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THE INDEPENDENT LIFE SKILLS PREPARATION PROJECT: A MODEL FOR
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SPECIALIZED FOSTER PARENT TRAINING
PROGRAM

City University of New York

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A MODEL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
SPECIALIZED FOSTER PARENT TRAINING PROGRAM

by

ALMA JACKSON CARTEN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Social Welfare in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Social
Welfare, The City University of New York.

1986

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Social Welfare.

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date

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Abstract

THE INDEPENDENT LIFE SKILLS PREPARATION PROJECT
A MODEL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
SPECIALIZED FOSTER PARENT TRAINING PROGRAM

by

ALMA J. CARTEN

Adviser: Professor Simon Slavin

Research on the community adjustment of youth who have been discharged from the foster care system suggests that many of them are entering into a growing population of homeless young adults. These findings emphasize their lack of preparedness for independent living and highlights the need to organize foster care services with a continuing array of programs.

The Independent Life Skills Preparation Project was developed as a demonstration foster parent training program to address the gap in services to this client group. A model is presented for the use of planned group interventions that are organized as independent life skills preparation programs and offered as pre-discharge services to foster adolescents. The curriculum supports those skills that reduce placement disruption and assists the adult caretaker to teach the adolescent the skills that will be needed in independence. The conceptual framework of the project was based on the premise that the family performs the function of preparing children for independence. Three assumptions of the project design acknowledged the ethnicity of the families making use of services, the strengths of the black foster family system and the need to organize foster care services in a continuum of care. The innovative aspect of ILSPP was in its conceptualization of the placement model and

the role of the foster parent.

Twenty foster parents and adolescents participated in two training programs that differed in instructional format and group composition. The Behavior Management program was attended only by the foster parents and a didactic instructional format was emphasized. The Communication Interaction Program was attended by both foster parents and adolescents with emphasis on a process format. A comparative research design was used to assess the relative effectiveness of the two training strategies and their relationship to placement stability and fostering skill. The evaluation of the program did not reveal a difference in the mean scores of the foster parents, however, there were observed differences in the effects of the training. These differences and the implication that the variables of group composition and instructional format have for the design of independent living programs are discussed.

Acknowledgements

The Independent Life Skills Preparation Project could not have been completed without the participation of many individuals and organizations or the encouragement of colleagues, friends and family. I express my appreciation and gratitude to each of them.

Rev. James A. Gusweller, Executive Director of the Episcopal Mission Society, the sponsoring agency of the project, embraced it from the onset and extended the resources of the agency to ensure its successful implementation. A very special thanks to him and the staff of the Society, particularly Steven Jones, Jean Stenard, Robin Maitland and Renee Bowden.

Child welfare has evolved to become more complex perhaps than any other field of social work practice. I was, therefore, fortunate to have as members of my Dissertation Committee three persons who were knowledgeable and insightful about the issues of the child welfare service delivery system. They gave the kind of guidance and direction that enabled me to produce a final product that I feel certain I will look back upon with pride in future years. Dr. Simon Slavin, Committee Chairperson, inherited me as an advisee when I enrolled in the doctoral program in 1982. It was a good match and he has been encouraging, supportive and challenging as an adviser and mentor. Dr. Michael Smith I can thank for assisting me to assume a greater comfort in the role of researcher. I was most fortunate to have as a non-doctoral faculty Committee member, Dr. James R. Dumpson. He has provided leadership to the social welfare community for many years and has long been an advocate for the rights of children and reform of the foster care system. My gratitude goes to each for giving of themselves in ways that was

supportive to my continuing professional development.

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Certainly the project could not have been successful without the foster parents. I have learned much from foster parents over the years and was uplifted by the caring and commitment that this group gave to the work that we undertook together. A very special thanks also to the agencies that they represented, which included Harlem Dowling, Edwin Gould, Louise Wise, Brookwood, Episcopal Mission Society and Special Services for Children.

I am often awed by the optimism with which the youth that I have come to know in my work in foster care approach life--in spite of it all. They give affirmation to the basic social work belief in the individual's inherent capacity for positive growth and change. My deep gratitude goes to the youth who participated in the project. Numbered among this group is Kenny, who was a young man that I worked with for a number of years before and after his discharge from foster care. It was he who sensitized me to the needs of older adolescents in foster care.

Finally, a very special thanks to my family. My mother and my sister Pamela who were steadfast in their availability and encouragement. My son Robby, perhaps more than any other, has consistently endured and tolerated me over the years that it has taken to complete the program and in that process has grown to become my closest friend and confidante.

I dedicate the work to my father. He valued family life, perseverance in the pursuit of goals, and education above all else. It would have pleased him that I can now number among my accomplishments the earning of the Doctor of Social Welfare degree and that the subject of the dissertation was family life.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Foster care is but one form of care that has been developed within the field of child welfare to meet the needs of dependent and neglected children. Foster care services, as initially designed, were intended to provide a short term solution to family problems and were viewed as the most desirable alternative for those children whose parents were temporarily unable to provide suitable standards of care for them.

To the contrary, these services have evolved to represent long term, impermanent care for many children (Maas and Engler, 1959), who seldom achieve reunification with their families of origin after placement. It has become characteristic for these children to age out of the system and they are subsequently discharged in their own responsibility to independent community living.

The detrimental effects that foster care has had on the well being of many families and children has been extensively documented in the research and practice literature. The system has not accommodated itself to the changing needs of the largest number of families making use of foster care services, and there is a general consensus that basic reforms are needed that would result in systemic changes.

Foster care, as one aspect of what should be a range of child welfare services, has not adequately addressed the needs of the general population of dependent children. However, black children have been particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of policy and service developments that have occurred in absence of a sensitivity to their unique circumstances (Billingsley and Giovannoni, 1972).

Over time foster care services have come to be viewed as the least desirable alternative for dependent children, and since the 1950s the system has been the subject of critical examination. This re-appraisal of foster care services did result in the passage of the Federal Adoptions and Assistance Child Welfare Reform Act of 1980 (PL 96-272) and the New York State Child Welfare Reform Act of 1979. The positive effects of this legislation has been observed, as they have supported initiatives that encouraged the development of preventive, reunification and permanency planning services for troubled families.

There are, however, large numbers of children who are currently under care who will not benefit from these new thrusts in the direction of child welfare services. The older adolescent who is entering in the system for the first time and the adolescent who has grown up in care represent groups that will benefit the least.

Currently there are approximately 19,000 children living in foster care arrangements in New York City. Of this number 11,451 (60.3%) are black and 48.8% are of adolescent years. Special Services for Children (SSC), the city agency with responsibility for all children in foster care, projects that approximately 1,700 of these children will be discharged to independent living in Fiscal Year 1986 (Unpublished statistics, SSC, Dec., 1985).

Adolescents in foster care, as all youth approaching adult status, are faced with the developmental tasks of identity consolidation, achieving separation and autonomy from family ties and with making choices and decisions related to future career and vocational goals. Within a complex social environment it is a life transition that has become increasingly difficult for all youth to negotiate, and made all

the more difficult for this group because of their foster care and minority group status.

Adolescents in foster care have not had benefit of a permanent family structure to provide consistent experiences that incrementally prepare them for self reliance. Upon reaching their majority they often lack the necessary skills, emotional readiness and support family networks that would ease this transition and better ensure successful functioning as emancipated adults.

Further exacerbating this is the high risk for disruption nature of adolescent placements, and a traditional conceptualization of the role of the foster parent as parent substitute with principle tasks of nurturing and encouraging a feeling of belonging to the family unit. Resultantly, additional role transition stress is imposed, and the adolescent is placed in a paradoxical situation as he is called upon to make attachments to what often is a series of families and parental figures.

In recognition of the complexity of the fostering experience, training for foster parents has become a requirement of the largest number of agencies providing foster care services. However, these programs have not sufficiently addressed the issue of ethnicity as it relates to service delivery to this client population. Nor have they addressed the emotional and educational needs of foster parents in ways that would enable them to tolerate the erratic behavioral expressions of the foster adolescent while simultaneously promoting the development of those skills needed for self reliance and independence.

The problem area that this project addresses is that of family disruption and the provision of specialized foster care services to the black adolescent who is approaching independence. The purpose of the

project is to present a strategy for the development of an ethnic sensitive foster parenting program. The project was designed to capitalize on the strengths of the black foster family system and support foster parent skill development in those areas that would facilitate placement stability and enhance the adolescent's ability to function successfully in independent living.

Rationale

The state took on an enormous task when it assumed the role of "parents patrie" with dependent and neglected children as did foster parents who accepted the delegated responsibility for the day to day care and nurturing of "somebody else's child." This partnership between the state, its administrative agents and private citizens has evolved into a complex set of systems and subsystems. Concerned as it is with the basic unit of the society and with the cherished relationship that exists between parent and child, it is a liaison that has historically been fraught with inconsistencies, value conflicts and dilemmas.

Historical patterns in the development of services have a continuing influence on contemporary child welfare practices and policies. These patterns in service development along with societal value and attitudinal changes have interacted as contributing factors that are partially responsible for the creation of profound changes in the demographic profile of the child welfare population and for the emergence of a "new majority" of the child welfare scene. This "new majority", which is also representative of one of the fastest growing groups of children who will be in need of services in the near future, is comprised of the older, black adolescent who often manifests serious physical, emotional, educational or behavioral problems.

Foster care has remained a social service for poor, minority families. Placements become necessary primarily as a result of the lack of financial resources, adequate housing and support social services. These families often do not receive appropriate preventive services or services that would support reunification.

Consequently, these are children who often have grown up in care, experienced foster care drift and multiple placements. Few enjoy hope of reunification with their families of origin. Permanent foster care has become the reality for the largest number of this population. Most are discharged from the child welfare system to an independent living arrangement upon reaching an age of majority.

Because it is a group that often lacks the economic and interpersonal skills necessary for successful independent functioning, there is a beginning trend of movement into the ranks of a new population of homeless young adults. Youngsters who were discharged from foster care without skills to find a job, resources to find an apartment or extended family networks to call upon by some estimates comprise more than one quarter of the homeless young people appearing in city shelters. Some youngsters report that they were discharged to pursue a shelter living arrangement with the sanction of their former child care agency (New York Times, July 19, 1985).

Additional concern is found in the fact that the number of teenage pregnancies within the black community has been growing. Within this group are youngsters who are already within the child welfare system. Their unique psychological predisposition that has been impacted upon by their own experiences with family disorganization, abandonment and loss, compel them to create what they perceive will be a nurturing family unit

of their own. They have not, however, had the kind of prerequisite experiences that would enable them to function adequately in the parental role.

In addition to the health risks encountered by the young mother, their children have a high mortality rate and if they survive have more medical problems and experience educational and social problems in later life. Teenage parents are more likely to live below the poverty level, less likely to complete high school and more likely to become dependent upon welfare. They become high risk as abusing parents, recreating a cycle of despair, a new population that will be in need of child welfare services and additional demands on available resources.

Shaffer and Caten (1984), using a direct interview methodology when researching homeless and runaway youth making use of shelters in New York City, found that 50% of the sample had been in foster care. Those youth with foster care placement as a part of their history demonstrated a greater degree of disturbance on all of the behavioral measures used than did those who had no foster care experience. Thirty-four percent of the girls in the study had been pregnant, and twenty-two percent were pregnant at the time they were interviewed. The study further noted the youngsters' lack of skills in self management and self support.

Crystal and Goldstein (1984) report similar findings in their study of the Homeless in New York City shelters. 348 of the men and women who entered shelters between November, 1982 and December, 1982 had spent most of their childhoods in foster care or similar institutions from which they were most likely discharged to independent living.

The Executive Director of the New York City Youth Bureau, in presenting a profile of homeless young persons suggests that is a

youngster who is "typically an ethnic minority from the inner city, out-of-school, unemployed with few if any personal ties or ongoing family supports. While on the brink of adulthood this youth is ill prepared to function as a responsible adult" (Jones, 1984, p. 14).

The reality that is presented by the demographics of the current child welfare population, along with projections that can be made about the characteristics of children who will be in need of services suggest developing trends that should effect patterns of service delivery. A primary concern should be that of providing the kind of experiences to this group that will enhance their ability to function successfully as emancipated adults.

The idea for the project evolved from the writer's five year experience as foster parent trainer with the Parent Therapist Program, which operates under the auspices of the Episcopal Mission Society of New York. The program provides comprehensive care and therapeutic placement to sixty "hard to place" adolescents who are between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one years.

Several themes of incongruence emerged from the work with the foster parents and youngsters in the program that shaped the design of the project. Foremost among these were that the youngsters were more often called upon in their interpersonal relationships with foster families to struggle with issues that were related to attachment as opposed to those of independence and autonomy. The latter being congruent with developmental tasks of their age group. Closely related to this, which seemed to mitigate against a realistic integration of the approaching demands of independent living, was the receiving of an unencumbered monthly allowance that encouraged a psychological dependency since this

allowance and the anticipated discharge grant was perceived of as a right and an entitlement.

Secondly, the foster parents' view of their role was that of parent substitute, which carried the task of providing all of those functions inherent within the traditional parent child relationship. Much effort was directed towards reteaching the youngster behavior that was suitable for continued living within a family system. This role conception conflicted with the youngster's perception of what the relationship should be and with the major task at hand--that of teaching, in a relatively short period of time, the necessary skills that would support successful functioning in independent living. Additionally, because relationships with natural parents and other extended family members were often troublesome and stress laden, foster parents were inclined to discourage the maintenance of these relationships--further isolating and estranging the youngster from potential supports that might be called upon in independent living.

A third theme, and perhaps the most important, was the continuing disagreement between the trainer and foster parents as to what the training content should be. The trainer emphasized traditional theories and concepts that were related to adolescent development and foster care services. The foster parent group, although good naturedly, denigrated this as impractical "book learning". They emphasized an intuitive approach that was supported by life experiences of rearing their own children in an urban environment. Although not clearly articulated by the foster parents, the parenting style adopted was clearly influenced by cultural, environmental and socio-economic factors.

Well conceived social programs often fall short of attaining desired

goals and objectives because the practices and procedures that evolve are informed by invalid theories and false assumptions about the client group. The presence of these identified strains and themes of incongruence were interpreted as possible indicators of inadequate theories that underlay the original program design. These themes provided a guideline for reframing the major assumptions of the project.

Conceptual Framework and Underlying Assumptions

The basic premise of the project is that the family unit is central to the life of every society and performs the essential function of educating and preparing children for independent living. The following assumptions were derived from this central premise and formed the conceptual framework of the project: (1) that the black foster family is a unique system of strength, (2) that services that are developed for families should reflect the ethnic identification of the groups making use of these services and (3) that foster care services should be organized in a continuum of care.

The ecological perspective as presented by Germaine and Gitterman (1980), gives recognition to the influences that transaction with the larger systems of the society have on the lives of individuals, families and groups as they strive to achieve an adaptive fit with their environments. This perspective further acknowledges the coping and adaptive abilities of people, and identifies the social purpose of social work and the helping process as that of promoting those kinds of transactions that will enhance and maximize opportunities for growth and change.

Billingsley (1968) and Chestang (1978) incorporate this systems orientation in their discussions of the black family and child welfare

policy formulation. Both suggest that services to families and children should be developed from an ethnic sensitive perspective which gives recognition to the environmental and social context that black families function within and the adaptive patterns that have emerged in response to these influences that serve positive functions.

The first assumption is derived from these concepts and takes a view of the black foster family as a unique system of strength that is particularly well suited to provide the kind of educational and socialization experiences to the black foster adolescent that will facilitate his transition to independent community living.

Supporting this, the second assumption affirms the importance of incorporating a sensitivity to ethnic and cultural differences of families in the development of child welfare policies and programs. Individual families develop interactional patterns, myths, traditions and norms that are idiosyncratic as well as those that identify them to their specific cultural and ethnic group and those that identify them with the general culture of American families. Services that are developed for families and children should reflect a responsiveness to this multi-level identification.

Dr. Ira Reed, an official of the National Urban League, in a presentation to the 1930 White House Conference on Children, urged that increasing opportunities be provided for blacks to participate in the development of child welfare services as lay and professional workers (Billingsley and Giovannoni, 1972, p. 85). This is a recommendation that has remained largely unacted upon although it has been echoed over the years. Contemporary writers in the field have continued to advocate for a minority presence in child welfare policy development. Participation

at the policy, management and direct service levels would facilitate service development along those lines that reflect a sensitivity to the cultural influences that effect family life.

Foster parents have always been the primary, "on the line" providers in foster care agencies. However, they have traditionally held a quasi staff/client relationship to their agencies of affiliations and frequently have been viewed as targets of treatment and change. Black foster parents have been particularly vulnerable to this orientation to service delivery since many do bring to the fostering relationship life survival concerns for which they may need assistance. However, this should not preclude the reality that these foster parents also carry insights that are derived from the black experience that presumes the dual perspective as explicated by Chestang (1973) and Norton (1978). Their intimacy of experiences in negotiating the demands of two worlds and of parenting own children for successful functioning in these worlds has facilitated the development of parenting skills that may be transferred to the fostering experience. Additional supports are provided to the adolescent whose transition to independence is made all the more complicated by his minority group and foster care status.

The second assumption validates the contribution that foster parents can make as service providers and in the development of ethnic sensitive foster care services and practices because of their on-the-job training, life experience and racial identification.

Preventive services that are intended to preserve the biological family unit should be viewed as the first stage of intervention with troubled families. However, even when these services are made available some parents will remain unable to provide a safe and nurturing

environment for their children. When the determination is made that removal of a child from his own home is the best available solution to family problems, then care in a substitute family is seen as the preferred plan of placement.

Foster care services, when indicated for children, are best organized in a continuum of care that begins with the child's entry into the system through post-discharge follow-up services. Planned, diverse programs of interventions that are informed in part by the foster child's psychosocial stage of development and in consideration of his undercare service and discharge plans should be offered at each stage of this continuum.

The final assumption is derived from traditional theory related to the psychosocial needs of children that has informed past foster care placement practices and decision making. The program conceptualization of the placement model for the adolescent is derived from this theory.

In planning substitute care for the adolescent, traditional practices have supported the use of small group settings as the preferred plan of placement, since placement in such settings would not conflict with the central developmental tasks of adolescence. Group homes that employ many adults as caretakers also lessen the possibility of the adolescent, who most often has retained ties to the natural parent and extended family relationships, developing feelings of divided family loyalties.

The conceptualization of the role of foster parent as parent substitute, which characterize traditional foster care practices, provides the young child with opportunities for bonding experiences that meet his psychosocial needs for attachment to a nurturing family and parental figures. This placement model, however, conflicts with the

psychosocial needs of the adolescent, which necessitates his achieving separation and autonomy from family and parental ties.

The project conceptualization of the placement model acknowledges the differential needs of the foster adolescent and is derived from the theories and concepts that have informed past foster care practices and placement decision making. The model supports a contractual placement agreement that focuses on the mutuality in the adolescent fostering relationship and identifies the role of the adult caretaker as that of role model/mentor, who in a relationship that stresses identification teaches competency and mastery in those skills needed for self-reliance. The placement model provides the opportunity for the adolescent to benefit from the "least restrictive environment" of the foster family home and the means for meeting his continuing emotional needs to belong to an intimate group without conflicting with the successful resolution of the transitional tasks of this life stage.

The ideological orientation of this conceptual framework draws upon and integrates several theories and concepts that include those that are related to the ecological perspective, adult learning theory, communication theory, adolescent psychosocial development, role theory, black family life style, identity consolidation of minority group members, and minority group use of social services.

Many of the issues of foster care service delivery that are addressed by the project are those that effect the general population of children and families who are consumers of these services. This project was developed in consideration of the specific needs of the black foster adolescent who is approaching discharge from foster care system. However, the assumptions of the conceptual framework that underlay the project

design are applicable to a wider range of families and children who are within the child welfare system. They as well have policy and programmatic implication for this field of social work practice in general.

Child Welfare Services

Family life is central to the development of a society its culture and people. The strengthening of family life is, ostensibly, the primary guiding principle that has informed and shaped the core of policies and programs that have developed within the field of American social welfare.

In the absence of an explicit and coherent national policy on the family, the child welfare system has emerged as the formalized expression of the value that is placed on family life in this country. This system provides the means for organizing and administering those services that are directed towards enhancing the quality of life of families, and for substituting or supplementing those child rearing functions that the biological family is no longer capable of performing.

Child welfare services have evolved and exist within the general context of social welfare services and refer to a range of activities within the society that have been designed to meet the needs of this group of children and their families.

Child welfare refers to all of those activities within the society that are designed to benefit children. Included within its scope are all of those measures that promote conditions that are favorable to the health and welfare of all children, prevent that which is detrimental to them, protect and safeguard their rights, and assist in overcoming obstacles that would prevent them from full realization of their individual potential.

Child welfare services represent those services that have developed as a result of parental inability to fulfill child rearing functions, and are designed to reinforce, supplement or substitute those functions that the parent has difficulty performing and to improve the quality of life of families and children. Child welfare services are typically concerned with those problems that arise as a result of difficulties within the parent-child relationship (Kadushin, 1974, p. 6).

Child welfare then, speaks to the general well being of children, and in its broadest sense should encompass every aspect of a society that directly or indirectly affects the life situation of children and incorporates such activities on the part of the state as compulsory education laws and child labor laws. Child welfare services, are concerned with the specific needs of specific groups of children and their families.

Child welfare has evolved as a specialized field of practice within the profession of social work and the child welfare system into a complex network of public and private agencies. These agencies are concerned with the prevention, amelioration and remediation of social problems that may arise as a result of disturbances in the family system. Child welfare services are provided in the broad categories of: (1) Preventive Services, which may encompass a range of clinical, concrete and support services that have a goal of maintaining the biological family intact; (2) Protective Services, that are designed to protect children from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and neglect by guardians, primary caretakers and exploitation by other adults; and (3) Substitute care to children outside of their own homes, which includes care in institutional settings, adoption and foster care.

Foster Care Services

Substitute care represents a pervasive and drastic change in the life of a child and therefore, should be regarded as the "third line of defense" (Kadushin, 1974, p. 392) in caring for the child. This form of care should be used only after all other alternative have been exhausted.

The term foster care is frequently used to define any type of substitute care of the child and may include boarding home care in a foster family home, adoption or placement in an institutional setting. The Child Welfare League of American (1959, p. 5) has defined foster care as: "A child welfare service which provides substitute family care for a planned period for a child when his own family cannot care for him for a temporary or extended period and when adoption is neither desirable nor possible."

This project is concerned with foster family care, or that form of substitute care that involves the placement of a child in a temporary living arrangement in a home that is licensed, monitored and supervised by an accredited child care agency and provides the foster parent with a board payment.

Past thinking has been that in those instances when substitute care is indicated for a child, foster family care was most desirable in that it provided a continuing means for meeting the child's affectional and socialization needs. Such care has, however, been seen as less desirable for the adolescent who may more appropriately be placed in an impersonal, small group home setting which would not conflict with a major developmental task of adolescence--that of achieving independence from the family group.

Recent years have seen a growing concern and reappraisal of a system of care that is no longer viewed as the most beneficial alternative for children. This concern has been related to the large number of children in care, the negative effects that long term impermanent care has upon the psychological development and emotional well being of children and the high costs that are involved in maintaining children in out of home living arrangements. Particular emphasis has been focused on the injurious effects that this system of care has had upon black and other groups of children who present special needs.

Acknowledging the problems and deficits of child care, Kadushin in his discussion of the dilemmas of the system suggests that it is a myth that child welfare agencies have failed to do the job that has been required of them. He states that "child welfare agencies provide a clearly defined, responsible, socially oriented apparatus to deal with a widespread problem. Few professional groups in the country have had equally large appropriations of public funds and managed them so responsibly" (Kadushin, 1983, p. 30).

Foster care has provided a viable alternative for large numbers of children and this is evidenced in the research literature. The study completed by Festinger (1983) of former foster children found little supporting evidence that this was a group that was psychologically damaged, emotionally dependent or engaged in criminal activities. Rather, the group did not appear significantly different from others of their age group in terms of their activities, self concept and future plans. Similarly, Rest and Watson (1984) in their survey of a small sample of adults who had grown up in long term foster care found that the experience of impermanence did not impair their ability to lead

independent satisfying lives as adults, but did leave them at risk of impaired self image from the deeply felt stigma of foster care, difficulty establishing intimacy in relationships and an unresolved sense of loss.

While the longitudinal study of children in foster care that was completed by Fanshel and Shinn found that children remaining in long term foster care did as well as those returning home on variables on intellectual ability, school performance, and personal/social adjustment, they further stated:

We are not completely sure that continued tenure in foster care over extended periods is not in itself harmful to children. On the level at which we were able to measure that adjustment of the children we could find no such negative effects. However, ...our measures of adjustment are not without problems, and we are not sure that our procedures have captured the potential feelings of pain and impaired self image that can be created by impermanent status in foster care...in the inner recesses of his heart, a child who is not living with his own family or who is not adopted may come to think of himself as less than first rate, as an unwanted human being (Fanshel and Shinn, 1978, p. 479).

The five year longitudinal study that was undertaken by Jenkins and Sauber (1966) of children entering foster care in New York City reported that 73% of the sample were discharged after five years to the care of the mother. However, while there were evidences of improved family functioning with the passage of the crisis situation that prompted the need for placement, the chronic underlying family problems tended to persist.

There are difficulties in conducting research studies of former foster children that have to do with confidentiality requirements of agency records, the willingness of the population to participate in such

research, and the difficulties that are involved in locating participants.

While there is some evidence in the research literature of beginning trends in this field of inquiry, Festinger's work did represent the first comprehensive study of former foster children who were discharged from the system to independent living. The results of the study present a positive view.

Positive benefits are accrued from the temporary placement of children in substitute family arrangements when biological parents are either unwilling or unable to provide minimal standards of physical care of emotional nurturance for them. The research literature does suggest that a feeling of permanency has a positive effect on the child's adjustment and sense of well being while under care and that services directed towards the biological family can result in early reunification.

However, black children have been particularly vulnerable to the many negative aspects of the system. These children are found to have a disproportionate representation in the foster care population, spend a longer period of time in care, experience multiple placements, are more often members of multi-problem, poverty level families, and are underrepresented in that population of children who achieve permanency or are placed for adoption.

Chestang (1978) and Billingsley and Giovannoni (1972) have cited sectarianism, bureaucracy, professionalism and the insensitivity of a service system, designed primarily from the perspective of the dominant group, to the needs of black families as being primary causes of the inadequate development of services for this group of children.

Black Children and Child Welfare

With the exception of the study that was completed by Billingsley and

Giovannoni (1972), Children of the Storm, Black Children and American Child Welfare, the child welfare literature gives scarce attention to child welfare services as they developed for black children and their families. In a comprehensive overview and analysis of the child welfare system, these authors conclude that for black children, child welfare services are more accurately defined as: "a limited array of services that have been overwhelmingly directed towards the placement of children away from their own homes" (p. 6).

The institution of slavery was the first system that provided for the care of dependent and neglected black children. As a result of legally sanctioned policies of segregation, the post Civil War years saw the development of a two tract service delivery system where black children were cared for either in institutions that were developed especially for them or the established child care organizations made separate provisions for them within the existing system of services.

Early in the history of American black families in this country, the African heritage of slave families supported a tribal socialism and extended kinship bonds that encouraged the incorporation of parentless children into existent families. After the Civil War, the Freedman's Bureau, which was established at the federal level, provided comprehensive services to blacks and enacted the charitable role that had previously been assumed by informal, mutual support systems. Interestingly, the Freedman's Bureau, although discontinued amidst partisan concerns and charges of corruption and inefficiency, did demonstrate the government's ability to administer an extensive program of rehabilitation and relief. One of the major accomplishments of the Bureau was that it provided preventive services that addressed the

financial dependency of parents and allowed children to be cared for in their own homes.

The condition of black children in the late 1800s was worsened by the extensive poverty and uprootedness that followed emancipation, and the migration to Northern urban areas where poverty was experienced more severely. The Child Saving Movement in rescuing children from mixed alms houses, that imposed no racial barriers, also created the need to extend existing systems of care for black children.

As the need for services for black children increased, efforts to meet their needs also came from within the black community. These were through the black church, women's clubs, such as the National Association of Colored Women, and individual black philanthropists. However, the black community has never experienced the kind of economic development that would support the establishment of independent organizations for the care of its own children. In a system that operated under a framework where each group cared for its own black children experienced a further disadvantage.

The White House Conference of 1909 recognized the impact of poverty on family stability. In response to the impetus that was provided by this Conference, Mother's Pensions were established in 1911 as state supported grants to children, representing one of the first income maintenance programs. These programs also represented an early institutional expression of a value orientation that successfully excluded black children from participation.

Georgia, Alabama and South Carolina were all states that had a large black population but did not have Mother's Pensions programs in place. Similarly, Mississippi and Kentucky were both states that had large

populations of blacks, but operated these programs in a limited number of counties. In 1930 of all mothers receiving these allowances, 95 % were white, and the largest of this number were widows or wives of the disabled. Divorced and deserted women were fully excluded from participation (Billingsley and Giovannoni, 1972, p. 82).

The early services that were provided for all poor children relied on private philanthropy, supported a religious sectarianism and reflected values and beliefs that linked poverty with personal inadequacy. As white families prospered as a result of the country's economic development and legally sanctioned policies of segregation disappeared, black children were soon to be left in the care of a system that was not only not created in consideration of their unique circumstances, but were in a system that was created for the "least loved of his white brethren, the poor white child" (Billingsley and Giovannoni, 1972, p. 30).

Sectarianism as it developed in colonial America acknowledged the autonomy of religious groups and the rights of each of these groups to care for their own. The major child care organizations that developed in the country were under Catholic, Jewish and Protestant auspices. Billingsley and Giovannoni (1972, p. 136) suggest that these sectarian patterns in the development of services operated to include and exclude children from services, and in reality represented a Catholic, Jewish and "all other" system. This became so since the Protestant sector was primarily a non-sectarian system that was made up of agencies that came together under a variety of auspices that often were not church based. These agencies, as was the expected social norm, adopted policies of segregation. Such a philosophy of sectarianism served to include all white children but did not serve as a guarantee for inclusion of all

black children.

Sectarian child care organizations have not been entirely self supporting. The growing recognition of public responsibility in the care of the indigent and an increase in the number of poor families did lead to public monies being made available to these agencies. These developments would, in turn, lead to the bureaucratization of child care agencies, that would further complicate the situation of black children.

Bureaucracies are characterized by a specialization of function, multi-authority levels and extensive systems of accountability. While quality of services are perhaps better ensured when private providers are publicly accountable, the bureaucratization of child care agencies resulted in a fragmentation of services that gave insufficient attention to the needs of the family unit and did not support the development of comprehensive, articulated programs. The continuing conflicts that are observed between biological parents, foster parents and children in present services are a reflection of services that were initially structured around the organizational needs of the bureaucracy as opposed to the needs of families.

The demands of an intricate accountability system that has become a requirement of the present day bureaucratic system has resulted in many professionals leaving the field of child welfare to be manned by untrained workers. This system of accountability has also moved the child welfare system towards a close articulation with the judicial system. Therefore, the decision making and planning process that is involved in providing services to troubled families, although best informed by sound clinical judgments and professional practices, has been transferred to the adversarial arena of the courts.

Although recent years have seen an exit of the MSW worker from the field of child welfare, social work has traditionally been the primary discipline represented in these settings. The growing professionalization of social work in the early years of its development also influenced the direction that services would take for black children.

An ecological perspective that broadens the assessment of individuals and families to include their interactions with the larger systems in the environment is a fairly recent development in the profession. This perspective did not become clearly articulated as a theoretical base for social work practice before the early seventies (Germaine, 1973). Early in the development of clinical social work practice Freudian Psychoanalytic theory, which gave little attention to the effects of environmental influences on individual and family functioning, formed the underlying theoretical orientation that shaped practice. This orientation meant that black families were assessed and understood primarily from the view of the dominant culture and recognition was not given to the effects of transactions with external systems. In child welfare settings the influences of this view had its greatest impact in the area of adoption and the development of in-home support services for families. In the absence of sufficient theory related to black family functioning, well intentioned practitioners further perpetuated a practice of removal of children from their own homes. The professional worker's conceptualization of the ideal family, and the child that was suitable for adoption resulted in the unnecessary removal of children from their own homes and made permanent foster care the reality for an increasing number of black children.

Child welfare services as they have developed for black children have resulted in irreparable damage to large numbers of families. These services to a great extent have become narrowly defined as foster care services. Billingsley and Giovannoni attribute these patterns in the development of services to racism:

Racism manifests itself in the present system of services in three major ways: (1) the kinds of services developed are not sufficient to the special situation of black children; (2) within the system that has developed black children are not treated equitably and (3) efforts to change the system have been incomplete and abortive (Billingsley and Giovannoni, 1972, pp. 3-4).

The demographic profile of the largest number of children who are currently in the foster care system gives indirect inference to the inequities that black children have experienced while in the system. The Wilder vs. Sugarman case clearly raises the question of institutional racism and exclusionary practices in the development and delivery of foster care services in New York City.

Foster Care Services in New York City

Foster care services in New York City are provided by the Human Resources Administration/Special Services for Children (SSC). Foster care is intended to be a temporary arrangement. Such placements become necessary when a parent, relative or significant other is unable to provide what has been determined to be adequate care for children as a result of illness, death, neglect or abuse, abandonment. Foster care is also used when specialized care of the child is indicated for the treatment of a serious mental, emotional or physical handicap.

SSC, as the city agency mandated to administer child welfare services to families, provides direct services to approximately 10% of children in

need of foster care. 90% of these children are cared for by voluntary child care agencies that are under contract with SSC. A child's progress in placement and each agency's performance in meeting the needs of families and achieving permanency goals for children is monitored by the agency's comprehensive Program Assessment System.

Children enter into the foster care system on a voluntary basis at the request of a parent or guardian, or as involuntary placements through Family Court order. An assessment that is completed by the SSC field office determines whether a child is appropriately placed in a foster family boarding home, group home or institutional setting.

The Wilder vs. Sugarman law suit was filed in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York in May, 1972. The case represents a myriad of complex, often conflictual and contradictory issues. Included among these, as previously discussed, are those that are related to:

American traditions that value religious pluralism and a dual system of public and private auspices in the development and delivery of social welfare services;

the rights of voluntary agencies to determine policy for services delivered under their auspices and their accountability to public funding sources for the expenditures of public monies;

the role of the state as "parens patriae"--being the primary protector of dependent children with a need to at times exercise its authority to act in the child's best interest;

the development of social welfare services from a residual perspective and the lack of quality services for all who are in need of them and

institutionalized exclusionary practices in the delivery of services and the rights of consumer groups of equal access to the best available services.

The suit is a class action filed on behalf of six children by the New

York Civil Liberties Union and the Legal Aid Society. It asserted that the situation of the named plaintiffs was representative of an entire class of black Protestant children who were in need of foster care services. The defendants were the officials of New York State and City governmental agencies. The Suit alleged that the New York State Constitution, the New York State Social Services Law, the New York Family Court and the New York City Administrative Code mandates judges to commit children to voluntary child care agencies on the basis of religion and in so doing authorized and sanctioned child care agencies to practice religious and racial discrimination in providing access to services. These actions were said to violate the constitutional rights of the children involved as protected by the First Amendment, which protect freedom of religion; the Eighth Amendment, which protects against cruel and unusual punishment and the Fourteenth Amendment, which ensures due process and equal protection under the law.

Approximately 90% of the dependent children for whom SSC is legally responsible for are placed with voluntary sectarian agencies of Catholic, Jewish or Protestant affiliation. Although 90% of the cost of care for these children is supported by public funds, voluntary agencies retain the right to establish policies of selection criteria for acceptance of children for services.

Children enter into care through a central referral system that accepts them on the basis of their religious affiliation. Since the number of Protestant children in need of services far exceeds the number of available placements in Protestant agencies this practice has resulted in a situation where Catholic and Jewish children receive priority consideration from those agencies that provide superior services.

Conversely, black Protestant children experience long delays in placement, placement in congregate temporary shelters or are inappropriately placed in training schools.

The Wilder case highlighted the many inadequacies of the New York City foster care system. Still it did not address the very real issues that are related to the structural aspects of the system or a reimbursement system that established financial disincentives to the delivery of more intensive comprehensive services. Additionally, the range of services that are provided by voluntary agencies are not sufficient to meet the needs of the older adolescent who evidences serious disturbance in some aspect of his adjustment--and again represents one of the fastest growing groups of children who will be in need of foster care services. When responding to the allegations of the suit, the then Commissioner suggested that the problems identified were not those that stemmed from discrimination, but were in fact related to a situation wherein the foster care population had become older, more disturbed and more predominately black and Hispanic and the system had not yet accommodated itself to these changes.

The Wilder case was long in litigation, with some of its significance being eroded over years that have brought changes in needs. The presence of the suit has also brought about needed changes in child welfare services. A major recommendation of the proposed settlement is that children be selected for services on a first come first serve basis. Such a plan, it would seem, would dictate the need for a diverse group of foster parents with a range of tolerance for coping with children who demonstrate a variety of problematic behaviors. Training would become an important factor in preparing foster parents for this role and for their

retention.

Critical to the process of finding solutions to the problems of the foster care system will be searching for those solutions that will promote the kinds of changes that will be beneficial to the largest group of children making use of foster care services. The recent reorganization of New York City's Human Resources Administration has placed all services to children and families under one division. The impact of the reorganization has yet to be felt and all goals of the implementation plan have yet to be accomplished.

Lasting solutions to the problems of the foster care system in New York City must continue to be searched for. Still, recognition must be given to the fact that there is the need to redress inadequate service delivery to a large group of children who have become victims within a system of all that the system was mandated to protect them from. Whether a deliberate action or the result of institutionalized, sanctioned operational procedures, such procedures have resulted in a process of discrimination against a group of children who happen to be of minority group affiliation.

These exclusionary practices are evidenced in the historical development of child welfare policy and services. Such practices had their beginning in colonial America when the need for religious autonomy provided a rational base for each group to care for its own and the sectarian roots of the development of services. Along with this was the residual perspective in the development of services that assumed that poverty was a result of individual pathology, which supported the practice of "outdoor relief" as opposed to the development of services for children in their own homes. All of these occurrences have had a far

reaching impact on black families and children who have been in need of child welfare services.

CHAPTER II

Historical Perspective

Titmuss (1959) defines social welfare as being a manifestation of society's will to survive as an organic whole and the expression of the will of its people to assist in the survival of certain groups. It is also suggested that far more attention has been paid to those social welfare services that are provided to the poor than to those that support middle income groups and are based on achievement and status in the workplace.

All social welfare programs are concerned with the redistribution of the wealth or resources of a society. All American social welfare policy has been directly or indirectly concerned with the strengthening of family life. Yet American society is one that has traditionally valued individualism, personal freedom and free enterprise. Poverty has not always been seen as a legitimate concern of public policy and the view has been taken that governmental intervention should be limited to promoting those strategies that facilitate self sufficiency or provide opportunities for the individual to "pull himself up by his boot straps."

Social Darwinism supports belief and notions about the worthiness of the individual and the inappropriateness of supporting the biologically and socially inferior. The philosophy of John Locke further linked material well being to morality. These, and other ideologies, have persisted overtime, influencing American child welfare policy in a direction of rescue of children and punishment of parents.

The historical influences that impacted on the development of

American child welfare policies, services and practices are varied and complex. As well, these policies and programs have developed within a social context, and have been greatly influenced by societal forces and the development of social policies and programs in other domains.

It is a social context that has evidenced conflicting and contradicting stated values which has encouraged competing and inconsistent policy development in various domains. While family life is viewed as being central to American society, the United States remains the only industrialized country that has not developed a national policy on families. It has been suggested that the belief that America is a child oriented society is a myth.

Kadushin (1974, p. 49) has enumerated several occurrences that influenced the emergence of child welfare services in this country and as a field of social work practice:

The development of a humanitarian philosophy

Economic and political changes that reinforced and supported changes in ideology

The increased specialization of social institutions

The increase in scientific knowledge

The rise in the status of the family and the child

The discovery of childhood

Changes in the arithmetic of child production

An important prerequisite for the development of services to children was for the child to achieve a status of being an object that was valued and cherished. The modern concept of parental love is said to be of recent origin in that prior to advances in sanitation, public health,

medicine and contraceptive devices, children suffered from a high mortality rate, which rendered parents reluctant to make attachments to a child who would be with them for a short period of time. Therefore, the family of the 1700s and early 1800s was adult centered and adult oriented. Mitchell made the observation that "if parents were unable to develop deep feelings of attachment to their own offspring, they would unlikely entertain such sentiments towards the children of their neighbors (Kadushin, 1974, p. 49).

Poor, black children still have not achieved a status of being valued and prized by the community at-large. Black children as previously discussed, have to a great extent been excluded from child welfare services as they developed over the years, and current services continue to reflect these early influences.

Current laws and concepts of child welfare services and the methods for financing these services have their roots in the social, economic and religious problems of pre-colonial England and in the legal and social institutions that were developed to address these problems. American social welfare policies and practices have their most significant identification with the Elizabethan Poor Laws of 1601. These statutes did establish the principle of public responsibility for the poor and indigent.

The structure of the Elizabethan Poor Laws provided for the care of the poor in the form of "outdoor relief", or a contractual agreement with private individuals. This was a form of care that included farming out, indenture, and institutional aggregate care in workhouses or almshouses. Indenture was probably the earliest form of foster care for children. During the colonial period the welfare structure did not allow

for a differentiation in the care that was provided to adults and that provided to children (Kadushin, 1974, p. 49).

"Indoor Relief", which provided services to children and their families in their own homes was largely a twentieth century development. Prior to this period few services were available to children who remained with their own families. Since early philosophy and values linked poverty with personal inadequacy, the thinking was that if poor children were in need of care because of the poverty of their parents whose condition was a result of their own personal indolence, then to have children with such parents would only produce another generation of indolents. Consequently, the major forms of care for children in early American history, which persisted into the twentieth century, was indenture, institutional care and the almshouses.

An important development of the nineteenth century in the care of children was the increase in the number of institutions and the establishment of the orphanage. This trend grew in part from the recognition that mixed almshouses were psychologically harmful for children. The Monson State School established in 1866, became the first institution in the United States to care for neglected and dependent children. Its procedures of monitoring services became the prototype for many current child welfare practices.

As institutional developments increased, there was a stimulation of efforts to meet the needs of children in other ways, which gave impetus to the establishment of new services. After 1850 institutional care was only one part of the complex systems which had been established to meet the needs of children.

The Community Organizations Society Movement also impacted upon the

development of services to families and children, and a greater professionalization and avoidance of duplication.

In response to the economic ills brought about by the depression, Robert Hartley established the New York Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor in 1843. This development promoted significant changes in the philosophy of the giving of assistance to the needy. The Association attempted to address the causes of dependency, and in 1897 opened the Hartley House Settlement, which served as a neighborhood center for adults and children. In 1879 paid visitors were substituted for volunteers and provided direct services to clients. They became the prototype for today's social work professional. The Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor later became known as the Associated Charities, and represented one of the earliest attempts in the field of child welfare at providing comprehensive services to families.

Religious organizations such as the YMCA and YWCA, the Settlement House Movement, incorporating the beginning work of Jane Addams of Hull House and Lillian D. Wald of the Henry Street Settlement, and the Child Saving Movement all had significant impact on the development of child welfare services. The Child Saving Movement was developed after 1850 as a means of rescuing children from mixed almshouses, promoting a greater use of foster care.

Charles Loring Brace, a Protestant clergyman, founded the Children's Aid Society in New York City in 1853. He originated the modern foster care movement and the use of the "free foster home" as a means of substitute family care for children. Charles W. Birtwell in Boston was also a pioneer in the field of foster care services and conceptualized the placement process around the issues of what was the best plan for the

child. It was within this context that the free foster home, an arrangement wherein the foster family received no reimbursement for the care of the child beyond that of the free labor provided by the child, was replaced by boarding foster family care. In the latter, the expenses incurred by the foster family in caring for the child were assumed by the agency, which gave the agency a greater authority in the selection and supervision of the foster home (Kadushin, 1974, p. 319). Van Arsdale in Chicago, instituted additional innovations and was a pioneer in the home finding movement. The National Children's Home became the parent agency to twenty-eight children's home societies, with its philosophy reflecting the conviction that congregate care did not meet the emotional needs of the child, and supported the benefits of the socialization experiences that the child received in substitute family care (Kadushin, 1974, p. 22).

During the period of the nineteenth century issues of poverty and dependency continued to be regarded as a reflection of personal inadequacy and not related to defects in the social and economic structure. While significant accomplishments were made in the development of services to children that found motivation in the beliefs of the need to rescue children from the effects of a damaging environment, the general attitude towards the condition of poverty still did not allow for the creation of comprehensive services. Towards the end of the century an emphasis did develop on providing services that would allow children to remain in their own homes, and the removal of children from almshouse to foster homes. These occurrences did speak to the country's beginning awareness of the special needs of the child.

The twentieth century may be viewed as a period of growth and change in the provision of services to children. Two World Wars, the

Depression, the development of social work as a profession, and the development of new knowledge all had an impact on the emergence of new patterns in services that reflected an increased understanding of the child and a recognition of the importance of the period of childhood.

The first White House Conference on Children was convened by Theodore Roosevelt in 1909 and was a landmark event in the history of Child Welfare. The major resolution of that Conference was that no child should be deprived of a home life except for urgent and compelling reasons, and that no home should be broken up for reasons of poverty alone (Kadushin, 1974, p. 156). The White House Conference on Children of 1930 gave added consideration to the special needs of the minority child as it acknowledged:

The dependent and neglected children of Negro, Puerto Rican, Mexican and Indian families present special problems needing consideration, and while there is theoretical agreement among leaders in health and social welfare that the children of these groups should receive...the same standards of care as those given to other children, their needs are in reality little understood by the general public, and in many communities are almost wholly ignored (Billingsley and Giovannani, 1972, p. 80).

The passage of the Social Security Act in 1935, replaced the Mother's Pension programs that developed after this Conference, with Aid to Dependent Children. Federal participation ensured a greater equity in income maintenance programs.

The 1960 Golden Anniversary White House Conference allowed for significant gains in the area of protective services to children. This was reflected in the recommendation that states create a central agency to hear complaints of abuse and neglect and provide services to the children and families involved. The White House Conference of 1970

further advocated for the development of more comprehensive, coordinated and humane services for children.

Another development of the twentieth century was the creation of the Children's Bureau which had the task to "...investigate and report...upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child life among all classes of our people...(Zeitz, 1959, p. 102). Julia Lathrop, the first chief of the Bureau, early established a committee to study the incidence and causes of infant mortality. A second task of the Committee was to study and develop uniform child labor laws. The first federal Child Labor Law was enacted in 1917, and this early period saw the development of a push towards the codification of laws that effected children (Zeitz, 1959, p. 103). In 1969 the Children's Bureau became a division of the Office of Child Development in the Department of Health Education and Welfare and continues to approve federal grants-in-aid to states for services that include maternal and child health, crippled children's services and child welfare services for homeless and dependent children.

The Child Guidance Movement (Friendlander, 1980, p. 216), the emergence of the Child Study Association of America, the Mental Hygiene Movement, the development of the Standard-Binet Intelligence Test, and Freud's initial lectures in this country in 1910 all contributed to the expansion of knowledge of child development. The relationship between psychology, social work and psychiatry became solidified, providing a broadened knowledge base for the understanding of human growth and development and the influence of childhood experiences on the later mental health of the adult (Zeitz, 1959, pp. 124-126).

The Child Welfare League of America was founded in 1920 to be a

"medium for nationwide teamwork in conserving and developing America's resources for children and youth" (Zeitz, 1959, p. 118). The League continues to function as the national coordinating body for the development of resources and maintaining acceptable standards of service.

The contemporary years have seen the continuation of the development of services to children, including services for children with special needs and supplementary, compensatory programs such as Head Start and Day Care. Child welfare has developed into a highly specialized field of practice within the profession of social work, and the changes in the status of children is reflected in the 1954 United Nations General Assembly Declaration on the Rights of the Child. These rights were affirmed by the White House Conference on Children and Youth of 1970 (Kadushin, 1974, p. 50).

American society today appears to stand as a child-centered, family oriented one, with a humanistic concern for the dependent and underprivileged, and as Kadushin states, "a culture of filocentric orientation conducive to the development of child welfare services (Kadushin, 1974, p. 54).

Child Welfare Policy Development

The concern of social policy is with life in a society, the intra-societal relationships among individuals and groups and their interactions with the society. The common domain of all social policies may be identified as having to do with the quality of life in society, the circumstances of living of individuals and groups, and the nature of all intra-societal human relationships (Gil, 1976, p. 13). Gil has offered a comprehensive view and defines social policy as:

...a system of interrelated, yet not logically consistent principles and causes of actions, which shape the quality of life, level of well-being of members of a society and determine the nature of all extrasocietal relationships among individuals, social subsystems and society as a whole (Gil, 1970, p. 411).

The goal of all social policy, as he suggests, should be with the equalization of rights and opportunities of all individuals of a society. "The principle of social equality derives from a central value premise according to which every individual and social group are of equal intrinsic worth and hence are entitled to equal civil, political, social and economic liberties, rights and treatment as well as subject to equal constraints. Implicit in this central value principle is the notion that each individual should have the right to fully actualize his inherent human potential" (Gil, 1976, pp. xviii-xix).

A primary purpose of the policies and programs that have been developed within the general field of social welfare has been the strengthening of family life. Throughout American history there has perhaps been a conflicting interplay between the primacy of family life, the rights of parents to rear their children without outside interference, and the right of the state to intervene in this relationship on behalf of those children who are not receiving adequate care. The nuclear family, as the basic unit in American society, has since the late 1800s held special meaning. Family autonomy has perhaps been favored from colonial times to the mid-nineteenth century when the state's role in defining expectations for the rearing of children began to broaden. This expanded role of the state was reflected in such activities as child labor laws, compulsory education laws and dependency and neglect laws.

Society's right to intervene into family life and the parent-child relationship evolved from the humanistic concept of a community's collective concern for its children, and the recognition that at times the state must assume a role of protector and/or acting in the child's best interest. Such activities on the part of the state are what have been previously discussed as child welfare services.

The underlying principles and values which inform the development of child welfare policies are related to the relationship between the child, his parents and the society. The activities that originate are one of society's organized expressions of its convictions about the worth of the child, his family and the child's rights as a developing human being and future adult citizen. Policies and programs have evolved from a core of principles that reflect values and beliefs about family life. Informing values and principles may exist concurrently although they may be inconsistent, incompatible or conflicting.

There is a wealth of material in the research and practice literature that provide a broad knowledge base and range of theories that explicate the conditions that would support the healthy physical, social, emotional and mental development of the child, and those conditions that would be disruptive to the process. The family is the most basic institution of any society. It performs essential functions of transmitting the culture, socializing, nurturing and preparing children for independent functioning.

An institutional concept in the provision of services to families would support the principle and assumption that as societies develop in complexity and specialization, the family, neighborhood and community may not be able to provide all that is necessary to ensure the successful

education and socialization of its young. Therefore, the community at large would assume responsibility for certain areas. To the contrary, a residual concept would assume a therapeutic stance. Services would be provided only when the family is no longer capable of successfully fulfilling child rearing functions. The underlying assumption of the latter conceptualization focuses on individual pathology and assumes that normal, adequate families do not require assistance. A third perspective would support the assumption that social welfare services are provided in order to improve and enhance the quality of life for all families.

Issues related to the rightness or wrongness of the activities or services that emerge emanate from the tensions among these three basic assumptions that underly service development (Giovannoni, 1981, p. 13). The perspective taken by a society at any given point in its development does influence the direction that the development that social policy will take in relationship to families and children. With the exception of the latter, American child welfare policy has been influenced by both a residual and institutional perspective. Child welfare services may perhaps be viewed as an expression of American family policy, and to assume the latter perspective would lead to the adoption of a national family policy.

In spite of expressed values related to the primacy of family life, and the inherent integrity and worth of the child, many have come to believe that the American child welfare system has failed its children. The Joint Commission on the Mental Health of Children stated in 1970 after three years of study:

This nation, the most recent of all world powers, has no national commitment to its children. The claim that we are a

child oriented society...is a myth. Our words are made meaningless by our actions (Joint Commission Mental Health of Children, 1970, p. 2).

Billingsley and Giovannani (1972), as noted, underscored the inequities in access to a full range of services that the black child has experienced. While an expressed underlying value of services to families is that the child's best opportunity for optimum growth and development is within the family of origin, their research documents that the vast majority of services have been directed towards the placement of black children away from their own homes. They as well document the development of a two tract service delivery system that has not dealt justly with the minority child. The research of Maas and Engler (1959) revealed that the provision of social work services to the natural family was the exception rather than the rule and that little social work activity was directed towards the reunification of families.

Frankel has stated that the existing authority is called into question and the rightness to the claims of legitimacy when there is an incongruence between the theory and practice of the system of authority. He continues by suggesting that this incongruence becomes apparent when the rules alleged to govern differ from those that are actually followed and when there is an absence of integration between the cherished goals of society and the means by which they are pursued (Frankel, 1959, p. 347).

Child welfare policies are inextricably bound to and interwoven with virtually every policy area when it is considered that the basis of most social welfare policy is the strengthening of family life. Reports issued by the Subcommittee of Fiscal Policy of the Joint Economic

Committee, and the findings of the Michigan Logitudinal Study of five thousand American families establish the interrelatedness of the well being of families and children and public policy in such areas as income maintenance, employment and housing (Kamerman and Kahn, 1976, p. 184).

Issues that are related to child welfare policies also intersect at almost every point with issues that are related to the treatment of ethnic minorities. The treatment of minority children is not only a reflection of their status of poverty, but also a reflection of institutional racism that is deeply ingrained in the larger society.

A residual concept, has been most prevalent in the development and provision of services of minority families. Historically a deficit model has more frequently been used in the conceptualization of the black family. This has resulted in an overuse of foster care. Child welfare practitioners, being exposed to what was viewed as the highest standards of child rearing and to one cultural orientation to family functioning in their training, searched for permanent homes for children that would meet those standards. In the work with black children this conceptualization of care meant that permanent foster care became the destiny for many of these children. Black children have been infrequently seen as candidates for adoption, are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system and have more often been left to linger in care. A major litigation has alleged that these children have not received equal access to quality services.

Lewis has stated as a practice principle:

"The conditions that determine the availability of service should be uniformly applicable to all partaking of it. Deviations from these conditions are justified only when they can be shown to be to everyone's advantage (Lewis, 1972, p. 406).

Since the 1950s the failures of the system that serves families and children have been given greater acknowledgement. The policies and programs that have evolved are said to be fragmented and inconsistent, and the field has been oriented towards crisis, rescue and remedy. Little attention has been given to the establishment of long range planning and policies that are directed towards the strengthening of family life and the prevention of family disorganization (Kadushin, 1974, p. 1X).

Traditional child welfare reimbursement procedures have tended to encourage agencies towards an overuse of foster care and predisposition towards maintaining children in care as opposed to developing preventive services, reunification services, or seeking alternative plans of permanency. Foster care has come to be viewed as not a desirable alternative for children who cannot be maintained in their own home with supportive services. The literature is replete with studies that document the damaging effects that impermanent custodial care has upon the psychological development and well being of children.

The New York State Child Welfare Reform Act of 1979, which was the model for the federal Adoptions Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, was enacted as a corrective measure to address and remedy the ills of these past policies and practices.

The Act mandated that by 1981 service alternatives to placement must be provided in those situations in which a determination had been made that such services could prevent placement, and those in which children who are already in foster care might be returned to their families if this alternative were available. The Act defined specific implementation steps, monitoring and accountability procedures.

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The primary concerns of the legislation are planning, prevention, permanency and monitoring. Increased funding is allocated to preventive services, which includes counseling, homemaker and day care service to at risk families.

A recent report that was completed by Welfare Research, Inc., after a five years of study of the impact of the Child Welfare Reform Act, stated that the policy shift towards preventive services had assisted approximately 30,000 children per year, averting foster care placement for more than 80% of them. State payments for foster care did decline by \$75.8 million from 1981 to 1984, to 254 million, for the same period spending on preventive services went up by \$45.1 million to \$62.4 million. The study further noted that the criteria for preventive services in New York City were so narrowly defined that families must be at imminent risk for foster care before eligible for these services (New York Times, November 9, 1985).

The research findings of Fein and Maluccio (1983) indicate that the passage of the Adoptions and Assistance Act of 1980 and the New York State Child Welfare Reform Act of 1979 has made significance inroads on encouraging agencies toward an early development of permanency plans for children. They have also impacted on the development of programs of prevention.

There is a general agreement that this legislation has had the greatest impact on addressing the needs of families who will be in need of child welfare services and those of younger children who will be entering into the system. These reforms do not, however, sufficiently address the needs of the new group of adolescents who are entering into the foster care system, nor those of older children who have been in the

system over an extended period of time. These are youth who in all likelihood will be discharged to independent living.

Policy initiatives that support the development of interventive programs for adolescents approaching independence that would enable them to develop skills needed for successful community living would address the key processes of the society. These young adults would then be able to enter the social and economic mainstream of American life as productive, contributing citizens.

Innovative foster care programs for these adolescents, the largest number of whom are black, can be informed by new knowledge that has emerged over the past two decades that takes a positive view of black families.

The Black Family

Perhaps the degree to which offspring are able to function as self-reliant adults provides an indirect measure of how well the family has enacted its essential role. Yet families cannot be assessed or understood in isolation from the larger environmental context within which they exist. Black families in America have historically functioned under the burdens imposed by minority group and economic status.

Prior to the 1960s and the publication of Andrew Billingsley's Black Families In White America (1968), the strengths of black families were seldom referred to in the literature. Nor did such an orientation inform the interventions of many professionals who provided services to black families. The black family was assessed primarily from a point of view of a deficit model, with the majority of the literature focusing on indicators of instability, disorganization and pathology. Hill (1971), in his discussion of the strengths of black families, suggest that this

"pejorative" tradition was established with the publication of E. Franklin Frazier's The Negro Family In The United States (1939). According to Hill, contemporary social scientists have failed to make use of more current data to test and update Frazier's original formulations, but have continued to focus on that part of his work that support theses of pathology and disorganization. Perhaps the most detrimental and widely publicized of such reporting was Daniel P. Moynihan's (1965) The Black Family: The Call For National Action. The report not only legitimized, and gave further credibility to an inaccurate view of the black family at the national level, but also had far reaching implications in the shaping of governmental policies that effected black families.

The foster care system has not escaped the influences of a prevailing norm for understanding black families that incorporated a system of myths and misconceptions. Billingsley and Giovannoni (1972) have associated this failure to fully understand the social/environmental conditions under which black people live and the cultural forms and adaptations that family functioning and structure have taken as a means for coping with these conditions with the unnecessary disruption of black families and placement of black children away from their own homes.

Contemporary social scientists have come to recognize that the preoccupation with pathology that is present in the majority of the research that is concerned with black family life has not only precluded the development of social policy and programs that would support and enhance family functioning, but has inhibited the development of research that would take on a problem solving focus. Hill gives acknowledgement to the fact that an examination of the strengths of black family

functioning can contribute as much towards the amelioration of some social problems as the examination of its weaknesses (Hill, 1971, p. 2).

Chestang (1973), Hill (1971), Billingsley (1968), Staples (1971) and Ladner (1971) are representative of those researchers and scholars who have departed from the traditional pathological approach to understanding the black family and have focused upon its strengths, adaptive and coping capacities.

Ladner in Tomorrow's Tomorrow (1971) expels myths that are related to beliefs about the pathological ghetto family and documents the strengths and resources of young black women who are growing up in ghetto areas. Similarly, Robert Staples' The Black Family: Essays And Studies (1971) identifies strengths and problems of black families, while suggesting the need for a new sociology on the black family. Hill (1971) through the analysis of national statistical data, identifies strengths that appear to be characteristic of many black families. This new orientation is embodied in Billingsley's work as he writes in Black Families In White America:

...we do not view the Negro family as a causal nexus in a tangle of pathology which feeds upon itself. Rather, we view the Negro family in theoretical perspective as a subsystem of the larger society. It is in our view, an absorbing, adaptive, and amazingly resilient mechanism for the socialization of its children and the civilizing of its society (Billingsley, 1968, p. 33).

Hill has noted that "family strength" is a highly subjective term, and that which may be identified as the strengths of black families has yet to be operationally defined and subjected to empirical verification. Within these parameters he identifies those characteristics of black family life that have been instrumental to the survival, development and

stability of the black community as: (1) Strong Kinship Bonds, (2) Strong Work Orientation, (3) Adaptability of Family Roles, (4) Strong Achievement Orientation, and (5) Strong Religious Orientation (Hill, 1971, p. 3).

While the influences of this new perspective and orientation is becoming more visible, a pathological view of family function continues to be apparent in child welfare services and in the attitudes of professional workers. The foster parent, who has a quasi staff/client relationship with agencies, is often viewed as a target for change as opposed to being an important extension of the agency's resources. The black foster parent is particularly vulnerable to this orientation to service delivery. Often a good deal of attention is given to the individual concerns and needs that the foster parent may bring to the fostering experience that emanate from his minority group status. Less attention has been given to the unique skills and insights that may be derived from that affiliation and the successful experiences of parenting own children to succeed--a task that is often accomplished with limited resources and within a non-supportive larger environment.

Much has been directed towards the in-service training needs of child welfare practitioners and foster parents. Yet little of this training has had a focus that would support and facilitate the development of an ethnic sensitive perspective in the delivery of services. Few of the foster parent training curricula that were reviewed evidenced an engagement of the foster parent in the development of the training content. There were no specialized curricula that addressed the problems of preparing the black adolescent for independent living.

Schools of social work, which have under contractual arrangements

provided much of the training for foster parents and child welfare practitioners, continue to grapple with the task of integrating minority content at a meaningful level throughout the curriculum and the means for effectively translating that theoretical knowledge into the practice component. A crucial question has been an identification of that content that is relevant to be taught.

There are acknowledged existent gaps in the available knowledge about black family life style and functioning. This project attempts to generate formative research data that facilitates the development of a foster parent training curriculum that has a greater relevancy to the older black adolescent who is approaching emancipation. It was not within the parameters of the project to present a detailed analysis, or documentation of the existence of black family strengths. Rather, a black perspective that focused on the strengths of black family life was adopted and prevailed in the implementation process of the project and curriculum development.

Those strengths of black family functioning that have been identified in the literature as being unique to black families were capitalized upon as they presented themselves in the implementation process. In that the care of unrelated children has been a tradition in the black community, emphasis was given to that characteristic that has been identified as Strong Kinship Bonds. This attribute incorporates a facility for the absorption of families and the informal adoption of children.

CHAPTER III

THE NATURE OF THE UNMET NEED

Timeliness and Feasibility of the Study

The 1980 report of the Department of Health and Human Services placed the total number of children who are living in out of home placements in the United States at 310,943. Patterns in the historical development of child welfare services and an ever changing societal context have influenced the dramatic changes that have been emerging in the characteristics of this population over the past decade.

The Temporary State Commission on Child Welfare was established in 1974 and had as a principle task that of studying the problems of the New York State foster care system. In describing this changing nature of the foster care population the Commission indicated that the healthy normal and easy to place for adoption child has been quickly disappearing from the child welfare scene to be replaced by a population that has a different social, racial and health profile. Supporting statistical data of the Commission indicated that more than one half of New York State's thirty to fifty thousand foster children are residents of New York City. The greatest number are of minority ethnic background, almost all are poor and a great number are members of welfare families or were otherwise known to social welfare agencies before entering into care. A disproportionate number of these children suffer from serious physical, educational, mental and emotional handicaps. Accompanying these trends in the characteristics of children making use of foster care services, is an advancing increase in their mean age and a lengthening of the period of time spent in care (1980, p. 3).

Recent census on the requests made for child welfare services reflect that it is a client group that is disproportionately represented by non-white, single parent, female headed families who are living in poverty. While 14 percent of the children living in the United States are black, these children make up 27 percent of the children in need of child welfare services. In contrast to the 83 percent of all children who live at home with their own families, only one-third of the group of children requesting services were living at home with their own families. Black families have not fully shared in the economic advances of the 1960s, and in 1974, with 7 percent of all white families living below the low income level, this was true for 27.8 percent of all black families and true for 52.2 percent of black female headed homes (Kadushin, 1978, p. 33).

It can be anticipated that the number of children in need of child welfare services will increase over the next years with a clustering of children at the upper age levels. Continuing statistical reports from SSC indicate a shift in the city's foster care population. This shift has supported an increasing focus of attention on older children with a service goal of discharge to their own responsibility. The city foster care population has shown a steady decline in the number of children between the ages of six and sixteen and a corresponding increase in the population of children sixteen years of age and over. The percentage of children with a goal of discharge to independence has increased from 22.9% in 1980 to 27.9% in 1984.

In 1974 with the passage of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Act, a major piece of legislation was enacted that addressed problems of the Juvenile justice system. A major thrust of the Act was to prevent the

often inappropriate placement of these youth in jails, training schools or other institutional settings because other more suitable alternatives were not available. Family foster care has increasingly been sought as an alternative to institutional care in that it is less expensive and also has the potential for replicating the benefits that are derived from intimate family living. This group does, however, represent a service population that is often emotionally traumatized (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1978, p. 1).

The current undercare adolescent population are youngsters whose families exhibit the greatest degree of pathology and disorganization. They have experienced "foster care drift" and multiple placements. The trauma that precipitated the initial placements of these children often have been exacerbated by the experiences encountered while in the system. This makes them high risk for placement breakdown.

These youngsters present unique service needs and challenge professions in the areas of policy formulation, program implementation and direct service to develop new and innovative interventive strategies. However, sufficient program development has not occurred in the area of emancipation services for foster adolescents.

Barth (1986), in reviewing the availability of emancipation services for adolescents in foster care notes the paucity of published materials on the development and effectiveness of independent living programs. He suggests that more information on the implementation of these programs is also warranted. Recent inquiry into the availability of these services to New York's foster adolescent population indicate that agencies typically do not have these programs in place.

The Foster Care Monitoring Committee, a civic group, in a 1984 report

to the office of the mayor stated that of the approximate 45,000 children discharged from foster care, between 1979 and 1984 the largest percentage of the group were not provided with the necessary assistance for living with their biological families. Nor were they given the kind of training needed to prepare them to live independently (New York Times, July 19, 1985).

A supporting study (1984), The Foster Care Exit, Ready Or Not, was completed under the auspices of the Citizens Committee for Children of New York. It found that there was no comprehensive program in place in the largest number of child caring agencies in the city that prepared youngsters to live on their own upon discharge from the foster care system.

Foster Care and Welfare Dependency (1984), a study completed by SSC found that 24% of the youth between eighteen and twenty-one years who were discharged to their own responsibility in the city Fiscal Year ending June, 1980 were on public assistance by September of that same year.

Finally, the efforts of child advocacy groups and a lawsuit, Palmer vs. Cuomo, brought against New York City and State has highlighted the gap in services for this group and focused community attention on the need for continuity in services. The State Supreme Court ruled in July, 1985 that city officials must supervise adolescents in foster care until they reach the age of twenty-one, providing them with a place to live and the kind of training that will prepare them to cope on their own after discharge from foster care (New York Times, July 19, 1985).

The issue for these youngsters becomes in part one of maintenance, or providing quality care while in the system, and developmental, or

preparing the adolescent for successful functioning as emancipated adults.

One intervention that has been developed by child welfare agencies, and has become institutionalized in these settings, is education and training programs for foster parents. The overall goal of these training programs has been improving the quality of foster care services and providing a means of effectively meeting the complex psychological and nurturing need of foster children. With the growing diversity of the foster care population, basic training programs have been extended to include specialized training components that will help foster parents develop the knowledge and skills needed to foster special needs groups of children. The innovative development and implementation of a specialized foster parent training program seems to hold a unique potential and usefulness for preparing foster parents to successfully foster the black adolescent while simultaneously preparing him/her for independent living.

Foster Parent Education

Education for parenting has long been a tradition in this country. Education for the parenting of other people's children, or foster parent education, is of more recent origin. This interest grew in part from the changing conceptualization of the role of the paraprofessional worker.

During the 1960s there were significant changes in the manner in which the non-professional human service worker was perceived. In response to an acute shortage of trained mental health personnel, along with the passage of the Community Mental Health Act of 1963, the role of the paraprofessional worker was re-evaluated. These workers who had previously provided custodial care as attendants in institutions were seen as having the potential to provide therapeutic services to

patients. Findings in psychological research indicated that certain personal attributes of the psychotherapist were more strongly associated with therapy outcome than was academic training. Carl Rogers (1961) designated the attributes of empathy, unconditional regard of another, and genuineness as the necessary and sufficient conditions for effective psychotherapy.

These developments in the mental health field were followed by similar occurrences in the social service field. They impacted on the perception of the foster parent, who is perhaps the prototype of the non-professional helper. Foster parents, who had been traditionally viewed in a quasi staff/client role in relationship to the agencies to which they were attached, were soon seen as a group to be professionalized. Training programs were developed that were directed towards increasing the effectiveness of the foster parent in the role of parent substitute. These programs incorporated experiential and didactic teaching methods, with recent years seeing the inclusion of the systematic skill approach.

The overall goal of foster parent training is the improvement of services to children while they are in care. It is now recognized that foster parenting requires not only usual parenting skills. Substitute parenting also requires additional knowledge about the complexities of the foster care system and the special developmental and emotional concerns of the foster child.

Foster parenting has been referred to as "Parenting Plus" since foster parenting encompasses many different issues that are inherent in a temporary parenting role. Among these are coping with a lack of knowledge about the child's history and experiences; sharing parenting

responsibilities with the natural parents and agency; coping with the child's feelings that are related to separation, loss and multiple parents; parenting children with poor self-concepts, sense of identity and other emotional concerns; and being subject to outside evaluation of one's functioning in the parenting role (Stone and Hunzeker, 1974). The foster parent of the adolescent must cope with all of these concerns in addition to the difficult developmental concerns of adolescence, while simultaneously preparing him for independent living.

Current State of The Art

There is a wealth of material available in the practice and research literature that is concerned with the education and training of foster parents. There is evidence that training and education programs do have an associative relationship to increased efficiency in foster parenting skills. The overall effectiveness of such programs, however, has yet to be empirically established and the research has produced mixed results. There is clear indication of the need for further exploration in this field; incorporating varied approaches that are relevant to the client population of service.

Recent New York State requirements mandate that all foster parents of special needs children be provided training experience within identified areas of focus. However, prior to legally mandated requirements, the largest numbers of child welfare agencies providing foster care services did provide some form of group education program for foster parents.

A 1974-75 research survey was undertaken by Weinbuck, Edwards and Levy (1977) that identified all accredited Child Welfare League of America agencies offering foster care services. The survey was an effort to compile and assemble descriptive data on group services offered to

foster parents. Of the 173 agencies reporting, it was found that 65 were offering some form of group service. The focus of these services was: (1) orientation to the foster parent roles; (2) family life education and (3) problem sharing. Goals were enumerated as: (1) the education of foster parents to the special needs of foster children; (2) to provide mutual support and problem sharing; (3) the clarification of the foster parent role and (4) improve communication between the agency and the foster parent.

Group services were incorporated into most agency programs through a variety of methods. Similar themes that emerged were that group services were seen as an important means of supplementing casework services, and for counteracting the shortcomings of the traditional pathology orientation approaches to upgrading foster homes. Group participation allowed for the universalization of feelings, provided a mechanism through which foster parents could air grievances, ventilate hostile feelings about the agency and workers while at the same time acquire a feeling that the agency did have an interest in their problems.

While only twenty-seven percent of the reporting agencies required participation in on-going group services, a larger percentage had requirements for mandatory participation in pre-service or orientation training. The latter focused on such aspects of fostering as the role of the foster parent, legal issues of fostering, agency policies and procedures and the rights and responsibilities of children, natural parents and foster parents.

Dorgan (1974) reports the successful implementation of a foster parent education program by the Franklin County Children's Services Board in Grove City, Ohio. The program was formulated around pre-service

training sessions for prospective foster parents, in-service training for experienced foster parents, specialized and advanced workshops, education and consultation services to neighborhood groups and the development of resource data for foster care literature. A key factor in the success of this program was the inclusion of the foster parents in the planning process. The foster parents were active participants in an education committee that had the task of completing an educational needs assessment. The literature supports the fact that the more successful programs are those that include foster parent participation in the development of services.

There are a number of foster parent training models and methods available. Key contributors in the field are Stone and Hunzeker (1974), Frey and Heinritz (1975), Guerney (1975), and Ryan (1974). Initial work was undertaken by Helen Stone (1974), Director of the Foster Parent Project of the Child Welfare League of America. The task of the Project was comprehensive and entailed: (1) an extensive review of the literature on foster parent training/education and a national search for materials and curricula being developed or currently in use; (2) the identification of schools of social work offering courses for paraprofessionals and those with an interest in establishing such programs; (3) consultation with the Council on Social Work Education around the development of continuing education programs; (4) consultation with the Department of Health Education and Welfare Office to explore the possibility of establishing foster parent education programs through the adult education network and (5) informal data collection methods that identified individuals who were conducting or planning training programs. After compilation of all the materials and data, the Project

formulated five basic content areas for training. These materials were made available as Educational Loan Packets that were circulated to foster parent associations and child welfare agencies (Stone, 1974, pp. 4-5).

Patricia Ryan and Bruce L. Warren (1979), and other faculty at Eastern Michigan University, under the auspices of the University's Foster Parent Training Project, have designed comprehensive programs to equip foster parents with specialized fostering skills.

Curriculum and course content adhere to what seems to represent an established format for beginning sessions. The focus is on:

- (1) The consequences of separation trauma.
- (2) How foster parents influence the child's behavior for short-term management and long-term growth.
- (3) Specific needs of children with special problems, i.e., mental retardation, emotional and physical disabilities, problems of adolescence and minority group status.
- (4) How foster parents meet problems in dealing with schools for ordinary foster children and those with special problems.

These basic course offerings have been expanded to include a number of specialized curricula.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1978) has published an extensive manual on foster parent training. The major components of this manual are (1) Foster Parent Selection, (2) Foster Parent Training, and (3) The Appendices.

The guide presents methods for identifying groups of potential foster parents, recruitment strategies and the use of screening materials to assess training needs.

The course outline provides a guideline for training adults and facilitating groups. Additional information that includes references,

tapes and films to be used in training can be found in the extensive appendices.

Louise Frey and Gretchen Heinritz (1975), at Boston University School of Social Work Division of Continuing Education, have developed a comprehensive training manual. The content areas are: (1) Growth and Development, (2) Separation and Loss, (3) Behavior, (4) Family Systems, (5) Community, (6) Roles, (7) Legal Aspects, (8) Homefinding and (9) Administration and Management.

Research Findings

The research literature supports several relevant findings as to the impact of training programs on fostering skills and placement outcome.

The findings of a two-year follow-up survey completed by Boyd and Remy (1978) indicated that training reduced the incidence of failed placements, increased the probability of desired placement outcome and increased the probability of the foster parent remaining licensed and continuing in the role of foster parent. Additional findings of the survey revealed that training had a positive impact on all placement outcomes independent of other factors such as experience of the foster parent, environmental stress and characteristics of the child (pp. 275-278).

Levant and Slobodian (1981) conducted a research study that was designed to evaluate the impact of a systematic skills training program on foster mothers and to investigate the relationship between skills training and placement stability. The sample included inner-city, lower socio-economic minority foster mothers, whose foster children ranged in age from seven to seventeen years. The training program consisted on ten three-hour, weekly sessions. The content of the sessions represented

what in the researchers' judgment was the best aspects of existing systematic skills training programs. A fundamental assumption of the training was that personal development is a prerequisite for effective skill development, or that skills are learned and relationships enhanced to the extent that one is able to grow as a person. The foster children of the control and experimental groups of foster mothers were compared before and after training on variables of self-esteem, asocialization, emotionality-tension, self-exploration and placement stability. The overall results left open the question as to whether or not systematic skills training can be effective in enhancing skills or quality of care in lower socio-economic homes. It was recommended that new research utilize an extended training program. This was indicated because of the needs and life circumstances of the foster mothers and the degree of disturbance of the foster children.

Low socio-economic foster mothers and their foster children were the subjects of a research study that was completed by Thompson and Tavormina (1980). The study was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of behavioral and group training techniques. Reflective counseling emphasized parental awareness, and understanding and acceptance of the child's feelings, while behavioral counseling emphasized actual observable behavior and environmental variables that maintained certain behavioral patterns.

The reflectively trained mothers exhibited an improvement in parental attitudes, while the behaviorally trained group improved in a decrease in the number of problem behaviors and more appropriate behavioral observations. A combination of approaches was seen as being most desirable in that parental behaviors and attitudes would be impacted in

an optimum manner. The authors additionally stressed the need to develop strategies that would reduce drop-out rate, increase motivation and attendance rates. Paying foster parents for attendance was suggested as possible solution.

Implications

The literature review indicates that foster parent training does have an associative relationship to the quality of foster care provided. Further benefits are accrued in that qualified and competent foster parents, who function as knowledgeable paraprofessionals, will decrease the amount of direct service hours spent by the social worker in mediating crisis situations. Social workers would then be freed to spend more direct service time in clinical activities, an area of high job satisfaction for most child welfare practitioners. The literature further suggests that the minority lower socio-economic foster parent may have additional personal needs that can be addressed in the training sequence. Many of these foster parents are dealing with survival issues of life and often need concrete and supportive services to assist them to solve their own life problems so that they are free to cope with the behavioral concerns of the foster child. Jacobs (1980) has discussed the issue of empowerment of the foster parent, which seems to hold much relevance for this population.

There is in the practice and research literature a wealth of material in the general areas of interest of this project. The theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the project design incorporated an integration of the available knowledge in these fields.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The Independent Life Skills Preparation Project presents a strategy

for the development of a model foster parent training program. Two training programs were implemented that differed in terms of instructional format and group composition. The process of implementation is described and comparisons are made of the effectiveness of the two programs in relationship to their impact on fostering skill development and placement stability.

Preparation for independent living is an incremental process. It is a process that should be initiated long before the sixteenth year of the adolescent. Continuity in care and on-going services should be provided throughout placement and augmented by follow-up discharge services. The project as developed falls far short of accomplishing this monumental task.

Limiting factors of the study are the representativeness of the participant group, which under ideal circumstances should have been larger in number and more characteristic of the current under-care adolescent population. The time allotted for implementation is still another limiting factor when considered in relationship to the volume of content covered. Finally, there was no direct involvement with the agencies and social work staff that carried the major responsibility for providing ongoing services to the foster families who participated in the project.

CHAPTER IV
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Project Design

The Independent Life Skills Preparation Project (ILSPP) concurrently focused on the implementation of two foster parent training programs and the collection of formative data for program development. A task of the project was to assess and describe the impact of two training strategies on fostering skill and placement stability.

The two training programs were identified as the Behavior Management Program and the Communication Interaction Program, and differed in terms of group composition and instructional format. The two programs were implemented over an eight week period with two separate groups of foster parents who had been pre-selected. The sessions were scheduled consecutively and met for two hours.

The content of the programs was formulated around the following modules or fostering skills:

Self Awareness

Human Development/Developmental Tasks of Adolescence

Assessment and Planning/Black Family Life Styles

Behavior Management/Foster Parent Practice

Systems Negotiation/Coping With Burnout

A curriculum guide was developed prior to the implementation process. However, integral to the project design was the teaching of these content areas and at the same time broadening and redefining them in collaboration with the group participants.

The innovative aspect of the project design was the engagement of an experienced group of foster parents in a collaborative process of program

development.

Although both of the training programs focused on content and process, the Behavior Management program emphasized a didactic teaching format and the Communication Interaction Program, a process oriented format that focused on the interactional/communication patterns of the adolescents and foster parents.

Six foster parents completed the Behavior Management Program. The primary trainer for the group was a female, social worker/educator. Seven foster parents and seven adolescents who were currently in placement with them completed the Communication Interaction Program. The primary trainer for this group was a male, social worker/psychotherapist.

The collaborative orientation of ILSPP emphasized the role of the foster parents as an extension of the staff of the agency of affiliation, and affirmed the wealth of knowledge derived from their previous on-the-job experience, life experience and racial identification. Equal value was given to the intuitive knowledge that evolved from the practical life experiences of the foster parent and that derived from empirical research and the practice experiences of the professional project staff. Efforts were made to achieve an integration of these two perspectives. Foremost in the design of ILSPP was the incorporation of the practice principle and ethical imperative that:

Opportunities to participate in the development of programs, in the formulation of policies and procedures, as well as in the practice decisions effecting their lives must be afforded (client groups) as a minimal expectation of organizations and practices intended to help them (Lewis, 1972, p. 411).

Practice Principles

The assumptions that formed the conceptual framework of the project

were derived from a basic premise that acknowledged the centrality of the family in the society and that the family performs the essential function of educating children for independence and self reliance. Assumptions related to black family functioning were derived from the proposition that the black family holds a unique position in American society. Billingsley (1968) has posited that as a result of its cultural and social heritage the black family has developed certain coping and adaptive mechanisms that make it particularly well suited to rear black children to adapt, cope and importantly to achieve in the larger society. In support of these assumptions the project design was formulated around the strengths of the black foster family and a conceptualization of it as being a unique system that could provide beneficial re-socialization experiences for foster adolescents approaching emancipation.

A deficient model has been traditionally used in the conceptualization of minority group functioning. To some extent child welfare agencies have continued to view the foster family as a unit for intervention, treatment and change as opposed to being a resource and extension of the agency staff.

The Project design acknowledged, and sought to capitalize on the special skills that the black foster parent brought to the fostering experience that came from life experiences of rearing own children to function and achieve in the larger society. Activities were directed towards extending these parenting skills through theoretical learnings in ways that would enable the foster parents to apply in the work of fostering those interventions that were effective in managing the erratic behaviors presented by the youngsters in their care while simultaneously

preparing them for independence. These assumptions informed the development of the practices and content of the Behavior Management Program.

Practice Principle: In work with adult learners value should be placed on their life experiences, and they should be engaged in the learning process, determining how and what should be learned.

The following rules would be informed by this principle:

- (1) In the orientation session the proposed training content and objectives will be presented to the foster parent group by the Project Coordinator.
- (2) The Project Coordinator's responsibility will be to accept feedback and input from foster parents around proposed content and objectives.
- (3) Final training content will reflect an integration of Project Coordinator identified priorities and foster parent identified priorities.

Practice Principle: The trainer in the enabling role should assist the foster parent to identify his own unique parenting strength and style so that these are transferred to and applied in the fostering experience. The following rules would be informed by this principle:

- (1) An autobiographical assignment should be used to assist the foster parent to identify the unique character of his family of origin.
- (2) Training content will incorporate a full discussion of adolescent growth and development with an emphasis on the unique developmental concerns of the Black adolescent.
- (3) The foster parent will maintain a log in which one assignment is to identify parenting skills that allowed for the successful resolution of adolescent concerns of own children.
- (4) The foster parent is to be given assignments where he is called upon to apply learnings to at home encounters with his foster child.

Practice Principle: The motivation of the learner may be increased if there is some intrinsic or extrinsic award associated with the activity in which he is engaged.

The following rules would be informed by this principle:

- (1) The trainer is to promote the creation of a learning environment that merges the cause and function of fostering and support this as valued and needed work.
- (2) The foster parent is to be given assignments where he is to identify positive outcomes and successful problem resolutions of the fostering experience.
- (3) Foster parents who complete the required number of sessions and assignments will receive a certificate for having successfully completed a foster parent training program.
- (4) The adolescent who completes the required number of sessions and assignments will receive a material reward or bonus.

Adolescence is a life stage that is characterized by turmoil, rebellion and the need to challenge authority and traditional values. These normative needs of adolescence, however, have resulted in adolescent placements being high risk for disruption and breakdown. Consequently, the older child in care often experiences multiple placements and does not have an opportunity for consistent experiences that assist him to learn interpersonal/social skills and competency in these areas that can be transferred to independent community living.

Similarly, the adolescent's need to achieve a consolidation of identity and autonomy from family ties creates a further dilemma for the foster adolescent, who must continually struggle with the question of identity as related to his foster care status and the need to make attachments to what may be a series of foster families and multiple parenting figures.

Theory and practice principles teach that in order to efficiently negotiate transitional periods of the life cycles, it is productive for the individual to have a cognitive and affective base for understanding these occurrences. Theory related to adolescent development supports the importance of the adolescent having significant input into the planning for his/her immediate and future life.

In their discussion of the positive outcomes associated with the involvement of children in child welfare decisions, Bush and Gordon (1982, pp. 309-310) suggest it is of particular significance for the older child in care to be involved in making placement decisions. Opportunities should be provided for him/her to articulate and share information about what conditions make for a supportive environment as a means of mitigating against placement breakdown. Children have access to information that often is not available to the professional, and are able to say when they feel at ease in a placement and whether the caretaker is supportive and encouraging.

The Project design incorporated these concepts and theories related to adolescent psychosocial development in its conceptualization of a placement model. Traditionally, foster care, as have adoptive services, used a "birth model" as a means of incorporating the child into the existing family system. A major assumption of the project is that a contract model is more appropriate for use in negotiating the placement agreement for the adolescent. This model emphasizes a reciprocal and mutual agreement between separate and distinct individuals/families. This requires that each have a historical sense of the other, a knowledge of the special concerns and needs that each bring to a new family encounter. Foster parents and adolescents should work towards the

development of interaction and negotiating skills that would support the long-term maintenance of this relationship.

The placement model identifies the role of the adult as educator as opposed to "parent" and supports the child's continuing ties to natural parent, siblings and other extended family members. These relationships are to be valued, supported and encouraged by the foster parent. Family information should be shared between the foster parent, foster siblings and foster child. Role expectation performance and task assignments in role enactment should be clearly explicated and derived from a mutual exchange.

The placement model assumes that the foster parent, the adolescent and the agency have entered into a binding partnership that cannot be altered without the full participation of each nor without undertaking a series of negotiating activities that are directed towards the successful resolution of conflict. The role of the foster parent is conceptualized as that of mentor, providing role modeling opportunities and all of the advantages of the knowledge that is derived from his greater range of experience and maturity. Crucial to this mentor/teacher role is the concept of identification, supported by foster parents' ability to be sensitive and responsive to the adolescents' need to establish independence and autonomy.

The focus upon the strengths of minority group functioning was also incorporated into the work with the adolescent. It is important that in spite of damaging and debilitating experiences that often characterize the lives of this group of youngsters, many appear to have become "stress resistant", maintaining a resiliency and strength. Often they have retained the positive values that are traditionally associated with black

family life. Robinson and Fields (1983) in their discussion of the "invulnerable child", suggest that practice with children whose lives have been marked with trauma be reconceptualized to focus upon their strengths and to interventive strategies that are more directive and supportive of these strengths.

The Communication/Interactional Skills Program addresses these issues of adolescent foster family placements. These concepts were used to formulate the practice and content of the Communication/Interactional Training Program.

Practice Principle: Healthy growth and development, and successful interpersonal and social functioning requires a knowledge of self, significant others in one's environment and one's relationship to those significant others. The following rules are informed by this principle:

(1) The trainer is to promote a full discussion of adolescent growth and development and identify those transactions in process that represent typical stressors of this life stage that occur in the interactions between adolescents and authority figures.

(2) The trainer is to promote the adolescents' and foster parents' ability to know themselves and understand their relationship to the other.

(3) The trainer is to devote an early session to the sharing of "family tree" information with both the adolescent and foster parent.

Practice Principle: Placement breakdown is minimized when there is shared and mutual communication between the foster parent and the adolescent.

The following rules are informed by this principle:

(1) The trainer is to promote a full discussion of the progress of placements in the conjoint sessions with the foster parent

and adolescent.

(2) No placement is to be terminated without the full participation of the social worker, adolescent and foster parent.

(3) No placement will be terminated without full discussion in conjoint session.

Practice Principle: The individual's social development is enhanced by group support.

The following rule is informed by this principle:

(1) The trainer is to create an atmosphere and environment that promotes a mutual regard and respect between the foster parent and foster adolescent.

(2) Opportunities should be provided for shared discussion of the perceived difference that the foster experience brings to the life of the adolescent and foster parent.

Project Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the project was to improve the quality of undercare services of the foster adolescent approaching discharge from the foster care systems in ways that would enhance the transition to independent community living.

Program Objectives:

- (1) To increase foster parenting skills in five skill areas: (1) Self-Awareness, (2) Human Development/Developmental Tasks of Adolescence, (3) Assessment and Planning/Black Family Life Styles, (4) Behavior Management/Foster Parent Practice, and (5) Systems Negotiation/Coping with Burn out.
- (2) To prevent placement disruption.
- (3) To present a strategy for the development of a model foster parent training program for Independent Life Skills Preparation.

The goals and objectives of the Project were achieved through the major steps of:

- (1) The development of a recruitment schedule for the collection of pertinent background and descriptive data on the program participants.
- (2) The Selection of Program Participants.
- (3) The development of the Foster Parent Questionnaire to measure fostering skills in the five skill areas; (1) Self-Awareness, (2) Human Development/Developmental Tasks of Adolescence, (3) Assessment and Planning/Black Family Life Styles, (4) Behavior Management/Foster Parent Practice and (5) Systems Negotiation/Coping with Burn out.
- (4) The Implementation of the Behavior Management and Communication/Interaction Training Programs.
- (5) Project Evaluation.

Research Methodology

The project used a combined descriptive/comparative research design and attempted to identify correlations and associations between training format, fostering skills and placement stability. A primary task was to assess and describe the relative effectiveness of the two training strategies.

The primary sources of data collection were: (1) the foster parent/youth recruitment forms, (2) the foster parent/youth questionnaires, (3) participant logs, (4) videotapes of training sessions, and (4) participant reactionnaires.

The research questions that the study addressed were:

In what ways does a didactic oriented training format effect fostering skill and placement stability in comparison to a process oriented format?

What influence does the participation of the adolescent in training have on the training results and placement outcome?

It was anticipated that the results would generate data that would produce or refine hypotheses development in the area of foster parent training and the relationship that group composition and method of

training has on the variables of fostering skill and placement stability.

Correlary questions that the project addressed were:

What is the differential impact of the format of training on foster parent performance in each of the five skill areas?

Is the use of a "contract model" a more viable placement agreement in fostering the older adolescent?

What is the impact of training on foster parent satisfaction with the fostering role?

Are there parenting styles that are idiosyncratic to the black foster parent?

Selection of the Sample

The participants for ILSP were selected from the general population of all adolescents receiving foster care services from SSC and its contract agencies. Using a list of all contract agencies that was obtained from SSC, recruitment materials were sent to the agency director that included: (1) an introductory letter to agency directors inviting their participation in the program, (2) a summary of the project proposal, (3) recruitment letters for foster parents and youth, (4) recruitment forms and (5) stamped, addressed return envelopes.

Agency direct service workers were instructed to pre-select and refer those foster parents and youth who met the basic program requirements and who they assessed as appropriate candidates for the project. It was not atypical for the agency social worker to telephone the project director for additional information about the project. These contracts did suggest that the workers may have been setting standards that were so high that suitable candidates may have been early screened out of the population as they sought to identify their "best foster parents" and most engageable adolescents for participation.

A second list was obtained from Special Services for Children Office of Consumer Affairs of foster parents who were active participants in the activities and planning processes of this department. A third list was obtained from the President of the New York Foster Parent Association. The SSC staff representative for the foster parent office and the President of the Foster Parents Association actively assisted in the recruitment process.

The total number of recruitment forms that were distributed directly by agencies is not known. A total of twenty-three recruitment forms were mailed directly by the project director to foster parents who had been recommended either by the SSC office or the president of the Foster Parent Association, and to foster parents who had learned through informal sources of the project and telephoned for further information. A consistent response from foster parents during the recruitment process was their pleasure at being seen as important contributors to the training process. There were also positive feelings expressed because it seemed that official recognition was given to the plight of youngsters who were approaching discharge from the system to independent living.

Thirty-five recruitment forms were returned. This was the population from which the original twenty-four participants were selected (16 foster parents and 8 youth). The largest number of foster parents returning recruitment forms expressed a preference to participate in the Communication/Interaction Program with their foster youngster. One youngster sought participation in the project without her foster parent.

The Foster Parent Recruitment Form obtained data on the following descriptive variables: (1) age, (2) marital status, (3) ethnicity, (4) education, (5) employment, (6) years of fostering experience, (7) foster

children currently in placement, (8) other household members, and (9) agency affiliation. Respondents were also asked to give a brief statement as to their motivation for seeking participation in ILSP and the individual contribution that they could make to the project.

The Youth Recruitment Form, in addition to descriptive data and motivation for participation in the project, obtained information on: (1) frequency of visitation with biological family members, (2) perception of the reason for initial placement, (3) post discharge self sufficiency expectation, and (4) degree of discharge apprehension.

Given the high risk for disruption nature of adolescent placement, as supported in the research literature and practice experience, the assumption was made that the largest percentage of youngsters that were represented in this group (16-19 years) would have experienced at least two previous out of home placements, either in institutional settings or individual foster family homes. Foster adolescents who had a history of substance abuse, extensive involvement with the juvenile or criminal justice systems, or those who were not enrolled in an educational or vocational program were excluded from the sample. These were all variables that have been shown to consistently mitigate against placement stability.

The participants in the project were not matched on the various variables that have been enumerated since the size of the total universe did not lend itself to this kind of sampling procedure, nor was this kind of procedure germane to the primary purpose of the project. Comparisons were made on those variables that might have had a relationship to the participants' ability to integrate training content.

Major selection criteria were ethnicity, years of fostering

experience, agency recommendation and that the discharge plan of the youngster was independent living. Additional information that assisted in determining which foster parents would best serve the project's objectives was obtained from the participants' written statements, and insights that were gleaned from follow-up telephone contacts.

The final selection of foster parents was made in consideration of factors such as the age and sex distribution of youngsters, and to ensure that a range of foster care agencies were represented. The agencies represented were Graham Windham, Harlem Dowling, Louise Wise, Edwin Gould, Brookwood, Episcopal Mission Society and Special Services For Children, direct care division.

The second phase of the study was the development of the Foster Parent Questionnaire to measure fostering skills in the five skill areas and the establishment of criteria for placement stability.

It is recognized that placement stability is impacted upon by a variety of intervening variables, which may be broadly categorized as those related to: (1) the adolescent, which would include such factors as degree of disturbance and attained level of adjustment; (2) the foster family system, encompassing such factors as characteristics of the foster parents and availability of environmental supports, and (3) the agency context, which would involve a multiplicity of factors including of those related to worker skill and previous activities that had taken a preventive focus and those directed towards crisis mediation and resolution. Encircling all of this would be the decision making process that informed the initial placement and the nature of the placement agreement. While all of these are intervening variables that have an important influence on placement stability, for the purposes of the

project, placement stability was simply defined as the retention of the adolescent in the foster home for the two month duration of the project.

The literature review of training programs that have been developed for foster parents and those used with child care workers in residential/group home settings indicated that such training programs were typically organized around Orientation Training and In-Service Training. Training content characteristically focused upon the following areas: (1) the legal framework of the foster care system; (2) the organization/agency context; (3) orientation to the foster parent/child care role; (4) family life education; (5) human growth and development and (6) education directed towards the special needs of foster children. In-Service foster parent training programs had the additional goals of providing an opportunity for group problem sharing and solving, improving communication with the agency and providing a means for mutual support.

These content areas were the guide that was used for the development of the content for the ILSPP training modules. This general training content as presented in the literature was expanded upon to include content that was relevant to independent life skill preparation and to the Black experience. The five training modules developed were:

- (1) Self-Awareness
- (2) Human Growth and Development/Developmental Tasks of Adolescence
- (3) Assessment and Planning/Black Family Life Styles
- (4) Behavior Management/Foster Parent Practice
- (5) Systems Negotiation/Coping with Burn out

Self-awareness was categorized as an expressive fostering skill and

Behavior Management/Foster Parent Practice as instrumental. All other skill areas were viewed as having both instrumental and expressive features. While the training sessions were organized around these major content areas, none were discrete. There was a constant overlapping of themes and attention was given to both content and process with independent life skill preparation and black family life styles providing the integrating themes for all modules.

PLAN OF EVALUATION

The Project concurrently focused on the implementation of the two training programs and the collection of formative data for program development.

The major objectives of the training programs were to support foster parent skill development in the five skill areas and prevent placement disruption. The major criteria of program outcome were established as placement stability for the two month duration of the project and the foster parents' demonstration of the successful integration of the training content as reflected in improved fostering skill scores.

The Foster Parent Questionnaire was developed as the instrument for the quantitative measurement of program outcome. The number of placement disruptions that occurred during the two month duration of the project was established as another quantitative indicator of program outcome. As indicated, this criterion of program outcome was established in recognition that placement stability is influenced by a number of significant intervening variables that were beyond the scope of this study.

Qualitative descriptive data were instrumental to the project goals. These data were obtained from participant logs, review of the video tapes

of all training sessions, observations and impressions of project staff, and the participants' evaluation of the training content and its overall usefulness to the fostering experience.

The Foster Parent Questionnaire

Based upon the project conceptualization of foster parenting skill, a seventeen item questionnaire was designed. The Questionnaire included three questions for each of the five fostering skills. In addition to the questions that were related to these skills, the Questionnaire contained a section that was related to independent living. This section was not included in the scoring. Using a scale that ranged from "not at all" to "extremely", the respondents were asked to indicate the degree of importance to independent living, and to rank in order of priority the following abilities/skills: (1) Personal Hygiene, (2) Civic Responsibility/Sense of Community Service, (3) Vocational Occupation Job Skills, (4) Home Management/Housekeeping Skills, (5) Budgeting/Finance Management, (6) Sense of Blackness and Relatedness to the Black Community, and (7) Interpersonal/Social Relationship Skills.

To clarify definitions, use of language, and directions given, the Questionnaire was pre-tested on a small group of foster parents who were currently involved in the In-Service training program at the Episcopal Mission Society's Parent Therapist Program, three staff social workers of this program and the two project trainers. Based upon the feedback from these three sources, revisions were made in the original Questionnaire. The decision was also made to administer the pre- and post Questionnaire in group under the direction of the project director to minimize distortions and confusion in completing the schedules.

Scoring

The Foster Parent Questionnaire contained a mixture of multiple choice, true/false, yes/no, and short answer responses. Scoring was based on a point scale that ranged from 85 to 0. The highest number of points that could be attained in each skill area, with the exception of Assessment and Planning/Black Family Life Styles was fifteen. For the latter skill area the highest number of points that could be attained was 25. 85-70 represented High Fostering Skill, 69-50 Medium, and 49 and below represented Low Fostering Skill. In evaluating program outcome, attention was given to the total attained score as well as the sub-scores attained in each of the skill areas.

When assigning numerical values to multiple choice response, five points were given to those responses that were judged to be the most preferred, one point to those that were considered acceptable and 0 to those that were considered to be the least acceptable. Items 3 through 4 sought information related to the foster parents' level of self-awareness. Respondents received five points for corresponding responses to questions 3 and 4. Under item 4, (c) was considered to be the preferred response, (b) acceptable and (a) the least preferred response:

4. Your foster child has not been attending school because he/she feels that the teacher is prejudiced and treats him/her unfairly. In discussing the situation would you attempt to assist the youngster to understand that:
 - a) _____ Color and race is of little significance today and anyone who is motivated and really wants to can make it.
 - b) _____ Racism is always present in all situations and young people need to understand that and be prepared to cope with it

- c) _____ Some situations are the result of racism, however, youngsters need to be prepared to accept responsibility for their own behavior and shortcomings.

Similarly, item 5, which sought information of knowledge of human growth and development, (a) was the preferred response, (b) acceptable and (c) the least preferred response:

5. Check that response that most closely describes what you think makes some youngsters behave in troublesome ways:
- a) _____ Past life experiences
- b) _____ Lack of motivation
- c) _____ Nature of heredity

On those items that required a short answer response (7, 11, 12, and 13), five points were given only when the respondent correctly identified three of the sought for responses and one point when one or more were identified. For example, in listing the three developmental tasks of adolescence, the Erickson model was used as a guide for scoring. Only those responses were credited that reflected an understanding of this conceptual framework. Similarly, in scoring item 11 and 12, only those responses that reflected Hill's conceptualization of the strengths of black families were credited.

In support of a major assumption of the project in scoring item 9, which was related to the placement model, (a) was the most preferred response, (b) the least preferred and (c) acceptable:

9. In accepting an adolescent 16 years or older for placement in your home, which of the following arrangements would be the most acceptable to you:
- a) _____ A contractual agreement between me, the youngster and the placing agency with my role being that of a role model or mentor with responsibilities to teach the youngster all of the responsibilities of adult living.

- b) _____ A Boarding House agreement between me and the agency with my role being that of custodian with responsibilities to provide physical care only as long as the youngster respected the rules of my home.
- c) _____ A Substitute Family Agreement where my role would be that of parent with responsibilities for providing discipline, love and assisting the youngster to develop a feeling of attachment and belonging to his/her new family.

The final item on the questionnaire asked that respondents rate themselves as foster parents--ratings ranged from excellent to poor. While this item was not used in the scoring, comparisons were made on the pre- and post test self ratings of the Foster parents'. This item was used as an indication of satisfaction with the fostering role.

The Youth Questionnaire

A Youth Questionnaire was designed that had a major goal of providing a framework for assessing the current level of readiness for independent living of the youth who would be participating in the program. Since the training programs were not directed towards imparting the kind of knowledge to youth that would increase knowledge and skill in the area of independent living, although given as a "pre- and post test", appreciable changes in scores were not anticipated and post test scores were not included in the evaluation of program outcome.

Using training materials that had been published by the School of Social Work, Virginia Commonwealth University, the youth questionnaire was developed to obtain information in the following areas: (1) Employment, (2) Home Management, (3) Money Management, (4) Health/Family Planning, (5) Social, Interpersonal Relationships, and (6) Sense of Blackness and relatedness to the Black community.

In addition, youth were also asked to identify the preferred placement agreement and to identify and rank the skills and abilities of independent living.

When the project terminated and after all schedules were completed the data were tabulated for analysis and interpretation. Since the ILSP used a descriptive/comparative research methodology and represented a before/after study, in analyzing the data, attention was given to describing the process of implementation, observed differences in the qualitative performance of the two groups and problems of implementation, as well as to a comparison of the post intervention performance of the two groups.

The evaluation of the program attempted to identify associational relationships between the training programs, the independent variable of the project, and fostering skills and placement stability, the dependent variables. Comparisons were made of the between and within group differences in mean fostering skill scores. The within group differences in scores were established as indicators of the effectiveness of each of the training strategies for improving fostering skills, and the between group differences as indicators of the degree of success that was achieved by each. The presence of differences that were statistically significant at the .05 level in the post-intervention between group scores of the foster parents was established as the most definitive indicator of the relative effectiveness of the two training strategies (Epstein and Tripodi, 1977, p. 156). Since the research design used two groups, the t-test was used to measure the differences between the mean scores of the training groups (Grinnell, 1981, pp. 504-505).

Comparisons were made of the number of placement disruptions that

occured during the two month period of implementation.

The Planning Process

The preliminary steps to the implementation of the Independent Life Skills Preparation Project included the identification of a conduit agency, project trainers, funding source, obtaining approval of Special Services for Children, and the recruitment of an Advisory Committee.

The Sponsoring Agency

The Episcopal Mission Society in the Diocese of New York was the conduit agency for the project. The Society also assumed financial responsibility for the project, which made it possible to avoid a delay in the timetable of implementation.

The Episcopal Mission Society is a religious based social welfare organization that was established in 1810 for the purpose of providing charitable services to the poor and disadvantaged of New York. The programs that the Society currently sponsors are: (1) Chaplaincy Services, (2) Residential camping services to youth, (3) Child Care Services, which includes group homes and specialized foster care services for adolescents, (4) Occupational Training, (5) Refugee Services and (6) Senior Citizens Services.

Since the project was to assume a black perspective, early activities were directed towards gaining the support of a major black child welfare agency that was housed in the black community. In retrospect, the politics of program implementation were greatly minimized by conducting the program under the auspices of the Episcopal Mission Society. Because the project director was known to the agency and the program received full support from the agency executive, the implementation process was facilitated. The program received a greater legitimation and necessary

resources were easily obtained. Most importantly, the program participants' sense of valuing of the program was increased by its receiving sanction from a major child care agency. Throughout the life of the project, the Executive Director's continuing support provided a means for increasing the visibility of the project at various levels of the agency. The project director participated in agency administrative staff meetings in the role of staff representative for ILSP and the project became an extended service program of the Society.

The Project Staff

In support of the goals and conceptual framework of ILSP the project trainers were to have an orientation that would allow them to maintain an ethnic-sensitive perspective in their interactions with the participant group, as reflected in the ability to identify with all of the subtle nuances and expressions of the black experience.

Both of the trainers who were identified had a long professional history in the field of social welfare and practice experiences with minority client groups. Both were black social workers with teaching experiences at the graduate social work level. The primary trainer for the Behavior Management Module brought additional expertise in the area of minority content curriculum development. The primary trainer for the Communication Interaction Module brought additional expertise in the areas of services to the acting-out adolescent, and foster parent training. The project director participated as co-trainer in all sessions of both modules and brought specific knowledge of child welfare services and current issues of the system.

Funding Source

The literature review of research related to foster parent training

programs suggested that the retention of foster parents in such training is enhanced when they are provided training stipends. Since the participants of ILSP were being specifically recruited for the purpose of engaging in collaborative work with the project staff, compensating both the foster parents and the youth for that work was viewed as a means for operationalizing the valuing of these contributions. Therefore, funding was sought primarily to support training stipends for this group. These stipends represented the major expenditure of the program's budget.

The project proposal was rewritten and submitted for funding to a number of foundations, these included the Greater New York Fund/United Way, the Valentine Perry Snyder Foundation, The New York Community Trust, the Compton Foundation, the Vinmont Foundation, and the Foundation for Child Development. During this process the project director had an opportunity to meet with the Assistant Director of the Greater New York Fund/United Way and with the Director of Children's Programs of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. Both of these foundation officers offered an invaluable critical appraisal of the project design and its conceptual underpinnings. Their comments led to new insights that were used to modify some aspects of the original design.

Special Services of Children

Approval of the project was needed from SSC as the city agency with responsibility for foster care services. The agency is a major component of the Human Resources Administration and is characterized by a highly bureaucraticized structure. Yet contrary to its public image, it proved to be responsive and accessible. Key staff members facilitated the process of gaining approval by providing useful information such as that

related to levels of decision making, departmental responsibilities and the informal processes of the organization. The final approval for the project was obtained from the Office of Management through the intervention of a staff member who subsequently became a member of the Advisory Committee.

The initial outreach activities of the project director to SSC's contract agencies did reveal a realistic concern on their part for the confidentiality rights of foster parents, children, biological parents and agencies as they related to research undertakings. Again, and contrary to their public image, workers were clearly functioning in the role of advocate as they sought to clarify the credibility of the project and protect the rights of clients.

The final directive that came from SSC, which was verbally communicated, was that the participation of the child (over 16 years of age) and that of the foster parent was to be voluntary. They were to sign a waiver and consent form in which they would indicate an informed participation. Contract agencies with the responsibility for youth participating in the program were instructed to include this information in the Uniform Case Record, indicating the foster family's participation in a program for independent living.

The Advisory Committee

The role of the Advisory Committee was to offer consultation to the project director during the planning and implementation processes. Its membership included members of the staffs of the Episcopal Mission Society, Special Services for Children, The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, New York University School of Social Work, Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services and a foster parent. The Director of

the Social Welfare component of the Episcopal Church Center later became a member of the Advisory Committee and expressed a tentative interest in dissemination of the project findings and the curriculum guide that was to be developed. While the members of the Advisory Committee were selected because of their agency affiliation and expertise and interest, with the exception of the Episcopal Mission Society, none were representing their organizations in an official capacity.

There were two meetings of the Advisory Committee. One meeting took place prior to the beginning of the project and had the purpose of reviewing the proposed project format and procedures. The second meeting of the Committee was after the project had terminated and had the purpose of sharing information about the implementation process.

A limitation of the Advisory Committee was that it did not include a foster parent or youth in its membership. The foster parent who had originally agreed to participate withdrew and active efforts were not undertaken to identify a youth for membership.

CHAPTER V

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Thirteen foster parents and seven youth participated in the Independent Life Skills Preparation Project. The group represented six major private child welfare agencies and the direct care component of Special Services for Children.

Both training modules were oversubscribed by one in anticipation of drop-out before program start up. All foster parents and youth who were selected for the program were sent letters of notification, and received a follow up telephone call prior to the orientation session. All others were sent a letter thanking them for their interest and requesting that their names be placed on a waiting list in the event that there were drop-outs from the program.

Four foster parents did drop out of the project before the Orientation Session and were replaced by waiting list parents. Of the four parents who dropped out, one was unresponsive to follow up contacts, two indicated unforeseen transportation difficulties, one indicated the work schedule of the foster child now conflicted with the schedule of the project and one had received an emergency placement of two young children that placed constraints on time. In the interest of group process, after the second missed session, no further attempts were made to bring the total number of participants up to eight. The final number of participants was seven youth and seven foster parents in the Communication/Interaction Program and seven foster parents in the Behavior Management Program. One parent dropped out of the Behavior

Management Program at the end of the fourth session. This foster parent gave as the reason for withdrawing her accepting for emergency placement two young children, whose problems required her ongoing attention.

The sessions were videotaped with the exception of the Orientation and Evaluation sessions. The Project Director served as co-trainer to both training programs and conducted the contracting and evaluation sessions.

Three conjoint sessions were held during the course of the project's implementation. All program participants and project trainers were present for: (1) the Orientation Session, which had the major purpose of the introduction of the program and the administration of the pre-tests to foster parents and youth, (2) the Review Session that was scheduled at the midpoint of implementation and had the purpose of assessing the progress of the programs and viewing of segments of the video tapes, and (3) the Evaluation Session, which had the purposes of reviewing the proposed reformulated curriculum outline, the evaluation of the program and the administration of the post tests.

Description of the Program Participants

The Foster Parent Group

All of the foster parents who participated in the study had some prior training that was provided either by their agencies or under the auspices of local and state foster parent organizations. The three foster parents who were affiliated with the Episcopal Mission Society had been engaged in continuous in-service training with the project director for the past six years. Three of the participating foster parents maintained an active role in foster parent training programs offered at the agency, city and state levels. Four of the foster parents in the

Behavior Management Program did have adolescents currently in placement who met the project requirement of age and discharge plan. At the time of the project start up two foster parents in this group did not have adolescents currently in placement but did have prior experience in adolescent fostering. Both had experienced such a placement within the last six months. These foster parents were selected for the project because of their extensive experiences in fostering and involvement in the development of policies and programs related to the training of foster parents.

The largest number of foster parents seeking participation in the project, and those who were selected for participation, had given as their motivation an awareness of the gap in services that existed for this population of children receiving child welfare services. They also felt that their extended fostering experience was an attribute that would support the achievement of the project objectives.

There was one male foster parent participating in the project. The age range of the foster parent group was 40 to 65 years. The mean age of the group was 49.5 years.

The number of years of formal education of the foster parent group ranged from 11 to 20 years. Four of the foster parents had earned a college degree and 5 had completed some college study. Only one of the foster parents participating in the project had not completed high school. This foster parent had completed high school through the eleventh grade.

When considering the total group on the descriptive variable of marital status, 6 of the foster parents were married and 7 represented single parent foster homes. Three of the foster parents had never been

TABLE 1
 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FOSTER PARENTS
 (N = 14)

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Training Program</u>		Total
	<u>Communication Interaction Program</u> (N = 7)	<u>Behavior Management Program</u> (N = 7)	
<u>SEX</u>			
MALE	-	1	1
FEMALE	7	6	13
<u>AGE</u>			
40-45	1	4	5
46-50	3	0	3
51-55	1	2	3
56-60	1	0	1
60 +	1	1	2
<u>MARITAL STATUS</u>			
MARRIED	4	2	6
DIVORCED/SEP	1	1	2
WIDOWED	1	2	3
NEVER MARRIED	1	2	3
<u>EDUCATION</u>			
GRADUATE SCHOOL	0	1	1
COLLEGE DEGREE	1	3	4
SOME COLLEGE	4	1	5
HS GRADUATE	1	2	3
11TH GRADE	1	0	1
<u>EMPLOYMENT</u>			
UNEMPLOYED	6	2	8
EMPLOYED P/T	1	3	4
EMPLOYED P/T	0	2	2
<u>HOME OWNER</u>			
YES	5	4	9
NO	1	3	4
NOT REPORTED	1	0	1

married, this number included the one male foster parent.

The largest number (8) of the foster parents were either unemployed or employed in part-time positions (2). Nine of the foster parents reported home ownership.

TABLE 2
FOSTERING PROFILE OF FOSTER PARENTS
(N = 14)

	Number
<u>Agency Affiliation</u>	
Contract Agency	10
SSC	4
<u>Length of Affiliation</u> (in years)	
Less than 5	3
6-10 (Mean = 9.6)	7
11-15	1
16-20	4
<u>Fostering Experiences</u> (in years)	
Less than 5 (Mean = 10.4)	2
13-15	8
16-20+	4
<u>Number of Foster Children</u> <u>Currently in Placement</u>	
1-2 (Mean = 2.3)	9
3-4	3
5-6	2

The fostering profile of foster parents indicated clear trends towards long term attachments with agencies of affiliations. None of the foster parents reported a change in agency affiliation over the past two years. The number of years of agency affiliation ranged from 3 to 23 years. Half of the total group of foster parents had been affiliated

with their current agencies from 6 to 10 years and 4 had an affiliation of 16 to 20 years or more. Only 3 foster parents had been affiliated with agencies for less than 5 years.

TABLE 3
COMPARISON OF FOSTER PARENT GROUPS
ON DESCRIPTIVE VARIABLES

(N = 14)

VARIABLE (in years)	TRAINING MODULE Communication Interaction (N = 7)		Behavior Management (N = 7)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Age	51.2	8.5	48	8.6
Education	13.2	1.6	15	2.9
Fostering Experience	12.6	6.9	8.2	5.6
Affiliation with Current Agency	10.6	7.5	8.2	5.6

There was a similar trend of advanced years in fostering experience that far exceeded the project requirement of at least 3 years of fostering experience. Two of the foster parents had less than 5 years of fostering experience and over half had fostering experience within the 13-15 year category. The mean number of years fostering experience for the group was 10.4 years. The number of foster children currently in placement in individual foster homes ranged from 1 to 6. Two of the foster parents had 4 or 6 foster children in placement. Most of the foster parents did not have birth children currently living at home.

There were between group differences on the variables of years of fostering experience, employment status and marital status.

When comparisons are made of the two groups of foster parents on the descriptive variables of age, sex, education, agency affiliation and years of fostering experiences, consistent similarities are demonstrated with the exception of years of fostering experience. The mean number of years of fostering experience for the Communication Interaction Group was 12.6 years as compared to 8.2 years for the Behavior Management Group. On the categorical variables of marital and employment status a difference did emerge between the two foster parent groups. Four of the foster parents in the Communication Interaction Program were married as compared to 2 of those who are married in the Behavior Management Group. Six of the foster parents in the Communication Interaction were unemployed as compared to 2 who were unemployed in the Behavior Management Group.

An assumption was made that significant expressive and instrumental benefits would be gained by the foster parent who could share the fostering experience with a spouse, and who was able to devote full attention to the role of fostering. Of additional importance is that of all foster parents who indicated their employment status as "unemployed" a substantial number in this group identified their occupation as "foster parent". Further benefits may be accrued when this congruence is expressed.

The general profile of the total foster parent group was one that is associated with positive placement outcome.

The Foster Adolescent Group

TABLE 4
 CHARACTERISTICS OF FOSTER ADOLESCENTS
 (N = 7)

<u>Characteristics</u>	Number
<u>Sex</u>	
Male	4
Female	3
<u>Age</u>	
Mean	18.2 Years
Range	17.7--19.1 Years
<u>Years In Care</u>	
Mean	9.3 Years
Range	2--17 Years
<u>Years In Current Home</u>	
Mean	7.8 Years
Range	1-17 Years
<u>Total Placements</u>	
Foster Home	11
Group Home	1
<u>Visitation with Biological Family</u>	
Frequently	1
Infrequently	3
Not At All	3

Of the total number of youth participating in the study (N = 7) 4 were male and 3 were female. The mean age of the group was 18.2 years. The number of years in care ranged from 2 to 17 years. The mean number of years in care was 9.3. Contrary to the profile presented by the general population of adolescents under care, the youth who participated

in the project tended towards highly stable placements . The number of years in the current home ranged from 1 to 17 years, (M = 7.8). None of the youngsters had experienced more than 2 placements and 4 had continued in the home of initial placement. The youngsters had experienced a total number of 12 placements; 11 of these had been in individual foster family homes as opposed to institutional settings. Although not supported by the information given on the recruitment form, one youngster who had been in care for two years verbally reported moving from "home to home". (This was substantiated in the log autobiography). This movement included living independently in self negotiated transitional arrangements and in group homes. This youngster not enter into care until the age of 12 years. The experience as described is more typical for the child who enters the system at an older age.

With the exception of one, the foster adolescents reported infrequent or no contact with biological parents. They gave a variety of reasons for the initial placement. All of the reasons given were related to the incapacitation of the natural parent, i.e., the loss of the parent through death or abandonment, the mother's inability to provide suitable care because of youth or physical illness and abuse and neglect. One participant who was a parenting teen gave "no place for me and my baby" as the precipitating cause of the placement. None of the youth had entered care as a result of behavioral problems.

The youth maintained a high level of optimism as they anticipated discharge from the system. All youth expected to have a job and an apartment upon discharge from care. Two anticipated the need for temporary support of public assistance, one of the youngsters expecting this support was a special needs child with a diagnosed developmental disability.

TABLE 5
 ANTICIPATORY DISCHARGE FEELINGS OF POSTER ADOLESCENTS
 (N = 7)

<u>Self Sufficiency Expectations</u>	Number
<u>JOB</u>	
Yes	7
No	0
<u>APARTMENT</u>	
Yes	7
No	0
<u>PUBLIC ASSISTANCE</u>	
Yes	2
No	5
<u>Frequency of Discharge Thoughts</u>	
Often	4
Seldom	1
Not At All	2
<u>Degree of Discharge Apprehension</u>	
Very	0
Somewhat	1
Apprehensive/looking	0
Forward	2
Not At All	1
Unsure	3

More than half of the youngsters indicated that they thought of discharge from the system often. None of the youth reported feelings of being "very" apprehensive as they approached discharge. Most suggested feelings of ambivalence as they anticipated discharge.

All of the youth participants were enrolled in a vocational or educational program. One was enrolled in a special education program, 2 were high school juniors, 1 was enrolled in a GED program, and 3 were in

their first year of college or enrolled in special vocational programs.

Implementation

ILSPP began on September 3, 1985 and terminated November 11, 1985. The beginning sessions were held at the Institute for African American Affairs, located on the Washington Square campus of New York University. In response to travel and space considerations the project was subsequently moved to the Board Room of the United Charities building, which is located at 105 East 22 Street in Manhattan.

The physical surroundings and atmosphere were viewed as important variables of implementation that would effect program outcome. Dodson (1983) in her development of a training curriculum to sensitize child welfare practitioners to black family life style, discussed the importance of the physical surroundings of training sites and that they reflect a black presence. This was the orientation that provided the rationale for conducting the program at the Institute for African American Affairs, since it's decor reflected historical and contemporary aspects of black experience. Although the project ultimately did not have the benefit of this kind of setting, an atmosphere of warmth, welcome and informality was created and refreshments were an integral part of all sessions.

The goals and objectives of the project would also have been well served had the meeting sites had available various materials that were of relevance to independent living. Such materials may have included brochures of vocational/technical programs, college bulletins, armed services recruitment information, SAT requirements, and other information related to community services and youth serving programs. The availability of these materials would have provided opportunities for the

acquisition of important information through informal means.

Engagement

The process of engagement, which began with the initial outreach efforts to agencies and foster parents was a key factor of implementation effecting program outcome. The manner, style and approach of the project director in these initial outreach efforts was important during the recruitment phase of the project. The style of the project trainers in the ongoing training process assumed a high degree of importance in maintaining a consistency in the attendance of the foster parents and particularly that of the youth participants.

The young adults who participated in the project had indicated on the recruitment forms an interest in being a part of the project. Still, in all likelihood their involvement had been encouraged by foster parents and by agency social workers. All of the young people traveled independently to the program from school or employment. Four were absent from the first session, although they had been expected by their foster parents. Follow up telephone contacts were made these youngsters. Attention was given to possible underlying feelings of anxiety. One of the foster parents had earlier reported her youngsters' reticence to be involved in any activity related to his approaching emancipation from the foster home. All of the youth who did not attend the first session gave prior school and employment commitments as the reason for the absence, and all were present at the next scheduled meeting. Three of these youth discovered that they knew one another from previous school or social activities, however, had not known of the others' foster care status. Given the continuing stigma that is attached to that status, the common bond that they found was perhaps instrumental to their maintaining a

consistency in attendance.

The young people did develop, over the course of time, a sense of comraderie and "esprit de corps", that well served the objectives of the project. Their attendance was consistent, with 3 attending all sessions and 4 missing no more than 2 sessions. When the project terminated the youth whose retention had initially seemed the most tenuous indicated that she would have attended the sessions without benefit of the stipend.

While promptness remained an ongoing problem, the attendance of the foster parents was equally consistent. None of the foster parents missed more than two sessions. Four of the group missed one session to attend the annual National Foster Parent Conference. The participants' sense of ownership and connection to the group was reflected in the characteristic behavior of giving advance notification of an anticipated absence or telephoning the project director or secretary the day of the scheduled session.

One foster parent dropped out of the program. It is important that this foster parent had entered the group late, was the least verbal and clearly did not have the same sense of attachment and belonging to the group as did its other members. This occurrence perhaps speaks to a relationship that exists between early induction activities and the retention of foster parents in training programs. A number of ILSPP foster parents shared relationships prior to the beginning of the program. Others established friendships as they negotiated travel arrangement and traveling companionships with one another. These factors, coupled with the shared common experiences of fostering, facilitated the engagement process, the early formation of a group

identity, and the spirit of cooperative working together towards the achievement of a shared goal that prevailed for the duration of the project.

Orientation

The essence of the Orientation Session was contracting and the further engagement of the group members. A major task of the session was to, at least, begin the process of instilling within the members a sense of purpose and mission--to connect the group to the inherent cause that was embedded within the work of foster parenting and the meaningfulness of the work that they would be undertaking.

All parents are generally buoyed and motivated for growth in the parenting role if reinforced by the positive feedback from children as reflected in the child's movement towards a greater maturity and competency. Previous work with foster parents had substantiated the frequency of feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. Foster parents often expressed feelings that theirs was a "thankless task" and that efforts of fostering the adolescent seldom resulted in a positive outcome. This orientation seemed to influence the foster parents' decreased motivation to seek means for improving fostering efforts, developing new skills, and persisting in their task.

Personal/self development is seen as being an important pre-requisite for skill development for all human service providers. When cause and function are merged in what one views to be valued and needed work and when one concurrently perceives that helping efforts can in fact have an impact on alleviating or changing a situation, then those conditions are in place that support and provide the best opportunities for personal/self development, which, in turn, pave the way for skill development.

Lewis (1982, pp. 9-10), in his discussions of the nature of work suggests that three elements are essential and necessary for all work: (1) a condition to be altered, (2) an investment of efforts and (3) the worker's necessary belief that a condition can be improved through efforts made to change it. In the absence of any of these, work is not well done and work that is well done is usually appreciated for its skill.

Although emphasized at the time of orientation, throughout the implementation process of the project, a consistent theme was that the solutions to the problems of the foster care system and the necessary leadership were to be found within the black community.

All program participants received a package of orientation materials, that included the summary of the proposed curriculum guide, and the Foster Parent or Youth Questionnaire. The role of the trainers was explicated as that of group facilitators and the goals and purposes of the project were presented with emphasis being placed on: (1) the minority perspective that the project would assume, (2) the collaborative focus that would seek to achieve an integration of the on-the-job experience and informal intuitive knowledge of the foster parents and the theoretical, formal knowledge and professional practice experiences of the project trainers, and (3) the identification of those priority skills and resources that would be needed by youth for successful independent living.

The issue and dimensions of confidentiality was discussed as it related to inter-group relationships, to biological parents, other extended family members, and the group members' agencies of affiliation. The implications of ILSPP as a research undertaking were also discussed.

All participants signed the required consent/waiver forms. The pre-test was administered in group with the direction of the project director. The discussion of the proposed curriculum areas was the final agenda item.

Process

Ensuring that the major objectives of each content areas were achieved, the project trainers were individually responsible for the development of content. They could rely upon their own creativity and the material that emerged from the process. Trainers were given articles, case studies and role plays from which they could select materials for use. Implicit was that the sessions would assume an educational focus and not a therapeutic one.

The suggested format of the sessions was lecturette followed by group discussion and an experiential exercise. While all participants had as a first log assignment the writing of an autobiographical sketch, the trainer carried the responsibility for the development of the weekly log assignments that would require the participants to integrate the seminar content with current at home fostering experiences. Foster parents were additionally encouraged to record their spontaneous thinking and experiences in their logs. The logs were to be reviewed by the project director at the mid-point of the project and at termination.

As previously indicated, the training sessions were organized around the five content areas. However, none of these were discrete and there was a constant overlapping of themes with attention being given to both content and process. A flexibility was maintained that avoided a close adherence to the prearranged sequencing of the major content areas. For example, in an early session, the trainer of the Communication Interaction Program proposed that first names be used. This facilitated

a discussion of the black experience and the negative connotation that the use of first names early in relationships had for many blacks and the valuing of elder relationships that had a base in the African heritage. The discussion also focused on the sensitivity of the use of names in the fostering relationship with the older adolescent, who in most instances maintained a continuing tie with natural parents and extended family members. Issues were raised as to how the foster adolescent is introduced to outsiders and how he describes his relationship to the foster parent and other foster family members. A range of fostering issues surfaced during this discussion. The process also promoted a full discussion of black family life style, although this content area had been scheduled later in the sequencing of the sessions.

Similarly a foster parent's sharing of an experience of failed plans to adopt an older child because of an unexpected contact with the natural parent, facilitated a productive discussion of the strength of the biological bond and the need to encourage a child's continuing ties with the biological family. For some of the foster parents this situation strengthened their belief that natural parents were disruptive and contact with them should be discouraged. Throughout the duration of the project the observation was made of a tendency on the part of the foster parents to resort to reductionist, simplistic or otherwise common sense theories in the face of overwhelming frustration or highly emotionally charged issues. Relationships with natural families remained an ongoing enigma in the work with foster parents. Given the characteristics of the natural parents of the largest number of children entering the system today, an ideal if idealistic concept would be for the foster parent to assume a supportive role and teach those kinds of parenting behaviors

that were seldom learned in the natural parents' families of origin. However, the largest number of ILSP foster parents, as indicated by responses on the foster parent questionnaire, felt that contacts with natural parents should be minimal. Few shifted from this position in their post-test responses.

While the groups did provide a mechanism for mutual support and sharing of experiences and problems, tensions also emerged in response to the differing value orientations and parenting styles of the individual group members.

Repetitive themes were identified and incorporated in the content during the process of implementation. The presence of the project director at both of the training modules permitted a cross sharing of similar themes between the two groups. A persistent and crucial theme that emerged during the process of implementation was that of the seeming inability of the participants to overtly acknowledge the difference that the status of foster care brings to the life of the child. While not acknowledged the centrality of this difference did surface in the patterns of interactions. For example, in one conjoint session with youth and foster parents the problem of teenage pregnancy was brought up in relationship to family planning being a necessary skill for independent living. One foster parent's spontaneous response to a youngster who was expressing a typical dilemma of youth around postponing sexual activity coupled with misconceptions about the safety of various methods of contraception was: "do you want to have a child who will have to grow up in foster care as you did"? While the response of the foster parent was motivated by caring and concern, the latent message seemed apparent. Statement such as "I've had him since...", which are used

frequently in the conversations of foster parents convey this unacknowledged difference and reminds the youth of the impermanence and ambiguity of his/her status. The denial and avoidance has the unintended effect of supporting the perpetuation of the stigmatization that has come to be associated with foster care status.

The foster parents of the Behavior Management Program in the absence of the youth, evidenced a greater ability to acknowledge differences. This was demonstrated in a discussion of the foster child's predisposition towards "romanticizing" the natural parent. One foster parent suggested that members accept their position of "number two" in the life of the youngster, and supported the role model mentor conceptualization of the foster parents' role. However, the presence of the youth in the Communication Interaction Program seemed to be an inhibiting factor to the full acknowledgment and open discussion of this crucial area. A foster parent in this group, in response to an assignment that youngsters write about their earliest memories of families of origin, stated that her foster adolescent could have no memories of the biological family since the initial placement was made in early infancy. Her perception was that a loss of upheaval was not a part of the youngster's experience since there in essence "had been none".

Teaching Materials

The instructional materials of the ILSP included group discussion, written materials, case records, role play, small group exercises, and video tapes of the project segments. The structured group interactions with foster parents and youth in the Communication Interaction Program were also considered to be important instructional materials.

Written materials, and articles seemed to be the most useful when

brief and presented in outline form. Few parents indicated a predisposition towards reading expansive articles, although the largest number of group members had college as a part of their educational backgrounds. There was more of an evidence that the foster parents had reviewed, as they made consistent reference to, a brief outline of the Erickson model of the life stages than a more comprehensive and detailed presentation of a psychosocial developmental framework. Lecturette was an effective teaching technique for conceptual, theoretical material.

Role play and small group exercise proved to be the most effective teaching devices for foster parents and for youth. In the Communication Interaction Program a small group exercise was for the foster parents and youth to work together in the development of the youngster's plan for independent living. An outline form was given with instructions to establish long range goals and intermediary goals for independence. They were also to identify obstacles to goal achievement and solutions to these obstacles. A further task of the activity was for the participants to identify the points of stress and tensions that emerged in the development of the plans. The exercise generated significant discussions at many levels, and underscored a need to be consciously and deliberately planful. Clearly, more opportunities are needed for the foster parent and adolescent to work cooperatively together in problem solving activities related to independence.

For an assignment in the Systems Negotiation/Coping with Burnout Module, the youth were to plan a visit to a neighborhood bank, and speak with a bank official about available banking services and the procedures for opening a savings and checking account. This task had the purposes of familiarizing them with a new system that would be needed in

independent living, developing a consumer orientation in the use of services and supporting the development of money management skills. One of the youth, whose apparent anxiety related to contact with an unknown system, led to a procrastination in the completion of the assignment. However, with some encouragement he was able to complete the assignment. He later enthusiastically shared the experience with the group by saying, "Yea man, the dude was calling me sir and everything". This reporting spoke to his beginning comfort with a new system, and a beginning consumer orientation in the use of services.

The logs were a far less effective training/teaching tool. The recordings in the youth logs were very sparse as were those, with two exceptions, of the foster parents. The two foster parents whose logs reflected the greatest use were those who evidenced the greatest growth and change, and whose pre and post test self assessment shifted from "good" to "excellent".

Learning/Teaching Styles

Two distinctly different patterns emerged between the two groups of foster parents in the integration of the training content. The Behavior Management group manifested a greater ability to relate to the training content at a cognitive level. The Communication Interaction group displayed more affective behaviors. These differences in group learning styles were to a great degree influenced by the teaching style of the trainer and by the presence of the youth in the Communication Interaction Program. The individual styles of the primary trainers was a significant variable of implementation and outcome.

The primary professional role of the trainer in the Behavior Management Program was that of educator, supporting the didactic training

model. Those behaviors that are typically associated with the enactment of this role were transferred to the work with this foster parent group. It was customary for the trainer of this group to begin each session with a clear explication of the objectives of the module, and a summation of the content of the preceding session. Sessions were terminated by giving a brief outline for the upcoming session. Handouts were frequently used and referred to in session. The format of Lecturette followed by small group discussion, experiential activity was generally, although not rigidly, adhered to for most sessions. Assignments of "homework" were typically given for the foster parents to think about or write about. Clear instructions and a written outline form was provided for the completion of log assignments. Although the use of the logs proved not to be an effective tool for training, the trainer did encourage their use as a means of record keeping, completing assignments and for recording reflecting and retrospective thoughts.

Another characteristic of the style of the trainer of the Behavior Management Module was to consistently provide focus, and articulate for the group the major task at hand--that of development of training content and curriculum for replication with a general foster parent population. This orientation of the trainer provided structured sequential experiences, defined the parameters of a productive working together, and facilitated the groups' beginning movement towards and assumption of a teaching role themselves. The digressive discussions, which often characterize foster parent groups was minimized and the group was assisted to develop a beginning conceptual approach that allowed them to generalize their personal experiences to the broader issues of the child welfare service delivery system.

The Behavior Management foster parent groups' sharing of fostering experiences provided many opportunities, for attaching and integrating theories to the practice of present at home experiences with foster children. There were also opportunities for a retrospective rethinking with new insights, previous encounters that may have been unsuccessfully resolved. While there were less opportunities for the enactment of the theories in process, as was provided by the Communication Interaction group, the separation of the intense emotional responses from the learning experience permitted a more effective involvement with the material at the cognitive level.

Still another influencing factor was that the trainer and co-trainer shared similar styles and had many opportunities for consultation before and after each session. There was also a mutual agreement on the overall conceptual framework and key concepts of the project. The project director as co-trainer of both groups consistently functioned under the constraints imposed by simultaneously being a participant and observer of a process. However, the difficulties of functioning in this dual role were minimized because of these factors.

The primary trainer for the Communication Interaction Training Program was a male social worker/psychotherapist with extensive experience in direct services with adolescents, and in the training of child care and classroom staff. As in the Behavior Management Program, the behaviors that are generally associated with this professional role were transferred to the work with the Communication Interaction Group.

The major content areas were addressed during the process of implementation. Still, the focus of the work emerged from the interaction between the foster parents and the youth. Emphasis was

placed upon process. The primary trainer was able to tolerate digressions and respond with ease to the here and now experience of the group. Another characteristic of this trainer's style was the use of a wealth of teaching analogues that were drawn from personal experiences of parenting and professional experiences with the acting-out adolescent. These behaviors on the part of the trainer did provide role modeling opportunities for the foster parents and facilitated a personal connection and demystification of the therapeutic professional role. The trainer also evidenced a high degree of comfort in lecturing from a personal, although informed, point of view. This appeared to be acceptable to the foster parent group and perhaps even gave to the adolescents a clear and definitive explication of expected behaviors.

There was less use of written materials with this group. When used, infrequent reference was made to these materials in the sessions. The process provided opportunities to attach theories to life experiences as they emerged, particularly in the content areas of black family life and adolescent growth and development. Content areas were generally not transferred to issues of the child welfare service delivery system, but remained as the personal experience of the group members. The format of lecturette, group discussion followed by experiential activity were not followed. Sessions were typically initiated around the immediate experiences brought to the group by the membership.

The use of logs did not receive consistent reinforcement, however, "homework" assignments were given the group. These assignments formed the work and content of the proceeding sessions.

Two of the youth celebrated birthdays during the life of the project. These birthdays were acknowledged by the project staff with

gifts and the resultant discussion further supported the goals of the project. One youth, who had identified difficulties around money management, was given a subscription to Black Enterprise. The issue that he received highlighted money management issues for couples, families and singles. A second youth, who was dealing with feminist issues was given the book, In Search of My Mothers Gardens, written by Toni Morrison, a black female author. These situations facilitated discussions that were related to the content areas of developmental tasks of adolescents and skills needed for successful independent living.

Some of the foster parents in this group, with this as their experience, did clearly develop an increased ability to form empathetic feelings with their youngsters. Some responses supporting this were: "my son is surprising me" or "I never knew he felt that way before". The group members were able to point out to one of the foster parents who reported never having "seen" her foster son smoke, that this was a behavior in which he had engaged in past group sessions at which she was present. In this instance the group provided a means for averting a crisis as the youngster was moved from his initial position of confronting the foster parent's authority. With the termination of the project, one foster parent voluntarily reported back to the project director that there was consensus on the part of a small group of foster parents that they were now better able to "put themselves in their children's shoes" and did feel a greater degree of "compassion" for them.

While the parents of the Behavior Management Group appeared to move towards the assumption of a teaching role, the foster parents of the Communication Interaction group seemed to move towards a greater

competency in the foster parenting, or practitioner role.

Limiting factors of co-trainer relationship was that there were insufficient opportunities for consultation in preparation for the sessions.

Termination

The Evaluation Session of the Project brought together all program participants from the two training modules and the two trainers. The primary purpose of this session was a discussion of the proposed reformulated curriculum outline, the evaluation of the project and the completion of the post-test.

At termination it was evident that the group had shared in a meaningful experience to which they were reluctant to bring closure. The dynamics of termination of this experience were related to those of feelings of abandonment and loss associated with the initial foster care placement and feelings about movement into independent living.

There was group consensus that the time allocated for the project was not sufficient to accomplish the tasks of the ILSP nor for a full exploration and development of all content areas. There was also group consensus that the youngsters who participated in the project were not currently at a level whereby they could achieve successful independent living. For some of the foster parents and youth, participation in the project surfaced issues as opposed to clarifying and resolving them. This was perhaps reflected in the incomplete post-test of one foster parent questionnaire. At the time of project termination the greatest number of participants had become identified with the research aspects of ILSP. In completing the post-tests there were many comments related to their desire to improve their scores.

The project reactionnaires asked that the participant group rate the overall program and individual content areas. The program received a consistently high rating by all participants completing the form. The training modules identified by more than half of foster parents as being very useful were self-awareness and black family life styles. Three of the youth indicated that completing the banking assignment was very useful to them. All of the youth requested that the project be extended.

It was anticipated that retaining the youth in the project for its duration would pose a problem of implementation. There were, however, no drop outs in the youth group and they were clearly identified with the goals of ILSP. The experience of the project suggests an availability of the adolescent to receiving group services. This, and other unintended benefits occurred that became evident at termination.

Foster parents have a great facility for establishing informal communication networks outside of the formal mechanisms provided for by agencies that serve both negative and positive functions. An informal communication network was formed between the foster parents who participated in the project. This network served positive functions and extended to agency staff, and to the staff of SSC. The foster parents did communicate through shared travel arrangements and also spoke with one another by telephone between sessions, enabling the work of the group to continue outside of the formal structure.

Absent throughout the project was the criticism and antagonism that is often directed towards agency administration and staff. This fact alone permitted both groups of foster parents to focus solely on problem solving activities related to the fostering experience. Training content that assists foster parents to understand and cope with the constraints

imposed by the often conflictual policies and procedures of the system within which they work should be a part of all foster parent training programs. However, since the ILSPP was not the sponsoring agency of the largest number of group members, an unintended positive gain was that problem solving energies were not depleted by a need to discuss what are the unresolvable issues that are inherent within the child welfare system. Foster parents did discuss individual agencies, however, the overall result was an increase in knowledge about the differences and similarities that existed among child care organizations. Although the group terminated with a sense of work not completed, there was a sense of accomplishment and purposeful problem solving.

Still another unintended positive outcome of the project was that it provided the foster parent group with an additional mutual support network. The request was made that a list of names and addresses be circulated to provide a means for "keeping in touch". This networking and mutual aid is an essential function of foster parent groups. The foster parent who dropped out of the program, paradoxically, eloquently spoke to this essential function of these groups as she advocated for foster parents to "help one another out" through the development of resource and informational networks. This foster parent also spoke of her extensive fostering history, during which she had cared for forty children. She suggested that the children currently in foster care presented a different profile in terms of level of disturbance and degree of disorganization of the biological family. Also problematic for this foster parent was that the agency had access to less information about the child's social history and that workers were less available to assist in the securing of necessary support services.

The self help, mutual support aspect of foster parent training groups has been seen as a viable function of these groups. Their development has been encouraged in most child welfare settings. This practice has not been extensively used with the adolescent and is a rich area for service development. These kinds of support groups can provide youth with the means for establishing peer relationships that could lead to shared apartment living arrangements in independent and long-term friendship ties with others who share a common bond because of the foster experience.

Fostering Skill Scores

The foster parent group was pre-selected and not matched on descriptive variables. Comparisons were made of those variables that could have a relationship to ability to integrate training content.

The comparisons of the two foster parent groups on the descriptive variable of age, sex and years of agency affiliation revealed no differences. The communication interaction group of foster parents did evidence a greater number of years fostering experience. There was also a noted difference between groups on the categorical variables of marital and employment status. The foster parents in the Communication Interaction group were more characteristically married and unemployed.

At the time of administration of the pre-test Foster Parent Questionnaire the attained score of both foster parent groups fell within low medium skill score, the mean score for the Communication Interaction group was 50.7 (SD = 12.6) and the Behavior Management mean score was 51.2, (SD = 12.7).

Fostering skills scores were assigned using the following scale:

High Skill Level = 85 - 70

Medium Skill Level = 69 - 50

Low Skill Level = 49 and below

The post-test scores did not reflect significant gains in fostering skills. The mean score for the Behavior Management group was distorted by one incomplete questionnaire. When this score is excluded from the data analysis the mean score for the group is 57.8, which represents a 6.6 gain. The mean score the the Communication Interaction Group is 56.8, representing a 6.1 gain.

The data were submitted to statistical analysis and the results showed no significant differences within or between groups in the pre-post test score. The mean differences between groups were obviously close and therefore did not warrant analysis. Although the assumptions necessary for the use of the t-test statistics were not rigorously met by the population under analysis, a t-test for dependent means was used to test the difference in means within the groups on pre-post test scores. The results for the within group differences were not statistically significant at the .05 level. Because of the size of the sample and the consistent absence of clearly discernable differences in the between and within group pre-post test scores the data were not subjected to further statistical tests of significance.

TABLE 6
PRE-POST INDIVIDUAL SCORES OF TRAINING MODULES

<u>TRAINING MODULE</u>					
Communication Interaction (N = 7)			Behavior Management (N = 6)		
<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Pts</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Pts</u>
63	84	+21	69	77	+8
42	53	+11	67	52	-15
57	22	-35	49	60	+11
29	65	+38	55	52	-3
50	63	+13	30	48	+18
49	46	-3	37	5	-32
Mean=50.7	Mean=56.8		Mean=51.2	Mean=49	
(SD 12.6)	(SD 19.4)		(SD 15.7)	(SD 24)	
				(M=57.8)	
				(SD 11.6)	

The post-test scores did indicate that the interventions did have the effect of increasing fostering skills of both foster parent groups, although neither group evidenced substantial changes in skill level. The absence of significant differences in the scores between the two groups, indicated that both interventions had equal impact on fostering skills.

When considering individual gains made in scores, three foster parents in the Communication Interaction Groups evidenced a ten-point score gain or more, as compared to two foster parents in the Behavior

Management Group. The largest number of individual gains in skill score (38 points) was that of a foster parent in the Communication Interaction Group. However, this parent left a substantial number of questions in the post-test unanswered and this factor alone accounted for the dramatic shift in skill score.

The foster parent in the Communication Interaction whose individual scores represented a 21-point increase presents a profile that may be explained through a consideration of qualitative variables influencing performance. This foster parent had been identified as an "informal consultant" by the project director. After each session she was contacted for feedback and her reaction to the content, response to the trainer, and sense of how other foster parents experienced the session. During the course of this process a collaborative, collegial relationship did emerge in its true sense. Beginning contacts were consistently initiated by the project director. However, subsequent contacts were initiated independently by the foster parent, supporting the reciprocity that did develop in the relationship. In addition to being assigned a role that differentiated the experience from others in the group, this foster parent attended all ILSP sessions, completed all log assignments and was an active participant in group discussions. She made extensive use of the logs, and completed a comprehensive autobiographical sketch, that illustrated some of the characteristics of the strengths of black families as identified by Hill. The foster parent kept detailed notes on each session, and entries indicated that she had engaged in independent readings. Erikson's stages of psychosocial development were outlined as were Hill's conceptualizations of black family strengths. The foster parent also established a positive identification with the project

trainers and made frequent references to the primary trainer in log recordings. This foster parent's self-assessment changed from "good" to "excellent", supporting her feelings of increased competency and satisfaction in the fostering role. Because she continued to be involved in In-Service training with the agency of affiliation, opportunities for transference and application of new learnings were also available. This process was observed by the project trainer. Frequent recommendations were made by this foster parent that the training methods that were being used in the ILSP be incorporated into these In-Service sessions, which graphically indicated the level of integration of the training content of the project.

A corresponding relationship was established with a parent in the Behavior Management Program. This relationship did not develop with the same degree of consistency and structure as did the former, nor were there opportunities to follow up with the foster parent outside of the ILSP experience. This foster parent did assume an active role of leadership in the foster parent training program in her agency of affiliation. In consultation with the project director this foster parent used portions of the project's content to develop a workshop with other foster parents. She also consistently attended all sessions, completed all log assignments and similarly made extensive use of the log as a learning tool. The quality of the log entries, however, differed from those of her counterpart as they did not evidence the same degree of coherence and integration. Similarly, this foster parent's self-rating changed from "good" to "excellent" in the post-test questionnaire.

While the data analysis revealed no significance difference in the group scores of foster parents, when considering the individual

performance of the foster parents the data suggest an influence of qualitative variables that impact foster parenting skill improvement. The individual experience of one foster parent whose individual score reflected a 21 point gain, does suggest that foster parent performance is improved when they feel that their work is valued by significant others.

TABLE 7
COMPARISONS OF PRE-POST CHANGES IN CATEGORICAL SKILL LEVELS

<u>Skill Level</u>	Training Modules			
	Communication Interaction (N = 7)		Behavior Management (N = 6)	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
High	0	1	0	1
Medium	4	4	3	3
Low	3	2	3	2

The largest number of foster parents attained scores that were within the Medium Skill Level at post-test, reflecting no change from the pre-test categorical skill level for both groups. At post-test one parent from each group had moved to the High Skill Level. One of these foster parents has already been discussed as the "informal consultant". The second foster parent who completed the Behavior Management Module and moved to the High Skill level increased the skill score by two points.

There were no significant changes between or within groups in the categorical skill levels. For the largest number of foster parents the

skill category remained unchanged in spite of the training program completed.

TABLE 8
DIRECTION OF CHANGE IN SKILL SCORE

Training Module	Skill Improved	Skill Not Improved
Communication Interaction	4	3
Behavior Management	3	3
TOTAL	7	6

Of the total foster parent group (N = 13), 7 had improved in fostering skills and 6 showed no improvement. In the Communication Interaction Group 4 of the foster parents had improved their scores as compared to 3 in the Behavior Management Group. The Communication Interaction Group did evidence a slightly higher degree of improvement when considering individual performance. As indicated in Table 6 the parents in this group improved scores by a larger number of points (83) than did those in the Behavior Management Group (37).

The data did not support an existence of significant differences between the effectiveness of the training strategies on fostering skills scores. Although not statistically significant both interventions did have some impact on improving fostering skills, with the Communication Interaction Group performing slightly better when consideration was given to individual scores.

When comparisons were made of the groups' performance in each skill

area, these similarities in group performance remained consistent with the exception of Self-Awareness. The Self-Awareness fostering skill was conceptualized as being representative of expressive fostering characteristics and the Behavior Management/Poster Parent practice of instrumental fostering characteristics. All other fostering skills were viewed as having both expressive and instrumental features.

TABLE 9
COMPARISONS OF MEAN PRE-TEST SCORES IN FIVE SKILL AREA

<u>Fostering Skills</u>	<u>Training Module</u>			
	Communication Interaction (N = 7)		Behavior Management (N = 6)	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Self-Awareness (15)	9.8	12.7	9.4	8.4
Adolescent Develop (15)	9.9	8.9	8.7	9.5
Assessment Planning/ Black Family Life (25)	13.2	14.3	15.7	15.8
Behavior Management (15)	8	9	6.4	8
System Negotiation (15)	10	10.3	10.4	8.4

Qualitative and quantitative measurement clearly indicated that the foster parents in the Communication Interaction Module, who participated in the training with their foster adolescents evidenced greater improvement in Self Awareness. The highest number of points that could be attained for this fostering skill was 15. The mean post score for the Communication Interaction group was 12.7 as compared to 8.4 for the

Behavior Management Group. Of the parents who were in the Communication Interaction group 5 evidenced improvement in this fostering skill as compared to 2 of those foster parents who were in the Behavior Management group. This finding does reveal that there are benefits derived from including the foster parent and adolescent in conjoint training. This training format did have a greater degree of effectiveness in improving the self awareness of foster parents.

Placement Stability

Placement stability as an indicator of program outcome, for the purpose of the project, was defined as the retention of the foster adolescent in the home for the duration of the project. During this period one placement disruption occurred. This was the placement of a twenty year old male who was in care with a foster parent in the Behavior Management group. This youngster had been in care for thirteen years and had experienced multiple placements that were punctuated by frequent reunifications with the biological mother. This history characterized his four year placement in the current home. The youngster was enrolled in a college program and had one child, who was cared for by extended family members. The reason given for the termination of the placement was return to the home of the natural parent. This decision was made independently by the youth.* The foster parent was male, single, employed full-time and had four years of fostering experience with the same agency. The foster parent had an attained post-test fostering skill score of High.

*It should be noted that a practice of the Communication Interaction group was that no placement was to be terminated without full discussion in group. Therefore, there is the possibility that this placement disruption may have been averted if assignment had been to this group.

With this one exception there were no other placement disruptions within either group, although there were observed tensions in the relationships between foster parents and adolescents in the Communication Interaction group. When contacted four months after the end of the project all placements had remained intact and the youngster who had been reunified with the birth parent had subsequently returned to the foster home.

This finding should be considered within the context of the characteristics of the foster parents and youth who participated in the project. The foster parents evidenced a high level of fostering experience ($M = 10.4$ years) who had a long relationship with the agency of affiliation ($M = 9.6$ years). There was also a consistent expression of satisfaction with the fostering role and identification with the role of foster parent. Secondly, is the profile presented by the adolescent group. The largest percentage of youth evidenced a high degree of placement stability prior to the interventions. None of the youth had experienced more than two placements and most had remained in the initial home of placement, which for the largest number was the current foster home.

The onset of adolescence, approaching emancipation and all of the concomitant concerns that the foster care status brings to the situation may threaten the stability of adolescent placements. However, the previous history of stability and adjustment of the adolescent and the characteristics of the foster parent group are all antecedent variables that have a significant influence on placement stability and outcome.

Inferences can be made from the findings of the study about the influence of the natural parent on the stability of adolescent

placements. Foster parents, as indicated, had consistently expressed the view that contact with the natural parent was most often disruptive and should be discouraged. Six of the ILSP youth reported infrequent or no contact with their families of origin. In the one placement disruption that did occur, the youngster had frequent contact with the biological parent and had voluntarily made the decision to return home. Similarly, the one foster parent who had experienced a placement disruption prior to the beginning of the project, had reported the youngster's unexpected contact with the natural parent as the cause of the failed placement.

An assumption of the project was that the foster adolescent is denied useful resources to draw upon in independence because ties with the biological family had not been encouraged or supported during the period of placement. The findings, however, suggest that continuing ties with the biological parent are in fact more often troublesome to the course of the youngster's adjustment while under care. Without appropriate intervention and clinical services, relationships with biological parents do have the potential for remaining a continuing area of stress and confusion for the adolescent. Still, every child should have the opportunity to maintain those biological ties that define his person. Relationships between foster children and biological family members pose a continuing practice dilemma that need to be addressed with this client population.

The foster adolescents in placement with the foster parents in both programs evidenced a high degree of placement stability. However, the data do not support a conclusion that this stability was a result of the interventions alone. Significant antecedent variables effecting program outcome when using the criterion of placement stability, which the

project did not fully address, are related to the general characteristics and profile of the participant group and services provided by the agency. This finding should be considered within this context.

Independent Life Skills

A secondary objective of the project was to present a strategy for the development of an ethnic sensitive independent life skills preparation program for youth approaching discharge from the foster care system.

Because the project had as a major objective the development of content that would enhance the adolescent's transition to independent community living, a major task was to identify the skills needed for self-reliance. This question was raised at the orientation session, and the group discussion highlighted the lack of consensus that existed around the meaning of emancipation and independence.

The concept of independence, for the purpose of the study, meant that the young adult would have skills and abilities, that permitted him to attain personal and financial self-sufficiency and attitudes that supported a sense of civic and community responsibility. For the black adolescent an additional task was to develop a sense of individual and group racial identity.

The discrete characteristics of independence were operationalized as the following abilities and/or skills:

- (1) Personal Hygiene/Cleanliness
- (2) Budget/Finance Management
- (3) Vocational Job Skills
- (4) Home Management
- (5) Interpersonal/Social Relationships
- (6) Civic Responsibility/Sense of Community Service
- (7) Sense of Self as Black/Relatedness to the Black Community

The participants were asked to rank and give priority to these in the pre-post test questionnaires. All were given further discussion during the implementation process.

The Youth Questionnaire was designed to obtain information about the youth's existent knowledge in these skills or abilities. This information also provided a framework for assessing the youth's current level of readiness for independent living. Since the program was not designed to specifically teach these skills of independence, no comparisons were made of pre-post test scores.

The highest possible score that could be obtained on the Youth Questionnaire was 110. The group scores of the adolescents ranged from 62 to 98, (M = 66.2). The highest score of 98 was attained by the youngster who had the experience of intermittent independent living.

There were demonstrated gaps in knowledge related to Health and Family Planning for the overall group. Only two of the youth, both of whom were females, gave correct and complete responses to the questions that were related to knowledge of contraception. While the total group scored high in the area of knowledge needed for seeking employment, the quality of the responses evidenced a lack of sophistication. For example, characteristic responses to the question related to job interview skills were "be on time", "don't chew gum", "sit up straight", "dress neatly" and "speak clearly". The responses of the youngster who had experienced independence did reflect a greater degree of sophistication, i.e., "come across clearly and effectively" and "be inquisitive towards your interviewer".

Money Management represented another area where the youth lacked specific knowledge. Three were able to correctly complete the banking

assignment, that asked that they write a check and fill in a bank deposit slip. There were similar gaps in specific knowledge related to the black experience. The largest number of youth could not successfully identify three black politicians or three historically black colleges and universities. However, the group was consistently able to correctly identify the most important issues that were facing the black community and identified W.E.B. Dubois correctly as a black scholar and educator.

The performance of the females in the group was consistently higher than that of the males in all areas. For the ILSPF foster adolescents it was a truism that "experience is the best teacher", as the youngster who had the experience of living independently consistently evidenced the highest level of readiness in all areas as judged by correctness and quality of responses.

Rank Importance of Independent Life Skills/Abilities

The Foster Parent/Youth Questionnaire asked the respondents to : (1) indicate the degree of importance that each of the listed skills or abilities had to independent living using a scale of not at all, slightly, moderately, extremely and (2) to rank the seven skills and abilities in order of their perceived priority.

Personal Hygiene/Cleanliness was viewed by the largest number of youth as having the highest priority to independent living, with four of the youth giving this a rank of 1 and three a rank of 3. Six of the group indicated that Personal Cleanliness was extremely important for independent living. While there was less group consensus around Vocational/Job Skills and Home Management, both were skills that were ranked high in priority and degree of importance. The group also evidenced less consensus as to the importance of Sense of Self as a Black

and Relatedness to the Black community. Responses in this area were widely dispersed with most perceiving this as having somewhat of a lesser degree of importance in independence. There was a general group consensus around Interpersonal Relationships and Civic Responsibility. The largest number of responses indicated that these were areas that were perceived by the group as having the least importance of independence.

The general responses of the foster parent group revealed a greater degree of consensus in all skill and abilities than did those of the youth. Similar to the youth responses, Cleanliness and Personal Hygiene was given the highest priority. This was followed by Vocational Job Skills, Budget/Finance Management, Home Management and Sense of Self as Black/Relatedness to the Black Community. There was less group consensus around the importance of Interpersonal Relationship and the largest number of responses gave this a ranking of 7. All of the skills and abilities were assigned a degree of importance of moderate to extremely, including Civic Responsibility and Interpersonal Relations which had been ranked at a low level of priority. The post-test responses evidenced these same trends and there was little shifting of responses.

The responses of the youth and the foster parents did demonstrate a convergence at the upper and lower levels of ranking. The inference may be made from this trend that youth are learning what is actively taught, reinforced or valued by the major caretaker. Personal Hygiene was an attribute that was highly valued by both groups. Civic responsibility and Interpersonal Relationships, and Sense of Blackness apparently were viewed as the "soft skills" needed for independence although they were perceived as having a moderate to extreme degree of importance they were more often given a low priority rating.

Racial Awareness, Placement Model

In responding to the questions related to racial awareness, the total group of youth expressed agreement with the statement that "color and race are of little significance today and anyone who is motivated and really wants to can make it." This response gave further support to the youths' optimistic view towards the future as reflected in the responses related to discharge apprehension and self-sufficiency expectations.

Items 4 and 10 of the Foster Parent Questionnaire were established as indicators of racial awareness:

- (4) Your foster child has not been attending school because he/she feels that the teacher is prejudiced and treats him/her unfairly. In discussing the situation would you assist the youngster to understand that:
- (10) Do you feel that black families and parents must provide something additional to children because of their minority group status?

Almost all of the foster parents gave the preferred response to item 4:

- (c) Some situations are the result of racism, however, youngsters need to be prepared to accept responsibility for their own behavior and shortcomings.

The total group responded positively to item 10. However, when asked to specify those additional roles of black parents and functions of black families a substantial number of foster parents did not respond in the pre-test. In the post-test, with the largest number now responding, the responses were more often related to the general role and function of parents and families. Only two foster parents responded using the framework of the five family strengths as enumerated by Hill, which was the guide used in crediting responses. This finding is important since the theme that prevailed throughout the implementation process was that

of the uniqueness and strengths of black family life. These strengths were identified in process in the Communication Interaction group and a portion of one session of the Behavior Management group was devoted to an explication and discussion of these strengths. These were also included in the materials that were handed out at the Orientation Session.

Item 9 on the Foster Parent/Youth Questionnaires was related to the preferred placement model for the older adolescent. Four of the youngsters gave a preference to the Substitute Family model at pre-test. The three who selected the Contractual Agreement were also youngsters whose interactions in the group gave evidence of strains and tensions in the relationship with their foster parents that were related to anticipated independence. In the post-test responses four of the youngsters gave the Contractual Agreement as their preference, one gave both Contractual and Substitute Family, one did not respond and one did not return the questionnaire. The adolescents were clearly expressing a good deal of ambivalence in this area and the dialogue in Communication Interaction group did support a general need on the part of all youth to feel that they were a part of the family system. Therefore, in expressing preference for the contractual model, the youth may have given what they knew to be the expected response. None of the youngsters selected the Boarding Home agreement as a preference.

At pre-test 10 of the foster parents indicated the Substitute Family Agreement as the preferred placement model and 3 selected the Contractual Agreement as the preferred placement model. The post-test responses of both foster parent groups revealed a dramatic shift in responses, with 3 of the foster parents now identifying a Substitute Family Agreement as the placement model of preference and 10 the Contractual Agreement. None

selected the Boarding Home arrangement as a preference.

This shift in the preference of the placement model and the role of the foster parent is interpreted as being a direct effect of the intervention. The foster parents had functioned throughout the life of ILSPP as independent thinkers, as reflected in continuity in responses in two other areas. The training content had clearly supported the engagement of the natural parent in the life and planning of the child. However, the post-test response did not reflect a change, as the foster parents consistently expressed the view that involvement with the natural parent should be minimal. Similarly, in the training process some emphasis was placed on a reprioritizing of the attribute of Personal Hygiene. Again, the post-test response did not reflect this bias of the training. Therefore, this finding does support one of the major assumptions of the project design. This has important practice implications for the development of training programs, particularly in orientation sessions with foster parents of adolescents, and the agency's formulation of the placement model.

Implications of Findings

Several studies have been conducted that have been concerned with the effect of foster parent training and its association to placement outcome, retention of foster parents and satisfaction in the fostering role. There is an acknowledged need for further inquiry in this field, however, the positive association that these variables have with foster parent training has been established. The absence of changes in the ILSPP foster parents' performance that were statistically significant may be more appropriately attributed to other factors. These would be the size of the sample, time limitations and the volume of content that was

covered, and the nature of the "contract" that existed between the project staff and the participant group. The contract was one that supported collaborative efforts on the part of the project staff and participants. The "trainees", therefore, were not accountable for learning content or demonstrating behavioral changes as is expected in traditional training programs.

Although the study did not generate data that were statistically significant, data did emerge that have a high degree of clinical significance. Qualitative unmeasurable changes did occur during the process of implementation that have important practice implications for the development of specialized training programs for foster parents of the adolescent.

A significant finding of the study as supported by qualitative and quantitative measurements, was that the presence of the adolescent was the most influential variable affecting fostering skill. This was an influence that was reflected only in the foster skill of Self-Awareness. The Communication Interaction group demonstrated a far superior performance and improvement in Self-Awareness in attained post-intervention group scores. The verbal responses and reactions of this group of foster parents at termination further supported this finding. Statements were made that spoke to the foster parents' improved ability to empathize with the adolescent and respond to his/her individuality.

The inverse side of the finding was that the Communication Interaction Group was less able to acknowledge the difference that the status of foster care brings to the life of the adolescent. It is a contention of the writer that an acceptance and acknowledgement of the difference that is inherent in the child's foster care is status is

central to successful fostering, and to preparing the adolescent for independence. First, such a predisposition would facilitate the process of identity consolidation. For as the adolescent is assisted to accept his origins, he simultaneously is assisted to gain a sense of constancy and integration of identity. Secondly, the acceptance of the difference would facilitate the transition to a conceptualization of the fostering role from the traditional parent substitute concept to that of role model/mentor. This model seems to have a greater degree of efficacy for assisting the adolescent achieve independence.

For the black foster child, identity consolidation is further complicated by this minority group and foster care statuses. Chestang (1973) in his discussion of the character formation of blacks suggests that injustice, inconsistency and impotency are socially determined experiences that are present throughout the life cycle, and are significant determinants of character development. This construct seems to have particular relevance when considering the black foster adolescent and his struggles to achieve homeostasis with his inner and outer environment as he moves towards adult status and independence.

The dual experience demands that the black individual develop the kind of social/interpersonal skills that will allow him to relate within two worlds. Although a necessary adaptive response, this can result in a superficiality in social transactions and a lack of authenticity in relationships. Societal inconsistency gives rise to ego syntonic feelings of distrust, suspicion and anger that are counterproductive to successful personality integration, and impotence leads to a loss of autonomy, diminished feelings of self-worth and low self-esteem (Chestang, 1973).

Following this construct, it is suggested that one adaptive response that has emerged in the individual's efforts to mediate the demands of the environment is that of "making it" or "getting over". These concepts imply a seduction of the environment and redefinition of the relationships that exist between the individual and the environment. However, the successes achieved in social encounters of this nature are diminished by a loss of authenticity, with individuals often relating to one another as objects.

The child welfare system provides vast opportunities for the adolescent to manipulate the environment in ways that will permit him to "get over" as the major players in the system have differing sets of priorities. These differing priorities are supported by competing policy demands that inform behaviors in relating to the adolescent. The foster parents who participated in the project were sensitive to this dynamic. One youth acknowledged that in relating to his foster parent it was his experience that very little "got by her" and there were few opportunities for "getting over". There are, however, far many more situations when the foster adolescents' attempts at "getting over" have at best resulted in serial terminations of placements and at worse the transferring of learned, non-productive manipulative behavior patterns to independence.

Chestang's model does have implications for understanding the differences in the process identity consolidation, which is critical to establishing autonomy and independence, for the black foster adolescent. Acknowledging the differences in the foster care status would seem to support the development of feelings of authenticity within the immediate environment of the foster family and minimize the need for the foster parent and adolescent to struggle with the "as if" character of the

relationship that this avoidance supports.

This need to respond to the youngsters "as if" he were their own child has the further effect of bringing the foster parent into a conflictual position with the policies and practices of the child welfare system. The system gives foster parents a delegated, temporary responsibility to the child and places them in a subordinate relationship to the birth parent, the agency and the state. The model for placement that is supported by ILSPP minimize these characteristics of the fostering relationship. The foster parents who participated in the study evidenced a clear readiness for functioning within this new definition of the role and status of the foster parent.

Traditional child welfare practices have supported the use of small group settings for the adolescent because of the central developmental task of this life stage. However, the least restrictive environment should be the preferred plan for children in need of out-of-home care. Foster family care, when planned in consideration of the changing developmental needs of the foster child and his under care status, can be used as an effective form of substitute care for the adolescent. This form of care can facilitate the transition to independent community living.

The largest number of the ILSPP foster parents reported home ownership, and were not apartment dwellers. Some of the group reported having from four to six foster children in placement. There is a potential for the development of specialized foster homes for multiple adolescent placements. Research (Rosenblum, 1977) has demonstrated that with thoughtful planning and follow-up services, individual foster family care can be successful with the adolescent.

The placement model that is supported by the project has a good

potential for planning successful adolescent foster family placements. The conceptualization of the foster parent as role model/mentor reduces the need for the adolescent to form competing alliances, supports continuing ties with biological extended family members and explicitly defines the task of the foster parent as that of teaching, through a process of identification, those behaviors that will prepare the youngsters for independence.

The experience of the ILSPD demonstrates that in the absence of planned pre-discharge services, even those youngsters whose placement histories were the most favorable and whose foster parents had extensive experiences of fostering, were poorly prepared for independent living.

The ILSPD adolescents were all involved in vocational or educational programs and were optimistic about their futures and abilities to live successfully on their own. This sense of competency, however, was not supported by the data collected from the Youth Questionnaire, which provided the framework for assessing independent living readiness. With one exception, the youth who had experienced independent living, the group evidenced a lack of readiness for this task. There were gaps in specific knowledge related to family planning information, and limited knowledge in job search and money management skills.

Festinger (1983) in her comprehensive study of former foster children discussed the optimism with which this group of young adults, as do all youth, approached independence and the subsequent complaints about the inadequate preparation that they had received. Sherraden and Adamek (1985, p. 470) in discussing the mental health problems and dysfunctional behavioral patterns of unemployed youth suggest that these young experience reactions that are similar to those of unemployed adults as

described by Levine (1982), moving through three stages of optimism, confusion and despair. Concomitant to this are doubts about self-identity, decreased feelings of self-esteem, depression and demoralization. These are all characteristics that encourage disengagement, and the drifting behaviors that make youth high risk for homelessness.

Skill development for independent living cannot be left to chance. These programs should be planned as one aspect of services along a continuum of foster care services. Programs for independent living should provide a range of services that should include clinical "soft", services that address the psychological concerns of the group along with "hard" services that would teach job and vocational skills. It is of importance that in spite of the fact that race continues to be a major factor influencing opportunity in this country for minority group members, the total group of ILSPP adolescents expressed the view that race and color posed no obstacle to individual opportunity.

A final important finding of the study was the process of growth and development of one foster parent who was identified as the "informal consultant" to the project director. The experience of his foster parent does demonstrate the potential for training experienced foster parents to become the primary trainer in agency foster parent training programs, while relying on professional staff for consultation and collaboration.

The status of foster care brings a difference to the life of the child and as well brings a difference to the life of the foster family. Family privacy is to a great degree relinquished to outside authorities who set standards for acceptable levels of care. Additionally, the foster parent's child rearing practices are subject to the review and

critical evaluation of the agency, foster family relationships are stressed and must be re-established with each new placement, attachments are made that may be abruptly severed, and extensive efforts of hard work that are directed towards encouraging the growth of the child may be undone seemingly in one brief moment. These are but some of the occurrences that bring differences to the life of the foster parent. Within this context, the rights of foster parents assume the lowest level of priority when considering those of the birth parent, the child and the agency. Foster parents are better able to identify with the experienced foster parent who is functioning in the role of primary trainer. The identification and empathy that would then exist between the trainer and trainees would facilitate the learning process, decrease resistances and the feelings of distrust that are directed towards the professional trainer who is perceived as having a primary allegiance to the agency.

Recent years have seen foster parents emerging as a viable consumer group. Foster parent organizations or associations now exist at the agency, state and national levels. Given these developments, an upgrading of the position of the foster parent from that of volunteer, altruistic helper to that of salaried para-professional worker may be a timely area of exploration with a group whose role requires a knowledge of psychosocial growth and development, specific techniques of behavior management and the ability to negotiate complex social service delivery systems.

Kadushin (1980, p. 393), in highlighting the findings of several studies that have been concerned with the effects of paying foster parents a fee or salary for services performed discussed some general and

positive effects of such payments as:

- (1) agencies were less defensive in their relationships with foster parents and were better able to present the realities of the foster child's difficulties with less fear that the foster parent would reject the placement;
- (2) payments made explicit the valuing that the agency gave to the service that was performed by the foster parents; and
- (3) foster parents felt a greater sense of identification with the agency, and did perceive staff members as peers and colleagues.

Importantly such payments had the overall effect of improving the quality of care provided. All of these findings have important implications for agency/foster parent relationships in providing under care and follow-up services to the foster adolescent. The goals and objectives of the young adult's plan for independent living may be better achieved when all parties are working cooperatively together within a framework that establishes and defines levels of expectations, performance and accountability.

CHAPTER VI

Summary and Recommendations

During the past two years increasing public attention has been focused on the community adjustment of young adults who have been discharged from the foster care system.

Investigation in this area indicates that these young people have not received the kind of preparation while in care that will enable them to live on their own. Many have been discharged from the foster care system only to enter into other social welfare systems with recent research (Shaffer and Caten, 1984) suggesting a developing trend of movement into the city shelter system. A 1983 study that was undertaken by the Citizen's Committee for Children found that the vast majority of city agencies that provide foster care services do not have in place clearly defined programs that have a goal of preparing adolescents for independent community living.

These occurrences have highlighted the gap in services that exists for this client group. They also emphasize the need to organize foster care services in a continuum of care that extends through post-discharge/aftercare services.

Social work has traditionally been the professional discipline having the highest degree of visibility in the field of child welfare. Therefore, the transition of the adolescent from foster care status to independent community living and program development that address the difficulties that accompany this transition is an important area of social work practice.

In July, 1985 the State Supreme Court gave legal sanction to the rights of these young people to be provided programs and services that will give them the help that they need to join the mainstream of the society as self-sufficient, contributing citizens. The Court ruled that city officials must supervise adolescents in foster care until they reach the age of twenty-one, and provide them with the kind of training that will prepare them to cope on their own after discharge from the system (New York Times, July 19, 1985).

Court litigation has characterized the process of child welfare policy formulation. Foster care services have long been a target for child advocates and social reformers. The deficits of the system have been acknowledged by key players at every level and by the general public. The services and programs that have evolved have not taken an articulated and integrated direction that has been planned in consideration of the total needs of families. Nor have they taken a purposeful course towards the achievement of clearly defined goals and objectives that embody the expressed societal value that is placed on the importance of family life. The fragmented services that we now see as the heritage of the child welfare system have their roots in an American tradition that supported the development of services under sectarian auspices, an administrative system that structured the delivery of services around the organizational needs of the bureaucracy and a practice orientation in service delivery that did not take into account the effects of environmental influences on individual and family functioning.

Billingsley and Giovannoni (1972), in their analysis of the American Child Welfare System, document that poor, black families have been

especially vulnerable to the effects of services and programs that enact inadequate policies that have been informed by a residual perspective. This perspective has influenced service development in a direction that emphasized the rescue of children from inadequate families, and resulted in large number of black children being unnecessarily placed away from their own homes. Because these children were not viewed as suitable candidates for adoption, nor did their families receive the kind of services that would support reunification, permanent foster care became the reality for a large number of them.

Consequently, we see a disproportionate number of black children in the foster care system. Current statistical reports from Special Services for Children (SSC), the city agency responsible for all dependent children, indicate that 60.3% of children receiving foster care services are black, 48.8% are of adolescent years and 1,700 will be discharged to independent living in FY 1986.

The Adoptions Assistance and Child Welfare Reform Act of 1980 and the New York State Child Welfare Reform Act of 1979 represent major policy reforms that have made considerable inroads in correcting the inadequacies of past foster care practices. The new direction that these policies support have encouraged the development of preventive and reunification services to families. Inquiries into the impact of the legislation document that foster care placement has been averted for many children. There has also been a reduction in the numbers of new children entering into the system. These new thrusts in services, however, have not supported program development for adolescents who will be discharged to independent community living. Barth (1986), notes the paucity of publication of materials in the area of emancipation programs for

adolescents. These findings further establish that pre-discharge programs that provide services that ease the transition to community living are indicated.

Foster parent training programs have been used for some time in child care settings as a means for improving the quality of care for children and families making use of foster care services. These programs have served the important functions of orienting foster parents to the role of fostering, providing ongoing in-service training and advanced training for fostering children who demonstrate special needs.

As early as 1930 when the White House Conference on Children gave recognition to the special needs of dependent and neglected minority children, it was also acknowledged at this Conference that programs for black children should provide opportunities for blacks to participate in their development at the lay and professional levels. Billingsley and Giovannoni (1972), Chestang (1978), and Dodson (1983), are all contemporary writers in the field of child welfare who have continued to advocate for a black perspective in the development and delivery of child welfare services. Such a perspective would capture the nuances of the black experience that effect family functioning and differentiate these families from and connect them to the general population of American families. This perspective would also move service providers away from a model for assessing these families that emphasizes pathology to a focus upon their strengths.

The Independent Life Skills Preparation Project (ILSPP) was developed as a specialized foster parent training program to address the gap in services for the adolescent in foster care. The program design emphasized the need to develop services for families and children from an

ethnic sensitive perspective, and that foster care services are best organized in a continuum of care.

The ILSPP was developed in consideration of the specific needs of the black adolescent approaching discharge from foster care. However, many of the issues of foster care service delivery that are addressed by the project have policy and programmatic implications for the general population of children and families who are consumers of these services.

Program Description

The project design was derived from the basic premise that believes that the family is central to the life of a society and performs the essential function of educating and preparing children for independent living.

Billingsley (1968) in his seminal study of the American black family presented a social systems perspective for understanding the structure and functioning of these families. This perspective acknowledges the impact of the larger social systems of the society on black family life and the adaptive patterns that have emerged that serve positive functions. The conclusion is drawn that the black family is a sustaining, resilient and nurturing social system possessing characteristics that make it particularly well suited to assist black children not only to survive but to achieve in a larger non-supportive environment. Hill (1971) in his study of black families also identifies its positive attributes. He enumerated five strengths that seemed to characterize all black families.

This ecological perspective and conceptualization of the black family as a unit of strength that is particularly well suited to prepare children for independence was incorporated into the work with the foster

family. An assumption that underlay the project design was that the black foster parent has experience in negotiating the demands of two worlds and of parenting own children for successful functioning in these two worlds. This dual perspective has facilitated the development of parenting skills that can be transferred to the fostering experience with the adolescent whose transition to independence is complicated by his foster care and minority group status. The black experience and independent living were consistent themes throughout the implementation process of ILSP.

The activities and practices of ILSP were informed by three basic assumptions that acknowledged: (1) the ethnicity of the families making use of services, (2) the strengths of the foster family system, and (3) the need to organize foster care services in a continuum of care that offered a diverse array of services and planned interventions.

The ideological orientation of the project drew upon and integrated several theories and concepts. Major among these were those related to the ecological perspective, adolescent psychosocial growth and development, adult learning theory, role theory, black family life and minority group use of services.

The innovative aspect of ILSP was in its conceptualization of the placement model. Foster care services have traditionally used a "birth model" for planning placements of children. This model identifies the role of the foster parent as parent substitute. This model acknowledges the psychosocial needs of some age groups of children to form attachments to nurturing parental figures. Conversely, placement in small group settings have been used as the preferred plan of placement for the adolescent since care in such settings does not conflict with his

normative developmental needs to achieve autonomy and separation from parental and family ties. However, in recent years, cost factors and a response to legislation that seeks to support care of the adolescent in the "least restrictive environment", substitute care in individual foster family homes has been increasingly used. Traditional practices have had a continuing influence in these placements. These influences create dilemmas for the adolescent as he seeks resolution of the major tasks of this stage of the life cycle.

The ILSPP conceptualization of the placement model as a contract agreement addressed these dilemmas. The model provided opportunities for the adolescent to enjoy all of the benefits from placement in the foster family home and for meeting his continuing needs for belonging to an intimate group. A contractual agreement, as a model for adolescent placement, focuses on the reciprocity and mutuality that exists between the adolescent, caretaker and placing agency. The role of the foster parent is identified as that of role model and mentor who through a relationship that stresses identification teaches the adolescent mastery and competency in those skills needed for independence.

The project design additionally acknowledged the valuable contribution that the foster parent, who has traditionally been the primary "on the line" providers of foster care services, can make to the foster care program development as a result of their on-the-job experience, life experience and racial identification.

The focus on the strengths of individuals and their coping, adaptive abilities also characterized the work with the adolescent. Robinson and Fields (1983) in their discussion of the invulnerable child, suggest that many children whose lives have been marked by trauma have become stress

resistant, developing compensatory behaviors that allow for a positive adjustment to the demands of their environments.

The foster care literature (Bush and Gordon, 1983) also identifies the positive benefits that are accrued when adolescents are given an opportunity to participate in placement decision making. This involvement supports the adolescents' developmental need to be increasingly involved in decision making about his life. This participation also establishes a mutuality and reciprocity that has a positive effect on placement outcome.

ILSPP represented a collaborative process between the professional project staff, foster parents and adolescents in program development.

Limitations of the project were that the agencies of affiliation were not included in this collaborative process, that the ILSPP participants were not representative of the current under care adolescent population and the limited time frame for the implementation of the program.

Methodology

The ILSPP used a combined descriptive/comparative research design that sought to assess and describe the relative affectiveness of two foster parent training strategies; and the relationship that group composition and instructional format had to the variables of fostering skill and placement stability.

Fostering skill was defined and operationalized into five skill areas of: (1) Self Awareness, (2) Adolescent Growth and Development, (3) Behavior Management/Foster Parent Practice, (4) Assessment and Planning/Black Family Life Styles and (5) Systems Negotiation/Coping with Burnout. Self-Awareness as defined by the project represented expressive fostering skills. This skill assumed insight into one's own behavior, an ability

to identify the primary parenting style and to differentially apply fostering interventions that were individualized to meet the developmental and emotional needs of the adolescent. Behavior Management/ Foster Parent Practice represented instrumental fostering skills and assumed an ability to identify common problems of adolescence and to apply selective techniques for teaching alternative behaviors. All other skill areas were viewed as having both instrumental and expressive features. Scoring was based on a scale that ranged from 0-85. Skill scores were assigned to categories as follows: High (85-70), Medium (69-50) and Low (49 and below).

Recognizing that there are a number of crucial intervening variables effecting placement outcome, placement stability for the purpose of ISLPP was defined simply as the retention of the adolescent in the foster home for the two month duration of the project.

The data for the study were collected from the Foster Parent Youth, recruitment forms, Foster/Parent Youth Pre-post Questionnaires, participant reactionnaires, participant logs and the video tapes of the training sessions. After all schedules had been completed at the termination of the project the data were tabulated for analysis interpretation and treated statistically.

The total number of ISPP participants was twenty. The foster parents and adolescents were recruited from the general population receiving foster care services from SSC and its contract agencies. The participants were pre-screened using the major selection criteria of ethnicity, years of fostering experience, discharge plan of the adolescent and agency recommendation. Foster parents who had less than three years fostering experience were not accepted for participation.

Adolescents who were not enrolled in a vocational/educational program or those who had a history of substance abuse, or involvement with the juvenile justice system were excluded from participation. The ILSP participants represented six private child care agencies and SSC's direct care component.

All of the ILSP foster parents were black, and with the exception of three all were currently fostering adolescents who would be discharged to independent community living. The foster parents who did not have adolescents in current placement did have previous experience with fostering adolescents. They were selected for participation because of their extensive fostering experience and participation in foster parent training program development.

Of the total number of 13 foster parents, one was a single male. The mean age of the group was 49.5 years. Six were married, 2 were divorced or separated, 2 were widows and 3 had never been married. The mean years of fostering experience was 10.4 years. The mean number of years of affiliation with the same agency was 9.6 years.

All of the foster parents indicated a satisfaction with the role of fostering as assessed by their self-rating of self as a foster parent. Over half of the group identified their occupational status as "foster parent". More than half of the group (9) reported home ownership and did not have biological children living in the home.

The foster parent groups evidenced a similarity on all descriptive variables with the exception of number of years fostering experience and marital and employment status. The mean years of fostering experience for the Communication Group was 12.6 as compared to 8.2 years for the Behavior Management Group. Six of the foster parents in the

Communication Interaction group were unemployed as compared to 2 of those in the Behavior Management Group. Four foster parents in the Communication Interaction Group were married as compared to 2 in the Behavior Management Group. A substantial number of foster parents in the Communication Interaction Group identified their occupational status as "foster parent". It was anticipated that the Communication Interaction group would enjoy instrumental and expressive gains from the increased number of years of fostering experience, opportunities for sharing the fostering experience with a spouse and from being able to devote full attention to a role that was perceived as their major function.

Of the total number of the ILSPP adolescents, 4 were male and 3 were female. The mean age of the group was 18.2 years. All of the adolescents were enrolled in either educational or vocational programs, one was enrolled in a special education program. With the exception of one all demonstrated a highly stable placement history and had remained in the initial home of placement. The mean number of years in care for the group was 9.2 years, with a range of 2-17 placement years. Only one of the adolescents had experienced more than two placements or placement in an institutional setting.

The ILSPP youth were highly optimistic as they anticipated discharge from the system. All expected to have a job and apartment upon discharge from the system. Two anticipated a need for temporary public assistance. One of the youth anticipating this kind of assistance did have a diagnosed disability. Most of the youth denied having frequent thoughts about discharge but expressed ambivalent feelings as they anticipated discharge from the system. Only one of the youth reported frequent visitation with biological family members, 3 reported infrequent

contact and 3 had no contact with family.

The ILSPP adolescents in total presented a profile of a stable foster care history that was significantly different from that of the under care adolescent population. With the exception of one, all had grown up in the system and one had achieved permanency through adoption. The ILSPP participants represented an "ideal" fostering constellation.

Assignments were made to the two programs as to preference of the foster parents and to ensure that the groups represented diversity in terms of gender of the adolescent and agency affiliation.

The two training programs were implemented concurrently over an eight week period. Sessions were scheduled consecutively and met for two hours. Seven foster parents and seven adolescents completed the Communication Interaction program and six foster parents completed the Behavior Management program.

Each program had a primary trainer, and the project director acted as co-trainer for both programs. The trainers were all black social workers with combined professional experiences in education, child welfare, adolescent services and minority curriculum development. Both of the training programs focused on content and process. However, the emphasis of the Behavior Management was on didactic instruction and the Communication Interaction focused on process. Much of the content of the Communication Interaction program emerged from the interaction of the group.

The format of the programs was informal small group settings that emphasized cooperation and collaboration between the participants and project staff.

A variety of training materials were used. These included role play,

case materials, readings, small group experiences and log assignments.

Findings

During the course of the program, one placement disruption occurred. This was in the Behavior Management group. The youth presented a history of multiple placements with frequent reunifications with the birth parent. As was characteristic of his previous history the youth did return to the foster home after a brief absence.

With this one exception there were no other placement disruptions during the period of implementation and for the four-month period following the termination of the project. In establishing placement stability as a criterion of program outcome it was acknowledged that there were a number of intervening variables that the project did not factor out that have an association with placement outcome. This finding should be considered within this context and that the ILSPP adolescents' previous history of stability placed them less at risk for placement disruption.

The evaluation of the program did not reveal a statistically significant difference in the post-intervention between and within group mean scores of foster parents. There were, however, observed differences in the effect of the two training strategies that have implication for the planning, design and implementation of independent living skills preparation programs.

Group Composition

Additional benefits are accrued when foster parents and adolescents participate in conjoint training sessions. The qualitative and quantitative measurements of program outcome clearly indicated that the presence of the adolescent had the effect of increasing the

self-awareness of foster parents and their ability to respond to the individuality of the adolescent. The post-intervention performance of the two training groups was grossly similar in all fostering skill areas with the exception of Self-Awareness. The Communication Interaction group demonstrated a far greater improvement in attained Self-Awareness skill score in comparison to the Behavior Management group. The Communication Interaction foster parents verbalized new insights into the behavior and feelings of the adolescents during the process of implementation. When the project terminated there was consensus among the group members that they had improved in their ability to empathize with the adolescent. This improvement was attributed to the intervention strategy.

This method of group composition also provided opportunities for foster parents and adolescents to work cooperatively in shared problem solving activities related to independence. The ILSP experience highlighted for both foster parents and adolescents that the process of formulating individual plans must be a planful process that is monitored, goal-directed, realistic and completed with a specific time frame.

This method of training also supported a greater variation in the patterns of within group subgroupings that are formed. The adolescents formed a distinct subgroup that performed support and teaching functions. The feedback and behavior modeling that came from peers had a far greater teaching value than what often is perceived as "lecturing" from the adult caretakers. Subgroups were also formed around gender of the adolescents. This subgrouping enriched content around family planning and social/interpersonal relationships as an aspect of independent living.

Identity consolidation is a crucial and central developmental task of adolescence. Foster care status complicates this process for the adolescent as it is a status that continues to carry a high degree of stigmatization. It seems essential that significant persons in the life of the adolescent demonstrate an ability to acknowledge this difference if they are to effectively assist in this process. The tendency of the total group of ILSPF foster parents was to deny the difference that foster status brings to the life of the adolescent and to treat the child as if he/she were their own.

However, while a sameness to birth children is verbalized, the difference does emerge in interactional patterns. This inconsistency between what is verbalized and what is experienced seems to reinforce the feelings of stigmatization that are experienced by the adolescent.

The presence of the adolescent had the effect of reinforcing an avoidance of this central issue. The Behavior Management foster parents, in absence of the adolescents, demonstrated a greater ability to accept their status of being the second adult figure of importance in the life of the adolescent. This orientation freed these foster parents from the need to compete with birth parents and minimized feelings of personal failure and responsibility for the adolescent's limitations. Such an orientation supported a greater objectivity in the caretaker role, which is central to the ILSPF's conceptualization of the role of the foster parent.

The foster parent has a delegated authority that is subordinate to that of the agency and natural parent. This "as if" quality of the relationship that comes to fore with the denial of the adolescents' foster care status invariably brings the foster parent into conflict with

the policies and regulations of the foster care system. Consequently, more opportunities are available for the adolescent to manipulate key persons in his life.

This "as if" dynamic further encourages a lack of authenticity in relationships that is dysfunctional to the process of identity consolidation and to the development of those social/interpersonal skills that serve positive functions in independence. The Behavior Management program as a training strategy more effectively addressed these issues of adolescent fostering.

A final observation about the effect of group composition and training outcome is that conjoint sessions provided an opportunity to constructively confront the issue of authority, which is central to adolescent fostering. Groups are a natural environment for the adolescent and when training is structured to include group interaction with adult authority figures, the adolescent is provided a support system within which he can appropriately challenge traditional values and authority. Foster parents as well are able to relinquish the need for absolute control, an attribute that is somewhat characteristic of the black foster parent. Conjoint training effectively promoted within group member sensitivity and in the Rogerian tradition seemed to facilitate the personal growth of some group members.

Instructional Format

Clearly discernable differences in learning patterns of the foster parent groups did emerge. Generally, the Communication Interaction group, with an emphasis on communication and interaction, supported affective learnings and facilitated a greater sensitivity between adolescents and foster parents. The experience for this group remained a

highly personal one. The foster parents of the Behavior Management group became more adept at generalizing their personal experiences to the more global issues of child welfare. The Communication Interaction group developed as "practitioners" and the Behavior Management group as "teachers".

The total group of participants were more easily engaged around experiential activities. Therefore, in developing these programs a wealth of opportunities should be provided for the use of role play, small group experiences, case materials and visual aids.

The style of the trainer assumes an enormous importance in training and has a significant impact on the direction of development of the group process, group character and the interactional patterns that emerge within the group. The experience of the Independent Life Skills Project demonstrated that a didactic teaching style of the trainer facilitated the development of cognitive behaviors that were observed in the Behavior Management group and an identification with the teaching role. The expressive, process-oriented style of the trainer in the Communication Interaction Group reinforced behaviors that enabled foster parents to perform more effectively in the practice role of fostering. This suggests that a diversity of training styles and teaching models be incorporated in training to support the most effective achievement of the learning objectives of the training modules.

Central to the educational encounter is the ability of the teacher to enter into the life space of the learner. The ethnicity of the project trainers did facilitate this process. This similarity supported the foster parents' identification with the professional staff that was observed during implementation. The foster parents evidenced a greater

degree of comfort in sharing highly personalized responses to the fostering experience and reactions to services provided by agencies. One foster parent stated that her social workers tended to be young and white. Age and ethnicity were experienced as distancing variables. The observation was made that the workers did not fully "understand the situation of our kids" or that "we (black people) have been doing this (caring for black children) for a long time."

There are a spectrum of teaching models that have difference uses for difference learners, and can be utilized in the development of instructional methods. It has been demonstrated that didactic teaching models support cognitive learnings and expressive non-directive methods support affective learnings and attitudinal changes. This was the experience of ILSP. The general principles of adult learning theory should be incorporated into the work with foster fami'y groups. This philosophical orientation would support the assumption that adults are best engaged when they are involved in developing the content of what is to be learned and when the material has meaning to his current life experiences and allow for its practical applications.

Lee (1979) in a project that used the small group design as a modality for work with new foster parents found that neither the didactic nor the experiential approach to the learning/teaching process with this group could stand alone. The project explored the connection between educational and social work approaches to learning through an analysis of John Dewey's experiential educational approach and those of social work educators Bertha Reynolds and William Schwartz. In formulating the methodology of the workshop the planning process was similar to that of the ILSP. The structure of this workshop was informed by the

predetermined content and the experiences of the participants were key to adjusting that content in process. Lee further suggests that the "method is to 'work from the experience out,' or inductively derive the concepts and content to be 'taught' from the experiences presented and shared by the learners" (p. 132). In foster parent training groups, as was the experience of ILSP, the on-the-job and life experiences of the participant group was of equal importance as the knowledge of the project staff.

While the Life experiences of the participants was essential to the training process, it is equally important that the training evidence planning, coherence and integration. Each module should be directed towards the achievement of clearly articulated learning objectives that have been cooperatively established. The ILSP foster parents and adolescents were consistently involved in a collaborative process of searching for answers to the basic questions of: What are the skills needed for independent living and how are these skills best taught and learned?

Beyond these basic findings, the total ILSP experience can serve as a guide for the implementation of an independent life skills preparation program. Such programs are intended to be one aspect of what should be a comprehensive array of predischarge services that are offered to both foster parents and adolescents.

Some writers in the field of foster parent training programs have related the retention of foster parents to the provision of stipends. Although a small stipend was given to the ILSP participants the retention and motivation for consistent attendance appeared to have a closer association to the quality of the engagement process, and the

atmosphere of collaboration that was created. The retention of the participants was also influenced by a group process that was used to facilitate the development of a common group identity, shared values and a sense of cause and mission in the undertaking. These activities had the effect of increasing feelings of ownership and belonging to a mutual support group. In addition to these issues of engagement, retention was also influenced by the sense of goal accomplishment that was consistently experienced by the participants.

The experience of the project was that because training was conducted off-site and offered to foster parents from several agencies, unintended benefits were derived. Given this environment, the participants were able to more effectively engage in problem solving activities that were related to the issues of independent living. The digressive discussion related to dissatisfactions with agency programs, policies and services, that often characterize foster parent group meetings, were minimized.

Conducting sessions off-site and inter-agency also had the effect of extending the support network of the foster parents and establishing new supports for the adolescent. For the adolescent these new relationships have the potential for becoming supports in independent living through the establishment of friendship ties that could become resources for shared apartment living. A secondary goal of foster parent training programs has been that they provide a mutual support, self-help system for foster parents. This method of intervention has not been sufficiently developed in the practice with the foster adolescent. Foster care status continues to carry with it a high degree of stigmatization. The common bond that is shared by foster adolescents because of this status can be supported through this interventive

modality to promote relationships that can be continued in independence as well as reducing these feelings of stigmatization. The experience with the ILSPP adolescents further highlighted the need for planned activities that are directed towards assisting the adolescent achieve self-reliance in independence.

Preparation for independence and emancipation is a life-long process and much of what families provide for children, within a nurturing supportive environment, are those kinds of experiences that support a developing competency and mastery that incrementally prepare them for self-reliance. The foster child should be given these same opportunities as his inherent right within the context of a nurturing substitute family context that recognizes that the specialness of his circumstances may require an enrichment of these opportunities. Festinger (1983), in dialogues with former foster children does suggest that the availability of these kinds of experiences and opportunities cannot be assumed or left to chance. Many of the young adults who were interviewed for the study expressed dissatisfaction with the preparation they had received for independence.

The experiences of the ILSPP was similar. For while the largest percentage of foster adolescents participating in the project had been in the home of the initial placement for an extended period ($M = 7.8$ years), with one exception, they did not demonstrate a readiness for independent living as assessed by the Youth Questionnaire. The Youth Questionnaire obtained information on knowledge related to Money Management, Employment, Apartment Finding, Home Management, Health and Family Planning. This exception was the youth who had experienced intermittent periods of independent living.

Over and beyond the experiences provided in the foster home that are directed towards preparing the adolescent for independence as a normative process, agencies that provide service to children whose discharge plan is independence should have in place a structured program offering individual and group services that have the specific goal of preparation for independence, coupled with post-discharge follow-up services.

As service providers have become more aware of the need for continuity in care of this population, independent life skills preparation programs are becoming available. One example is a program developed by Ansell at the School of Social Work, Virginia Commonwealth University under the auspices of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, (Making It On Your Own, 1983). The components of an Independent Living program as developed by ILSP were: Sense of Self as Black and Relatedness to the Black Community, Vocational/Occupational and Job Skills, Budgeting/Finance Management, Home Management/Housekeeping, Interpersonal Social Relationship Skills, Civic Responsibility and Sense of Community Service and Personal Hygiene. There is general consensus that these programs should include clinical services and concrete services in the broad categories as outlined by Festinger (1983, pp. 299-300).

- Counseling that addresses educational, work and career objectives and choices: assessments of interests and skills; information about work and career options; information about educational opportunities, high school equivalency and vocational education programs, college programs and financial aid possibilities; and assistance with enrollment procedures.
- Vocational training and employment: The ABCs of applying for a

- job assistance in finding work experiences during placement; training in marketable skills and trades; information on community resources for finding employment; assistance in locating post-discharge employment.
- Training in independent living skills providing experiences in handling money and information on budgeting; information and assistance on establishing savings accounts for earnings; information on various types of financial assistance; availability of supervised independent living settings prior to final discharge; information about how and where to find living quarters and temporary housing; assistance in finding housing; training and experience in shopping and cooking.
 - Sex education and family planning: education on sexual matters, family life, and community facilities that provide information and counseling on family planning.
 - Information about kin and other ties: providing an opportunity to discuss specifics of background; assistance in locating biological family members and others of the youths' choosing; information about various community groups that could provide companionship and links to adults.

An assumption that underlay the design of ILSP was the services that are offered to families should reflect a sensitivity to the ethnicity of the groups making use of these services.

The largest number of adolescents and foster families making use of the foster care service delivery system in New York City are of African American origins. The activities of ILSP reflected this common racial identity, which did positively effect the achievement of project goals.

The foster parents gave affirmation to the meaningfulness of this aspect of the training in their reactionnaires. These responses of foster parents supported the assumption that training content of Independent Life Preparation programs should acknowledge cultural variations within families and the dominant value orientations that influence family functioning of those receiving services.

The project design further incorporated the ethnical imperative (Lewis, 1982, p. 411) that opportunities to participate in the development of programs, policies, procedures and practice decisions affecting their lives should be made available to those groups making use of agency services. The integration of the intuitive knowledge and on-the-job experience of the foster parent and theoretical, professional knowledge of the project staff informed the development of the major practices and procedures of ILSPP. It is indeed timely for foster parents to be facilitated in a role that would extend the available resources of agencies. The experience of ILSPP further suggested that experienced foster parents can be provided with advanced training that will enable them to assume a major role in the implementation of these programs. The training strategy of the Behavior Management program did have a demonstrated effectiveness for supporting those attributes that could facilitate the development of teaching skills.

One foster parent was identified as an informal consultant to the project director. This foster parent was contacted after each session for evaluative feedback about the program as it developed in process. Overtime this relationship developed into one that was characterized by a mutuality that is reflected in collaborative, consultative encounters.

This foster parent demonstrated the greatest change in fostering

skill score and new behaviors that indicated personal development and self-growth. She successfully conducted two training sessions at her agency of affiliation. In conducting these sessions the integration of the ILSP content was demonstrated. The role of informal consultant differentiated the experience of this foster parent from other group members, emphasizing the positive benefits that come from collaborative efforts that reflect a valuing of the contribution that the foster parent can make.

In support of the principle of the project design that encouraged collaboration, the major content areas for independent life preparation programs was reformulated as follows:

- Module I Orientation to the Program
- Module II The Child Welfare System/Historical Relationship to
 Black Families
- Module III Self-Awareness
- Module IV Psychosocial Growth and Development
 Developmental Tasks of Adolescent
- Module V Promoting Skills of Independent Living
- Module VI Assessment and Planning/Reinforcing the Traditional
 Values of Black Family Life
- Module VII Practicing Skills of Independent Living
- Module VIII Negotiating Systems/Developing Support Networks

The ILSP experience suggests policy implications for foster agencies in the formulation of adolescent placement agreement. Although all of the ILSP foster parents had experience in adolescent fostering, their approach to the work was that of substitute parent. At the beginning of the project the largest number of foster parents expressed a preference

for the substitute family agreement. This model is incongruent with the developmental needs of the adolescent and promotes ongoing conflicts with the policies of the system and with natural parents.

A troublesome finding of the project was the clear orientation of foster parents to exclude natural parents from participation in the life of the adolescent. However, if the adolescent is to achieve identity consolidation it is imperative that he establish a sense of comfort with his origins and a view of self as a part of these origins yet separate and distinct from them. When foster parents view their role as parent substitute, there is a tendency to denigrate the natural parent as opposed to assisting the youngster to accept their limitations and not equate their worthiness to parental problems. Many adolescents continue to have a need to "romanticize" the birth parent, therefore, when the foster parents' view of their role moves them away from competing with natural parents there are more opportunities for assisting the adolescent to resolve conflicting feelings about them.

The role of the foster parent as mentor may be more effective in assisting the foster adolescent resolve difficult issues associated with the process of identity consolidation. Importantly, the adolescent can be helped to resolve these conflicts and learn skills of independence within a family environment. The ILSPP adolescents consistently expressed the need to belong to a family unit. One youngster captured the ambivalence of the group in the choice of both a substitute family agreement and contract agreement, suggesting that "everybody needs to have a family, it should be a little of both."

When the ILSPP terminated there was a dramatic shift in the foster parents' preference for the placement model. The largest number of

foster parents at post intervention expressed a preference for the contract agreement. The foster parents who participated in the project consistently performed as independent thinkers. This shift, therefore, is viewed as a result of the ILSP experience.

The participants' evaluation of the program at termination gave consistently high ratings to the total program and each training module. There was a general consensus that sufficient time had not been allocated for the implementation process. All foster parents and adolescents expressed a desire to continue. As a result of the informal systems that had emerged during the course of implementation, a network was established for the group to maintain ongoing contact with one another.

Recommendations

Preventive services should be offered as the first stage of intervention with troubled families. However, even when these services are offered many parents will remain unable to provide their children with a protected and nurturing family environment. In these instances, when out-of-home care is indicated, placement in an individual foster family home is the preferred form of care. This form of care can be planned in ways that successfully meets the needs of a range of age groups of children. For the adolescent this form of care can provide a means for easing the transition to independent community living.

Foster care services should be organized in a continuum of care and offered within a service delivery framework that is sensitive to the ethnicity of the families making use of services. Agencies that provide these services can effectively use planned group interventions that are organized as independent life skills preparation training programs and offered as pre-discharge services to foster parents and adolescents whose

discharge plan is to independent community living. These programs would represent one form of the comprehensive array of services that are provided in this continuum of care.

There are several possibilities for designing independent life skills programs for foster parents and adolescents. These programs should include a variety of interventive procedures. Many of these procedures can be found in established foster parent training programs and the newly developing independent skills programs that are directed exclusively to the adolescent.

While the content of these programs is best developed in collaboration with the program participants, the components of independent life preparation programs as described here reflect the core content of these programs and can be used as a guide for the development of "tailor made" programs.

Group composition and instructional format are important variables that affect training outcome and should be considered in the design of these programs. When the adolescent and foster parent are involved in conjoint training sessions the learning environment is enriched. There are increased opportunities for a greater variety in relationships and activity patterns that emerge that support the overall goals of training. Importantly, this method of intervention promotes an empathetic identification between the adolescent and foster parent. As well, opportunities are provided for the resolution of conflicts and stresses that are typically associated with the adolescent fostering relationship. These conflicts can be resolved within the context of a supportive mutual support group which further assists the adolescent to appropriately challenge traditional values and adult authority figures.

This method also permits greater opportunities for small group experiences that serve as behavioral rehearsals of skills needed for independence.

When training sessions are conducted with foster parents alone, the cognitive behaviors that are needed for fostering are reinforced. There is a tendency on the part of the foster parent to treat the adolescent as if he were their own child. This orientation poses dilemmas for the youth, engenders role confusion and promotes a lack of authenticity in relationships that are dysfunctional to the process of identity consolidation and interpersonal skill development. Conducting training sessions with the adult caretaker alone minimizes this "as if" quality of the fostering relationship and is an effective strategy for addressing these issues of adolescent fostering.

The number of sessions that will be needed to achieve the learning objectives of each module was not predetermined. However, a nine-month period is seen as an adequate time frame for completing the major goals of training. There is also the option for recontracting with the participants at termination for a continuation of the programs under a different format.

The components that are presented here are best delivered in an informal small group setting that emphasizes collaboration and cooperation. The program is intended to be offered as a total unit to a closed membership group of adolescents and foster parents with opportunity for conjoint and separate sessions. Group sessions should be structured consecutively with each session lasting for two hours. The sessions should be co-led. Additional benefits are gained if an experienced foster parent serves as co-trainer with an agency staff

person.

The early sessions of independent preparation programs can be held conjointly. The major work of these sessions is to be devoted to contracting, engagement, developing the content of subsequent training sessions and exploring the concepts of the contract placement agreement. This process should include a clear explication of the roles of the agency social worker, foster parent and adolescent. In establishing the parameters of this placement model, attention should be given to the adolescents' continuing need to feel that he is a part of a nurturing family unit that he can call on for support in independence.

Middle sessions can be conducted separately. Sessions that are conducted with foster parents can be used to provide information about the historical development of child welfare services and current issues in the delivery of foster care services. Importantly, the process during this phase of training should encourage the development of a relatedness to the cause that is embedded in the work of child welfare. Experiential activities should be developed that focus on the positive outcomes of the fostering experience. An additional task of these sessions is to assist the foster parent identify his unique parenting style and develop mentoring techniques that are individualized to meet the needs of the adolescent. These sessions provide opportunities to explore cultural variations in families and child-rearing practices.

For the adolescent, these middle sessions that are held separately, provide an opportunity to identify the tensions in the current substitute care home, explore feelings related to foster care status and approaching independence. An essential function of these separate adolescent groups should be the establishment of support peer network that can become

resources in independence--particularly for shared apartment arrangements.

Later sessions can bring the participants together again in conjoint sessions. The goal of these later sessions is to explore and practice the skills that are needed for independence. The identification of new systems that will be needed in independence and the skills needed to negotiate these systems are important tasks of these later sessions. These sessions should be developed to become very specifically task-oriented work sessions, i.e., resume writing, college/vocational training applications, job application, requirements for entry into the Armed Services, apartment finding, etc. A requirement of this phase of the training is for each adolescent to develop in consultation with his foster parent and social worker a goal directed independent living plan proposal. Ongoing sessions should provide a means for assisting the foster parent and adolescent to resolve the problems that are encountered in achieving the intermediary objectives that should be reflected in these plans.

All sessions should use a variety of instructional materials and the use of experiential activities emphasized. The later sessions will generate a wealth of "life instructional" materials as the group works to implement the adolescent's independent living proposal. The use of logs and diaries should be encouraged as a means for self-observations of behaviors.

The ILSP experience does suggest that the interventive techniques that are described can successfully be used to develop programs and services that address the identified gap in services to foster adolescents. The project leaves unanswered the question of identification and recruitment of adult caretakers who possess those

attributes that will enable them to effectively perform in this proposed new fostering role of role model/mentor. This is an area for further inquiry.

Implicit within the development of ILSP was the assumption that black children have not received equitable treatment within the child welfare system. The largest number of families needing child welfare services are those groups who lack sufficient financial resources and access to those services that will empower parents to protect the integrity of their families and provide nurturing experiences for their children. Poverty continues to be the single most significant variable effecting family stability and the well-being of children. Statistical reports of the Children's Defense Fund indicate that 133 million American children are living in poverty. Given the character of American life, black children will continue to be disproportionately represented in these numbers.

All children are in fact the collective responsibility of society. The child welfare system was designed as the means for assuming this responsibility and is a reflection of society's caring and valuing of all children. The foster care system, as one aspect of child welfare services, has more than any other service delivery system been called upon to undertake its work in the full glare of the public eye. Policy development has more often been formulated in response to litigation that has come about as a result of media coverage that highlights the worse of the system but seldom pays attention to its accomplishments. Programs, therefore, continue to be planned under the legal monitoring of the judicial system. One consequence of the occurrences of the last two decades has been a decreasing visibility of the profession of social work

in this field, resulting in some gains and some losses. The re-involvement of the profession at the policy and decision-making levels, however, seems to hold the hope of reestablishing cause and function in the field of child welfare and ensuring that program development is informed by a professional value system that believes in the inherent worth of each individual and his rights to full self-actualization. Meyer (1986) eloquently advocates for the profession to recapture the field of services to families and children from the lawyers, judges and MBA's. The ILSPP experience suggests a possibility and opportunity for accepting this challenge.

APPENDICES

INDEPENDENT LIFE SKILLS PREPARATION PROJECT
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CODE # _____

YOUTH QUESTIONNAIRE
INDEPENDENT LIFE SKILLS PREPARATION PROJECT

1. What is your sex?
a. Male _____ b. Female _____
2. Please state your age. _____ years
3. What is your current school grade? _____
4. I am employed as a _____.
5. I am not employed. _____
6. What is your religion? _____.
7. How long have you been in foster care? _____ (yrs., mos., wks.)
8. Which of the following statements best describe you?
 - a. _____ I prefer to make my decisions alone and on my own.
 - b. _____ I prefer to discuss my thoughts with an adult or with someone that I trust before coming to a final decision.
 - c. _____ I prefer to take things as they come and "go with the flow".
9. If you are a youth who is sixteen years of age or older and being placed in a foster home for the first time, which of the following arrangements would be the most acceptable to you?
 - a. _____ A Contractual Arrangement between me, my foster parent and the placing agency, with my foster parent serving as a kind of role model and mentor, or someone who would teach me by example and in other ways all of the responsibilities of adult living.
 - b. _____ A Boarding Home Arrangement between the foster parent and the placing agency. The foster parent would provide for my room, board and physical care only so long as I obeyed and respected the house rules.
 - c. _____ A Substitute Family Arrangement where my foster parents would act as my own parents, providing love, discipline and making me feel that I belonged to this new family.

NOW FOR SOME QUESTIONS THAT ARE RELATED TO INDEPENDENT LIVING. REMEMBER THAT THIS IS NOT REALLY A "TEST" AND OFTEN THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS. SO RELAX, ANSWER ALL OF THE QUESTIONS AND CHOOSE THOSE RESPONSES THAT MOST CLOSELY REPRESENT YOUR POINT OF VIEW.

1. Listed below are some abilities and skills, indicate the degree of importance that you feel each is to independent living by placing a check in the appropriate box.

RANK	<u>ABILITIES/SKILLS</u>	<u>NOT AT ALL</u>	<u>SLIGHTLY</u>	<u>MODERATELY</u>	<u>EXTREMELY</u>
_____	Personal Hygiene/ Cleanliness				
_____	Civic Responsibility/ Sense of Community Service				
_____	Vocational Occupa- tional/Job Skills				
_____	Home Management/ Housekeeping				
_____	Budgeting/Finance Management				
_____	Sense of Self as Black/Relatedness to Black Community				
_____	Interpersonal/Social Relationship Skills				
_____	Other (Specify)				

2. Now that you have indicated how important you think each of these abilities/skills are to independent living, will you rank each in order of their priority, i.e., 1=the most important, 2=the second in importance, etc. Place a number on the line to the left of each ability/skill.

WILL YOU NOW TURN TO THE NEXT PAGE AND ANSWER SOME QUESTIONS THAT ARE SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO THESE SKILLS OF INDEPENDENT LIVING.

1. Can you list at least three resources, people or places, that could be helpful to you when beginning to look for a job?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

2. Can you list at least four things that are important for you to know or do when going on a job interview?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____

3. When looking for an apartment to rent, an important rule to follow is that your monthly rent should not be more than 25% of your monthly income.

True _____ False _____ Unsure _____

4. What is meant by utility bills?
 - a. _____ life, fire & health insurance
 - b. _____ telephone, gas & electric costs
 - c. _____ personal expenses (including grooming, clothing & entertainment)

5. Unit pricing is a convenient way to:
 - a. _____ do comparative price shopping at the grocery or food store
 - b. _____ determine how much each load will cost at the laundromat
 - c. _____ is something that should be avoided since the real cost of individual items is never known

6. When grocery shopping which of the following are smart tips to keep in mind?
 - a. _____ never go grocery shopping when you are hungry
 - b. _____ always shop with a grocery list
 - c. _____ avoid shopping in small neighborhood stores
 - d. _____ all of the above

7. If you were living on your own and needed to make up a personal budget, which of the following items would you include?

- a. _____ savings
- b. _____ rent
- c. _____ utilities
- d. _____ transportation
- e. _____ recreation
- f. _____ all of the above

8. How often would you say an adult should have a complete physical examination?

- a. _____ every six months
- b. _____ once each year
- c. _____ every two years
- d. _____ if under thirty years of age and in good health an adult need only go for a physical examination when feeling bad

9. Can you give the name and address of the hospital that is the nearest to your home?

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____

Does it have an emergency room? Yes _____ No _____ Unsure _____

10. Who is responsible for protecting a couple against pregnancy?

- a. _____ the male
- b. _____ the female
- c. _____ both are

11. Can you list at least three types of birth control?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

12. Of the three types of birth control that you listed, which do you think is the most effective?

13. The two most common types of Venereal Disease are:

- a. _____ Diphtheria and Halitosis
- b. _____ AIDS and Herpes
- c. _____ Syphilis and Gonorrhea

14. What are some of the symptoms of Venereal Disease?

- a. _____ A rash on any part of the body
- b. _____ Itching and pain when urinating
- c. _____ Pus discharge from the penis
- d. _____ All of the above

15. Many young people have a lot of knowledge and information about alcohol and drugs that they may have obtained from educational programs or even first hand experimentation. Some of this information is myth and some is fact. Check out how much you really know by answering true or false to the following:

	<u>TRUE</u>	<u>FALSE</u>
a. Alcohol, tobacco and caffeine are all physically addictive drugs.	_____	_____
b. Use of angel dust can cause permanent and irreversible brain damage.	_____	_____
c. Drinking coffee or taking a cold shower can help a person sober up.	_____	_____
d. Marijuana smoke can cause cancer.	_____	_____
e. Sniffing chemicals can result in death.	_____	_____
f. The use of any drug during pregnancy can be harmful to an unborn child.	_____	_____
g. Excessive drinking increases sexual desire and pleasure.	_____	_____
h. The law allows the individual to receive medical help for drug problems without legal penalties.	_____	_____

16. What is the legal voting age in New York State? _____ years

17. Can you list the names of at least three minority (Black or Hispanic) politicians in the New York metropolitan area or on the national scene?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

18. Voting should be considered to be everyone's civic responsibility and duty. Therefore, everyone who is of legal age should register to vote.

Agree _____ Disagree _____

19. Can you name and list at least three Historically Black Universities or Colleges?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

20. A major problem or problems facing the Black community today would be:

a. _____ An increase in teenage pregnancy.

b. _____ An increase in single parent female headed homes.

c. _____ Large numbers of youth are unemployed.

d. _____ All of the above.

21. Who is W.E.B. DuBois?

a. _____ A Black Educator/Scholar and Writer

b. _____ A French Diplomat

c. _____ A Black Entertainer/Musician

22. Color and race is of little significance today and anyone who is really motivated and wants to can make it.

Agree _____ Disagree _____

NOW FOR A FINAL EXERCISE ON MONEY MANAGEMENT AND BANKING SKILLS. TURN TO THE LAST PAGE OF YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE WHERE YOU WILL FIND TWO BLANK CHECKS AND A BLANK DEPOSIT SLIP. NOW COMPLETE QUESTIONS 23 AND 24.

23. Make check #101 out to the New York Telephone Company in the amount of \$33.81 and check #102 out to Foodtown Grocery Store in the amount of \$21.79. Enter both in your cash register.

24. Make out the deposit slip so that it will show the deposit of your payroll check in the amount of \$250.63 and your birthday gift in cash from your foster parents.

FINIS!

ILSPP

FOSTER PARENT REACTIONNAIRE

CODE # _____

By answering the following questions you will be providing the project staff with valuable information that will be used in planning continuing educational programs for foster parents. You should be thoughtful and open in your responses and answer all questions. The rating is based on a scale of 1 to 4 as follows:

1	2	3	4
NOT AT ALL	SOMEWHAT	VERY MUCH	EXTREMELY

The overall training program was very relevant to preparing youngsters for independent living.

1 2 3 4

SELF-AWARENESS

This session was helpful to me in my work as a foster parent.

1 2 3 4

The session content was related to the overall goals of training.

1 2 3 4

The Trainer was knowledgeable and created an atmosphere for group sharing and learning.

1 2 3 4

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT/DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF ADOLESCENCE

This session was helpful to me in my work as a foster parent.

1 2 3 4

The session content was related to the overall goals of training.

1 2 3 4

The Trainer was knowledgeable and created an atmosphere for group sharing and learning.

1 2 3 4

ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING/BLACK FAMILY LIFE STYLE

The session was helpful to me in my work as a foster parent.

1 2 3 4

The session content was related to the overall goals of training.

1 2 3 4

The Trainer was knowledgeable and created an atmosphere for group sharing and learning.

1 2 3 4

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT/FOSTER PARENT PRACTICE

This session was helpful to me in my work as a foster parent.

1 2 3 4

The Trainer was knowledgeable and created an atmosphere for group sharing and learning.

1 2 3 4

SYSTEMS NEGOTIATION/COPING WITH BURNOUT

This session was helpful to me in my work as a foster parent.

1 2 3 4

The session content was related to the overall goals of training.

1 2 3 4

The Trainer was knowledgeable and created an atmosphere for group sharing and learning.

1 2 3 4

What parts of the course were the most helpful to you and why?

Which parts of the course were the least helpful to you and why?

Which parts of the course do you find yourself using the most in your work as foster parents?

What suggestions do you have for improving the course?

Code # _____

POSTER PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE
INDEPENDENT LIFE SKILLS PREPARATION PROJECT

Please Circle The Appropriate Response

- 1. What is your sex?
 - 1. Male
 - 2. Female
- 2. What is your age?
 - 1. 25-29
 - 2. 30-34
 - 3. 35-39
 - 4. 40-45
 - 5. 45-49
 - 6. 50-54
 - 7. 55-59
 - 8. 60 +
- 3. What is your marital status?
 - 1. Married
 - 2. Divorced
 - 3. Widowed
 - 4. Separated
 - 5. Never Married
- 4. What is the highest school grade you have completed?
 - 1. Elementary School
 - 2. Junior High School
 - 3. Senior High School
 - 4. College
- 5. What is your employment status?
 - 1. Employed Full-Time
 - 2. Employed Part-Time
 - 3. Employed Occasionally
 - 4. Not Employed
- 6. What is your occupation?

- 7. Do you own your own home?
 - 1. Yes
 - 2. No
- 8. How many years have you been a foster parent?
_____ years
- 9. What is your religious denomination or preference?

10. Complete the information below about all of your own, biological children:

AGE	SEX	SCHOOL/OCCUPATION	LIVING AT HOME NOW	
			Yes	No
---	---	_____	---	---
---	---	_____	---	---
---	---	_____	---	---

11. Complete the information below on all foster children who are presently placed in your home:

AGE	SEX	SCHOOL/PROGRAM	LENGTH OF PLACEMENT (years/months/weeks)
---	---	_____	_____
---	---	_____	_____
---	---	_____	_____

NOW FOR SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT POSTERING THE OLDER ADOLESCENT. REMEMBER THAT THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS, SO BE AS CANDID AS POSSIBLE AND SELECT THOSE RESPONSES THAT MOST CLOSELY REPRESENT OR EXPRESS YOUR POINT OF VIEW.

1. Listed below are some abilities and skills. Indicate the degree of importance that you feel each is to independent living by placing a check in the appropriate box.

RANK	ABILITIES/SKILLS	<u>Not At All</u>	<u>Slightly</u>	<u>Moderately</u>	<u>Extremely</u>
_____	Personal Hygiene/ Cleanliness				
_____	Civic Responsibility/ Sense of Community Service				
_____	Vocational/Occupational Job Skills				
_____	Home Management/ Housekeeping				
_____	Budgeting/Finance Management				
_____	Sense of Self as Black/ Relatedness to Black Community				
_____	Interpersonal/Social Relationship Skills				
_____	Other (Specify)				

2. Now that you have indicated how important you think each of these abilities/skills are to independent living, will you rank each in order of their priority, i.e., 1=the most important, 2= the second in importance, etc. Place a number of the line to the left of each ability/skill.
3. Which of the following best describes your foster parenting style?
- a) _____ Authoritarian b) _____ Democratic c) _____ Permissive

4. Place a check next to that response that most closely describes how you would respond to the following situations. (IT IS IMPORTANT TO CHECK ONLY ONE RESPONSE).

You have just discovered that your 16-year old foster daughter has been having sex with her boyfriend and is not using birth control because of his objections.

- a__ Let her know that such behavior is irresponsible and she should stop.
- b__ Discuss the situation with her.
- c__ Give her the freedom to make her own decision.

Your foster child has not been attending school because he/she feels that the teacher is prejudiced and treats him/her unfairly. In discussing the situation would you attempt to assist the youngster to understand that:

- a__ Color and race is of little significance today and anyone who is motivated and really wants to can make it.
- b__ Racism is always present in all situations and young people need to understand that and be prepared to cope with it.
- c__ Some situations are the result of racism, however, youngsters need to be prepared to accept responsibility for their own behavior and shortcomings.

Ben has been temporarily placed in your care while awaiting court hearing for grand theft, his first offense. He was not returned to his own home because of his assaultive behavior towards an abusive stepfather and an alcoholic mother. In relating to Ben it is important for the foster parent to:

- a__ Let Ben know who is in control and that any deviations from the foster home rules will result in his being remanded into the custody of the court.
- b__ Be noncommittal and very observant of Ben's behavior.
- c__ Set supportive but firm and consistent limits for Ben.

5. Check that response that most closely describes what you think makes some youngsters behave in troublesome ways.

- a__ Past life experiences
- b__ Lack of motivation
- c__ Nature or heredity

6. Do you think that what you do for or with your foster youngster can make a difference in his/her behavior and future? Yes _____ No _____

7. List three developmental tasks of adolescence:

- a. _____
 b. _____
 c. _____

8. Indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

	AGREE	DISAGREE
Most black children are brought up by single mothers who live on welfare.	_____	_____
Most black men desert their families and are unwilling to provide economic support to children.	_____	_____
Social workers in the past have been too quick to remove black children from their biological homes.	_____	_____
Natural parents most often have so many problems that it is generally best to discourage all contact with youngsters who are adjusting well in foster care.	_____	_____
Adolescents need to have contact with their biological parents and the foster parent should not attempt to be a substitute parent.	_____	_____
Fostering is natural to black families since such families have traditionally cared for children whose parents were unable to do so.	_____	_____

9. In accepting an adolescent 16 years or older for placement in your home, which of the following arrangements would be the most acceptable to you. PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND CHECK ONLY ONE.

- a__ A Contractual agreement between me, the youngster and the placing agency with my role being that of a role model or mentor with responsibilities to teach the youngsters all of the responsibilities of adult living.
- b__ A Boarding Home agreement between me and the agency with my role being that of custodian with responsibilities to provide physical care only as long as the youngster respected the rules of my home.
- c__ A Substitute Family agreement where my role would be that of parent with responsibilities for providing discipline, love and assisting the youngster to develop a feeling of attachment and belonging to his/her new family.

10. Do you feel that black parents and families must provide something additional to children because of their minority group status?
Yes _____ No _____
11. If yes, what must parents provide?
- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
12. If yes, what must families provide?
- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
13. List the three most problematic behaviors that you have been faced with as the foster parent of an adolescent:
- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
14. Of the problematic behaviors listed above, have you felt that you were capable of managing these on your own in a way that was helpful to your youngster?
- Always _____ Sometimes _____ Never _____
15. If faced with the rebellious, challenging behavior of an adolescent, which of the following would be the most typical response for you:
(CHECK ONLY ONE)
- a__ Try to understand the meaning that the behavior may have for the youngster and be selective in my response.
- b__ Recognizing that this is not appropriate behavior for one approaching adulthood, remind the youngster that this was the kind of behavior that led to problems in his own family, insist that the behavior change or he will have to leave my home.
- c__ Report the behavior to the social worker and recommend that the youngster be referred for counseling.

16. NOW FOR SOME QUESTIONS THAT WILL LET US KNOW HOW MUCH YOU KNOW ABOUT SERVICES THAT MAY BE HELPPUL TO YOUNGSTERS WHO ARE BEING DISCHARGED FROM FOSTER CARE TO INDEPENDENT LIVING.

	YES	NO	UNSURE
a. The Pell Grant, BEOG would be of interest to a youngster who wants to enroll in college.	___	___	___
b. To apply for working papers, a youngster may need to obtain information from the office of vital statistics.	___	___	___
c. A male 18-year old with a disability may be eligible for AFDC upon discharge from foster care.	___	___	___
d. The GED is a useful alternative to the high school diploma.	___	___	___
e. All youngsters who are unemployed when discharged from foster care are eligible for welfare assistance and should be encouraged to apply.	___	___	___
f. The school nurse at the local high school can provide a youngster with free, confidential counseling, contraceptive devices for family planning and treatment of venereal disease.	___	___	___
g. There is no city office of employment that provides special services to the adolescent in need of job skills training.	___	___	___

17. When youngsters are not able to successfully establish themselves as emancipated adults in independent living after discharge from foster care, which of the following do you feel is the most responsible for this failure:

- a__ The youngster's lack of motivation
- b__ The lack of advance planning on the part of agencies and social workers.
- c__ The inability of foster parents to assist youngsters in helpful ways.

18. Finally, how would you rate yourself as a foster parent?

0--Excellent
 1--Good
 2--Fair
 3--Poor

CURRICULUM CONTENT AREAS

Self Awareness

Human Development/Developmental Tasks of Adolescence
 Assessment and Planning/Black Family Life Style
 Behavior Management/Foster Parent Practice
 Systems Negotiation/Coping With Burn Out

Self Awareness

Insight into one's own behavior is an important characteristic of all human service workers. Self awareness is required for clarity and perspective on what one is doing and why. Foster parenting is often viewed as an extension of parenting, which has been perceived as a natural intuitive process. However, foster parenting is more accurately described as "parenting plus" in that the foster parent must not only have knowledge of the complex child welfare system, agency policy and structure, but must as well be able to relate to the special emotional concerns of the child as related to his developmental stage and to his foster care status. The foster parent of the troubled adolescent is faced with coping with the difficult developmental concerns of adolescence as well as to the adolescent's often confronting, manipulative and provocative behavior, and must do so within a system of legal mandates and guidelines that place limits on his choices of action. The foster parent must be sure that their behavior is motivated by the underlying or expressed needs of the adolescent rather than to their own, and that they are utilizing planned interventions that are directed towards moving the youngster towards independent living as opposed to behavior that is reflective of their own need for control or sense of frustration with the inconsistencies of the system.

Billingsley has posited that as a result of a cultural heritage and restrictive social system, the black family has evolved as an adaptive system that is particularly well-suited to rear black children to survive and achieve in a large society that is often unsupportive of his needs. Implicit within this is the assumption that the black parent has developed parenting styles and skills that facilitate this process of adaptation. The self awareness sequence should assist the foster parent to identify his unique parenting skills and style so that these may be transferred to the fostering experience.

Prior to the 1960's with the publication of Billingsley's Black Families In White America, the strengths of black families were seldom related to. The Black family was assessed primarily from a point of view of a deficient model and appeared different, dysfunctional and pathological. Moynihan described the black Community as a "tangle of pathology" at the heart of which was the black family, and provided a framework for the governmental policy that was to assume a position of "benign neglect". A stance of "blaming the victim" has supported a proliferation of myths and stereotypes that are related to black family functioning. The point of view has become acceptable to those who determine public policy to some extent and has become integrated into the self perception of many blacks. Robert Hill in his book The Strengths of Black Families made a

significant step in removing the myths and stereotypes that have been associated with black family life as he enumerates: (1) Strong kinship bonds, (2) Strong work orientation, (3) Adaptability of Family Roles, (4) High Achievement orientation as documented characteristics of Black family life that have been instrumental to the survival of a group. Insights into these dynamics should assist the foster parent in valuing and understanding the process of his own family life and to the development of a more empathetic connection to the natural parents of the children that he is fostering. Self awareness and a Black perspective will be integrated throughout the content of both training modules, although will be specifically dealt with in Sessions I and II, which will focus on foster parenting styles and values clarification.

Human Development

Foster parents need information about human growth and development, developmental tasks of each stage and the problems that develop as a result of faulty resolution. Often in their frustration and inability to effect immediate change in the adolescent's behavior, the foster parent will seek explanations of behavior in such lay theories as that of the "bad seed". An important learning task for the foster parent is to become able to determine that past experiences are associated in a causal relationship with the current level of adjustment that is attained by the adolescent, and to view their role as one of providing experiences of remediation, re-education and resocialization.

Although not exhaustive, this sequence attempts to connect psychological developmental theory and the special developmental concerns of the minority adolescent, particularly as related to identity consolidation, to foster parenting. Erickson's framework of the Eight Stages of Man will provide the major theoretical base for teaching content. Session IV, which is concerned with Adolescent Growth and Development will focus on characteristics problems of adolescents such as sexual promiscuity, substance abuse and poor school and/or vocational performance. Kenneth Clark's DARK GHETTO will provide a framework for conceptualization related to negative resolutions of developmental tasks, integration of personality and movement into career and vocational areas for minority youth.

The impact of the social environment is integrated into the content, emphasizing the effects of social problems for the individual's attained level of adjustment.

The meaning of separation and loss will be stressed in both sequences, with particular emphasis on the adolescents' status of being high risk for placement breakdown, a situation that reactivates the feelings that are associated with the original separation and often preclude him from making successful attachments and encourages him to recreate situations that perpetuate the cycle of rejection.

Assessment and Planning

Foster parents need to develop means for assessing what each adolescent's

major problems are and skills in the formulation of plans for helping the youngster to adjust within the family system while utilizing the supports of that system to provide re-socialization experiences for him. Major activities in fostering the adolescent should be directed towards the preparation of the youngster for independent living.

This sequence, which incorporates black family life style, will focus upon the unique characteristics of the family system. A major theme will be that of the utilization of a "contract model" for the incorporation of the youngster into the existing family structure. The role of the foster parent is conceptualized as that of mentor/role model.

The collaborative aspect of planning with the agency and social worker will be stressed, and the utilization of contracting and negotiating sessions that will involve the social worker, the foster parent and the adolescent. The adolescent is to have major input in formulating his plan of care and in the process of assessing his movement towards achievement of planning goals. An underlying assumption is that no plan of "treatment" is implemented or placement contract terminated without full participation of the social worker, the adolescent and the foster parent. The Uniform Case Record may be effectively used as the framework within which this process can take place.

Behavior Management/Foster Parent Practice

This sequence will bring together all of the learnings of the previous sessions with the trainers focusing upon the process of enabling foster parents to identify those most characteristic and problematic behaviors presented by the youngsters, with a resultant development of useful interventive strategies. Emphasis will be placed upon the mediation and prevention of crisis situations with major goals being directed towards the stabilization and retention of the youngster in placement.

The overall goal of this sequence is to assist the foster parent to respond to the adolescent in a planful and sensitive manner, to practice attitudes and skills, and provide role modeling experiences that encourage the adolescent to develop self control, self responsibility and self direction. The foster parent will be encouraged to develop educational and developmental approaches that will enhance the adolescent's feelings of self-esteem, sense of self, and the motivation to grow towards full potential, and to develop and practice attitudes and skills that will foster open two-way communication with adolescents. Developing skills in reflective listening and the ability to respond to verbal and non-verbal communication are important learning goals.

Systems Negotiation/Coping With Burn Out

This sequence will focus on empowerment issues and will bring together the parents of both training modules. The session will be conducted by an experienced foster parent from an outside agency and an experienced social worker who is knowledgeable about the child welfare system, entitlement programs, and related support service delivery systems.

Foster parents are often faced with coping with the survival issues of their own life situations. Child welfare mandates now require that the foster parent be engaged in direct service activities on behalf of their foster children. Activities that were once the responsibility of the social worker or other agency support staff, such as negotiating re-instatement in or school enrollment, follow-up on medical or other recommended appointments, assisting in the attainment of employment, social security cards and birth certificates, belong to the foster parent. In order to fulfill these tasks the foster parent must take time away from employment, which is stress producing, and must negotiate systems that he may or may not have prior knowledge of. The foster parent is consistently subject to an outside evaluation of his performance. For many the boarding rate reimbursement provides an important means for augmenting family income. The threat of removal of a child or loss of license may have serious implications for the foster family's financial stability.

This sequence is in part directed towards providing the foster parent with information on about support service delivery systems, his rights as foster parent and providing him with a means of recognizing and coping with stress related symptoms.

Foster parents may have few experiences that support and give value to the work of foster parenting. The extended family concept will be developed as one support system utilizing the concepts and structure of self help groups.

Structure of Sessions

While a suggested format for sessions is provided, all trainers are encouraged to be innovative and creative in the development of training content, while adhering to the overall goals and philosophy of the project and insuring that the content developed is directed towards the achievement of the learning goals and objectives and behavioral changes of the sequence. The general format of the sessions is that of a lecturette, group discussion, lab/experimental activity and log assignment. All sessions are scheduled for two hours, will take place in an attractive physical setting, and refreshments will be made available.

Training and education are not identical. Education is concerned with imparting knowledge. Training with imparting knowledge as well as with developing skills and influencing attitudes. In the development of learning experiences for adults, it is recognized that he brings to the learning situation a wealth of information from his life experiences. The role of the trainer becomes that of facilitator, assisting the foster parent to become aware of that knowledge and make it useful in the learning situation. Because of the underlying philosophical orientation of the project, the trainer must additionally maintain an ethnic-sensitive perspective in his interactions with the foster parent group.

THE BEHAVIORAL/MANAGEMENT SKILLS MODULE

SESSION I

Orientation

The Orientation session will be conducted by the Project Director, and will provide the "contracting" session with foster parents. The Project director will present and review the course outline with the foster parents, allowing opportunities for their reactions and input.

Foster parents are responsible for attending all eight sessions with promptness in arrival being stressed and for maintaining a log in which they are to relate significant learnings of each session to in-home experiences with children. Logs will be reviewed by the Project Director at the end of the fourth and seventh sessions, and comments made on the foster parents indicated integration of the course content.

All foster parents will receive a certificate at the termination of the Project. In order to be eligible for the certificate, foster parents must have attended at least six of the eight sessions and completed all required assignments.

The pre-test will be administered at the orientation session. Because of the differing educational levels of foster parents, and anxiety that may be associated with test taking, the Project Director will go over each item with the group, minimizing anxiety, clarifying and answering questions as needed. The purpose of the testing will be clearly stated, informing participants that the post-test will be given at the end of the training cycle. Foster parents will be asked to use the first three digits of their social security number or telephone exchange for identification purposes.

The first assignment will be given, which will be the completion of an autobiographical sketch, that will be used in Session II.

SESSION II

Self Awareness

FOSTER PARENTING STYLE

Lecturette

The presentation will focus on the role of foster parent as change agent; philosophy related to attitudes and value assumptions about how changes are brought about, and what the foster parent can do to facilitate change in youngsters. The lecturette should include Roger's discussions of the characteristics that make for an effective therapist, as well as each individual's inherent capacity for growth and change.

The trainer will facilitate a discussion that will identify the predominate parenting styles present in the group, at least one of which

should be the authoritarian parenting style. Subsequent discussion should focus upon which style seems to work best with which adolescent and behaviors. Emphasis should be placed on identifying those styles which appear to be more useful in assisting the adolescent to move towards self-sufficiency and independent living.

Lab/Experiential Activity:

Participants will break into small groups for a more in-depth discussion of their autobiographical materials, identifying those parenting styles that appeared more prevalent in their families of origin. Did natural parents make differential use of self in relating to siblings. Black family life style should be a prevailing theme.

Log Assignment:

The foster parent should identify at least two learnings that evolved from the session, identify their own parenting style and identify at least two situations in which they would use a * certain style and why.

Behavioral Objectives:

At the end of the session the foster parent will be able to:

- (1) Define the identified foster parenting styles and the techniques and rationale of each.
- (2) Identify his own primary parenting style.
- (3) State at least one situation for which each style seems most effective.

Behavioral Changes:

- (1) Foster parents will be more flexible and individualize their approach to the adolescent.
- (2) Foster parents will broaden their range of parenting skills by observing the parenting styles of other foster parents in the group.
- (3) Foster parents will be able to assist in the placement process by accepting for placement those youngsters more closely matched to their parenting and life style.
- (4) Foster parents will evidence an increase in awareness of the special parenting issues related to minority youngsters.

SESSION III

Self-AwarenessVALUES CLARIFICATIONLecturette:

(In preparation for the Session, the participants will be asked to review Hill's The Strength of Black Families. A condensed review will be provided).

The lecturette will focus on a definition of values, the importance of values and full discussion should evolve around Black family values. The trainer should illicit responses around foster parent values as related to sexual behavior, money, the role of children and parents, with some attention being given to parental handling of inconsistency of societal democratic values and the treatment of minority groups. The session may be ended by a role play situation depicting a value conflict such as the adolescent's use of money, drugs or sexual behavior.

*Log assignments are not noted hereafter, however, Trainers are responsible for the development of an appropriate log assignment for each session.

Lab/Experiential Activity:

The activity may be a continuation of the issues involved in the role play situation, or a selection of one of the topics from a Values Forum, which will provide for discussion around issuers of Drugs and Medication, Relationships with the Natural Family, Collaborative relationships with the Social Worker, and privacy and discipline.

Behavioral Objectives:

The foster parent will be able to:

- (1) Recognize the importance of values clarification in self awareness.
- (2) Identify the major source of values in their lives.
- (3) Identify their most important personal and parenting values.
- (4) Identify those values that have been identified as being unique to Black Families.

Behavioral Changes:

- (1) In making parenting decisions, the foster parent will try to determine the influence of their personal values on each decision and to weigh the appropriateness of that influence.
- (2) Foster parents will discuss values conflicts more frequently in group, with the adolescent and with the social worker.

SESSION IV

HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENTSeparation and LossLecturette:

In the presentation, the trainer will utilize the basic scheme of Eric Erickson's Eight Stages of Man, with a focus upon experiences that result in a positive or faulty resolution of the tasks of each stage. Emphasis will be placed on the life stages of young adulthood and adulthood, identifying the crisis presented and the central problem task to be solved. A correlation may be drawn between the "authenticity crisis" of the adult and resultant reintegration of identity and the adolescent's search for identity.

It is crucial for the foster parent to have an understanding of the concept of separation and loss, and there are a number of theories available. The trainer may use the material of John Bowlby and Carolyn Thomas, who studied grief and mourning in young children separated from their families. The trainer may also make use of the Kubler-Ross material on death and dying.

Lab/Experiential Activity:

(In that this is a full content session in terms of the areas to be covered, time may preclude the group breaking into small group and the lab activity may be conducted in full group).

A Fantasy Trip is one possible means of beginning the process of enabling the foster parent to get in touch with feelings related to separation and loss. The Fantasy Trip may parallel the experience of an adolescent having experienced multiple placements in group homes, diagnostic treatment centers and foster family homes. After completing the activity foster parents should be asked to share feelings that are related to the experience, with the Trainer emphasizing that these are feelings that are universal and are connected with the stages of loss and grieving.

Alternative activities may be to use the experience described by Washington in his autobiography Up From Slavery, of the separation from his family of origin; or foster parents may be asked to think of someone to whom they are very close and have been permanently separated from through death, divorce, desertion, etc., and share the feelings associated with this loss with someone in the group to whom they feel close. Case materials may also be used in the completion of this exercise.

The Trainer should draw parallels to the work with children and families, emphasizing that the comfort with which the foster parent handles own feelings of separation and loss impact on how they are able to recognize and assist the foster child in coping with these feelings.

Behavioral Objectives:

- (1) The foster parent will be able to identify his own developmental stage and the main developmental issue and crisis presented.
- (2) The foster parent will be able to identify the developmental stages from infancy through adolescence in terms of characteristics and tasks.
- (3) The foster parent will be able to identify the current developmental stage of his foster child.
- (4) The foster parent will be able to identify at least two indications of faulty resolution of developmental tasks.
- (5) The foster parent will be able to identify residual effects of initial feelings of separation and loss of the adolescent in their interactions together.

Behavioral Changes:

- (1) The foster parent will relinquish lay theories in seeking causal relationships in behavior and increase in the ability to make assessments of behavior that are based on human development theory.
- (2) Foster parents will relate to new placements and termination of placements with a greater degree of sensitivity to the needs of self, the adolescent, and other foster family members.

(In partial fulfillment of the log assignment, the foster parent should record the effects upon foster family members of an adolescent moving into their home or of a placement being terminated.)

SESSION V

ADOLESCENT GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENTLecturette:

The discussion should approach adolescence as a period of natural turmoil and dysfunctional behavior. The adolescent in foster care is faced with a paradoxical situation with augments this period of turmoil. The process of identity formation is complicated by his foster care and minority group status, and his tasks of achieving autonomy and independence from family ties complicated by his need to make attachments to new and different parenting figures. Emphasis should be given to the special concerns of the minority youngster, his needs for consolidation of a racial identity, and to the characteristic problems presented by the adolescent who is involved in faulty resolution, i.e., sexual promiscuity, pregnancy, substance abuse, poor school and vocational performance.

Lab/Experiential Assignment:Film: Marsha: In Search of an Identity

The film portrays a sixteen year old who has been remanded to the custody of the court because of her mother's inability to control her behavior. Her experiences in group homes, inability to establish supportive peer relationships and her struggles with sexual identity as she experiments with lesbian relationships are highlighted.

Behavioral Objectives:

- (1) The foster parent will be able to identify the major developmental task of adolescence.
- (2) The foster parent will be able to identify the special concerns of identity consolidation that are unique to the minority adolescent in foster care.
- (3) The foster parent will be able to identify the developmental stage and task in which his foster child is currently involved.

Behavioral Changes:

- (1) The foster parent should be able to assess the adolescent's development by using theory that is related to human development.
- (2) The foster parent will be able to relate to the developmental needs of the adolescent with a greater degree of sensitivity.
- (3) The foster parent will become more supportive in his parenting efforts with a decrease in the need to control the adolescent's behavior.

SESSION VI

ASSESSMENT AND PLANNINGBlack Family Life StyleLecturette:

The presentation will give a historical perspective of the Black family and its evolution as a system that is adaptive and particularly well-suited to rear minority youngsters to survive and achieve in the larger society. There will be a presentation of the theories of Billingsley, Chestang and Hill, with some attention being directed to the dispelling of myths that have been associated with Black family functioning, i.e., desertion by the father, matriarchal family structure and out of wedlock pregnancy. A brief overview of the work of Billingsley and Giovannoni should be presented which documents that services to Black children have been overwhelmingly directed towards the placement of the child away from his own home. A major intent of the

session is to assist the foster parent to value and better understand the foster child's natural family and the adolescent's need to gain a sense of comfort with his origins if he is to enjoy successful functioning in interpersonal and social adult relationships, with full integration of personality.

The session will further support the theme of the contractual agreement in adolescent placement, the foster parent's role of mentor/role model, with the adolescent having a need to be involved in the planning and the decision-making process as it affects his life.

Caring for non-related children has been a tradition within the Black community and that the Black family is a natural unit for providing re-socialization experiences to Black children should be stressed. If feasible, a natural parent who has been reunited with children will give a brief talk to the foster parents. In lieu of this, the publication THE PARENT IN THE SHADOW will be used to facilitate a discussion of the natural parent.

Lab/Experiential Assignment:

The group will be introduced to the Uniform Case Record and its use in planning and goal achievement review.

The major content areas of the Child Welfare Reform Act should be utilized with focus on foster parent preference act, and procedures for subsidized adoptions.

Behavioral Objectives:

- (1) The foster parent will be able to identify at least three myths and stereotypes that have been associated with Black family life functioning.
- (2) The foster parent will develop a familiarity with the Uniform Case Record and identify those areas in which he can have planning input.
- (3) The foster parent will be able to identify the attributes of role model/mentor.
- (4) The foster parent will be able to identify at least two communication interactional skills that would support the maintenance of a contractual agreement.

Behavioral Changes:

- (1) The foster parent will demonstrate a greater empathetic connection to the natural parent, and ability to support the adolescent's maintaining appropriate contact and visitation.
- (2) The foster parent will demonstrate an increased ability to engage in playful activities with the adolescent.

SESSION VII

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT/FOSTER PARENT PRACTICE

This session will bring together all of the learnings of the previous session and will be taught by the Project Director and the co-therapist of the Communication/Interaction Skills Module. From the work of the previous sessions it is anticipated that critical information will have evolved around which the sequence content can be formulated. If feasible, a tape of one session from the C/I training module will be presented in this session. Assisting the foster parent to cope with those most identified problematic behaviors presented by the adolescent will be the major theme of the sequence. Focus will be upon assisting and enabling the foster parent to teach alternative behaviors through role modeling, crisis prevention and mediation, and the use of the techniques of the life space interview. An underlying assumption is that all behavior, including negative behavior, has purpose and meaning for the individual. A goal of teaching alternative behaviors is to assist the adolescent to communicate that meaning in positive, non-self destructive ways.

Lab/Experiential Assignment:

The group may remain together in full session for involvement in at least three role play situations that depict characteristic encounters of foster parent and adolescent. The task of foster parents observing the role play will be to: (1) identify the possible underlying meaning of the behavior of the adolescent and of the foster parent, (2) identify the most appropriate parenting style for coping with the "personality style" of the adolescent, and (3) identify the techniques that were or were not used by the foster parents in teaching new or alternative behaviors and (4) identify those dynamics that may be unique to the minority fostering constellation. The task of the foster parents involved in the role play should be to focus on a discussion of self awareness issues and the conscious use of self in the resolution of conflict and interactions with the adolescent.

Behavioral Objectives:

- (1) The foster parent will be able to identify the techniques of life space interviewing.
- (2) The foster parent will be able to identify some of the possible underlying causes of at least three of the most identified problematic behaviors.
- (3) The foster parent in role play situations will be able to demonstrate appropriate techniques of teaching alternative behaviors.

Behavioral Changes:

- (1) The foster parent will more often make conscious use of self in coping with the negative expressions of the adolescent's behavior.

- (2) The foster parent will relate to the adolescent with a greater degree of sensitivity and regard.

SESSION VIII

SYSTEMS NEGOTIATION/COPING WITH BURN OUT

Recent changes in child welfare regulations and Special Services to Children assessment requirements now mandate that foster parents be engaged in direct service activities that were once the responsibility of agency staff. Many service delivery systems are unfamiliar and encounters with them are stressful for the foster parent. This sequence will provide the foster parent with information about the structure, purpose and function of the most used service delivery systems and entitlement programs, such as the Board of Education, Committee on Handicap, Hospitals, SSI and Social Security. The importance of preventative medical care will be stressed not only in the service to the adolescent, but also as a means of assisting the foster parent to relate to his own health care. In issues related to minority group use of service delivery systems it has been noted that some ethnic minority groups make use of medical services more often in crisis situations rather than as ongoing preventative care.

The work of foster parenting the troubled adolescent can be very stress-producing. Foster parents must undertake this work within a system that they experience as bureaucratic, constraining and non-supportive and insensitive to their needs. Many foster parents are confronted with survival issues of life and the demands of foster parenting often compounds the stress of their life situations. This sequence will assist the foster parent in the identification of stress, stressors and symptoms of burn out with a goal of assisting them to develop coping, self management skills and means for sensitizing the organization to their needs.

In conducting the sessions it is essential that the trainer create a "safe environment" wherein the foster parent can identify organizational and administrative sources of stress and be given an opportunity to identify all of the sources of stress of their jobs. In the absence of such an atmosphere the session has the potential for adding to stress rather than to its reduction.

The extended family system should be developed into a major support or self help structure.

Behavioral Objectives:

- (1) The foster parent will be able to identify at least three major service provider agencies, their function, purpose and structure.
- (2) The foster parent will be able to identify the importance of preventative health care.
- (3) The foster parent should be able to identify the major stressors of his family life and foster role.

- (4) The foster parent will be able to recognize the symptoms of stress and burn out in themselves and in other foster parents.
- (5) The foster parent will be able to give examples of stress reducing techniques and ways in which the extended family system can be used as a support, self help system.
- (6) The foster parent will be able identify examples of insensitive and inequitable treatment os service delivery systems in their interactions with ethnic minorities.

Behavioral Changes:

- (1) The foster parent should demonstrate a greater willingness and ability to utilize service delivery systems on behalf of self and adolescent in their care.
- (2) The foster parent should demonstrate an ability to assume a role of advocacy in the identification and use of support service delivery systems on behalf of the adolescent in their care.

COMMUNICATION/INTERACTION SKILLS MODULE

The content of the Communication/Interactional Module cannot be fully explicated here in that much of the content will be developed from the issues that the participants bring to the sessions that come about in their day to day interactions in the home setting.

Focus will be upon communication; the development of skills in negotiating and mediating conflicts with some degree of insight development; the establishment of mutual feelings of empathetic regard; and the establishing of reciprocity in behavioral control and management.

The themes of all sessions of this module will parallel those of the Behavioral/Management Module with the co-trainers directing the interaction of the participants to facilitate the achievement of learning objectives and behavioral changes through the use of the group process.

SESSION I

ORIENTATION

The orientation session will be conducted by the Project Director and the co-trainer. The training objectives will be presented and the responsibilities of trainers and participants. The participants are responsible for completing log assignments for each session; one reading assignment, I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings; attending all group sessions promptly and for relating to one another in an appropriate manner in sessions.

The trainers will allow for input from the participants as to what they would like to gain from the sessions and learn from the experience. The

pre-test will be administered, and participants will be given the first assignment, which is the completion of the autobiographical sketch which will be used in Session II.

SESSION II

Self Awareness

FOSTER PARENTING STYLE

Mutual sharing between the foster parent and the adolescent around families of origin.

SESSION III

Self Awareness

VALUES CLARIFICATION

Some exploration of generational conflicts in values, and foster family, family of origin value conflict and similarities.

SESSION IV

HUMAN GROWTH AND BEHAVIOR

Understanding the underlying meaning of behavior, and the initial feelings of separation and loss.

SESSION V

ADOLESCENT GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Developing skills in communication and reflective listening; understanding the adolescent "condition".

SESSION VI

ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING/BLACK FAMILY LIFE STYLE

Discipline, self control and role expectation. The contractual agreement and adolescents' role in planning and goal setting.

SESSION VII

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT/FOSTER PARENT PRACTICE

Reflections on independent living, necessary supports and transitions.

SESSION VIII

SYSTEMS NEGOTIATION/COPING WITH BURN OUT

This session will be conducted with the total group of foster parents from both training modules.

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