

Poster Session II
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The Social Networks of Foster Parents

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Purpose: The purpose of the study is to explore the structure and function of the social networks of foster parents caring for children in foster care including children with behavioral problems; and second, to examine the relationship between the dimensions of foster parent social networks, perceived quality of network support, parental competence, and parental representations. Evidence indicates that foster parents are inadequately prepared, respected and lack the necessary systems support to adequately parent children with complex problems.

Theoretical Background: Belsky's Determinants of Parenting Model has been adapted here for use with foster parents. In order to develop empirically based, effective interventions, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the existing social context, the social network dimensions and support system of foster parents. Foster parent social networks are areas that can be targeted for intervention.

Sample and Setting Number of Subjects: A random sample of certified foster parents will be recruited in Monroe County, Rochester, New York. The anticipated sample size is 80 subjects. Participants will be certified foster parent for at least six months who is currently fostering a child aged 6 to 12 years old for at least 3 months and English speaking.

Methods: A quantitative descriptive cross sectional design will be used. Data will be gathered using a one-on-one semi-structured interview.

Measures: Social network data will be collected using the Social Network Questionnaire. Child behavioral problems will be assessed using the Child Behavior Checklist, parent report (Achenbach, 1981). Parental competence will be measured using the parental competence subscale of the Parenting Stress Index (Abidin, 1995). Parental representations will be measured using the Parent Development Interview-Revised Short Version (Aber, Slade, Berger, Bresgi & Kaplan, 1985).

Analysis: Interviews will be transcribed verbatim and coded. Data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlations.