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TRANSITIONS IN FOSTER CARE:

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR FOSTER CARE WORKERS

VOLUME ONE

A thesis presented in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy at
Massey University

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1986

ABSTRACT

This thesis set out to develop training programmes for foster parents and social workers involved in the provision of foster care services, as a means to addressing the current crises in the field. Studies both nationally and internationally have been critical of efforts by agencies to provide stable placements to children who needed to be removed from their biological parents but, with some notable exceptions, few have gone on to address responses to these deficiencies in any systematic way.

The first element in the development of these training programmes was to establish an epistemology which would provide a comprehensive framework for practice. Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development and Garbarino's empirical research into environments which are detrimental to children were brought together with principles emerging from research into foster care, to develop an ecological framework for foster care.

The ecological framework was then translated into a training methodology by means of the Developmental Research and Utilization Model advanced by Thomas. This methodology identified a series of reference points around which the training programmes were constructed. These training programmes, which are set out in Volume 2 of this dissertation, were then evaluated in agencies concerned with the provision of foster care services. Changes in perceptions about

foster care, their methods of service delivery, increased attention to agency policies supporting effective intervention and delivery of foster care services were reported. Greater emphasis on the role of biological parents, agency responsibility for assessing their needs and providing them with appropriate services were highlighted. The direct impact of the training programmes on children, however, was beyond the scope of this thesis.

Foster care is only one option to be considered when determining the most suitable alternative for a child. It can not be taken as a superior or inferior form of care in comparison to others but is only appropriate under certain circumstances. An important element in the management and development of a series of alternative options for children requiring substitute child care is knowledge about the extent of current provisions and their diverse forms. The thesis also reports on a limited survey of such facilities and programmes in New Zealand.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A project of this size is impossible to undertake and complete without the support and dedication of a large number of people. Even if I attempted to name them all, some will be inadvertently omitted. I hope I have already personally acknowledged their support over the years that this project has taken to complete.

My supervisors, Professor Graeme Fraser and Merv Hancock have had to cope with the idiosyncracies of an applied thesis and have always been very supportive over the past few years. They have been instrumental in maintaining a balance between the requirements of an academic environment and the realities of the social work task. Their positive outlook has always been a motivating influence, especially during those moments when carefully considered plans had to be changed. By its very nature, the thesis was voluminous and, therefore, demanded more than the usual amount of reading time for drafts from both Graeme and Merv. I am most grateful for their assistance.

The contribution of the New Zealand Foster Care Federation has been very significant. Their total commitment to improving the standards of foster care provisions in New Zealand provided me with an avenue to test ideas and get critical feedback. Three presidents of the Federation, Jane Thompson, Bobby Duncan and Jill Worrall, and their former Education Officer, Margaret Craig, have really spear headed the

training needs of foster care workers in New Zealand and have been intimately involved with the project since its inception. Their guidance, support, feedback and challenges have been most helpful in the development and evaluation stages of the project. They have now become the agents through which the training programmes developed in this thesis are made available to the practice community.

I wish to also record my appreciation for the assistance and support provided by my colleagues in the Social Policy and Social Work Unit at Massey University. I am particularly indebted to Ephra Garrett for her constant encouragement and to Professor Ian Shirley for his personal support and guidance. My friends in Ashhurst, particularly Catherine and Peter Rochester, who were very supportive of my family deserve a special vote of thanks. I am also grateful to the Open Home Foundation and the Department of Social Welfare for providing material assistance and venues for the pilot test and evaluation stages of the project.

Finally, some comments to those most important to me, my family. To our mothers, thanks for simply being 'mums' and understanding that completing the project was important. Prem, Indra and Pramen have lived with this project for a number of years. At one time they seriously thought foster fathers were better because they spent more time with their children. The sacrifices they have made can never be repaid, and in that, the completion of this thesis has extracted an unfair price. However, I simply and inadequately say 'thank you' and

hope that I can be more available in the future.

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