannot be placed with relatives that placement with non-relatives should be considered.

Basically, the selection process is aimed at assessing (Fish in Maidman, 1984:218):

- Motivation to foster;
- Expectations of the role;
- Personal qualities of potential foster family;
- Family dynamics of the potential foster family;
- Parenting styles and skills;
- Ability to relate to agency staff;
- Ability to accept the role of substitute, short-term parent;
- Ability to relate to situation of the foster child and his/her family.

The process of selecting foster parents involves placing each child with a family where there can be comparable similarities and possible continuity of cultural values with those with which the child is already familiar. Before the amendment of Section 40 of the Child Care Act, 1983, the law stated that children could be fostered only by parents of the same race. The section was amended to require that only the religion and culture of prospective parents should be taken into account.

4.7.2 Recruitment of foster parents

The lack of a substantial pool of foster families that can meet the varying needs of children currently entering care is a problem that perpetually confronts social workers in child welfare. According to Kadushin (1980:10) there are and always have been relatively few people who are willing to accept the burden and responsibility of rearing someone else's child. Freidman et al. (1980:16) conclude that given how little

information the public has about foster care and the magnitude of the commitment required of foster parents, the low rate is really to be expected. Recognizing the problem of inadequate foster homes, Glassberg (1965:465) states that recruitment must take place within a context of proper appreciation that foster parents are a precious resource in child care, and with the understanding that no waste, abuse or misuse of such resources should occur if foster care needs are to be met.

Recruitment involves a programme of interpretation to the public of the need for foster homes and the satisfaction to be derived from fostering a child (Kadushin and Martin, 1988:363). The Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:39) found a lack of recruitment programmes. According to the Committee when recruitment programmes are launched they are usually unsuccessful because of inadequate advertising and insufficient information that is presented.

The lack of information about various social welfare organisations and the services they offer seems to be one of the problems for the scarcity of a sufficient pool of foster parents in the black community. As a result very few families (if any) come forward as volunteers. Whether or not they are willing to offer their services voluntarily to agencies requiring their help is an aspect that has not been studied thoroughly. For a special programme such as foster care, the entire community should be enlightened and educated in order to develop a more understanding, helpful attitude and to make a more helpful contribution to sound community building before any recruitment campaign can be introduced (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:112). However, with current factors of economic stress and with many

families living in inadequate housing, families might find it difficult to accept an additional responsibility on top of the problems they have. At the same time, in the midst of poverty and growing unemployment the foster care grant may be the main attraction.

4.7.3 The task of foster parents

These vary according to the age of the child, the child's previous experience and the individual needs of the foster child. The task of the foster parent is described as a very difficult and demanding one which requires unique parenting skills and skills related to the complexity of foster care. The general tasks of the foster parent can be described as follows:

4.7.3.1 Physical care

Foster parents have the day-to-day responsibility of the child's physical care. Before the foster parent can establish a meaningful relationship with a child he will first have to be able to care physically for the child (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:88). There is evidence that it is only after the foster parent is able to care for the child physically that a meaningful relationship with the foster child can be established.

Some of the children in foster care have been subjected to trauma and deprivations more serious than those experienced by the average child. It is for this reason that

foster parents should be informed about the child's physical condition prior to placement, in order to make them aware of the commitment required to handle adequately all the demands likely to be made by the child's physical and emotional condition.

4.7.3.2 Emotional care

It is widely acknowledged that children separated from their families have experienced varying kinds and degrees of deviation in parental care. Apart from physical neglect they tend to be emotionally deprived as well. Fish (Maidman, 1984:229) notes that abused children may suffer developmental lags because of their fears, lack of trust and low self-esteem. She recommends that foster parents must learn to assess the child's level of emotional development to reinforce incremental steps forward. As foster parents have daily contact with the foster child "it is the foster parents who sometimes first identify these problems and it is their task to report the matter to the social worker who will make the necessary arrangements for treatment" (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:88). The foster child needs help to rebuild his trust in people. The provision of adequate mothering during foster care may prevent the development of serious disturbances.

4.7.3.3 Social Development

The foster child has a need to establish meaningful relationships with his family, foster parents and people in general. Foster parents need to recognise and respect the

child's needs for continued contact with his natural parents. It is thus essential that they encourage frequent parental visiting, accept the child's parents and to avoid speaking negatively about them especially in front of the foster child which will merely compound mixed feelings of love and hurt foster children might already have about their parents.

Other social tasks include helping the child to establish meaningful relationships with the rest of the foster family. The child needs to feel accepted by the entire family. It is only when the foster child feels accepted that he will be able to identify with his new environment. This identification process is necessary for the child in his normal development and could serve as a corrective learning process where the child has been subjected to negative influences and behaviour (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:89).

Recognizing the child's need to socialize, the foster parent can enrol the child in various societies available in their neighbourhood (if they are available). The social worker can help foster parents to establish community contacts for the child.

4.7.3.4 Educational Task

This relates to the child's academic work, for example helping with his school work and taking interest in his school activities as well as education in aspects like social behaviour, cleanliness etc. The type of education provided depends on the child's needs and the extent to which the child has been neglected.

4.8 TERMINATION OF PLACEMENT

Ideally activities undertaken on behalf of a child who is in foster care have as their objective movement of the child into a more permanent living situation (Kadushin and Martin, 1988:417):

- (1) Planning for the child's return home by working with birth parents and child toward modification of those conditions that necessitated placement: this alternative terminates in the reunification of the child with his family. The decision regarding the return of the child to the care of his parents, will by and large be influenced by the capacity of his parents to resume his care (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:76). At the same time, as soon as circumstances of the parents have improved to the extent where they can resume the care of their children, the return of the children should be considered. The rights of the natural parents over the child are restored when an order issued in terms of section 15(1) of the Child Care Act, 1983 lapses after the expiration of a period of two years or such shorter duration as the children's court initially determined no extension of the order been granted by Minister in terms of section 16(2) of the Child Care Act (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:143).
- (2) Planning for termination of parental rights and permanent parental substitution; this terminates with the adoption of the child. Experience has shown that a high proportion of foster children will never return to their families of origin sometimes because their parents have drifted away and lost interest in them. In order to safeguard the interests of children from their parents an application can be made for their adoption in terms of section 19 of the Child Care Act, 1983. Adoption is the only form of permanent substitute care for which provision is presently made in the Child Care Act, 1983. However, not all children who cannot return to parental care can be adopted.
- (3) Planning for long-term foster care when the child's ties to the birth family remain strong, family remains intensively involved with the child, but there is little likelihood that the birth family can remediate its problems to the extent of having the child returned: Rather than leave these children, their parents and foster parents in a state of limbo, the reality of long-term foster care needs to be considered. The rationale is to try to stabilize the position of the child.

- (4) The last alternative results in the child being discharged from the provisions of the Child Care Act, 1983. In terms of section 16(2) no order may be extended beyond the date on which the child attains the age of 18 years (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:143). The Minister may discharge a foster child from the effect of any order made by any court. In such an event the foster parent concerned is also discharged from his responsibilities under such an order.

In most cases, a child in the black community although discharged still remains in the care of the foster parents. This tends to create problems for foster parents especially financially as they might not be in a position to provide for him especially meeting his educational requirements if he is of school going age.

4.9 THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER

Foster care is part of the total service programme presented by child welfare agencies. Much of the responsibility for the effectiveness of a fostering service will rest upon the structure of the total organization to which it belongs, and the support this structure gives to those who work within it (Guide to Fostering Practice, 1976:158).

The role of the social worker is complex by itself. The roles the worker performs interweaves and overlaps, each taking priority over others depending on the evolution and developments of the case. She must be able to relate to the child, parents, foster parents, to the wider group of those caring for the child within the community and in the smaller group of staff within his own agency. Carrying out these responsibilities is a herculean task and agencies need to provide the support necessary for workers to carry out these tasks.

The worker is regarded as the main instrument to the success of the foster care programme. She must have skills necessary to handle and resolve crisis situations. The social worker's knowledge and understanding of the African culture and the implications this has for practice will be an added advantage.

Maidman (1984:17) identifies a number of specialized roles the workers perform. These include: information gathering, human relations intervention, liaison tasks, supporting, contracting, change agent activities, monitoring, problem solving, resource brokerage and team facilitating. Fein *et al* (1984:353-356) identify five roles the worker assumes in order to achieve permanency planning for children in foster care. These include case planning and management role, therapeutic role, client advocacy role and role of court witness.

4.9.1 The social worker and biological parents

The first task of the social worker is to attend to the development of a healthy working relationship with the natural parents. The engagement of a client in a relationship is essential since it establishes the foundation of the helping process. The task of developing the worker-parent relationship is often complicated by the fact that many of the children in foster care come from families where there are severe problems and where the parents are described as "hard to reach" because they avoid or reject the services of the social worker. In an attempt to develop a relationship the social worker is expected to be emphatic, sensitive and understanding. In return, the parent is likely to feel secure and be willing to share personal thoughts and feelings.

In addition to developing an understanding of what it means to the natural parents to be separated it is vital for the social worker to grasp the difficult position created for a parent when those children are cared for by somebody else (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:40).

It has been found that parents are most amenable to treatment immediately after the removal of children from their care. It is therefore important that social workers make a special effort to reach parents at this most accessible period.

Throughout the placement period individual and group work or work with the entire family, plus other social services, can be made available to help parents deal effectively with environmental or emotional stress that has impaired parental functioning and with the added conflict and stress that arise in reaction to the placement of the child (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:42).

According to Blumenthal (McGowan and Meezan, 1983:309) ideally worker-parent contacts should occur weekly or at least once every two weeks. The contacts serve five important purposes. They can be used to :

- (1) provide counselling and other casework services related to improving parental functioning, the parents' own behaviour and emotional adjustment, the parents' relationship with the foster parents etc.,
- (2) share information and concerns about the child's adjustment, health, schooling, progress and so on;
- (3) discuss parent-child visiting and appropriateness of the visiting plan;
- (4) elicit feedback about services provided by other community resources; and;

- (5) evaluate progress.

During these contacts the worker provides guidance and direction, offers emotional support, seeks information and promotes clients understanding.

The social worker can assist parents by facilitating the utilization and co-ordination of community resources and by regularly assessing their value. The successful provision of foster care services requires that parents use all possible community resources that can help the family resolve the problems that led to the placement.

The Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa (1987:43) describes the different kinds of social work services needed by parents whose children are in short-term, intermediate and long-term care. With regard to parents whose children are in short-term or intermediate care social work with parents may be focused on three aspects namely:

- Assist parents with the problems which impair their functioning as parents and prevent the return of the children to their custody.
- To encourage and where necessary, to assist parents to maintain regular contact with their children; to monitor the regularity of the visits as well as the effect these visits have on the child; and
- To review regularly their own services to the parents and actively assist parents to work towards a realistic plan for themselves and their children.

With regard to children who are in unplanned long-term care and where parental contact is either limited or non-existent the Guide reads:

"When this happens, it is the task of the social worker to make a realistic appraisal, together with the parents (if they can be traced) of the likelihood of their resuming the care of their children or alternatively, help them to accept

the fact that they will be parents only in name and to accept the arrangement whereby the foster parents are awarded more custodial functions and rights, in order to care more securely for the child."(p.43)

4.9.2 The Social Worker and the Child

Once the child has arrived in a foster home the social worker becomes the focal point for ensuring that the agency maintains a complete and comprehensive overview of the welfare of the child (Guide to Fostering Practice, 1976:111). The child will now be the centre of a network of people who have concern for his care. The social worker's responsibility is to support and maintain this network and make sure full use is made of the resources of the agency and the community. Part of the work after placement consists of supervision for guidance and protection of the child.

According to the Guide to Fostering Practice (1976:111) to perform these tasks the social worker will have to personify the agency which is the primary means by which it can fulfil its continuity responsibilities for the child. This means personalizing the support of the agency in a warm but professional relationship with the child.

The responsibilities of the social worker are not only concerned with promoting the development and general welfare of the child but with actually protecting them from any situation which could cause physical and or mental harm. This requires that the social worker makes regular visits to the foster home where she will see not only the foster family but also the child on his own. The frequency of these visits should be determined by the needs of the foster family and the child (Guide to Foster Care

Practice in South Africa, 1987:67). It is the task of the social worker to have regular discussions with the child and to develop a relationship of trust with him. The Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa (1987:62) describes three main aims of direct work with the child:

- To develop a relationship with the child in order to get to know him as a person. Unless the social worker can manage to develop a positive professional relationship with the child prior to placement, the chances of developing this at a later stage are poor. Communication can only be established within a relationship of trust and for this to develop it is essential for a foster child to get to know his social worker. This will involve the social worker explaining who she is and what her job involves clearly, accurately and appropriately for that particular child. To communicate effectively with children who have been subjected to traumatic and/or depriving circumstances requires sensitivity and consideration for the child and a certain courage to reach out and help the child to take the first steps in communication (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:72).
- To help the child come to grips with his own life situation and to be an active co-participant in the further planning concerning his future. When the child comes into foster care he needs help in order to grasp and accept the reasons why he is in the care of another family. The work will have been started before he is separated and needs to be provided through a continuous relationship between him and the social worker. According to the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) (1975:41) the worker should encourage and assist the child to express his overt and inner feelings about the change as much as he is able, so that the child does not use up her energy in anxiety and stress in a way that interferes with his ability to relate to foster parents or to use the opportunities of the new situation. It is the task of the social worker to help the child to understand his past so as to enable him to free himself to use the foster placement as a healing and growth experience (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:63). Providing this help can facilitate their transition to a foster home and can dispel some of the fears of the unknown.
- To help the child to make a transfer to a new environment, to assist him with his initial adjustment and to continue making contact with him so as to serve as a link between his present and past and in general to be the person with whom he can discuss those problems which he cannot or finds difficult to discuss with either his own parents or his foster parents.

The Guide to Fostering Practice (1976:117) describes the different kinds of services that are likely to be needed by children in short-term, intermediate and long-term care. With regard to children in short-term care the Guide reads: "They need constant help to keep alive the image of their parents, family and home...". These children need regular reassurance about their return home. For children in indeterminate care the Guide states that providing support and help without false reassurance is an important social work task.

Basically, the responsibility of the social worker with regard to the foster child involve (CWLA, 1975:38):

- Maintaining a continuous relationship;
- Evaluating how the child's physical, emotional, cognitive, social, educational needs are being met and whether he is making progress in the care he is receiving;
- Planning with foster parents and supervising his living situation in accordance with individualized goals for the use of foster family services;
- Providing selected and coordinated resources and services necessary to meet his total needs; and
- Providing direct treatment of emotional problems associated with leaving his home.

The CWLA (1975:39) emphasizes that services to the child be based on understanding of the following:

- The child's previous life experiences and their effect on him.
- His level of development, and
- Specific experiences involved in the placement,

- His social and personal adjustment.

4.9.3 THE SOCIAL WORKER AND THE FOSTER PARENTS

The success of foster placement is determined by a number of factors including how well the foster family and child are matched, the way they have been prepared for the placement and are assisted during the placement. According to the Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa (1987:104) one of the main tasks of the social worker is to support the foster family and to give guidance on ways that could aid both the foster family and the child to accept one another and to work out a pattern of life to which the foster child can adapt. The Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa (1987:105-106) describes the spectrum of services required by foster parents. These include:

4.9.3.1 Direct Advice and Guidance

The amount of direct advice and guidance that the foster parents may need and want is largely determined by their general experience and ability in the realm of foster care, their ability to foster a specific child and the demands of the placement. The social worker can advise the foster parents on ways and means that the child's placement can be made less stressful to all involved.

4.9.3.2 **Service aimed at supporting and strengthening the foster family**

Due to the adverse life circumstances to which many foster children were subjected to prior to placement a variety of services may be needed by them to overcome past deprivations and damage. Caring for these children requires good parenting, additional awareness and skills. These children, undoubtedly, make additional demands not only on the foster parent but also the entire foster family. Under these circumstances, support and services aimed at strengthening the foster family are essential in order to keep it intact.

4.9.3.3 **Direct Treatment of underlying Problems in the Foster Family**

There are instances where the social worker may engage in direct treatment of the underlying problems in the foster family which are likely to affect the foster child. The CWLA (1975:68) points out that although the specific treatment of the underlying problems of the foster parents is not within the scope of the foster family service, the worker's understanding of the foster family gained from regular and continuing contact is invaluable in helping foster parents to deal with problems arising during the placement, thus avoiding unnecessary conflicts leading to unplanned replacements of the child.

4.9.3.4 **Supervision Services**

To carry out its responsibility, the supervising agency needs to maintain continuing supervision of the placement to ascertain the quality of care the foster child is

receiving and to promote foster parent competence in their care of the child. The Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa (1987:106) states that in rendering supervision services care must be taken not to let the foster parents be threatened by the social worker.

Throughout the placement foster parents need help to understand the importance of the child's continuing relationship with his parents. In cases where the foster parents and the natural parents have a poor relationship the social worker needs to take responsibility for guiding the contacts between them. Part of the social worker's responsibility includes helping the foster parents in applying for a foster care grant and giving guidelines of what is required of them in handling it.

4.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter has identified important philosophical and programmatic elements that are needed for an effective foster care system. The professional support that social workers should provide for foster parents, the foster child and the biological parents has been described.

In the black community, the practice of formal foster care is a modern innovation. Informal substitute care has been practiced for a long time without State intervention.

The next chapter focuses on the legal aspects of formal foster care.

CHAPTER 5

FOSTER CARE LEGISLATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the legal aspects of foster care as embodied in the Child Care Act, No.74 of 1983. This chapter and the placement process (already discussed in the previous chapter) are closely interwoven but for clarity purposes, these are dealt with separately. A general description of the Child Care Act, 1983, is presented as it compares with previous legislation particularly the Children's Act, No.33 of 1960. The areas discussed include the general protection of children, the inquiry, powers of the Children's Court, the Child Welfare Society and its provision of the foster-care service.

5.2 THE CHILD CARE ACT NO.74 OF 1983 AND CHILDREN'S ACT NO.33 OF 1960 COMPARED

The Child Care Act No. 74 of 1983, has been preceded by various acts, which attempted to protect the rights and welfare of children, since the Union of South Africa. It differs significantly from its predecessors, especially the Children's Act No. 33 of 1960, in its provisions regarding the removal of a child from parental care, the holding of an inquiry and the placement of a child in foster care.

An analysis of the Child Care Act, 1983 reveals a total shift of emphasis from the "child in need of care" concept in the Children's Act, to the concept of a PARENT being found to be "unable or unfit" to have custody of the child. The new approach has generated a lot of controversy and concern.

Supporting the new approach is Theron (1984:13) who states that where existing and earlier legislation aimed at the protection of children placed the emphasis more on the child's position and the extent to which the child was in need of care, the Child Care Act, 1983 concentrates on the parent or family and in this way begins at the root of the problem. According to him this is the most important new aspect in the Act. Furthermore, Van der Merwe (1983:6560-6561) in defense of the Child Care Act states "...The legislation does not,...., focus solely on the child, or solely on the child's parent but on both. The emphasis is therefore on the care of the child by the parents or those entrusted with the custody of the child..."

A careful look at other legislation involving the welfare of children, such as the Divorce Act 70 of 1979 and the Matrimonial Affairs Act 37 of 1953 as well as related supreme court decisions, it is soon apparent that there is one central theme of concern that consistently emerges, that of the "best interests of the child" being the paramount consideration (Barlow, 1983:339). According to him it is difficult to justify this change of focus if the above approach in our law is still desirable.

Basically, section 14 (4) of the Child Care Act, 1983, which seeks to prove the inability or unfitness of the parents clearly lists a number of conditions in order to

determine this. The section makes the guilt or inadequacies of the parent the basic criteria for intervention and remedial action. In terms of the Child Care Act, 1983, the children's court hearing will focus on the parent and not on the child. This shift in emphasis means that social workers have to prove that the parents are incompetent and this means that the parents have to obtain legal representation to prove their innocence (Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children, 1990:25-26). As the Court must determine in terms of 14 (4) (b) that the parent is either unable or unfit, evidence on the malfunctioning of the parent and its bearing on the future care and well-being of the child will have to be presented to the court in a fully substantial manner (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:136).

This could in many cases prove to be more difficult than making a case for finding a child in need of care on the premise that his welfare or safety is in some way or other vitally threatened by the circumstances in which he finds himself. This situation is to the detriment of the child and does not promote the social worker's relationship with the parents.

In contrast, however, Van der Merwe (1983:6561) states "...the time has come for us to tell an incompetent parent without beating about the bush, that his child is in need of care because he is an incompetent parent, and that action should be taken against these unfit people for the sake of the child..."

Middleton (1989:8) argues that the above approach together with the failure to lay down a standard or norm for the return of the child to his natural parents is

responsible for trends of thought that lead to practices inconsistent with permanency planning. To correct this oversight the Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:26) recommends that the Act be amended in order to eliminate the element of accusation against the parents and to ensure that the emphasis falls on the needs and interests of the child.

5.3 PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

The Child Care Act, 1983, seeks to promote and safeguard the welfare of the child against their parents, guardians and other child offenders. The Act provides firstly, for the general protection of all children and, secondly, for the specific protection of pupils and foster children. Whilst the main focus is the protection of children, the Act makes provision for the punishment and rehabilitation of child offenders. The administrative machinery comes into operation when the safety and welfare of the child are threatened (Hawthorne, 1988:38).

5.3.1 Removal from parental care

Section 14 (4) (b) of the Child Care Act, 1983, states precisely the grounds upon which a child may be removed from parental care. The degree of harm which is being inflicted upon the child, or which appears to be imminent, should be of a serious nature before severance or interruption of the natural bonds can be justified (Middleton, 1989:9). In analyzing the significance of Section 14 (4) (b) Middleton (1989:8) concludes that proof of any one of the facts set out in sub-sections 14 (4) (b)

(i-x) is generally relatively easy and this may facilitate unnecessary removal of children when, with appropriate preventive action, they could possibly have been left in parental care.

As far as removal to places of safety is concerned, a child could be removed from the care of its parent or guardian to a place of safety in terms of the Children's Act, 1960, without the intervention of the Commissioner. Now, however, the Child Care Act, 1983 lays down that a warrant for the removal must be obtained from the Commissioner unless the delay in removal caused by obtaining the warrant would be disadvantageous for the child concerned (Theron, 1984:14). Although no definite time limit for bringing the child before the Children's court is specified, the child must be brought before it as soon as is practicable.

5.3.2 Emergency Removal

This is governed by Section 12 of the Child Care Act. This section authorizes any policeman, social worker or authorized officer to remove a child to a place of safety without a warrant if there is reason to believe that the delay in obtaining a warrant will be prejudicial to the safety and welfare of the child.

It is strongly advocated that hasty removals be avoided at all costs. The Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:25) suggests that although crisis removal must from time to time be done in the interests of the child great circumspection should be displayed in this regard. By means of guidelines,

supervision and inservice training, organisations should prevent the hasty and ill-considered removal of children. The Committee cautions social workers to be aware that further attempts at treatment will be difficult once such removal has been initiated.

The Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:25) identifies the following deficiencies in the action of social workers.

- (1) They usually concentrate on the safety and placement of the child but they lose sight of the importance of the child as part of the family, and the planning of the child's future.
- (2) The perception of when a crisis demands the removal varies from social worker to social worker. As a result, other possibilities for ensuring the safety of the child without removing him from parental care are not investigated adequately.
- (3) In such cases, assessment is usually an internal matter, while contributions from multi-disciplinary teams are not utilized properly.
- (4) Pressure on the part of the children's court contributes to hasty action.

5.3.3 Parental Power Versus State Responsibility

Parental power constitutes the sum total of rights and duties of parents with regard to their minor children, arising out of parentage. Parental power is acquired by birth, adoption, legitimation of the child by marriage and by order of court (Nathan, 1982:318).

It includes guardianship, custody and maintenance. According to common

law the supreme court as the upper guardian of all minors "will interfere with anyone

who has the lawful custody of a child, whenever the best interests of the child so demand " (Nathan, 1982:323).

Where a child has been placed in any custody other than the custody of his parent(s) or guardian in terms of the Child Care Act, 1983 or Section 290 of the Criminal Procedure Act No.51 of 1977, the latter is divested of his right of control over and his right to the custody of the child. The right to discipline and punish are now vested in the custody of the foster parents. Thus after children have been removed from parental care and placed in foster care by court order certain parental rights are forfeited. The rights that are forfeited centre around the daily care and upbringing of the child as these are now the responsibility of the foster parent. However, the order never suspends guardianship in the narrow sense, but only that the child goes temporarily to someone else and during such a period loses custody (Barnard, Cronje and Olivier, 1986:294).

Parents, however, still retain legal guardianship. Among the rights retained by the biological parents are those related to consents for major surgery, marriage while the child is still a minor and the foster child's property. This means that, although foster parents undertake the child's direct care, and are vested with decision-making authority regarding the child's daily living, they are not empowered to make independent major decisions that have far-reaching effects on the child's life. It is only under exceptional circumstances such as when the foster parent "has reasonable grounds for believing that the performance of any operation upon or provision of medical treatment to the child is necessary to preserve his life or save him from

serious or lasting physical injury or disability and that the need for the operation or medical treatment is so urgent that it ought not be deferred for the purpose of consulting the parent or guardian of the child or minister "(Guide to foster care practice in South Africa, 1987:139-140). The latter have to be informed at a later stage as specified in terms of the Child Care Act, 1983.

5.4 CHILDREN'S COURT PROCEDURE

The Child Care Act, 1983, specifies three main sets of circumstances under which the court may intervene on behalf of the child:

- 1) The first refers to a situation where the child has no parent or guardian or has but cannot be traced;
- 2) Secondly, Section 14 (4) (b) (i-x) lists a number of conditions to determine the unfitness or inability of the parent, guardian or the person in whose custody the child is,
- 3) Lastly, the set of circumstances refers to where the problem rests with the child and not so much with the parent or guardian in that they cannot control him properly so as to ensure proper behaviour such as regular school attendance.

The children's court procedure is characterized by the following:

5.4.1 The right to Confidentiality

There is a two-fold provision for privacy in children's court proceedings; namely:

- i) No one may disseminate any information likely to reveal the identity of the child unless assent has been given by the minister or presiding commissioner.

- ii) The proceedings are held in camera with the result that no-one may be present at the sitting of a children's court unless he is a necessary participant in the court proceedings.

5.4.2 Parties to Proceedings

Notice of the holding of an inquiry must be given to the parents or guardian or person having custody. If a person required by the summons to attend fails to do so without excuse or reason shall be guilty of an offence, and he may be dealt with in the manner provided for in terms of Section 74 (7) in terms of the Criminal Procedure Act, 1977. All children in respect of whom an inquiry is held must be present during the proceedings. Only in exceptional cases, such as ill-health, or other sufficient cause can a child be excluded from attending the hearing. In such circumstances the inquiry may either be held without the child or postponed to a later date.

With regard to the exclusion of foster parents as parties to proceedings Middleton (1989:10) states:

"...It does not frequently happen, however, that the court when contemplating the making of an order in terms of Section 15 (1) (b), regards the prospective foster parents as parties... Their presence and participation in the proceedings is, however, essential to that part of the inquiry devoted to the development of an effective plan of remedial action and the assessment of the prospects that the plan may have for success. It is therefore submitted that express opinion should be made for participation in the proceedings, where appropriate, by the prospective foster parents."

5.4.3 Legal Representation

The Child Care Act, 1983, strongly emphasizes the parents, but too little attention is given to the importance of the child at the hearing. According to Barlow (1982:339) this problem already exists where the welfare organization finds itself attempting to argue against legal counsel for the parents. Being untrained in the various aspects of procedure and evidence, these organisations fail in their endeavour purely because of a lack of legal knowledge (Barlow, 1982:339). Failure to provide legal representation could result in an abused child being returned to a harmful environment.

The Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children, (1990:53) states that although regulation 10(1) makes provision for the child's presence in court and the minuting of evidence in general, no mention is made of whether the child is given a hearing.

There is thus no provision to ensure that the child's rights in terms of regulation 4 (1) to question witnesses, give evidence and address to court are maintained. The Committee, thus, recommends that the child's rights in terms of regulation 4 must be protected.

5.4.4 Evidence

The Commissioner presiding over a children's court holding an inquiry may request a social worker or any other person who can form authoritative opinion on the child

or his circumstances to furnish a report. Although it appears that this report is not mandatory as stipulated in the Child Care Act, 1983, these reports are submitted in a majority of (if not all) cases.

The Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:25) identifies the following shortcomings in the social worker's reports:-

- 1) Particulars in the reports rely too easily on hearsay evidence and information that cannot be verified.
- 2) The reports do not attest to sufficient expertise, and information is presented in a clumsy and naive manner.
- 3) The reports contain too much unnecessary detail, while the essentials do not receive adequate attention.
- 4) The reports are not accompanied by a proper plan of treatment with the relevant written agreements.
- 5) There is no prognosis in respect of the parents' potential again to undertake the care of their children. Too much emphasis is placed on measurable shortcomings and deficiencies, while the parents' ability or inability to fulfil their parental role is not spelled out adequately.
- 6) A well-motivated recommendation is seldom made to the court that the duration of an order should be for a period shorter than two years.
- 7) Social workers are not trained with regard to the way they should conduct themselves in court and are therefore often uncertain of themselves. This inability to assert themselves can be to the child's disadvantage.

5.4.5 Powers of the Children's Court

A children's court, following the holding of an inquiry can make any one of the following orders in terms of Section 15 (1) of the Child Care Act, 1983 namely:

- a) The child be returned to or remain in the custody of his parent or guardian or of the person in whose custody he was, under the supervision of the social worker. Failure to comply with the conditions for the continuation of custody, the social worker may again bring the child before the childrens' court.
- b) The child be placed in the custody of a foster parent under the supervision of a social worker.
- c) The child can be sent either to (i) a children's home or (ii) a school of industries,

5.4.6. Duration of Foster Care Orders

One of the differences between the Children's Act, 1960, and the Child Care Act, 1983, lies in the duration of court orders made in respect of the children. In terms of the Child Care Act, 1983, a children's court order remains in force only for a period of two years, or such shorter period as determined by the children's court at the time of making that order. The duration of such an order, however, may be extended by the Minister until the child reaches the age of 18 years, except in the case of a school of industries.

Theron (1984:15) indicates that the shorter duration of court orders will emphasize the intensive treatment of such children and cause them not to be subject to court orders for unnecessarily long periods. Responsible foster care practice, therefore, requires that the social worker should regularly monitor the circumstances of both the

child and his foster care parents as well as those of the natural parents (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:137).

5.5 The Child Care Act and Permanent Placement

There has been growing concern about the large number of children who remain in foster care for prolonged periods. Permanency planning takes as its major premise the idea that for normal growth and development every child needs a family within which he feels secure, a sense of belonging, where there are adults with whom he can identify and who are devoted to him.

Placements in terms of section 15 of the Child Care Act, 1983 are not intended to be of a permanent nature. This, according to Middleton (1989:11) is in accordance with sound permanency planning which requires that the child who has been removed from his parental home should either be returned to his parents or in some form of permanent substitute as soon as possible.

The only form of permanent substitute care for which provision is presently made in the Act is adoption. The Act makes no provision for permanent foster care. Experience has shown that there are a large number of foster children who can neither be returned to their natural parents nor adopted for some reason or other. Middleton (1989:11) feels that the cost of such permanent placement could be no more than the cost of a series of temporary placements covering the same aggregate period.

Section 16 (1)(2) together with regulation 15 provide that after the original period of a foster care order has expired, it may be extended for a period not exceeding two years. The Minister may either extend the validity of the order for a period not exceeding two years or transfer the foster child from one custody to another. The result is a series of temporary placements with concomitant, aggravating uncertainty regarding the future, not only for the child but also for foster parents and or natural parents (Middleton, 1989:11). This is undoubtedly, in direct conflict with the objects of permanency planning.

5.6 THE CHILD WELFARE SOCIETY AND FOSTER CARE SERVICES

Foster care is part of the total service programme provided by child welfare organisations. The total service programme revolves around the welfare of the child and all people and aspects related to the well-being and development of the child (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa. 1987:113).

5.6.1 Reconstruction Services

The term reconstruction services is defined by the Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990-:4) as:

"The provision of social work service to parents whose children are placed in substitute care, with the purpose of improving the family's general, social and parental functioning to such an extent that the children may be placed in parental care once more."

Because of the problems experienced with the rendering of reconstruction services, its meaning and the attainment of the goal thereof, the Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:28) suggests the substitution of the term both in regulations and practice for "services to biological parents". It seems these services would encompass a wide range of services to the parents not necessarily with the aim of restoring children to their care, but also with the intention of helping parents give up their children either for permanent placement or adoption. Used properly, this could lead to the early identification of cases where children cannot be restored to their families.

5.6.2 Access by Natural Parents

Access here is used in the sense that natural parents and foster children maintain contact during the placement either through correspondence, visits or holiday leave. Although rights of access is not specifically mentioned in the Child Care Act, 1983, Section 15 (1) (a) provides for prescribed requirements which the court may determine (Guide to Foster Care Practice in South Africa, 1987:142). It is essential that details surrounding access be specified at the time of the inquiry and the service agreement, to prevent disagreements at a later stage.

5.6.3 Regular, Periodic, Formal Review

The Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:3) identify two types of review, namely -

- (i) Formal review - refers to the review of foster care cases in order to make decisions concerning the recommendation of social workers with regard to dealing with children in terms of Sections 16 (2); 33 (3); 34 (1); 36 (1) and 37 of the Child Care Act, 1983.
- (ii) Internal review - the process whereby an institute presents cases for evaluation to an internal panel at regular and fixed intervals and through which progress of the case is monitored.

It is necessary that all placements be subjected to a process of regular, periodic, formal review. The Committee found that most organizations do not have planned internal review of cases. The result is that the provision of the service continues in an unplanned manner. Without prescribed internal reviewing procedures there can be no proper control over the progress of cases (Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children, 1990:51). The agency is only required to submit a report to the Minister three months before the expiry of the order. This is the first and only form of statutory review for which provision is at present made. This procedure for review of cases is inadequate because -

- It occurs only shortly before the expiry of the court order;
- It provides no provision for formal participation of the parties in the making of decisions in the course of the duration of the foster care order;
- It does not provide an adequate mechanism for securing observance of the rights of the parties during the currency of the foster care order and in relation to the termination of the placement (Middleton, 1989:12).

It is necessary that provision be made in the Child Care Act, 1983, and or regulations for the formal review of foster care placements at regular intervals.

5.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has given a description of the law as it concerns foster care. It has identified elements in the Child Care Act 1983, that are believed to militate against the provision of a successful foster care service. In view of the problems discussed, amendments to the Child Care Act 1983, are necessary particularly with regard to permanency planning.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

A detailed description of the research design and methodology is presented in this chapter.

6.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The practice of related foster care placement in the black community has not been researched intensively in spite of the developments that have taken place in the foster care system. The result is that little empirical information about the dynamics of the problem exist. The research design can be described as exploratory - descriptive since the objectives of the study are to explore and describe formal foster care practice in the black community. This type of investigation is necessary when a poorly defined problem confronts the researcher. Often, the researcher possesses little objective information about the nature of a problem and the possible factors influencing it (Arkava & Lane, 1983:190). It is descriptive as the study seeks to lay a foundation for possible future investigation. As a first phase in the research, an extensive literature study of foster care and related literature was undertaken, which included the studying of reports, research papers, books and journal articles. Valuable insights were gained from this exercise. Although an attempt was made to include South African literature, most of the literature used was published in the United States of America and Great Britain. This was conducted in order to identify previous research

into the subject related to the proposed investigation; to support the conceptual framework as well as to conceptualize the present practice of foster care. It, also, provided a substantially clearer insight into the dimensions and complexity of the problem. The second phase consisted of an empirical study. This sought to collect data with regard to the aims of the study listed in chapter one. Thirty foster parents were utilized for this purpose.

6.3 METHODOLOGY

6.3.1 Sampling Procedure

Records of the Fort Beaufort Child Welfare Society were studied. These provided useful information with regard to the choice of the sample of foster parents as well as details such as background information on the foster children and their foster parents. Further relevant information was obtained from social workers through informal discussions. The sampling procedure used in this study was availability sampling. Subjects were selected on the basis of the following criteria:-

- The population from which the sample was drawn were local residents (Fort Beaufort black Township) already formally engaged in fostering.
- They should be legally appointed by the Children's court to act as foster parents, under the supervision of the social worker.
- Foster children in their care should be related to them. A study of agency records' revealed that the bulk of the foster care caseload is comprised of family-related placements. According to Malaka (1982:5) the fostering of children who are not blood relations is a new venture among South African blacks.
- A minimum of at least two years experience as foster parents was regarded as an important criterion. Selltiz, *et al* (1972:55) suggest that it is a waste of time and effort to interview people who have little relevant experience, or who lack ability to communicate their experience. It was thus believed that foster

parents having such an experience will be able to share their experience with the researcher.

Initially, the sample consisted of fifty respondents from a population of sixty. The number was reduced to thirty since some of them did not meet the above criteria. In addition, ten foster parents took part in the pilot study. Furthermore, information gained from some personal interviews did not elicit sufficient data, as a result these could not be included in the study. Lastly, the inability of the researcher to trace and or make contact with foster parents despite repeated home visits and office appointments resulted in the exclusion of some subjects from the study.

6.3.2 Pilot Study

The questionnaire was pretested on ten foster parents currently involved in fostering.

The aim was to ascertain:-

- whether the questions as they were phrased would achieve the desired results by obtaining the required information;
- whether the questions were clearly understood by all respondents;
- whether additional questions were needed or whether some questions were redundant and should be eliminated, and;
- to determine the amount of time it will take to interview each person.

On the basis of the feedback received, minor corrections were made.

6.3.3 Instrument of Data Collection

The study of relevant literature together with informal discussions with social workers currently involved in foster care helped in the design of the questionnaire that was used. Because the study is exploratory in nature an attempt was made to gather as much information as possible about how formal placement is perceived by the foster parents. The questionnaire was subdivided into four sections (APPENDIX). The first section dealt with the personal particulars of the foster parents such as age, marital status, education, occupation, economic position and family composition. The second focused on the background history of the foster children. The third section covered foster parent attitudes towards the foster child(ren) and biological parents. The last section examined perceptions about formal foster care. The interview schedule used was structured. Both closed - and open-ended questions were used. Open-ended questions were used in order to give the opportunity and scope to foster parents to explain their experiences and observations of foster care work.

6.3.4 The Fieldwork

The fieldwork was done over a period of three months.

Personal interviews instead of mailed questionnaires were used because of the nature of the study. While the disadvantages of this method are well known (eg. time consuming and expensive) the following advantages necessitated the use of personal interviews:

- questions can be clarified and more information elicited through probing.

- the researcher can exercise control over question order and ensure that all questions are answered.
- the majority of foster parents included in the study have a low standard of education; they would thus experience problems in administering the questionnaire themselves.

Formal structured interviews were used. Interviews were conducted by the researcher. Subjects were interviewed either at home or offices of the Fort Beaufort Child Welfare Society, depending where it was most convenient for them. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses before the interview commenced and permission sought for the recording of their responses.

6.3.5 Data Processing and Analysis

This was done by computer with the assistance of a statistician in order to improve the quality and reliability of statistical analysis and inferences. In this study data were presented in tabular form in order to summarize and make observations about the data. From the tables summarizing the data, statistical calculations were made which led to interpretations about their significance.

6.4 LIMITATIONS

These can be summarised as follows:-

- The research was done during a period of unrest in the township and country in general. The political climate usually affects the respondents' answers and or willingness to participate.

Thus, caution had to be exercised in order not to generate mistrust and suspicion among respondents. The social worker helped in overcoming this problem.

- The overall reliability of the responses was limited since respondents tended to answer truthfully those questions which were not embarrassing to them.
- The sampling procedure used, availability sampling, is the chief limitation in this study. The survey group of thirty may be regarded as small and generalisation of data may therefore be limited. The study focused mainly on formal placements. The subjects did not include children who were informally placed with relatives. Clearly the findings represent only foster children placed with relatives by court order. However, although the findings are based mainly on conclusions drawn from the sample, the researcher is of the opinion that the findings and recommendations will contribute information to the available body of literature for the understanding of foster care in the black community.
- Some of the subjects who could have been included in the study could not be contacted because of the researchers' inability to trace them.
- An extensive search of the published literature yielded very few studies on kinship care. There is a general paucity of literature in the entire area of related foster care world wide. A need exists to develop this specialized area of foster care.

CHAPTER 7

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Attention is given in this chapter to the presentation and analysis of data. The first two sections relate to the background information of the biological parents, foster parents and foster children. The last two sections deal with their experiences and perceptions of formal foster care.

7.2 PERSONAL AND SOCIAL PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

7.2.1. TABLE 1
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS (N=30)

AGE IN YEARS	FOSTER MOTHER		FOSTER FATHER	
	NO.	%	NO.	%
26 - 30	1	3,3	0	0
31 - 35	0	0	1	6,25
36 - 40	1	3,3	0	0
41 - 45	4	13,3	1	6,25
46 - 50	8	26,7	5	31,25
51+	16	53,3	9	56,25
TOTAL	30	100%	16	100%
MISSING DATA	0		14	

Table 1 presents the age breakdown of the foster mothers and foster fathers. A majority of the foster parents are over the age of 50 years, namely 53,3% of foster mothers and 56.25% of foster fathers. In this study the majority of the foster parents are elderly grandparents who are old age pensioners. It was found that six foster mothers (19,9%) and two foster fathers (12,5%) were aged between 26 and 45 years.

Foster care as a form of substitute care is a challenging task requiring a great deal of physical vitality. A majority of the foster children in the study are in the care of elderly grandparents who reported difficulty in coping with all the demands of child rearing especially exercising proper control and discipline. This is presenting an unwelcome challenge. A lack of parental control might lead to numerous problems such as poor schooling and delinquent behaviour. According to the research conducted by the Dept. of Health Services and Welfare (1982:32) social workers pay little attention to the age of the foster parents when children are placed with relatives. In contrast, they found that when children were placed with non-relatives, they tend to be placed in the care of foster parents in the 40 to 50 age groups.

7.2.2

TABLE 2
MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS (N=30)

MARITAL STATUS	NO.OF PARENTAL COUPLES	%
Married	14	46,7
Single	2	6,7
Widowed	11	36,6
Divorced	2	6,7
Separated	1	3,3
TOTAL	30	100

Table 2 shows that 46,7% of the foster parents in the survey were married, while 53,4% were single foster parents either because they were widowed (36,6%); had never been married (6,7%); divorced (6,7%) or separated (3,3%). There was only one notable change ie only one foster mother was estranged from her husband two years after formal foster care placement.

7.2.3

TABLE 3
LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF RESPONDENTS (N=30)

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	FOSTER MOTHER		FOSTER FATHER	
	No.	%	NO.	%
NONE	8	26,7	1	6,25
LOWER PRIMARY	14	46,7	6	37,5
HIGHER PRIMARY	6	20	6	37,5
HIGH SCHOOL	1	3,3	2	12,5
TERTIARY	1	3,3	1	6,25
TOTAL	30	100	16	100

Generally, the educational achievement level of the foster parents is low. Furthermore, they are similar to the general trends in the community. The majority of foster mothers have either no schooling (26,7%) or had not gone beyond lower primary (46,7%).

Only one foster mother (3.3%) has received tertiary education. With regard to the educational level of the 16 foster fathers, they are basically of a comparable

educational level. Seventy-five percent (75%) have passed Standard IV or a lower standard. Only one foster father (6,25%) had a tertiary education.

7.2.4 Occupational and Financial Status

Malaka (1982:204) notes that lack of, as well as a low standard of education are associated with unskilled labour. Thus, the educational level of the foster parents in this study is closely related to their occupational status.

Only 36,95% of foster parents in this survey were actively employed - with 19,6% working as unskilled labourers on a part-time basis and 17,4% working on a full-time basis. Some (13,04%) were engaged in hawking for their income as there are inadequate job opportunities, whilst 6,5% have been unemployed for a long time. A significant proportion (43,5%) depend on old age pensions in addition to the foster care grant for their subsistence. It should be noted that most foster families have two or three foster children in their care. At the time of the study two foster families were not in receipt of the foster care grant due to placement transfer. These foster parents were unemployed and depend on the old age pension of some family member(s). All the foster families reported to be unable to maintain the foster child on the grant they receive.

With regard to family members it was found that about 80% were able to work, but could not find employment. Other family income include old age pensions, maintenance and disability grants. Irregular contributions by other employed family members are

also an important source of income. State grants seem to be the families' main source of income, but because of the large families were unable to meet all their basic survival needs. Another contributory factor is that some family members instead of contributing to the family's income were reported to mismanage their finances.

7.2.5 Other Descriptive Characteristics

The majority of the foster families live as extended families with an average of eight family members.

Sixty percent of the foster parents are maternally related to the foster children. Over half of the foster children (52%) were placed with grandparents, 44% with an aunt and 4% with a brother.

Forty-three percent of the foster parents have previous informal fostering experience whilst for fifty-seven percent fostering is a new dimension in their lives.

7.3 THE NATURE OF THE BIOLOGICAL FAMILIES

Foster children in the study were placed in foster care as a result of the personal circumstances of their parents described in Section B. The absence and unfitness of most of the biological parents made it impossible for the children to return to their families of origin. Whilst initially foster care was intended to be a short-term service, for the foster child in this study it is a long-term process. All the foster children were already living with relatives when they were given the status of a foster child.

A significant proportion were placed before they reached the age of three years. Over half (59,5%) came from single-parent families.

7.4 SECTION B

7.4.1 **TABLE 4**
REASONS FOR PLACEMENT (N=42)

REASON FOR PLACEMENT	NO.OF CHILDREN	PERCENTAGE
Death of one or both parent(s)	8	19.05
Abandonment or desertion by parent(s)	15	35.7
Neglect or abuse of child (Psychological/physical)	2	4.8
Inability of parent(s) to care for child: Psychological and/or physical illness of parent(s)	5	11.9
Child(ren) rejected by parent's new spouse	3	7.1
Parent(s) unfit to care for child: alcohol/drug abuse/immoral conduct	9	21.4
TOTAL	42	99.95 (100%)

Table 4 shows the distribution of children according to the main reason for placement in foster care. Reasons for placement were obtained from agency files as well as the foster parents in the study. The reasons for placement of children in the sample provided an indication of some of the main social problems existing in Fort Beaufort. Essentially, the placement of children in foster care reflects parental malfunctioning which eventually results in the disintegration of the family. Analysis of the situations leading to the need for placement of children led to a classification consisting of six reasons. Although more than one reason in a majority of cases have led to a child's entering care, considerable effort was invested in identifying the reason that seemed

central. However, while these categories were designed to be mutually exclusive, they were not so in an absolute sense.

In this study the largest group of children entered foster care because of abandonment, desertion or neglect (40.5%). Parents' unfitness constituted 21.4%; while 19.05% of the children were orphaned; with 11.9% of foster children in custody because of mental illness of the parent, typically the mother who was usually institutionalized.

It appears that the reasons for placement in kinship care are similar to those leading to foster care in general. Also, reasons for placement seem to vary by location.

7.5 TABLE 5
MOTIVES FOR FOSTER PARENTHOOD (N=30)

MOTIVE	NUMBER	%
Desire to render a service	30	100
Desire for companionship	14	46.7
Foster care grant	30	100
Foster parent has been living with foster child(ren) long before formal placement (would not like to part with them)	30	100
Childlessness	2	6.7
Sense of duty and obligation	18	60

No total is given because more than one motive was identified as an incentive for foster parenthood. The motivations of foster parents have been the subject of considerable interest. It is recognized that relatives motives are complex and not easily discernible. Foster mothers in this study expressed themselves in different ways about their incentive for foster parenthood. Generally, it seems foster parents have never questioned their own motives, but seem to regard it as a natural kind of action, as a result they found it difficult to elaborate on the answers they supplied.

Malaka (1982:208) has observed that "Applicants often come to a welfare agency hoping to get appreciation for their seemingly good intentions of wanting to render a service to destitute children... Thus questioned, the applicants become defensive. Defences sometimes camouflage the real motives and to a large extent, only those motives that are hopefully regarded as good, are voiced."

7.5.1 Desire for Companionship

This served to motivate 46.7% of respondents in the sample. This motive was verbalized by foster parents whose own children were either grown up, widowed or old age pensioner. Foster children were also seen as an important source of domestic help.

7.5.2 Foster Care Grant

All foster parents approached the Welfare organisation mainly because of the need for material and financial assistance. Thus the foster parent status was gained only as a

means to a financial end. It is important to note that 80% of the foster children have been living with the foster parent(s) for an average of four years before seeking financial assistance. As time passed by the foster parents became economically unable to sustain a child's growing material needs. Thus, they testified that the foster care grant motive was not an overriding factor. However, with current factors of economic stress, general poverty, inadequate housing etc. the foster care grant may be one of the main attractions.

7.5.3 Childlessness

Childlessness was seen to be operating as a motivational factor for two foster parents (6.7%). They regarded the presence of children as being essential for harmony in the marriage.

7.5.4 Sense of Duty and Obligation

This accounted for sixty percent. It was felt that an important factor in assuming the role of foster parenthood was a family background in which the rearing of a relative's child(ren) was a tradition.

7.6 SECTION C

7.6.1 ATTITUDE TOWARDS FOSTER CHILDREN AND THE BIOLOGICAL PARENTS

7.6.2 Knowledge of Family background

It is common practice in the Black community not to discriminate the foster child from other family members. In most cases the foster child is not even told that the foster parents are not his biological parents especially in cases of childlessness, death, abandonment or illegitimacy. In foster care literature there is a resounding consensus that a child should be informed about his biological parentage. However, there is no consensus on how, when or what to tell the child. As far as adoption is concerned Berger and Hodges (1982:67) state that views about when the first 'telling' should take place fall within a continuum between two opposite positions viz (i) the child should be told as early as possible (ii) or as late as possible or (iii) not at all.

Generally, interviews with the foster parents in this study revealed that they found it difficult to share information with the foster children about their true parentage. They considered it inappropriate to inform the foster children about their identity after they had accepted them into their family. They believed that disclosure would be interpreted as either discrimination or rejection and would confuse the children.

According to Pakati (1984:10) since culturally the emphasis was placed on sociological parenthood, the children's exact status was never discussed with them. The foster parents in the study seemed to be primarily concerned about the effect of telling on their relationship with the foster children, as well as losing the child's confidence. They felt that telling might not only hurt the child's feelings but would most likely create animosity.

Of the thirty foster parents, seven (23.3%) in the sample had informed the foster children in their care about their origins; fifty percent have no intention whatsoever of disclosing their foster children's identity; whilst twenty-seven percent were unsure if the foster children know or not. They indicated that they would not wish to discuss the issue with them.

Seven of those who have informed the foster children have great misgivings. According to them the bond between them became weak or was destroyed. Foster children (especially the adolescents) began treating them with little or no respect and eventually they became uncontrollable. The situation was aggravated by the fact that they were confused by their elder siblings who wanted to take them back; who according to the foster parents have no real interest in their welfare but the foster care grant. These foster parents reported that ever since they told the foster children about their family background they noticed that the foster children regarded any form of discipline as ill treatment. It is doubtful if these foster parents will perform this exercise again in view of their unpleasant experience.

Fifty percent perceived themselves as the biological parents to the foster children. They do not want to acknowledge that the foster child is not theirs and telling is seen as undermining their wish to believe that the foster child is theirs. Whilst they dread that the foster child might hear about his foster care status from a third party, there was a feeling that it is better for the foster child to learn about his past from the foster parents themselves. The social worker's or any other person's involvement in this issue appeared to threaten the foster parent's position by their seeming intrusion into family affairs. Foster parents in this category wished that the foster child need never know and shrink from the whole business of telling. They tended to be overprotective and possessive of their foster children. There was also an unconscious desire to protect the foster child from the perceived trauma of dual parentage.

7.6.3 FOSTER PARENT'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FOSTER CHILDREN

The main aim here was to ascertain the place of the foster child in the foster family.

Determining the nature of the relationship, their foster children and the foster family is difficult to measure since this relied solely on the foster parent's responses or interpretation. Responses tended to be defensive and subjective. However, a lot was learnt : foster parents' inability to understand and handle foster children's problems effectively.

All the foster children have been living with the same foster family for an average of four years before the placement was formalized, and therefore have been part of the extended family system. Generally, they are viewed as younger siblings of the foster parents. The majority of the foster children addressed their foster parents as their biological parents, (the same means of address used by other children in the family).

On the question of their relationship with the foster children, the study revealed that the majority of the foster parents (73.3%) are fond, possessive of the foster child and accept them. They described the foster child as "good natured and easy going", hence they felt that their relationship with the foster children was satisfactory. Any problems were regarded as minor and part of the growing process.

At the other extreme 26.7% of the foster parents described their current relationship with the foster children as poor. They described the foster child as difficult. Though other factors might have contributed to the foster parents current difficulties, two conditions were identified: (1) older foster children were found to have difficult acting-out behaviour which presented an unwelcome challenge to the foster parents (2) the foster children have become a vehicle of bitter jealousies and disputes and the object of a tug-of-war between the foster parents and the foster children's elder siblings or other family members.

7.6.4 Attitude of the Foster Parents towards Biological Parents

On the question of the foster parents relationship with and their attitude towards the biological parents, the study revealed that their attitude was not entirely satisfactory. Seven (23.3%) of the thirty respondents described their relationship as very good; while four (13.3%) described it as poor and for nineteen (63.33%) as non-existent. There were mixed feelings regarding coming into contact with the biological parents particularly those foster parents who regarded themselves as the natural parents. They were apprehensive of the natural parents wanting the custody of the foster child. However, all the foster parents mentioned that they would welcome the financial contribution of the natural parents.

7.6.5 Children's Relationship with Biological parents

One of the crucial issues in foster care is whether it is desirable for the biological parents to visit their children and if so, how often and under what conditions. The respondents were asked if there is contact between natural parents and their children, whether they do encourage contact; to describe its frequency and how they feel when the biological parents visit.

The responses indicated that the relationship between foster children and the biological parents cannot generally be described as satisfactory. The majority of the foster children were unvisited. Closer examination of the visiting pattern for those foster children who were reported to be visited regularly (16.6%) revealed that

visiting was either once or twice a year in spite of the fact that the parent(s) lived in the same neighbourhood.

It is clear from the evidence obtained from foster parents that visiting is generally underemphasized and that irregular and sporadic contact results in parents and children losing touch and becoming estranged from each other. The result is a strong attachment between the foster parents and the foster children which manifests itself as possessiveness on the part of the foster parents.

The foster parents, as already stated, have mixed feelings towards the biological parents. This seems to strengthen their wish to exclude entirely the biological parents from the placement. The children visited included those whose parents have been hospitalized for a long time. These biological parents visited the children whenever they could. Foster parents, also, arranged for the foster children to visit their biological parents.

7.7 SECTION D

7.7.1 PERCEPTION OF FORMAL FOSTER CARE

7.7.2 The Court Proceedings

Respondents were asked to express their views regarding how they experienced the court proceedings. The court room experience was an initial encounter for all the foster parents. According to them, the proceedings presented a situation that was confusing, threatening and mystifying, both linguistically and culturally. None of them were prepared. Consequently, they did not know what to expect.

In response to the question "Is it necessary for a court of law to place a child in foster care" (See Appendix), the foster parents in the study indicated the difficulty of answering the question. Of the total number of respondents in the study ninety percent were uncertain. The uncertain response was not motivated. Ten percent were in favour of the role of the court in placing children. They expressed the opinion that it helped secure placement, thereby preventing custody disputes.

On the question of their thoughts on the foster placement investigation, the general feeling among the foster parents in the study was that the investigation was too long and complicated - resulting in delays in providing help so desperately needed. For twenty percent, it was resented. They felt that information that they were not comfortable with had to be discussed with the social worker for the first time. In

contrast, eighty percent had no ill feelings about the investigation. Basically, all foster parents accepted both the investigation and court proceedings as a formality.

7.7.3 **TABLE 6**
OPINION ON AND NATURE OF FOSTER PARENTS
PREPARATION AND TRAINING (N-30)

	NO.	%
YES	0	0
NO	30	100

The respondents were asked whether foster parenthood warrants special preparation and training. The question was included to determine:

- i) foster parents perception of such an exercise
- ii) what benefit they got from it
- iii) nature of the preparation and training

In examining the nature of preparation and training that the foster parents received, it is immediately apparent that no specific training programme has either been developed and no foster parents have undergone any specific preparation prior to formal fostering. Therefore, none received any information and training on all the facets and implications of foster care. As a result, they were ignorant of practical matters such as legal implications of foster care; role of social worker vis-a-vis their own; rights of biological parents etc.

All the foster parents answered against the idea of preparation and training. This is consistent with their view that the fostering role is similar to the parenting role. They motivated their responses as follows:-

- fifty percent felt that they would be identified as foster parents whereas they considered themselves as natural parents to the children they foster;
- they already have experience in rearing their own children and are therefore familiar with most of the problems likely to arise;
- such training courses will not be of any use in the day-to-day care of the foster child;
- they believed that such preparation and training will only help to discriminate against the foster child from other family members.

Despite their opposition there was a strong interest among thirty-seven percent of the respondents to find out what the preparation and training entails.

A course is necessary to dispel their misconceptions.

7.7.4 Role of the Social Worker

Relatively high percentages were scored in respect of each task. There was great similarity in responses.

Foster parents assigned equal status (100%) to the advisory; problem-solving and advisory function of the social worker.

However, they testified that she performs the supervisory task more than any other role, which tends to be much more autocratic in nature. Social workers are seen as major decision-makers. This, according to respondents, does not facilitate any form of two-way communication. They feel that, the social worker is on many (if not all) occasions, looking for mistakes and that they are held accountable if something goes wrong with the placement. Forty percent, also mentioned that the social worker is not sensitive to foster parents' needs. Nevertheless, the foster parents described their relationship with the social worker as good. They see the social worker as someone who possesses some special knowledge and skill not otherwise available to foster parents.

7.7.5 Ongoing contact between foster parents and social worker

Respondents were asked whether there is a need for ongoing communication between the social worker and foster parent once the placement has been formalized.

The number of contacts the social worker has with the foster parents is a matter of concern. According to the research, the social worker makes contact mainly with the foster mothers on an irregular basis with long periods of time between visits. Contact with foster fathers and or other family members was reported to be non-existent, and no direct contact is established with the foster child either.

Relatively few foster parents (30%) were in favour of ongoing contact with the social worker. They expressed the need for regular, ongoing supporting professional service

throughout the placement period. They reported that they initiate contact and have regular contact with the social worker. The remaining seventy percent were ambivalent in their attitude towards ongoing contact, hence they don't initiate contact on their own accord (except when they review the foster care grant). On average, they have at least two contacts with the social worker per year. Basically, contact occurs in the form of home visits and office interviews.

The respondents who found the contacts useful probably had positive experiences with the social workers. The negative responses seemed to signify a lack of commitment and/or negative experience with the welfare organization.

7.7.6

TABLE 7
REPORTING OF PROBLEMS TO THE SOCIAL WORKER
(N=30)

REPORT PROBLEMS	NO.	%
YES	9	30
NO	21	70
TOTAL	30	100

On the question of whether respondents report all the problems to the social worker, data indicated that foster parents were not open about their problems. They found it hard if not impossible to reveal the true situation to the social worker. The result for

the social worker is that failure is hard to detect, with problems often identified only when there is a crisis.

According to this investigation the following factors greatly influenced the action of foster parents:-

- Only thirty percent seemed to have managed to build a relationship of trust with the social worker.
- Two-way communication does not yet exist.
- Irregular and infrequent contact between the foster parents and the social worker makes them lose contact with one another.
- Foster parents fear that they will be regarded as incapable.
- Their attitude, further indicates ignorance of the social worker's role.

According to Table 7, only thirty percent of the total sample reported that they inform the social worker about whatever difficulties they encounter; whilst the remaining seventy percent view the problems as part of the growing process and thus not of a serious nature to warrant the social workers attention. They felt that they can deal with the problems themselves. On the whole, the involvement of extended family members is preferred than the involvement of "outsiders."

The factors outlined above, result in the foster parent not making proper use of available expertise and advice from professional social workers.

7.7.7 **ROLE OF THE FOSTER PARENT**

Wolins (1963:14) found that seventy-seven percent of the foster parents "compared themselves to the child's own parents or adoptive parents". Subsequent research on this has produced this line of thought. This investigation, too, has shown similar results.

Foster parents were asked to choose a role that best described their role as foster parents. On average each chose a maximum of two duties. Because of this overlap in the duties selected, no total is given. All the respondents chose upbringing and guidance to be of equal value (100%). This includes meeting all the foster child's material, physical and emotional needs. Of equal importance is to ensure that accepted modes of behaviour and values are transmitted to the child. Also, the purpose is to ensure that the foster child moves through the stages of childhood development towards ever-increasing independence. Protection and discipline accounted for ninety and eighty percent respectively.

It is evident that whatever their role, respondents saw their current function as continuing the biological parental duties towards the foster child. The choice of roles indicated that the foster parents saw themselves as playing a permanent role in the lives of the children in care (Malaka, 1983:251).

Two factors seem to influence the foster parents' perception of their role.

- The foster child's circumstances or reason (s) for placement.
- The length of time for which they had been foster parents.

An additional role mentioned by sixty percent of the respondents focused on foster child-foster parent relationship. This, considered as a fundamental source of stress at times, involves the expectation of relating in a warm, open and loving way.

7.7.8 FOSTER CARE EXPERIENCE AND SUGGESTIONS

Seventeen respondents (56.6%) have no intention of taking foster children in their care.

They gave the following reasons in support of their statements:

- Grandparents find the task of looking after young children too demanding and challenging.
- Problems with the placement: custody disputes, delinquent behaviour and/or difficult acting-out behaviour presented an unwelcome challenge.
- The youngest foster mother in the study would like to start a family without the additional responsibility of foster children.

Only 43,3 percent testified that they derive satisfaction from rearing and looking after the foster children.

The suggestion reiterated by all the foster parents is that the foster care grant rates are low and do not cover the costs. They would like to see an increase in the foster care grant. No reference was made for services by the social worker.

The next chapter deals with findings and conclusions, makes several recommendations and identifies possible future research areas.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is devoted to the conclusions and recommendations that stem from this investigation.

8.2 RESTATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of this study was to gain knowledge and to analyze the facts that pertain to fostering in the black community. This was achieved by a literature review, interviewing the foster parents and studying case records. More specifically the objectives of the study were:

- To establish foster parents' perceptions and experiences of formal foster care.
- To obtain information with regard to the nature and practice of foster care in the black community.
- To identify from the literature the main trends and tendencies as far as the practice of foster care is concerned, with a view to evaluate the present mode of intervention, and,
- To recommend practices by which the present system of foster care can be adjusted to make it more relevant to the needs of the black community and possibly formulate questions for future research.

8.3 GENERAL

8.3.1 LITERATURE ON RELATED FOSTER CARE

There is a dearth of indigenous published literature relating to kinship care worldwide - especially in South Africa. An urgent need exists to develop this specialised area of foster care practice. This has serious implications for the rendering of effective foster care in the black community.

Much of what has been written in this area draws largely on the experiences of other countries, particularly the United States of America and Britain. These countries have always taken the lead in the development of foster care as a child welfare service. The literature reviewed has helped in identifying foster care trends as well as understanding the problems in the foster care system. What is also apparent is that the principles, philosophy knowledge base underlying the foster care service, and to some extent the procedures, have universal applicability.

8.4 MAIN FINDINGS

8.4.1 REASONS FOR PLACEMENT

The reasons that led to the need for placement in this study were found to occur in combination in the same family. However, an attempt was made to identify the reason that seemed central.

It was observed that a large number of children entered foster care as a result of abandonment, desertion or neglect. These constituted 40,5% of the total sample. The findings indicate that the main reason for placement appear to be in the area of parental malfunctioning and pathological conditions present in the parents such as continuing poverty exacerbated by unemployment or low income, lack of or insufficient informal support networks and or the unavailability of social services early enough is believed to have had an enormous effect on the breakdown of families.

The Fort Beaufort community is described as a community with numerous social problems. These range (to mention a few) from alcoholism, high crime and unemployment rate, lack of parental control resulting in delinquent behaviour, teenage pregnancy and poor infrastructure. Unemployment appears to be a major factor with resultant lack of food, shelter, clothing etc. The majority of children in this community are believed to be growing up under conditions which hinder their optimum development. Their problems are a reflection of conditions within their neighbourhood and community in which they live. For many of the children in the study there is destructive or poorly functioning family life due to poverty.

8.4.2 Motivation for foster parenthood

Research into foster parent motives is not new. There is general agreement in foster care literature that foster parent motives are complex and not easily discernible.

All the respondents suggested that the primary motive was altruistic, motivated primarily by their concern for the children's welfare. From the study it was clear that Kinship ties are valued and in most occasions still adhered to. Caring for the foster children was perceived as a sense of duty and obligation especially to the immediate family members i.e. 60% of the respondents. They seemed to be influenced mainly by the traditional value system which emphasizes blood ties. 6.7% regarded the children as being essential for family stability especially the marriage.

Whilst all the foster parents approached the welfare agency mainly for financial reasons, their responses suggested that this was regarded as a means of helping them to carry out their tasks effectively. Thus, although much has been written in social work literature about the legitimacy of earning income, this has not been recognized by the foster parents themselves. However, with current factors of economic stress, general poverty etc. it is reasonable to assume that the foster care grant may be the main attraction.

Sound motives for foster care are desired. It is necessary that a systematic attempt be made to evaluate them and predict their outcome. Attention, therefore needs to be given to the screening process which focuses on the broader aspects of the foster parent's life situation and the needs of the child in question.

8.4.3 PREPARATION AND TRAINING FOR FOSTER PARENTHOOD

The intricate nature of foster care as a form of substitute care requires that foster parents be adequately prepared and trained in order to qualify them for the service. From the literature reviewed it is evident that training and educational programmes have not as yet been significantly developed in South Africa. Those conducted are neither universally available nor regularly conducted.

None of the foster parents in the study received any preparation and training for their role. Although the majority of the foster parents testified that there is no need for preparation and training, interviews gave the impression that they have poor knowledge and are ignorant about the many facets of foster care. It is apparent that the quality of foster care could be improved through training and preparation.

The first step in preparing them for their new role is to educate them about foster care in general. The content would need to include goals and objectives of foster family services, role responsibilities, agency policy and procedure, legal ramifications of foster care. For the purposes of this study, it seems necessary that the preparation and training, as a starting point, focus on those aspects likely to promote foster parent involvement and cooperation, since these were found to be lacking.

8.4.4 Support and monitoring of placements

The support and monitoring of placements in this study was found to be low. Of the respondents in this study only twenty percent have regular contact with the social worker or at least twice a quarter. The rest have contact at least twice a year.

The degree of regular monitoring and ongoing support that should be provided to children in related foster care and their families is a subject of much debate. The Task Force on Permanency Planning (1990) advocates that the approach to foster children in kinship care should be the same for all foster children. The other view is that kinship care is a better arrangement and less agency involvement is needed. The Guide to Fostering Practice, (1976:138) aptly describes the position of relatives when they become official foster parents. Here mention is made that children placed with relatives may have more need to talk about their parents and the reasons for the placements than those in unrelated foster care.

The stresses of fostering by relatives are considerable. There may be tensions and jealousies between the child's parents and the foster parents and or the network of relatives. In order to overcome this and many other problems, it is thus advocated that children in kinship care should receive as much attention, support and monitoring as children in non-related placement.

8.4.5 Foster parent - Social Worker relationship

The research done did not indicate any active involvement of the foster parents during the foster care process. Factors that were identified to influence this include:

- The majority of the foster parents do not appear to have managed to build a relationship of trust with the social worker.
- The social worker is seen as a major decision maker with the result that two-way communication does not exist.
- Also, the investigation revealed that contact between the social worker and the foster parents, is irregular, making them lose contact with one another.

The twice yearly visits are inadequate in spite of the foster parents stating that benefit was derived from these visits. It has also been noted that contact diminished gradually after the placement was formalised. Also, foster parents seem to relate the need for contact only to reporting about child's academic performance and review of the foster care grant. This seems to indicate that these foster parents have a limited view of their role within the foster care system and have poor knowledge of the range of services the social worker can provide.

The relative neglect of the foster parents has implications for practice. This might rob the social worker of the opportunity to make a realistic appraisal of the total foster care situation. An ongoing working relationship allows the foster parents to become involved in service planning and provision.

8.4.6 Revelation of foster care status

There is a selective openness about foster care on the part of the foster parents in the study. The findings partly suggest a lack of confidence in the foster parents ability to communicate effectively about foster care to the children. More important, however, reticence in regard to revelation of child's background seems to arise from the foster parents' unresolved feelings associated with the reasons for placement, cultural factors and fears regarding the disintegration of their relationship with the foster children.

There was general consensus that telling might hurt the child's feelings and probably create animosity. For the majority of the foster parents acknowledging the existence of the "other" parent in the child's life (especially since the foster parents regarded themselves as the biological parents) was also a source of strain. Against this background the majority of the foster parents found it difficult and inappropriate to share information with the foster child about his status.

Informing the child about his true parentage is regarded as an important prescription in social work literature. Data from this study indicates that the social worker's involvement in this issue is not welcome. How the African family dealt with this issue has been discussed in Chapter Two. This situation calls for sensitivity and considerable professional skill in the social worker concerned.

8.4.7 The need for permanency planning

Foster care whilst designed primarily to be a temporary arrangement has come under criticism for its failure to deal adequately with the future of many children.

The Maas and Engler study (1959) revealed that more than half of the foster children were likely to remain to their maturity in foster care. Their findings made clear that something was seriously remiss in the way the foster care system was working.

In this study few, if any, foster children were expected to return to their parents. As a result the foster parents were committed to their long-term care. Responses indicated that many of the children have become well ensconced in the foster home and have adapted to the foster parent as the 'psychological parent'. Writers such as Fanshell and Shinn (1978) have noted that the length of time in the foster home is associated with the foster parent becoming the 'psychological' parent. It can, thus, be concluded that since the majority of the foster children have been in the same setting for several years, coupled with the failure of the natural parents to visit, it seems most likely for the foster children to have a strong attachment to their foster parents.

The entire programme needs to be geared at reaching as early as possible more clarity on the future permanent care of the child (Guide to Foster care Practice in South Africa, 1987:148). Several options are available. For the children in this study, planned long-term foster care and permanent foster care seem appropriate.

8.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.5.1 COMMUNITY EDUCATION ABOUT FORMAL FOSTER CARE

Formal foster care as practised among African people is a relatively new concept. As indicated by the findings of the present study the foster parents are ignorant about the many facets of foster care. The practice conflicts to a large extent with the views of the wider community. Education aimed at creating a positive attitude towards legal foster care is essential. Also community education programmes designed to promote family life, as well as developing the public's awareness about the needs of foster - and other destitute children would improve the quality of service.

8.5.2 MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

A major resource in a foster care service is that of manpower. Welfare organisations often have difficulty in maintaining a substantial pool of foster parents. Foster parents are important service providers to the system of foster care. There is a need to educate and sensitize them to the practical issues of foster care. The existing gap in their knowledge impinges on the effective provision of services.

At the moment, foster parents do not receive sufficient information and training on all the facets and implications of foster care. Foster parent education and training programs are neither universally available nor regularly conducted. They vary in content and methods, purposes and focus, levels of participation and degree of success.

The need for training according to the Committee of Inquiry into the Foster Care of Children (1990:45) falls into three categories, namely:

- training for professional foster parents;
- training for foster parents that is initially combined with selection and then presented on an ongoing basis; and
- provision of information and practical assistance to serving foster parents.

Support and self-help groups for foster parents are essential. They can help:

- increase knowledge and skill;
- offer foster parents an opportunity to discuss problems of mutual concern;
- increase foster parent professionalization etc.

However, the influence of these groups has not been studied and reported systematically.

The intricate nature of formal foster care requires that social workers be adequately trained and prepared for their work. Thorough training, in-service and staff development programmes are essential. Continuous, meaningful training can impact on every aspect of foster care service.

In order to be effective in the delivery of foster care services, adequate levels of manpower are needed to carry out this task. A common problem is that of large case loads which create an impediment to effective service delivery, and that case-load size

inhibits social workers from performing their assigned tasks. Against this shortage, the use of para-professional aides needs to be investigated.

8.5.3 PREVENTIVE SERVICES

A need exists to prevent unnecessary removal of children from parental care. This can be achieved by (1) provision of services likely to promote and strengthen family life particularly parenting capacities, (2) identifying family at-risk. Available evidence suggest that preventive services do not receive sufficient attention and that children are too readily removed from the care of their parents.

In this study it was observed that by the time contact was established with the agency family disintegration had already taken place with the result that remedial efforts were impossible.

8.5.4 THE FOSTER CHILD

Better communication with children in foster care is recommended. Existing literature points to a lack of this (Fanshel & Shinn, 1978). Also, in this study it was found that foster care work is restricted only to the foster mother with the foster child in the background. Direct consultation and regular contact with the foster child is recommended.

8.5.5 RESEARCH ON RELATED FORMAL FOSTER CARE

The field of related foster care placement has to a large extent been neglected. It has received less attention from researchers and writers alike, with the result that little empirical information about its dynamics exist. It is recommended that research into the area of related foster care be stimulated.

8.6 POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH

- The study limited itself to the study of formal placements in the Black community. National statistics on informal placements do not exist, although it is well known that unofficial placements with relatives is a frequent practice. Research in this area would shed light into the nature of these placements.

- There have been few systematic inquiries into children's own perception of foster care, amid the publicity. Also, studies to evaluate the outcome of placement have been less frequent.

- Similarly, foster fathers and the foster family are generally neglected in both foster care practice and research. Investigation into the foster father's role and family is indispensable.

- Future research should consider using more qualitative approaches that examine caseworkers' views on these arrangements as opposed to the use of unrelated foster care arrangements.
- The placement of children with people who are not blood relatives has not received sufficient attention either. According to Malaka (1982) this is a new venture among South African blacks and indicates a shift from Kinship care.
- Until about three years ago South African law stated that children could be fostered only by parents of the same race. This was amended to require that only the religion and culture of prospective parents be taken into account. Since then about fifty children countrywide have been fostered or adopted across racial and ethnic lines (Coetzee, 1993:20).

According to Coetzee (1993:21) black groups in America and England are becoming increasingly concerned about the number of black children being adopted by Whites. She argues that there have been cases of black children being taken away from their white foster parents and placed with blacks. Referring to inter-racial adoptions Joubert (1993:737-738) states that the American experience shows that racial or cultural difference are realities which must be taken into account, but that assumptions and fears can be illusory and must not be taken into account merely because they exist, unless they manifest themselves as realities in a particular case.

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APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE

Response Number

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1 2

A. PERSONAL PARTICULARS OF THE FOSTER PARENTS

1. Age of foster parents:

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Age	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51+
Foster Mother						
Foster Father						

3
4

2. Marital Status:

1	2	3	4	5
Married	Single	Widowed	Divorced	Separated

--

5

3. Educational Status:

		Foster Mother	Foster Father
1	No Schooling/Standard passed		
2	Lower Primary Education		
3	Higher Primary Education		
4	High School Education		
5	Post Matric		

--

6

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7

4. Occupational Status:

		Foster Mother	Foster Father
1	Unskilled Manual Worker		
2	Semi-Skilled		
3	Small Business Woman/Man		
4	Professional Worker		
5	Pensioner		

 8

 9

5. Economic Details

(a) Please state salary or income per month:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0-50	51-100	101-150	151-200	201-250	251-300	+300

 10

(b) Any additional source of income?

1	2
YES	NO

 11

(c) How much?

1	2	3	4	5
0-25	26-50	51-75	76-100	+101

 12

6. Family Composition

(a) Number of own children currently residing with you.

1	2	3	4	5	6
0	1	2	3	4	+5

 13

(b) Other residents in the household:

1	2	3	4	5	6
0	1	2	3	4	+5

 14

B. BACKGROUND HISTORY OF FOSTER CHILD/REN

1. Relationship with the foster children:

Grandmother/Grandfather
Brother/Sister
Aunt/Uncle
Other (specify)

	15
--	----

	16
--	----

2. What is/are the reason/s that had resulted in the children being placed in formal foster care?

--	--

17 18

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3. Was/Were the child/ren informally placed with the family?

19 20

1 2

YES	NO
-----	----

	21
--	----

If yes, what was the duration of stay with the foster family before formal placement, if at all?

1	2	3	4	5
0-1 Year	2-3	4-5	6-7	+8

	22
--	----

4. What was/were your reason (s) for agreeing to the foster placement?

--	--

23 24

5. What are your expectations for the natural parents?

Make contact regularly
Send money
Visit
Write letters
Take children back
Other (specify)

	25
	26
	27
	28
	29
	30

C. Attitude Towards Foster Child(ren) and Natural Parents

1. Is the foster child aware that s/he is not living with his/her natural parents?
Motive.

1	2
YES	NO

	31
32	33

2. If the foster child/ren is/are aware that s/he is not living with his/her natural parents, does s/he ever ask why s/he is living with you and not with own parents?

1	2
YES	NO

	34
--	----

3. Who explained the reason for the placement to the child?

35	36

4. If the foster child/ren talk(s) about his/her own parents how do you feel?
 Motivate answer.

1	Uncomfortable and ignore child
2	Angry
3	Guilty
4	Ambivalent
5	Good
6	Other (specify)

 37

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

38 39

5. What is the nature of your relationship with the foster child(ren)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Excellent	Very Good	Good	Neutral	Bad	Very Bad	Non-existent

 40

6. Is the foster child accepted by the rest of the foster family?

1	2
YES	NO

 41

7. What kind of relationship do you have with the natural parents?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Excellent	Very Good	Good	Neutral	Bad	Very Bad	Non-existent

 42

8. How do you feel (mostly) when natural parents visit their child(ren)? Motivate answer.

Angry
Jealous
Ambivalent
Guilty
Good/Glad
Other (Specify)

	43
--	----

44	45

9. If the foster child/ren has/have contact with the natural parents, describe frequency.

--	--

46 47

10. Do you encourage contact? Motivate answer.

1	2
YES	NO

	48
--	----

--	--

49 50.

D. Perceptions about formal foster care

1. Is it necessary for a court of law to place the child in foster care? Motivate answer.

1	2	3
YES	NO	UNSURE

	51
--	----

--	--

52 53

2. How did you experience the court proceedings. Please explain.

Confusing
Unpleasant
Threatening
Other (specify)

<input type="checkbox"/>	54
<input type="checkbox"/>	55
<input type="checkbox"/>	56
<input type="checkbox"/>	57

3. Please describe your thoughts on the foster placement investigation?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

58 59

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

60 61

4. Should foster parents be prepared for their role? Motivate

1	2
YES	NO

<input type="checkbox"/>	62
--------------------------	----

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

63 64

5. Were you prepared and trained for the role of foster parent?

1	2
YES	NO

<input type="checkbox"/>	65
--------------------------	----

If yes, state nature of preparation:

1	Preservice training
2	Inservice Foster Parent Training
3	Interviews
4	Discussions
5	Other (specify)

<input type="checkbox"/>	66
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6. Which of the following aspects did the preparation cover?

1	Legal implications of foster care
2	Foster parent's status and role
3	Foster care worker's role
4	The need for reconstruction services
5	The importance of supervision services
6	The handling of the foster care grant
7	Other (specify)

67

7. Did you want other aspects to be covered as well?

1	2
YES	NO

68

8. To what extent was training and preparation helpful?
Motive answer.

69

9. How would you describe the role of social worker? Motivate answer.

70 71

1	Advisor
2	Problem solver
3	Educator
4	Supervisor
5	Consultant
6	Intruder
7	Other (specify)

72

73 74

10. Which of the following best describes your relationship with the social worker?
 Motivate answer.

1	The social worker is a supervisor of foster parents
2	The social worker is an advisor to foster parents
3	The social worker is a friend of foster parents
4	The social worker is an educator

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75

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76 77

11. Is there a need for ongoing communication between social worker and foster parent once the placement has been formalised?

1	2
YES	NO

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78

If yes, how often should the contact take place (per year)?

--	--

79 80

What should the reason(s) of this contact be?

--	--

1 2

Who should initiate this contact? Motivate answer.

Foster parent
Social worker
Foster child
Natural parents
Family members
Other (specify)

3

4

6

7

8

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9 10

12. Are there areas you find difficult to discuss with the social worker? Motivate answer.

1	2
YES	NO

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11

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12 13

13. Do you report all the problems that you experience to the social worker? Motivate answer.

1	2
YES	NO

14

15 16

If no, how do you handle these problems?

17 18

14. How would you describe your major role as a foster parent? Motivate answer.

Discipline
Upbringing
Guidance
Protection
Other (specify)

19

20

21

22

23

24 25

15. Now that you have an experience as a foster parent, if asked to do it again would you do it? Motivate answer.

1	2
YES	NO

26

27 28

16. Do you have any suggestions with regard to the practice of foster care? Motivate answer.

1	2
YES	NO

29

30 31