

5-2023

## FOSTER PARENT TRAINING, RETENTION, AND SATISFACTION: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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FOSTER PARENT TRAINING, RETENTION, AND SATISFACTION: AN  
EXPLORATORY STUDY

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

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by  
Dulcinea Catota  
Dennisse Moreno Romo

May 2023

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## ABSTRACT

Research has demonstrated that foster parents who experience high levels of stress and frustration with the foster care agency are more likely to consider terminating their participation in foster care agencies. This quantitative study's purpose was to explore the relationship between training and foster parents' satisfaction in their foster care agency, and between training and foster parent retention in their foster care agency. Participants completed an online questionnaire using Qualtrics software. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 21, using statistical tests including frequencies and Pearson's R. The hypothesis that training would correlate positively with satisfaction and retention of foster parents was not supported by the data. Instead, results indicated that there was no correlation between training and satisfaction and retention of foster parents. These findings could not be generalized to the general population of foster parents, so future research should explore whether social workers are currently providing adequate service to adequately prepare foster parents in caring for the needs of their foster children.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my parents for being my endless safe space and landing spot. Your prayers have sustained me and allowed grace to flow into my life when it felt impossible. Thank you to my field instructors for providing me with such amazing opportunities for growth and development, and for believing in my abilities when I could not see them. Thank you to my research partner for undertaking such a rigorous project with me; only you could truly understand the sacrifices we have endured to accomplish our dream. You have truly made this experience such an enjoyable one.

-Dulcinea Catota

I would like to thank my two favorite people in the world, my wife Isabell, and my little sister Leslie. Thank you Isabell, for loving me unconditionally. Thank you for always encouraging me to pursue any dream or desire of mine. I would like to especially thank my little sister, Leslie for reminding me to not take life so seriously. As you always say, we are here for a good time, not a long time. Thank you both for your undying love and support. I hope you both know you mean the world to me.

-Dennisse Moreno Romo

## DEDICATION

To my newborn son, David Xavier. Thank you for being my little teammate in this journey. Through the highest highs and lowest lows, utter chaos and complete peace, feelings of guilt and overwhelming pride, you met me with unconditional love. It is my turn to hold you, guide you, and support you. I could never be the perfect mother, but I am perfectly in love with you. -Dulcinea Catota

This is dedicated to my wife, Isabell. Thank you for being so supportive throughout my journey. I could not have done it without you.

-Dennisse Moreno Romo

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Problem Formulation

In 2011 there were 638,000 children in need of foster care placement and in 2020, the number was 632,000 (Children's Bureau, 2021). However, in 2011 there were only 392,000 children in foster care placement, and 407,000 in 2020. There is a growing need for licensed, certified foster homes now more than ever before.

Foster care is a temporary service provided by the state for children who cannot live with their birth parents until family problems are resolved (Children's Bureau, 2020). In family foster care, children live with relative, or nonrelative adults also called Resource Families (RFs), who have completed the Resource Family Approval (RFA) process. RFAs are people who have been approved by the state, or by an agency licensed by the state, to provide children with shelter and care. The general qualifications of foster parents are being able to meet the physical, emotional, and developmental needs of a child. All foster parents in the United States must be licensed or approved to provide care for children. As of January 1, 2017, the Welfare & Institutions Code § 16519.5 states that anyone who wants to foster or adopt a child in California including Los Angeles County, Orange County, San Bernardino County, or Riverside County, must complete the Resource Family Approval process (The Step-Up Coalition, 2019).

Most states require 10 to 30 hours of training before the applicant can become licensed and before a child is matched with a resource family (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018). In California, there is a minimum of 12-hour pre-approval training. The training includes a resource family orientation which explains the RFA process, requirements, and focuses on the needs of a foster child. Then, there is an eight-hour mandatory pre-placement training which focuses on self-care and how to be an effective caregiver with prudent parenting standards. There is a mandatory eight-hour renewal training every year also known as the post-approval training (The Step-Up Coalition, 2019). However, those are the only mandatory training required in California and once a family is approved, they are essentially on their own.

This is problematic for the child welfare system because foster children come into the system after being removed from their biological home. Most are at the young age of 8-years and 20% of them spend at least 6- to 11-months in foster care (Children's Bureau, 2020). They are followed by 17% who stay for 12- to 17-months (Children's Bureau, 2020). This can be a traumatic experience for children, which is why proper foster parent training is so crucial. Current research suggests a need for continued training in order for foster parents to be prepared to care for children who have experienced such trauma (Dorsey et al., 2008).

Training can be offered on an array of topics such as positive discipline, importance of self-esteem, effects of trauma, child development, behavior, and methods of parenting. These topics are believed to help combat the challenges

that foster parents face (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018). Research suggests further training will help facilitate long term placement and retention. Long term placement is necessary for children to grow in safe and nurturing environments (Rodger et al., 2006). Therefore, proper implementation of training is an important factor to consider regarding long term retention rates in resource families (Denby et al., 1999). In addition, another indicator of long-term retention among foster parents and resource families is satisfaction.

Denby and colleagues (1999), created the Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (FPSS) to measure satisfaction and the intent to continue fostering. The responses were based on a four-point scale ranging from 1 "Not at All" to 4 "Very Satisfied." The results showed a high level of satisfaction with only 16% of participants reporting low satisfaction. It revealed that foster parents with overall satisfaction levels had the strongest intention to continue fostering (Denby et al., 1999). Overall, foster children and youth are dependent on their foster parents being satisfied with the circumstances of their placement to maintain a stable home and have long term retention.

Research has demonstrated that foster parents who experience high levels of stress and frustration with the foster care agency are more likely to consider terminating their participation in foster care agencies (Rodger et al., 2006). Foster parents work with many parties ranging from county entities to provide effective interventions to their foster child. One can expect that this takes a lot of effort on the foster parent's part to maintain communication and

collaboration with these entities and it is pertinent that they are satisfied with the process. Therefore, it is important to provide continuous training and assess for both satisfaction and retention levels in foster families.

The purpose of this research study is to examine how previous and current foster parents perceive training in their California foster care agency. Foster parents are essential in the Child Welfare System. They provide children with support and stability while their family problems are being resolved. There is little research on the relationship between foster parent training and retention rate. There are only three mandatory trainings required by the State of California totaling 28-hours (The Step-Up Coalition, 2019). Therefore, this study explores resource families' perceptions using a self-administered survey designed by the researchers. The researchers hypothesized that participants would advocate for more training.

In addition, the study explores the relationship between foster parent training and satisfaction rates. Foster parents deal with a number of challenges in the foster care agency. They often care for children with emotional and behavioral problems and may be unsure how to navigate the mental health system. Further training can prepare foster families to tackle these challenging obstacles and increase their satisfaction levels. Therefore, the study explores whether a relationship exists between training and foster parent satisfaction. The researchers explore and assess this question with their participants. The

researchers believe this may help shape the future of training and assessments in county and tribal foster parent agencies.

This study is needed to explore the importance of training foster parents and the relationship between training and satisfaction and retention rates. The results of the study will potentially contribute to social work practice. More specifically, it will contribute to child welfare practice in micro and macro levels. On a macro level, this study may provide foster parent agencies with insight on the effectiveness of the current statewide mandatory training in place. The findings will influence whether new policies and procedures need to take place.

On the micro level, the findings will address the specific needs of current foster parents. Foster parents need to feel supported to fulfill their ultimate goals in foster care agencies. Research found that the most common goals were to provide love to children and protect them from harm. Good relationships and communication with child welfare agencies leads to increased confidence in the competency of their workers (Rodger et al., 2006). Poor relationships with child welfare agencies essentially takes away from these goals.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

In the past 20 years, rates of youth entering the foster care system have grown approximately 65% while the number of foster homes has only increased approximately 55% (Rodger et al., 2006). This means that the rate of children entering the foster care system outweighs the number of foster homes for them to be placed in. There is a national need for foster parents in state and local child welfare agencies.

Foster homes facilitate stability in a child's environment and nourish healthy growth and development. The underlying concern here pertains to effectively recruiting and retaining foster homes. This has implications for addressing the factors in which foster parents feel fulfilled and satisfied with their participation in foster care agencies. Some factors to consider include relationships with child welfare agencies, training, and satisfaction.

#### Foster Parents and Child Welfare Agencies

Research suggests that most foster parents consider quitting (Rodger et al. 2006). Rodgers and colleagues sent questionnaires to open or current foster homes to survey participants regarding sensitivity and understanding between themselves and social workers. They identified characteristics of current foster families and performed a factor analysis by a Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (FPSS). The results revealed that challenging aspects of fostering identified



75.5% of foster parents who had considered quitting fostering. The study also revealed that foster parent satisfaction was related to their perceptions about the child welfare agency regarding teamwork and communication. Negative relationships with the child welfare agency were linked to foster parents who had considered quitting fostering (Rodger et al., 2006). This study decided to send their questionnaire to open or current foster homes which creates a gap in the generalizability of their results. For further research, previous foster homes should also be considered, and these homes could give insight as to why they could not be retained.

Foster parenting is a tedious, challenging task, and foster parents depend on child welfare agencies to guide them throughout the process. Those who choose to foster were found to do so for altruistic, self-motivating reasons (Cooley et al., 2021). They must be trained to be included as an integral part of the clinical team. Foster parents need to feel included in the decision-making process concerning their foster child to feel fulfilled.

### Foster Parent Training

The quality and stability of foster placement is consistently associated with more positive outcomes (Conn et al., 2018). Yet, many foster parents report feeling unprepared or unwilling to manage emotional and behavioral problems that are most often present in children entering foster care. Foster parents have been called upon to manage increasingly difficult emotional and behavioral problems in the absence of formal behavioral management training or

specialized support. The study provided a parenting program, Incredible Years, and assessed its impact on foster parent stress and attitude, and perceived effect on parenting. The study revealed that this program increased peer support and confidence, as well as changed foster parents' perceptions about their foster children's mental health (Conn et al., 2018). Foster parents are often called to serve as therapeutic outlets for their foster children without having the expertise to do so. The training program helped alleviate the feelings of being unprepared or uncomfortable, and foster parents were more aware of the needs of their foster children. The implications for these findings are that the training program helped foster parents increase their confidence and ability to implement the skills and strategies discussed (Conn et al., 2018). This study did face the challenge of self-selection bias in which participants chose whether to participate in the training intervention. The control group did not have as big of a time commitment as the intervention group; therefore, intervention groups may be more inclined to seek training. In future research, perhaps an analysis of previous and ongoing training programs can be explored.

### Satisfaction and Retention

In 1999, a study explored the factors contributing to the current crisis in the foster care system regarding the retention of foster parents. They utilized questionnaires to determine how satisfaction related to a foster parent's intent to continue fostering. Among the strongest influences for foster parent satisfaction were competency for handling their foster children, and the child welfare agency

providing information. Satisfaction was found to exert influence on a foster parent's retention. These findings indicate that support and training must be given to foster parents after they have begun fostering. The appropriate response for the foster care crisis of low foster parent retention is for child welfare agencies to address foster parents' need for information and skills (Denby et al., 1999).

A literature review synthesized thirteen publications from four different countries. The results demonstrated the scarcity of training and its need for foster parents to feel able to handle their foster children. The results also showed the importance of foster parent satisfaction as a related outcome (Kaasboll et al., 2019). This review serves as a basis for developing training for foster parents which could lead to higher rates of foster parent retention, and thus stabilize foster placements. A gap identified in this review is the limited diversity of the sample because most participants were women from the United States. Another limitation was that the previous research studies measure satisfaction shortly after their training course. In this manner, participants were more likely to report their short term needs (Kaasboll et al., 2019). Perhaps in a future review, researchers could explore the effects of training over time.

Another study by McKeough et al. (2017) examined stress and foster placements, as well as perceptions of support and training. The results demonstrated the need for foster parents to receive training to handle their foster children. Foster parents with high stress reported a desire for additional training. Another result demonstrated the need for improving support and training to

ensure good placement outcomes and retention. The study revealed the perceptions of foster parents as feeling unprepared and under qualified to manage their foster children and calling on child welfare agencies to provide more support and training. Foster parents are currently demanded to care for their foster children without such training which serves as a factor in the current collapse of the foster care system (McKeough et al., 2017). This study essentially was only able to capture a snapshot of current stress and perceptions, rather than assess these factors over time. In the future, researchers can determine the lasting effects of training programs and how it relates to overall perceived satisfaction.

It was determined by a study completed in 1999 that the crisis of poor foster parent retention should be addressed by responding to the needs of the foster parents. It explored other options, such as increasing recruitment efforts; however, the issue here would not be resolved. The problem at large is that when foster parents feel unsatisfied in their child welfare agencies, they consider terminating their participation in foster care programs. Therefore, child welfare agencies must respond to the foster parents' need for support and training (Denby et al., 1999).

Another study explored manners in which implementing training would be feasible for foster parents. Findings from this review demonstrate the need for flexibility in training as current methods are hindered by access and time. They recommended online training as a viable option for a cost effective and more

feasible manner for foster parents to receive and participate in ongoing training (Kaasboll et al., 2019).

### Current Policies in Foster Care Training

Foster parents in the United States must be licensed or approved to provide care for children. As of January 1, 2017, anyone who wants to foster or adopt a child in California including Los Angeles County, Orange County, San Bernardino County, and Riverside County must complete the Resource Family Approval process as part of the Welfare & Institutions Code § 16519.5. The RFA includes 20-hours of training that covers a wide range of issues like trauma, behavioral and emotional adjustment, self-esteem, and positive discipline (Children and Family Services, 2017).

According to Children and Family Services, the training that foster parents must receive to qualify as foster parents in San Bernardino County in the state of California is extensive. First, before they complete any of the training, they must complete an orientation called Foster and Adoptive Parent Orientation to become an approved Resource Family. This is done at their Taking Care of Business Day. Next, they will receive all the requirements and paperwork from social workers to start the process. Social workers are there to answer any questions and guide them through the process. If they want to move forward with the process, then two social workers will be assigned to the applicant throughout the entire process. One of the social workers is called the Permanency Assessment Worker and the other is called the Home Environment Worker. Both workers are

meant to get detailed demographic information from the applicant and their homes to see if they meet criteria. Once they have gathered all the necessary information such as relationships, family structure, and discipline styles, they will review the applicant for approval. If approved, the applicant will become a resource parent. Each applicant must complete training, provide references, pass background checks, and complete home and family assessments before a formal approval (Children and Family Services, 2017).

According to the California Department of Social Services, the mandatory training in place is called Foster and Kinship Care Education (FKCE). FKCE was established in 1984 and has since been a part of training to existing and potential foster parents. In addition, the training called Parenting Resources for Information, Development and Education (PRIDE) also is implemented to all potential foster parents in all 74 Foster Family agencies in San Bernardino County. Only PRIDE and FKCE are mandatory training in California. As mentioned earlier, the total amount of hours from the mandatory training is 20-hours before a child can be placed in a home (The Step Up Coalition, 2019).

In addition to the Welfare & Institutions Code § 16519.5, there are Statewide Learning Objectives expected from applicants seeking to be Resource Families. According to the 2005 All County Letter from California Department of Social Services, the Resource Family Training Workgroup hopes to have the resource family applicant knowledgeable in 41 learning outcomes after their initial training. The competencies range from defining what a resource family is to

describing the roles of a resource family caregiver. The goal is to inform future applicants of their rights, responsibilities, and provide any additional training if necessary (California Department of Social Services, 2005).

### Theories Guiding Conceptualization

The two theories guiding the conceptualization of this study are attachment and role theory.

Bowlby (1969) believed that attachment theory is the “lasting psychological connectedness between human beings” and as a result “form bonds with one another”. In the foster care system, it is necessary for foster parents to build an attachment with their foster children to promote positive behavioral and emotional adjustments.

In addition, Bowlby noted four distinguishing characteristics in identifying attachment that relate to this research paper since a strong secure attachment between a foster parent and child can influence a person's overall satisfaction. The first is proximity maintenance, in which we want to be close to the person we are attached to. The second is safe haven, in which we return to the person we are attached to when we feel threatened or want to feel safe. Third, a secure base is where a child feels comfortable exploring based on the attachment figure's location (Bowlby, 1969). The fourth characteristic is separation distress in which anxiety occurs when a child is not close to their attachment figure. This study explores that if foster parents receive the right amount of secure attachment with their foster children, the researchers believe they can overcome

any stress or pressure. If they secure this strong bond, then they can have higher levels of satisfaction and look for help to retain long term foster care. Overall, foster children will benefit from this secure attachment.

In role theory, a person assumes a social position or identity and applies a behavior that is then associated with that social position or identity (Mellette et al., 2020). Regarding foster care, a foster parent assumes the position of the primary caretaker. A foster child also has an assumed social position that they are expected to play out. If a foster parent is unclear of their social position due to lack of training, they will not be able to fulfill their responsibilities. As a result, this hindered role due to minimal training can lead to lack of satisfaction and overall retention as a foster parent.

Foster fathers have a unique role in child caretaking and child development (Mellette et al., 2020). However, they sometimes experience confusion on what role and parenting style they should express. Fathers who have formal support such as training from the challenges they face will have a stronger identity and relationship with foster children (Mellette et al., 2020). As previously mentioned, receiving high levels of formal support is associated with foster parent retention and satisfaction (Rodger et al., 2006). Ultimately, to allow foster parents to promote a safe and nurturing environment, their roles should be clearly established during training. A proper training will establish the responsibilities of foster parents within the foster care system and allow parents to apply their roles accordingly. Therefore, formal training will allow foster parents



to understand their role in the child welfare system. In doing so, it will greatly improve the lives of foster children and overall foster families.

### Summary

Foster youth have been entering the foster care system at higher rates than foster homes entering the system. Different research has found some relationship between foster parents feeling prepared to handle the needs of their foster children and their willingness to continue fostering. The attachment and role theory mentioned previously provide a framework on how to assess the needs of foster care parents for the betterment of services. It is important for social workers to continuously check in with the parents and assess their opinion on the effectiveness of these programs. In return, this will help the overall meet the needs of the foster children within the foster care system. The researchers believe the relationship between the mandatory training offered to foster parents and their overall satisfaction levels and retention levels should be explored. Therefore, keeping the two theories in mind, the following results in Chapter Three explores the importance of training and the relationship between foster parent training and satisfaction retention rates.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### Introduction

This study explored the effect of training on foster parent satisfaction and retention. This chapter contains the details of how this study was carried out. The sections discussed will be study design, sampling, data collection and instruments, procedure, protection of human subjects, and data analysis.

#### Study Design

The purpose of this study was to explore resource families' perceptions of their foster care agency and the relationship between foster parent training and satisfaction rates. This is exploratory research due to the limited amount of research that addresses this topic from the perspective of foster parents. Using a quantitative research design, the researchers utilized a self-administered surveys distributed to foster parents.

A strong point in using an exploratory, quantitative approach is its feasibility in recording responses and generating observations. This allows the researcher to group data and make generalizations about the population. This process will allow the researchers to explore the role of training in foster parent satisfaction and retention.

A limitation in quantifying the personal experiences of foster care parents as they relate to satisfaction is that they are restricted to a limited range of answers. There is not much room for participants to add their personal

experiences which inhibits the possibility to gain new insights. There may also be new details, observations, and knowledge that the researcher is not able to identify due to the empirical nature of utilizing a survey with closed-ended responses.

This study sought to answer the two following questions regarding parents with current or previous involvement in foster care programs: (1) what resource families' perceptions of their foster care agency are and (2) what is the relationship between foster parent training and satisfaction and retention rates.

### Sampling

This study used a non-random convenience sample, as well as snowball sampling, of foster parents who are participating in or have participated in foster care programs. The participants were recruited from social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Reddit. There was a total of 55 participants that fully participated in this survey plus 11 participants that completed less than half of the survey thus were excluded from the data analysis.

### Data Collection and Instruments

Quantitative data was collected via surveys posted in the following social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Reddit between October 24, 2022, and January 2023. Researchers also utilized ads on Facebook to distribute the survey. The participants were introduced to the study by being provided an introduction and description of the study and its purpose. Demographic

information was collected at the start of the survey. This information consisted of age, marital status, race/ ethnicity, education level, and employment status.

Foster parent satisfaction was measured by the Foster Parent Satisfaction Scale (Kapp and Vela, 2004). Three items from four factors of this scale were used to assess foster parent satisfaction for a total of twelve items. The factors are state worker competence, cultural competence, empowerment, and outcomes as related to agency quality. Answers were recorded using a Likert scale: 1=agree, 2=unsure, 3=disagree.

The survey asked participants four questions regarding their participation in previous foster parent training. The researchers generated these questions and examined the content validity of these questions with their research supervisor. Under the training section, the first question was “How many trainings did you attend in the past 12 months?”. The second question was “What kind?”. The third question was “How often?”. Lastly, the fourth question was “Was there follow-up on the training?”

The researchers asked participants six items regarding their time as an active foster parent. These questions explored various factors contributing to a foster parent’s total time as a participant in foster care agencies. Questions included “How long have you been foster parenting?” “Have you ever taken a break from fostering? If yes, how long was the break for?” “What made you stay?” “Longest Time a Foster Child Remained in Foster Home” “Number of

Times a Foster Parent Declined to Accept a Child” “Most Kids You Have Ever Had at One Time.”

### Procedures

An online flyer posted on Facebook was created describing the purpose and goal of this study as well as the need for participants. Researchers posted the flyer in a public Facebook post in several foster parents' groups. Researchers provided their Facebook accounts on the Facebook post to allow participants to address questions via Facebook messaging. The proposed date was posted on the flyer and so was the QR code and link to the study. Upon clicking the link, the participants were redirected to the questionnaire via Qualtrics website. Qualtrics software was used to create the survey and to collect the data.

Before beginning the survey, participants reviewed an Informed Consent statement which explained the purpose of the study. Participants were asked to confirm their participation in the study. There were four parts in this survey which included: a demographic survey and the three questionnaires relating to satisfaction, training, and retention. It took approximately one minute to complete the demographic survey, approximately two minutes to complete the training questionnaire, approximately two minutes to complete the satisfaction questionnaire, and approximately two minutes to complete the retention questionnaire.

Participants were given a debriefing statement on the conclusion of their participation in the study, only to thank them for participating, as no deception was used.

### Protection on Human Subjects

The study was approved by the CSUSB Institutional Review Board Social Work Subcommittee. The identity of participants was kept completely anonymous. Each participant read an informed consent prior to their participation in the study. Participants' names and contact information was not required or collected. In addition, the nature of participation was voluntary. After a year, the participants' responses will be permanently deleted from the Qualtrics software by the researchers.

### Data Analysis

Analyses involved in this study are descriptive analysis, correlation analyses, and multiple regression analyses using SPSS. First descriptive analysis of variables was conducted. Second, a correlation analysis of training and satisfaction and retention was conducted. Third, a multiple regression analysis was run to explore the relationship between training, satisfaction, and retention with covariates controlled.

### Summary

This study explored the relationship between training and foster parent satisfaction and retention of foster parents in foster care programs. The study

used quantitative methods including an online, self-administered survey to facilitate this process.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

In chapter four, the researchers present the data gathered from the survey. First, the researchers discuss the demographics of the survey participants and then the researchers discuss the key variables measured. These variables include foster parent current or previous involvement in foster care programs. In addition, what the foster parents' perceptions of their foster care agency are. These variables showed whether there was a relationship between foster parent training, satisfaction, and retention rates.

#### Data Results

##### Demographics

The current study consisted of 54 participants (see Table 1). Of the 54 participants, 9 (16.7%) were between the ages of 18-25, 20 (37.0%) were between the ages of 26-40, 17 (31.5%) were between the ages of 41-60, and 8 (14.8%) were 61 years old or above. Participants were asked to identify their ethnicity and had the option to self-describe as multi-racial/multi-ethnic. Nineteen (35.2%) participants were White, 11 (20.4%) participants were Hispanic or Latino, 8 (14.8%) participants were Black or African American, 3 (5.6%) participants were American Indian/ Alaska Native, 3 (5.6%) participants were



Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 1 (1.9%) participant was Asian, and 9 (16.7%) listed themselves as two or more races/ethnicities.

Table 1. Demographics of the Participants

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency (N)</b>	<b>Percentages (%)</b>
Age		
18-25	9	16.7
26-40	20	37.0
41-60	17	31.5
61+	8	14.8
Race/Ethnicity		
White	19	35.2
Hispanic/Latino	11	20.4
Black/African American	8	14.8
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	3	5.6
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	3	5.6
Asian	1	1.9
Two or more races	9	16.7

To gather further information about the participants, they were asked additional demographic questions regarding their marital status, educational level, employment status, and annual income if applicable.

When asked about their marital status, of 54 participants, 8 (14.8%) answered “Single”, 27 (50.0%) answered “Married”, 7 (13.0%) answered “Separated”, 11 (20.4%) answered “Divorced”, and 1 (1.9%) answered “Widowed”.

When asked about their education level, of 54 participants, 1 (1.9%) had answered some high school, 20 (37.0%) answered that they graduated from high school, 10 (18.5%) attended some college, 11 (20.4%) graduated from college, and 12 (22.2%) completed graduate education.

When asked whether they had a job in addition to their role as a foster parent, of 54 participants, 31 (57.4%) reported having a job in addition to being a foster parent, and 23 (42.6%) did not. Participants who reported additional employment were directed to a sub-question about their annual income. Of 31 participants that were directed to this sub-question, 1 (3.2%) answered “\$20,000-\$29,999,” 6 (19.4%) answered “\$30,000-\$49,999,” 8 (25.8%) answered “\$50,000-\$69,999,” and 16 (51.6%) answered “\$70,000 and above.”

Table 2. Additional Demographics of the Participants

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency (N)</b>	<b>Percentages (%)</b>
Marital Status		
Single	8	14.8
Married	27	50
Separated	7	13
Divorced	11	20.4
Widowed	1	1.9
Education Level		
Some high school	1	1.9
High school graduate	20	37
Some college	10	18.5
College graduate	11	20.4
Graduate study	12	22.2

Employed in Addition to Role as Foster Parent	31	57.4
Yes		
No	23	42.6
If Yes, Annual Income	1	3.2
\$20,000-\$29,999	6	19.4
\$30,000-\$49,999	8	25.8
\$50,000-\$69,999	16	51.6
\$70,000 and above		

### Satisfaction

The questionnaire had thirteen questions with Likert scale responses to help the researchers gain an understanding of the level of satisfaction the participants had about foster care agencies (see Table 2). The first statement was, "The agency has realistic expectations of me." The question order went from disagree to unsure to agree. Thirteen (24.1%) answered disagree, 13 (24.1%) answered unsure, and 28 (51.9%) answered agree.

The second statement was, "The agency has helped my family do better." Eleven participants (20.8%) answered disagree, 12 (22.6%) answered unsure, and 30 (56.6%) answered agree.

The third statement was, "Overall, I am satisfied with the services I am receiving from this agency." Twelve participants (22.2%) answered disagree, 9 (16.7%) answered unsure, and 33 (61.1%) answered agree.

The fourth statement was, "My worker asked for my opinion on the problem my family and I were having". Ten participants (18.9%) answered disagree, 8 (15.1%) answered unsure, and 35 (66.0%) answered agree.

The fifth statement was, "My worker asked for my opinion about the services my family and I needed". Six participants (11.3%) answered disagree, 9 (17.0%) answered unsure, and 38 (71.7%) answered agree.

The sixth statement was, "I know who to call if I feel like my rights have been ignored." Nine participants (17.0%) answered disagree, 9 (17.0%) answered unsure, and 35 (66.0%) answered agree.

The seventh statement was, "My worker was respectful of my family's culture and ethnic background." Four participants (7.5%) answered disagree, 6 (11.3%) answered unsure, and 43 (81.1%) answered agree.

The eighth statement was, "I felt comfortable talking with my worker about what culture and race have to do with my situation." Four participants (7.5%) answered disagree, 8 (15.1%) answered unsure, and 41 (77.4%) answered agree.

The ninth statement was, "My worker spoke the language most appropriate for me and my family." Two participants (3.8%) answered disagree, 45 (84.9%) answered unsure, and 6 (11.3%) answered agree.

The tenth statement was, "My worker spoke the language most appropriate for me and my family." One participant (1.9%) answered disagree, 2 (3.8%) answered unsure, and 49 (94.2%) answered agree.

The eleventh statement was, "My worker treats/ treated me with respect." Eight participants (15.1%) answered disagree, 3 (5.7%) answered unsure, and 42 (79.2%) answered agree.

The twelfth statement was, "My worker does/ did a good job explaining what was required of me." Thirteen participants (24.5%) answered disagree, 6 (11.3%) answered unsure, and 34 (64.2%) answered agree.

The thirteenth statement was, "My worker respects my values and beliefs." Five participants (9.4%) answered disagree, 9 (17.0%) answered unsure, and 39 (73.6%) answered agree.

### Training

The questionnaire had four questions that measured the participants' exposure to training within their foster care agency. The first question was "How many training sessions did you attend in the past 12 months?" Of 54 participants, 20 (37.0%) answered "1", 13 (24.1%) answered "2", 9 (16.7%) answered "3", 4 (7.4%) answered "4", and 8 (14.8%) answered "5 or more".

The second question asked participants about the type of training they were exposed to in their foster care agency. Of 54 participants, 23 (44.2%) answered "State Required," 29 (55.8%) answered "Optional," and 2 (3.7%) participants did not answer the question.

The third question asked about the frequency of training in their foster care agency. Of 54 participants, 19 (35.2%) answered "Once," 27 (50.0%) answered "Periodically/Scheduled," and 8 (14.8%) answered "Other."

The fourth question inquired about whether there was a follow-up for the training that the participants participated in. Of 54 participants, 11 (20.4%) answered “Yes,” and 43 (79.6%) answered “No.”

### Retention

The questionnaire had six questions that measured the participants’ retention rate. The first question was “How long have you been foster parenting?” Of 54 participants, 10 (18.5%) answered “Less than a year,” 9 (16.7%) answered “1 year,” 12 (22.2%) answered “2 years,” 7 (13.0%) answered “3 years,” 1 (1.9%) answered “4 years,” 4 (7.4%) answered “5 years,” and 11 (20.4%) answered “6 or more years.”

The second question asked participants if they had ever taken a break from foster parenting. Eighteen participants (33.3%) answered “Yes,” and 36 (66.7%) answered “No.” If the participant answered “Yes,” they were directed to a sub-question inquiring about the length of their break. Of the 17 participants that answered this sub-question, 3 (17.6%) answered “Less than 1 year,” 8 (47.1%) answered “1 year,” 1 (5.9%) answered “2 years,” 5 (29.4%) answered “3 or more years.”

The third question inquired about the factors that influenced the participants’ choices to stay in their foster care agency. One participant (1.9%) answered “Training,” 14 (25.9%) answered “Satisfaction,” 6 (11.1%) answered “Pay and/or benefits,” 12 (22.2%) answered “Intrinsic,” and 21 (38.9%) answered “Other.”

The fourth question asked about the longest time a foster child remained in the participant's foster home. Twenty-two participants (42.3%) answered "5-20 months," 15 (28.8%) answered "21-35 months," 5 (9.6%) answered "36-50 months," 4 (7.7%) answered "51-65 months," 2 (3.8%) answered "66-80 months," and 4 (7.7%) answered "81-over."

The fifth question inquired about the number of times a foster parent declined to accept a child. Twenty-seven participants (50.0%) answered "0," 14 (25.9%) answered "1," 5 (9.3%) answered "2," 4 (7.4%) answered "3," and 4 (7.4%) answered "4 or more."

The sixth question inquired about the number of foster children a foster parent has had in their home at one time. Twenty-four participants (44.4%) answered "0," 14 (25.9%) answered "1," 15 (27.8%) answered "2," 10 (18.5%) answered "3," and 5 (9.3%) answered "4 or more."

#### Presentation of the Bivariate Statistics

A Pearson's R correlation was conducted to analyze the relationship between training and satisfaction (see Table 3). No significant relationship was found between participants' training and satisfaction ( $r = -.161$ ).

Table 3. Pearson's R Correlation: Training and Satisfaction

r
-.161

A Pearson's R correlation was conducted to analyze the relationship between participants' training and retention (see Table 4). No significant relationship was found between participants' training and retention ( $r = .199$ ).

Table 4. Pearson's R Correlation: Training and Retention

$r$
.199

A Pearson's R correlation was conducted to analyze the relationship between participants' satisfaction and retention (see Table 5). No significant relationship was found between participants' satisfaction and retention ( $r = .201$ ).

Table 5. Pearson's R Correlation: Satisfaction and Retention

$r$
-.201

### Summary

The majority of our participants were new foster parents who attended one or two training sessions with their foster agency. The results indicated that there



was not a significant relationship between the variables of training and satisfaction, training and retention, and satisfaction and retention, therefore, the hypotheses were not supported by the data.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

This chapter will discuss how the results of the study can add to the understanding of foster parents' attitudes toward training and satisfaction. We will discuss implications for the social work field, as well as for foster care agencies. Additionally, this chapter notes the study's limitations, including instrument validity, the content validity, and lack of generalizability. Finally, recommendations for future research and our overall conclusions are discussed.

#### Discussion

This study sought to examine the relationship between foster parent satisfaction, retention, and training. The literature suggested that satisfaction led to a good relationship with child welfare agencies as well as long term retention (Denby et al., 1999). Our study's results suggest that foster parents' satisfaction with foster care agencies is not related to foster parent retention. Similarly, our results suggest no significant relationship between foster parent satisfaction with foster care agencies and foster parent training. Finally, our results suggest no significant relationship between foster parent retention and foster parent training. Overall, our study's results suggest no statistically significant relationship between foster parent satisfaction, retention, and training.

The findings from our study are inconsistent with the findings in previous studies. Per Denby et al., (1999), foster parent satisfaction is related to teamwork, communication, and a good relationship with child welfare agencies and agents. They also state that overall satisfaction with fostering clearly exerts the strongest influence on a parent's intention to continue fostering. Our exploratory study did not find a correlation between foster parent satisfaction and retention, foster parent satisfaction and foster parent training, nor foster parent retention with foster parent training.

#### Limitation

A limitation of this study is that we utilized the satisfaction scale which was created by Kapp & Vela in 2004. Although this is an instrument that has been well-tested, it only measures foster parent satisfaction. In addition, research on our other two topics of retention and training is limited. There is no actual agreed upon scale to use to rate all three variables of foster parent satisfaction, retention, and training. Hopefully, further research in this area will allow for a valid, reliable scale to be used to assess foster parents' satisfaction in their foster agency. On the same note, it is hoped that a scale be developed to rate the retention of foster parents participating in foster agencies.

Another limitation is the small, non-random convenience sample which decreases the study's generalizability to foster parents in general. Our data collection was limited by time and resource constraints and may not include a representative sample of foster parents across the United States.

In addition, some of the survey questions were created by the researchers and were untested. This draws the question of the content validity of the survey questions.

#### Recommendations for the Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

In regard to social work micro practice, future research should explore current foster parents' attitudes toward the training in their foster agency. More than half of our study's participants reported only having two or less training sessions in the past year, which may indicate that social workers are not providing the foster parents enough opportunities to better prepare for the needs of their foster children. Although our findings did not support that training foster parents to adequately tend to the needs of their foster children would increase satisfaction in their agency and increase their length of retention as a foster parent, we suggest that this issue and its impact be included in future studies.

Although our study's results did not support relationships between foster parent training, retention, and satisfaction, previous research suggests that foster parents may not feel prepared or competent to provide the higher level of care for their foster children (Kaasboll et al., 2019). Future research should continue to examine foster parents' needs in terms of better preparation and education.

In regard to social work practice, our study's results suggest that some foster parents seem satisfied in their current foster agencies. This is encouraging, but warrants further attention, as previous research suggests that

the implementation of training could only increase feelings of satisfaction (McKeough et al., 2017).

### Conclusions

This chapter covered the findings of the study and reported no support for our hypothesis that training impacted satisfaction or retention. Additional findings were inconsistent with literature on training, in that our study found no statistically significant relationships between training, satisfaction, and retention. Limitations, suggestions for future research, and implications for micro- and macro-level social work were also discussed. Further, this chapter highlighted how these findings could be helpful for foster care agency social workers in training their agency's future foster parents.

APPENDIX A  
INFORMED CONSENT

**INFORMED CONSENT**

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate the effects of training on foster parent satisfaction. This study is being conducted by Dulcinea Catota and Dennisse Moreno Romo, graduate students at CSUSB, under the supervision of Dr. Deirdre Lanesskog, Associate Professor of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

**PURPOSE:** The goal of this study is to examine foster parents' perceptions on the training they receive through foster care agencies, and any effects of training on foster parent satisfaction and retention.

**DESCRIPTION:** Participants will be asked questions on the training they received upon their participation in foster care agencies, as well as some demographic questions.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation is completely voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may skip or not answer any questions and can freely withdraw from participation at any time.

**ANONYMITY:** Your responses will remain anonymous and data will be reported in group form only.

**DURATION:** This survey will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.

**RISKS:** Although not anticipated, there may be some discomfort in answering some of the questions. You are not required to answer and can skip the question or end your participation.

**BENEFITS:** There will not be any direct benefits to the participants. However, findings from the study will contribute to our knowledge in this area of research.

**CONTACT:** If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Lanesskog via telephone at (909)537-7222, or via email at [dlanesskog@csusb.edu](mailto:dlanesskog@csusb.edu).

**RESULTS:** Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks database (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/>) at California State University, San Bernardino after July 2023.

**CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:**

I have read the information above and agree to participate in your study.

**Or**

I have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

**Or**

I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in your study, have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

APPENDIX B  
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE



## QUESTIONNAIRE

### Demographic Survey

- Age
  - 18-25
  - 26-40
  - 41-60
  - 61-over
- Education Level
  - Some high school
  - High school graduate
  - Some college
  - College graduate
  - Graduate study
- Marital Status
  - Single
  - Married
  - Separated
  - Divorced
  - Widowed
- Race/Ethnicity
  - Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin of any race
  - American Indian or Alaskan Native
  - Asian
  - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - Black or African American
  - White
  - Two or more races
- Are you employed in addition to your role as a foster parent?
  - Yes
  - No
- If yes, what is your Annual Income?
  - Under \$20,000
  - \$20,000-29,999
  - \$30,000- \$49,999
  - \$50,000- \$69,999
  - \$70,000 and above

### Satisfaction (1= agree, 2=unsure, 3= disagree)

- The agency has realistic expectations of me.
- The agency has helped my family do better.
- Overall, I am satisfied with the services I am receiving from this agency.
- My worker asked for my opinion on the problem my family and I were having.
- My worker asked for my opinion about the services my family and I needed.
- I know who to call if I feel like my rights have been ignored.

- My worker was respectful of my family’s culture and ethnic background.
- I felt comfortable talking with my worker about what culture and race have to do with my situation.
- My worker spoke the language most appropriate for me and my family.
- My worker treats/ treated me with respect.
- My worker does/ did a good job explaining what was required of me.
- My worker respects my values and beliefs.

**Training**

- How many trainings did you attend in the past 12 months?
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5 or more
- What kind
  - State required.
  - Optional
- How often
  - Once
  - Periodically
  - other
- Any follow-up to the training?
  - Yes
  - No

**Retention**

- How long have you been fostering?
  - Less than a year
  - 1 year
  - 2 years
  - 3 years
  - 4 years
  - 5 years
  - 6 or more years
- Have you taken a break from fostering?
  - Yes
  - No
- If yes, how long was the break?
  - Less than one year
  - One year
  - Two years
  - Three or more years
- What made you stay?

- Training
  - Satisfaction
  - Pay, benefits.
  - Intrinsic
  - Other
- Longest Time a Foster Child Remained in Foster Home
  - 5–20 months
  - 21–35 months
  - 36–50 months
  - 51–65 months
  - 66–80 months
  - 81–over
- Number of Times a Foster Parent Declined to Accept a Child
  - Never
  - Once
  - Twice
  - Three times
  - More than three
- Most Kids You Have Ever Had at One Time
  - One
  - Two
  - Three
  - More than three

Satisfaction questions from: Kapp & Vela et al., (2004).

Developed by: Dulcinea Catota and Dennisse Moreno.

APPENDIX C  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Dennisse Moreno Romo <004923031@coyote.csusb.edu>

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**IRB-FY2022-204 - Modification: IRB Approval Protocol Change/Modification Letter**

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**do-not-reply@cayuse.com** <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>  
To: 004923031@coyote.csusb.edu, 007724906@coyote.csusb.edu, Deirdre.Lanesskog@csusb.edu

Wed, Nov 2, 2022 at 9:40 AM



November 2, 2022

**CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

Protocol Change/Modification

IRB-FY2022-204

Status: Approved

Deirdre LanesskogDennisse Moreno Romo, Dulcinea Catota  
CSBS - Social Work  
California State University, San Bernardino  
5500 University Parkway  
[San Bernardino, California 92407](#)

Dear Deirdre Lanesskog Dennisse Moreno Romo, Dulcinea Catota:

The protocol change/modification to your application to use human subjects, titled "Will the implementation of training increase foster parent satisfaction and facilitate long term retention in foster care agencies?" has been reviewed and approved by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). A change in your informed consent requires resubmission of your protocol as amended. Please ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study. A lapse in your approval may result in your not being able to use the data collected during the lapse in your approval.

This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional campus approvals which may be required including access to CSUSB campus facilities and affiliate campuses. Investigators should consider the changing COVID-19 circumstances based on current CDC, California Department of Public Health, and campus guidance and submit appropriate protocol modifications to the IRB as needed. CSUSB campus and affiliate health screenings should be completed for all campus human research related activities. Human research activities conducted at off-campus sites should follow CDC, California Department of Public Health, and local guidance. See CSUSB's [COVID-19 Prevention Plan](#) for more information regarding campus requirements.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following by submitting the appropriate form (modification, unanticipated/adverse event, renewal, study closure) through the online Cayuse IRB Submission System.

**1. If you need to make any changes/modifications to your protocol submit a modification form as the IRB must review all changes before implementing them in your study to ensure the degree of risk has not changed.**

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## ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE

This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. All chapters were completed together by Dulcinea Catota and Dennisse Moreno Romo. Both researchers split the sections in each chapter evenly. Both researchers worked together in creating the survey as well as distributing the survey to potential participants.