

**Facilitators and Barriers
in Recruiting and Retaining Foster Parents in
Prince Edward Island**

Selynn Butler

Department of Psychology

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Science, Honours in Psychology

Faculty of Science

University of Prince Edward Island

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

February, 2018

University of Prince Edward Island

Department of Psychology

Certificate of Examination

Examining Board

Thesis Advisor

Thesis by Selynn Butler

Entitled: Facilitators and Barriers in Recruiting and Retaining Foster Parents in
Prince Edward Island

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Science, Honours in Psychology

Abstract

This study examines particular facilitators and barriers in recruiting and retaining foster parents in Prince Edward Island (PEI). A review of the extant literature indicated that Self-Determination Theory provided a sound theoretical framework for understanding foster parenting; therefore, this research focused on exploring tenets of this theory. Namely, the psychological need satisfaction levels (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) of foster parents were closely examined. The study also explored foster parents' likelihood to encourage other families to foster, satisfaction in practical aspects of fostering, and intentions to continue fostering. A sample of 33 Regular foster parents in PEI completed either an online or paper questionnaire that collected quantitative and qualitative data. Analyses discovered that PEI foster parents' autonomy was the least satisfied, followed by relatedness, and finally, competence was the most satisfied. Overall, PEI foster parents are generally satisfied, likely to encourage other families to foster, and likely to continue fostering for several years, but there are areas in need of improvement within the foster care system, including support for autonomy, relationships between workers and foster parents, and financial resources.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to several people for their contributions to this thesis. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Philip Smith. He consistently supported me throughout this project in a way that promoted my independence, while ensuring that I was always guided in the right direction. Without his dedication, organization, and constructive feedback, this thesis would not have been possible. I feel privileged to have Dr. Smith as a mentor, and I will carry what I learned from him onwards as I advance my education.

Second, I would like to express special thanks to the participants of this study who took time out of their busy lives to take part in this research. Their selfless devotion to care for foster children is truly admirable, and I am grateful to have had this opportunity to learn about their experiences as foster parents. I hope that this work will go towards improving aspects of the foster care system so that they can continue to lovingly support Island children in need of protection.

Third, I must acknowledge Child and Family Services as a whole for supporting this research, and also specific members who went above and beyond. Alice Maund was always eager to assist me in any way that she could, and I am very appreciative of this. I would also like to extend thanks to the Recruitment and Retention Committee for graciously allowing me to attend one of their meetings, and to members of the Senior Management Team for reviewing my questionnaire and providing feedback. All of their assistance greatly enhanced my learning experience and the quality of this research.

Fourth, I would like to thank Vickie Johnston and Rona Smith for serving on my examining board. Their time and valuable feedback are much appreciated.

Finally, I would like to express profound gratitude to my family and friends who have continually encouraged me throughout my years of study and during my work on this thesis. Their willingness to listen and give advice at any time allowed me to complete this goal.

Table of Contents

Certificate of Examination	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
List of Appendices	xii
Introduction	1
Foster Care in Canada	1
History	1
Canadian foster care demographics	2
Foster Care in Prince Edward Island	3
Prince Edward Island foster care demographics	3
Child Protection Act review	4
The Importance of Caregiver Stability	5
Recruitment Strategies	7
Foster Parents	8
Influences to foster	8
Motivations to foster	9
Foster parent requirements and supports	10
Foster parent satisfactions and challenges	11
Foster parent retention	16

Theoretical basis for understanding foster parenting	18
Self-Determination Theory	18
Motivation	18
Basic psychological needs	20
Research on Self-Determination Theory	21
Connecting Self-Determination Theory to foster parenting	22
Summary of the Literature	24
Present Study	25
Method	25
Participants	25
Procedure and Materials	26
Collaboration with Child and Family Services	26
Sampling Procedure	27
Questionnaire	28
Balanced Measure of Psychological Needs	29
Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey	32
Author constructed questions	34
Results	34
Influences to Foster	34
Psychological Need Satisfaction	35
Foster Parent Satisfaction	39
Psychological Need Satisfaction and Foster Parent Satisfaction	41
Recruitment, General Satisfaction, and Retention	43

Qualitative Analysis	44
Facilitators	44
Rewarding aspects of fostering	45
Awareness of the need for foster parents	45
Strong relationships with the agency and social workers	46
Barriers	46
Poor relationships with the agency and social workers	46
Issues surrounding control	47
Inadequate financial resources	47
Additional reasons influencing retention	48
Discussion	48
Main Findings	48
Positive psychological need satisfaction levels	49
Relationships between psychological need satisfaction and practical aspects of fostering	52
Exploration of particular facilitators and barriers to foster parent recruitment and retention	56
Methodology	60
Limitations	61
Recommendations for Future Research	62
Implications for Foster Care in Prince Edward Island	63
Conclusion	66
References	68

Appendices74

List of Tables

Table 1. Influences to Start Fostering

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness Satisfaction

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Foster Parent Satisfaction Factors

Table 4. Summary of Correlations for Psychological Need Satisfaction Scores and Foster Parent Satisfaction Factors

Table 5. Likert Scale Responses to the Item “In the future, would you encourage other families to foster?”

List of Figures

Figure 1. Distribution of Scores for Autonomy Satisfaction as measured by The Balanced Measure of Psychological Needs.

Figure 2. Distribution of Scores for Competence Satisfaction as measured by The Balanced Measure of Psychological Needs.

Figure 3. Distribution of Scores for Relatedness Satisfaction as measured by The Balanced Measure of Psychological Needs.

List of Appendices

- Appendix 1. Invitation to Participate (Online and Paper Versions)
- Appendix 2. Participant Information Letter (Online and Paper Versions)
- Appendix 3. Participant Consent Form
- Appendix 4. First Reminder Email and Final Reminder Email
- Appendix 5. Questionnaire
- Appendix 6. Items Associated with Each Factor Examined in this Study
- Appendix 7. Permission to use Honours Paper

Each year, many Canadian families open their homes to provide foster care for children who need protection from their own families. According to Statistics Canada (2012), there were 47,885 children in foster care in Canada during 2011. Foster care is part of the child welfare system, which is the system responsible for ensuring that all children are living in “safe, permanent, and stable environments that support their well-being” (Hick & Stokes, 2017, p. 141). It is an out-of-home-service wherein children deemed to be in need of protection are placed in the care of substitute parents until they can safely reunite with their birth family (Strong-Boag, 2011). Foster parents provide physical care, emotional care, guidance and supervision, and act as positive role models for the children that they take into their homes (Hick & Stokes, 2017). Unfortunately, Canada is currently facing a major shortage of foster parents – reaching the point of crisis according to the president of the Canadian Foster Family Association (Bissett, 2016). To understand and ultimately ameliorate this dire situation, the facilitators and barriers in recruiting and retaining foster parents must be thoroughly examined.

Foster Care in Canada

History. To understand foster care as it is known today, it is important first to consider the history and evolution of child welfare in Canada that gave rise to this vital service. During the pre-industrial period, children were expected to work on their family farms and “generally were not seen as needing special care or nurturing” (Hick & Stokes, 2017, p. 142). John Joseph Kelso, a pioneer in child welfare, played a crucial role in shifting this perspective. Grounded in the belief that community mobilization is necessary for social change, Kelso helped found the Toronto Humane Society in 1887 which advocated against cruelty to animals and children. He also established Children’s Aid Societies throughout Ontario and several other provinces during his career (Hick & Stokes, 2017). The creation of the Children’s Aid Societies prompted the

establishment of the Ontario Children's Protection Act in 1893 – the first legislation of this nature in Canada. The Act outlined what was considered to be abuse and neglect and gave the state the ability to remove children from their homes and place them in care. Often, this care was provided in an institutional setting (Hick & Stokes, 2017). The idea of non-kin foster homes, supervised by Children's Aid Societies, also originated from the Ontario Children's Protection Act (Strong-Boag, 2011). Other provinces followed the example of Ontario and created their own Child Protection Acts, recognizing the importance of protecting children from harm (Hick & Stokes, 2017).

Following this push towards removing vulnerable children from their homes came a push in the opposite direction during the 20th century: “The idea that family care, even flawed family care, was better than institutional care, and that a natural family was better than a foster family, took hold” (Hick & Stokes, 2017, p. 145). This perspective was evident as the child welfare system began to favour prevention-oriented services over removing children from their birth family (Strong-Poag, 2011). Presently, views are much the same. There is a continued aim to keep children within their permanent family and placing children in foster care is typically a last resort that requires careful deliberation. Structured risk assessment tools are used in collaboration with the expertise of Child Protection social workers to make decisions regarding whether children are able to remain safely with their birth family or need to be placed in foster care (Hick & Stokes, 2017).

Canadian foster care demographics. Although foster care has been a part of Canadian history for quite some time, it was only in recent years that the first nationwide data-based review of foster parenting was conducted. As a part of the initiative “Every Child Matters: Strengthening Foster Families in Canada” by the Child Welfare League of Canada and the

Canadian Foster Family Association, Leschied, Rodger, Brown, den Dunnen, and Pickel (2014) carried out the most extensive review of foster parenting in Canada to date. Using the Canadian Foster Parent Survey, Leschied et al. (2014) collected data from 941 foster parents to gain a much better sense of the characteristics of Canadian foster parents and foster children. The study revealed that the average foster parent is European-Canadian, 50 years of age, has a university degree, and is married with two birth children. Further, they discovered that the average foster parent has fostered for 11 years and has provided care for 29 different foster children throughout this time. Generally, fostering is not a parent's only source of income as the majority of respondents indicated that they had a job outside of fostering (Leschied et al., 2014).

Foster Care in Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island foster care demographics. In addition to painting the first national picture of foster care, the study by Leschied et al. (2014) examined responses from the foster parents of each province and territory separately. Prince Edward Island (PEI) foster parents were found to be similar to the average Canadian foster parent, with a few notable differences. All respondents from PEI were European-Canadian and complementing national data, the majority were married with a university degree and employment aside from fostering. In comparison to national data, PEI foster parents were found to be slightly older than the typical Canadian foster parent with an average of 53 years of age, to have more birth children (3), to have fostered for a more extended period of time (12 years), and to have had more different foster children during that time (34) (Leschied et al., 2014).

As previously mentioned, the survey by Leschied et al. (2014) also gathered demographic information about foster children. They learned that most PEI foster children were adolescents or infants and that almost all foster parents had cared for children with special needs, of which

behavioral challenges were the most common (Leschied et al., 2014). The questionnaire also collected data concerning the types of maltreatment experienced by foster children. Of the sample, 92% of PEI foster parents indicated that they had provided care for neglected children, 67% reported caring for physically abused children, 58% had cared for emotionally abused children, and 25% indicated caring for children who had been sexually abused (Leschied et al., 2014). Although this study plays a significant role in helping to learn more about PEI foster parents and foster children, it should be noted that the response rate from PEI foster parents was quite low, with only 12 foster parents completing the survey. To improve generalizability, further studies about foster parenting in PEI are necessary.

Child Protection Act review. Aside from learning about the demographics of foster parents and foster children, it is also essential to learn about the opinions of foster parents toward the foster care system. In PEI, foster care is a part of Child Protection Services, and it is governed by the Child Protection Act. Every five years, a review of the Act is undertaken to ensure that it is serving in the best interests of the children that it was designed to protect (Child Protection Act Review Advisory Committee, 2016). The most recent review began in November 2015 by an advisory committee made up of 15 members who were appointed by the minister of Family and Human Services. The review process involved collecting information from citizens across PEI who are affected by the Act, including foster parents. Through the course of the review, the Child Protection Act Review Advisory Committee (2016) learned that foster care in PEI is in need of improvement. A primary concern that the committee highlighted in their report was the disproportionately low number of foster families compared to the number of children in care, with only 65 foster families on the Island and 196 children in care as of March 31st, 2016 (Child Protection Act Review Advisory Committee, 2016).

Beyond these worrisome numbers, the committee also heard about the specific challenges experienced by PEI foster parents. One area deemed to be problematic was the lack of collaboration between Child Protection workers and foster parents. The committee heard that foster parents perceive a lack of respect from the Child Protection System, demonstrated by a lack of communication and consultation with foster parents. Foster parents expressed concern about workers withholding information from them (e.g., medical information about children in their care) and not being involved in plans of care for their foster children. Foster parents also discussed feeling as though they are under too much scrutiny; one participant described feeling like they live in a glass house in their own home (Child Protection Act Review Advisory Committee, 2016). Another area of concern was cluster meetings, which are mandatory meetings for foster parents directed by Child Protection Services staff members. Because Child Protection workers are in charge of the meetings, foster parents explained that they do not feel as though they can express themselves freely during these times. Taking these concerns into consideration, the committee devised a list of specific recommendations for improving the foster care system and ultimately, PEI foster parent recruitment and retention (Child Protection Act Review Advisory Committee, 2016). The government is said to be committed to developing a five-year action plan to implement the committee's recommendations (Gillis, 2017).

The Importance of Caregiver Stability

Recruiting and retaining foster parents is essential to ensure better outcomes for children deemed to be in need of protection. Nowacki and Schoelmerich (2010) designed a study to compare attachment representations and psychological adjustment among young adults who grew up in foster homes and group homes in Germany. Much like Canadian group homes, German group homes involve several different trained caregivers supervising a small group of

children and adolescents who are placed in the home due to the unsafe conditions with their birth family (Hick & Stokes, 2017; Nowacki & Schoelmerich, 2010). In comparison to this caregiver instability caused by shift changes and job changes, children in foster care have caregivers who are much more constant. Nowacki and Schoelmerich (2010) found that the young adults who grew up in foster families were significantly more likely to show secure and resolved attachment representations compared to those who grew up in group homes who were significantly more likely to show insecure and unresolved attachment representations, as evaluated by an interviewer trained in the Adult Attachment Interview method. This finding has widespread implications as having a secure and resolved attachment representation (compared to an insecure and unresolved attachment representation) has been found to be associated with more positive social behaviour throughout life (Boyd, Johnson, & Bee, 2015; Webster & Hackett, 2007). Using the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI), Nowacki & Schoelmerich (2010) also found significantly lower levels of psychopathology among former foster children compared to the young adults who grew up in group homes, who had an average BSI score in the range indicative of psychological distress. Although the researchers cannot rule out the possibility that the two groups had pre-existing differences, the results suggest that growing up in a foster family is associated with more encouraging outcomes compared to growing up in a group home.

Research by Vanderwert, Zeanah, Fox, and Nelson (2016) also investigated caregiver stability, though their study compared brain activity among foster children with placement stability and those with placement instability. Consistent with Nowacki and Schoelmerich's (2010) finding that caregiver stability is favorable, Vanderwert et al. (2016) found that at age 12, foster children with placement stability had significantly higher EEG beta power than foster children with disrupted placements. Beta waves are high-frequency brainwaves and are

associated with better attention and cognitive performance, providing evidence that foster children with placement stability may benefit at the neural level (Vanderwert et al., 2016). Taken together, these findings suggest that it is in the best interests of children in need of protection for Child Protection Services to focus on recruitment and retention strategies in an effort to increase caregiver stability.

Recruitment Strategies

In PEI, improving foster parent recruitment has indeed become a focus for Child Protection Services, as evidenced by the recent creation of a budget for outreach strategies (A. Maund, personal communication, May 31, 2017). Every five weeks, a committee meets to strategize ways to find new foster parents while working within the annual \$1000 budget. The committee has tried various recruitment methods including regularly scheduled information sessions across the Island, having booths at popular family-oriented community events, and creating the “Be a Foster Parent” website which provides easily accessible information about foster parenting (A. Maund, personal communication, May 31, 2017; Recruitment and Retention Committee Meeting, personal communication, June 16, 2017). Interestingly, one of their most effective recruitment strategies was not an intended plan – the airing of a news story about the imminent possibility of infants being placed in group homes due to the lack of foster families. Following this broadcast, Child Protection Services received many inquiries from people interested in becoming foster parents. Although several of those who expressed interest were not suitable to become foster parents themselves, committee members believe that these people may have discussed the alarming situation with others, heightening interest across the Island (Recruitment and Retention Committee Meeting, personal communication, June 16, 2017). In order to continue increasing interest in fostering, a focus of future recruitment strategies will be

to challenge people's perceptions of who foster parents are. The committee hopes to create a short video about fostering and to feature a different foster parent each month on various social media platforms to illustrate that foster parents are a diverse group of people. By highlighting this diversity, the committee believes that others may realize that they too could become a foster parent (Recruitment and Retention Committee Meeting, personal communication, June 16, 2017).

Foster Parents

Influences to foster. To evaluate the effectiveness of various recruitment strategies, researchers have examined self-reported influences to foster. Rodger, Cummings, and Leschied (2006) surveyed a large group of foster parents in Ontario. Foster parents were asked how they learned about fostering and the most frequently cited response (by 34% of respondents) was that they knew other foster families. In relation, 12.8% of respondents indicated that they learned about fostering because they knew other foster children, and 11% responded that their parents provided foster care. Learning about fostering through various media outlets was much less frequently reported (Rodger et al., 2006). Leschied et al. (2014) also studied influences to foster and found similar results among PEI foster parents: 50% of respondents indicated that knowing an existing foster family influenced them to foster, 33% responded that they knew a child who was in need of foster care, and 17% cited that they grew up with parents who fostered.

Complementing the results from Rodger et al.'s (2006) study, media advertisements were much less likely to impact parents to begin fostering (Leschied et al., 2014). The finding from these studies that foster parents are most likely to learn about fostering through other foster parents is in line with the extant literature; according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2001), "Survey after survey shows that foster parents are the best recruiters of other foster and adoptive parents"

(p. 6). Child Protection workers in PEI also know this to be true as people who inquire about becoming foster parents most frequently reference other foster parents when asked how they learned about fostering (Recruitment and Retention Committee Meeting, personal communication, June 16, 2017). Because of this, Child Protection workers understand that it is important to keep current foster parents satisfied, in hopes that this will motivate them to encourage others to start fostering too (A. Maund, personal communication, May 31, 2017; Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2001).

Motivations to foster. Researchers exploring what impacts parents to begin fostering have also examined motivations to foster. In a study of foster parenting in Nova Scotia, Cashen (2003) found that the overwhelming majority of respondents (95.3%) endorsed becoming a foster parent to provide a home for children in need of loving parents. Similarly, Rodger et al. (2006) found that 92% of respondents had a desire to be loving parents for children in care and 89% of the sample indicated becoming a foster parent to save children from harm. It is important to note that wanting to increase income was the least commonly cited motivation, with only 6.3% endorsement (Rodger et al., 2006). Complementing these results, Leschied et al. (2014) found that the most common motivations to foster among PEI foster parents were to be loving parents, to save children, and to care for children again once their own family had grown. In a qualitative study of Ontario foster parents, MacGregor, Rodger, Cummings, and Leschied (2006) also heard parents explain that they began fostering out of a desire to help children in need, and because they wanted to have children in the home after their biological children had grown up. Foster parents also discussed beginning fostering to provide a beneficial learning experience for their biological children, and because they were seeking a route to adoption (MacGregor et al., 2006).

Foster parent requirements and supports. Along with learning about foster care and being motivated to care for children in need, parents must meet several requirements before being approved to foster. Because there is no national child welfare system, each province and territory assumes the responsibility for regulating its own foster parent requirements (Hick & Stokes, 2017). As previously mentioned, Child Protection Services oversees foster care in PEI, and so they are responsible for creating the guidelines and screening potential foster parents. To apply for fostering in PEI, one must be at least 21 years of age, have lived in PEI for the past six months with plans to continue living on the Island for at least two years, and be “financially stable with adequate housing and a private bedroom” for the foster child (Government of Prince Edward Island, 2015, para. 2). Potential foster parents must also undergo a criminal record check and a Child Protection record check (Government of Prince Edward Island, 2015). In addition to these basic requirements, Child Protection Services conducts a more in-depth assessment of each family interested. “The Foster Family Assessment Report Guide” (n.d.) allows workers to evaluate “whether or not the given family has the skills, experiences, and aptitudes essential for successful fostering” (p. 1). If a family satisfies these requirements and receives approval for a placement following the assessment, parents are then required to attend a foster parent preparation group before taking in any children (A. Maund, personal communication, May 31, 2017). Next, a placement is arranged, and parents receive information about the child to ensure that it is a suitable match. Importantly, any confidential information that parents receive about the foster child or their birth family is forbidden from being shared with others (Government of Prince Edward Island, 2015).

In exchange for their services, foster parents receive monthly compensation “determined by taking the foster child’s needs and level of care that will be provided into consideration”

(Government of Prince Edward Island, 2015, para. 6). Financial support is coupled with support from social workers; each foster home is assigned a resource social worker and each foster child has a Child Protection social worker (A. Maund, personal communication, May 31, 2017; Government of Prince Edward Island, 2015). Foster parents also receive support from other foster parents during the monthly cluster meetings held across the Island. While providing a source of peer support, these mandatory meetings also give Child Protection workers the opportunity to train foster parents further and to update them on any changes regarding policies and practices (Government of Prince Edward Island, 2015). On an annual basis, foster parents also attend the Foster Care Spring Symposium and the Fall Foster Care College which involve experts speaking about different topics (e.g., parenting strategies, medical issues) (A. Maund, personal communication, May 31, 2017). Although these supports are in place, that is not to say that all foster parents agree that they are sufficient. Some parents believe that the financial compensation for fostering is not adequate (Recruitment and Retention Committee Meeting, June 16, 2017), and some parents are also asking for a formalized mentorship program to be established (A. Maund, personal communication, May 31, 2017).

Foster parent satisfaction and challenges. Foster parenting, although a rewarding experience for many, is not without its challenges. A focus of foster parenting research has been foster parent satisfaction, which is inextricably tied to foster parent challenges. To gain a general sense of foster parent satisfaction, Cashen (2003) had foster parents from Nova Scotia rate their level of satisfaction. Of the sample, 42.8% rated being "very satisfied " and 43.7% rated being "satisfied" with their experience of fostering. Leschied et al. (2014) also measured foster parent satisfaction, using a scale developed based on previous research. The scale, "Your Experience of Fostering", allows for a measurement of general satisfaction and also of satisfaction pertaining to

five separate factors: “Perceptions about Agency and Child Workers”, “Challenging Aspects of Fostering”, “Confidence and Satisfaction”, “Training”, and “Working Together” (previously titled “Perceptions About Foster Home Support Workers”) (Leschied et al., 2014, pp. 64-65; Rodger et al., 2006, p. 1137). In general, PEI foster parents were found to be moderately satisfied with their experiences fostering (Mean = 5.14, SD = .80, on a 7-point scale). Among the identified factors, they reported high confidence in their abilities as a foster parent, moderate satisfaction with agency workers and training, and lower satisfaction with “how the challenging aspects of fostering are resolved and dealt with” (Leschied et al., 2014, p. 140). Other researchers have also conducted studies that relate to these factors. Specifically, aspects of foster parent confidence, satisfaction with training, and satisfaction with agency workers have garnered attention.

In relation to foster parent confidence, Cooley and Petren (2011) studied foster parent perceptions of competency. Using a mixed-methods study with 20 foster parents in Florida, they measured perceived competence in 12 domains that are typically emphasized during pre-service training and are “essential to successful foster parenting” (Cooley & Petren, 2011, p. 1969). Examples of the domains, first outlined by Buehler, Rhodes, Orme, and Cuddeback (2006), included “providing a nurturing environment”, “promoting social and emotional success”, “growing as a foster parent”, and “managing the demands of fostering on personal and familial well-being” (p. 523). Quantitative results revealed that foster parents reported high confidence levels in the majority of the competence domains, with an overall mean score of 3.55 (SD = .68) on a 4-point Likert scale. Similarly, Cashen (2003) found that the majority of foster parents surveyed endorsed feeling competent to deal with their foster child’s behaviour. Child Protection workers may have different opinions of foster parents’ competence levels, though. During focus

groups, MacGregor et al. (2006) heard many foster parents discuss not feeling recognized or respected by workers to do their job competently. This disparity between foster parents' self-perceptions and agency perceptions of foster parents highlights that foster parent competency is a complex matter. To understand this topic further, the influence of training must also be taken into consideration.

Cooley and Petren (2011) explored the relationship between feelings of competency and satisfaction with training and found a discrepancy between foster parents' high perceived competence in the quantitative portion of the study and their "requests or frustrations for more training, information, and support" (p. 1971) in the qualitative portion of the study. For example, foster parents reported wanting more "real life" examples during training, to have experienced foster parents help lead the sessions, and to have a training guide for use after pre-service training (Cooley & Petren, 2011). Foster parents in PEI have also been requesting a training handbook, suggesting that it is a common desire among those who foster (A. Maund, personal communication, May 31, 2017). In line with these findings, foster parents in Cashen's (2003) study reported feeling that training was inadequate. MacGregor et al. (2006) found contrasting results in their sample of Ontario foster parents though; most of the focus groups felt that they received excellent training. However, the groups did still suggest that training could be improved by having experienced foster parents helping to direct training sessions and individualized training for specific needs of children (e.g., abuse). Interestingly, aspects of training in PEI satisfy both of these suggestions; Island foster parents receive specialized training known as Trauma Informed Care, and this training is led by foster parents (A. Maund, personal communication, May 31, 2017). In the opinion of a youth worker who works alongside foster parents, Trauma Informed Care helps to increase feelings of competency as it provides both

parents and workers with a universal vocabulary (Recruitment and Retention Committee Meeting, personal communication, June 16, 2017). Whether foster parents feel that their training is inadequate or excellent, one thing that can be agreed upon is the importance of this service. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2001) explains that pre-service training is essential as it allows foster parents to become motivated, and it is the first step in developing a strong relationship with the agency and its social workers.

Research consistently shows that positive relationships between foster parents and Child Protection workers are important to ensure foster parent satisfaction. In fact, Rodger et al. (2006) used factor analysis to study associations among items in the Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey originally developed by Denby, Rindfleish, and Bean (1999) and found that the factor “Perceptions About Agency and Child Workers” accounted for the most variance in foster parent satisfaction. This factor included items relating to teamwork and communication between foster parents and social workers, thus showing the power of strong collaboration (Rodger et al., 2006). Similarly, MacGregor et al. (2006) heard parents discuss the importance of positive relationships with agency workers. Parents mentioned that having their phone calls returned on time, support for their opinions, and “open, honest communication” (p. 359) from agency workers makes them feel supported. Unfortunately, these ideal conditions do not always occur. Parents reported that often, workers do not share information or consult with them when making decisions about children in their care. This situation leads parents to feel mistrusted and creates a vicious cycle wherein parents do not feel comfortable approaching workers should they have a problem. Some parents even said that these feelings of mistrust from agency workers were the reason why they did not encourage others to become foster parents (MacGregor et al., 2006). As previously mentioned, the Child Protection Act Review Advisory Committee (2016) heard similar concerns

from PEI foster parents in regards to the lack of communication and consultation that they experience. Cashen (2003) also examined these topics and found that less than half (47%) of the foster parents surveyed reported having a good relationship with agency workers. Diving into more specific correlates of agency relationships, 69% of the 341 Nova Scotia foster parents endorsed feeling “confident they could contact the agency for support and encouragement any time”, 61% felt encouraged to express their opinions, and 63% felt respected by social workers and treated fairly by the agency (Cashen, 2003, p. 144). Although these percentages do encompass the majority of respondents, they certainly illustrate that there is much room for improvement in terms of building strong relationships between foster parents and Child Protection workers.

One issue that may be hindering relationships between foster parents and agency workers is that of control. According to Wayne MacFarlane, president of the PEI Federation of Foster Families, “It has always been that the department has 100% control and the foster parent has 0% control” (Recruitment and Retention Committee Meeting, personal communication, June 16, 2017). He believes that this power imbalance leads foster parents to feel frustrated with the Child Protection System, though he did acknowledge that this situation has started to improve. Geiger, Hayes, and Lietz (2013) also found that a perceived lack of control is associated with foster parent dissatisfaction. Their study explored the reasons that influence foster parents’ desire to continue or discontinue fostering, and parents explained that when they do not feel as though they are team members with Child Protection workers, they are left feeling helpless. Further, parents detailed that these feelings of not having any power or control were the primary reason why they wanted to discontinue fostering. These findings were also corroborated with results from the quantitative portion of the study. Using a measure of locus of control, researchers found

that a higher external locus of control, or in other words feeling less personal control in fostering, was a significant predictor of increased likelihood to discontinue fostering (Geiger et al., 2013).

Foster parent retention. The perception of control is only one of the many factors that influence foster parents' intent to discontinue fostering. Numerous researchers have studied foster parent retention as it is a primary area of concern for Child Protection Services (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2001). Unsurprisingly, factors previously identified as being implicated in foster parent satisfaction are also tied to retention. One of those factors is poor relationships with Child Protection Services. Brown and Calder (1999) asked current foster parents what would make them consider stopping foster parenting and many parents discussed poor communication of information, the department breaking promises, and not being involved in a plan of care for their foster child. Cashen's (2003) study involved parents who had actually discontinued fostering and in line with Brown and Calder's (1999) findings, the most commonly cited reason for discontinuation was a lack of support from the agency. Parents in Geiger et al.'s (2013) study spoke about experiencing a lack of support from the agency as well. When asked why they were choosing to discontinue fostering, foster parents discussed not feeling respected or recognized by agency workers, a lack of emotional support from workers during transitions, high staff turnover, and poor communication (Geiger et al., 2013). Rodger et al. (2006) also found that problems with workers and agency red tape were most predictive of parents considering quitting. Likewise, Leschied et al. (2014) found that one of the top reasons why PEI parents considered quitting was because of agency red tape. Taken together, it is evident that problematic relationships between foster parents and Child Protection Services can negatively impact foster parent retention.

It should also be noted that problems with Child Protection Services are not the sole reason why foster parents choose to discontinue. As Brown and Calder (1999) discovered, parents may consider stopping foster parenting due to personal issues such as emotional problems, medical problems, stress, and fatigue. Finances also must be taken into consideration; the reimbursement that parents receive often does not cover the costs of taking care of the foster child, so it can be challenging for some to continue fostering even if they want to (Geiger, 2013; Recruitment and Retention Committee Meeting, personal communication, June 16, 2017). Additionally, struggling to manage a foster child's behaviour may lead parents to discontinue fostering (Brown & Calder, 1999, Leschied et al. 2014; Rodger et al., 2006). In PEI, a Child Protection worker noted that increasing age is another typical reason why foster parents choose to end their services (Recruitment and Retention Committee Meeting, personal communication, June 16, 2017).

Although it is important to consider the various reasons why parents discontinue fostering, a review of the literature surrounding retention is not complete without also exploring the reasons why parents continue fostering. Geiger et al.'s (2013) study examined this aspect of retention and found that higher levels of satisfaction and having a two-parent household (compared to a single-parent household) were significant predictors of being more likely to continue. Moreover, thematic analysis of responses to open-ended questions revealed intrinsic motivation and rewards to be the primary reasons why parents continue fostering. This theme included statements about loving relationships, having a sense of responsibility to continue, and making a difference in children's lives (Geiger et al., 2013). Strong agency relationships are another factor that can promote retention. Respondent's to Cashen's (2003) survey explained that having more supportive agency relationships would improve their desire to continue foster

parenting. In line with these statements, Rodger et al. (2006) found that parents who had not considered quitting were more likely to report having positive relationships with Child Protection workers.

Theoretical basis for understanding foster parenting. The reviewed research suggests that there are several factors that significantly influence the experience of fostering. Foster parent relationships with Child Protection workers, perceptions of competency, and perceptions of control can either facilitate or hinder foster parent satisfaction and retention. Interestingly, a theory of motivation has components that encompass each of these factors, appearing to provide a theoretical basis for the themes discovered in the literature. Self-Determination Theory (SDT), posited by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, suggests that motivation in any given context is influenced by the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: the need to feel connected to others, the need to feel competent, and the need to feel control over one's choices (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Because these three needs align with factors that influence foster parent satisfaction and retention, a more thorough explanation of motivation and the components of SDT is required.

Self-Determination Theory

Motivation. In brief, motivation is “what “moves” people to action” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 13). SDT differentiates types of motivation along a continuum of self-determined activity, from amotivation to extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Whereas amotivation simply means the absence of motivation, extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation can be described in terms of their level of autonomy versus control, with autonomously motivated behaviours being more self-determined (Ryan & Deci, 2017). When someone's behaviour is autonomously motivated, they are fully engaged in the behaviour. Intrinsically motivated behaviours, which are performed out of pure interest, are autonomous by

definition. Simply engaging in an intrinsically motivated behaviour is rewarding. According to SDT though, only some intentional actions are intrinsically motivated and truly autonomous – the rest are governed by extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Extrinsically motivated behaviours are driven by consequences separable from the behaviour itself. These consequences may include obtaining a reward or social approval, avoiding punishment, or reaching some other valued outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Moreover, different types of consequences are associated with different types of extrinsic motivation, each varying in their degree of autonomy versus control (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The most controlled form of extrinsic motivation is external regulation. Externally regulated motivation is apparent when a behaviour is completely controlled by external forces, such as rewards and punishments. Introjected regulation, a slightly less controlled form of extrinsic motivation, occurs when a “person has taken in but not fully accepted external controls” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 14). When someone’s behaviour is controlled by this type of regulation, their actions are motivated by guilt, shame, fear of disapproval, or ego enhancement. Becoming more autonomous in nature, identified regulation involves identifying with, and accepting the value of an extrinsic behavior. Finally, the most autonomous type of extrinsic motivation is integrated regulation wherein a behaviour becomes intertwined with other values and beliefs that someone holds (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT proposes that more autonomously motivated behaviours are associated with greater persistence and better performance (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Behaviours may become more autonomously motivated through the process of internalization. According to SDT, humans have a natural tendency towards internalization and this can be facilitated or impeded by the social conditions in which a behaviour occurs. Specifically, environments must satisfy the three basic

psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) to promote and sustain optimal motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Basic psychological needs. The idea that human beings have three basic psychological needs is central to SDT. Psychological needs can be defined as “innate psychological nutriments that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity, and well-being” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 229). According to SDT, these necessary nutriments are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The need for autonomy refers to “the need to self-regulate one’s experiences and actions” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 10). Environments that provide the opportunity to make choices for oneself support autonomy, whereas demanding and controlling conditions diminish autonomy satisfaction. Competence refers to one’s perceived ability to complete tasks effectively. Structure and positive feedback can support the need for competence. Conversely, overly challenging and inconsistent environments hinder competence satisfaction. A growing body of research shows that support for competence and autonomy facilitates intrinsic motivation, whereas a lack of support for these two needs undermines intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

The final psychological need is for relatedness. This can be described as the need to feel connected to others, to contribute to others, and to feel like an important member of social groups. Relatedness can be satisfied through developing and maintaining positive relationships. Naturally, impersonal or rejecting social conditions inhibit relatedness satisfaction. (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In relation to motivation, Ryan & Deci (2017) advise that feelings of relatedness are most influential in the internalization of extrinsic motivation (i.e., moving from external regulation towards integrated regulation). Without supports for autonomy and competence though, “the internalization will not become fully integrated and volitionally persistent” (Ryan &

Deci, 2017, p. 17). This assertion reveals the relationship between the three needs; although each of the needs function separately, they are also interdependent and “combine additively to influence outcomes” (Sheldon & Hilpert, 2012, p. 441). Because of this relationship, it is important to fulfill each of the needs. According to Ryan and Deci (2017), if any one of the three needs is not satisfied “within a given domain or in a given period in one’s life, specifiable experiential and functional costs within that domain or in that life phase are to be expected” (p. 93). Specifically, thwarted need satisfaction can make people more likely to become “self-focused, defensive, amotivated, aggressive, and antisocial” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 9).

Research on Self-Determination Theory. Research on SDT has been conducted in many different contexts, including in workplaces and volunteer settings (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Cashen (2003) discovered that foster parents may identify as working professionals or volunteers, and so the findings from both settings are relevant and necessitate attention. Deci et al. (2001) examined this topic and found that greater workplace autonomy, competence, and relatedness satisfaction was associated with greater engagement at work and improved well-being on the job, among both Bulgarian and American workers. Baard, Deci, and Ryan (2004) also studied the influence of workplace need satisfaction on well-being and found that higher levels of need satisfaction correlated with enhanced vitality and lower anxiety and somatization among workers. Ryan, Bernstein, and Brown (2010) studied this area too and found that workers experienced fluctuations in levels of need satisfaction and that these changes correlated with changes in wellness. Specifically, workers experienced enhanced wellness on weekends, which is also when they had increased levels of autonomy and relatedness satisfaction. This finding draws attention to one of the challenges of fostering; because foster parenting is said to be a 24-hour job, parents do not truly have a weekend as workers in many other jobs do (Recruitment

and Retention Committee Meeting, personal communication, June 16, 2017). This difference may have ramifications for foster parent well-being.

Along with influencing wellness, need satisfaction has been found to relate to the retention of workers. Among volunteer workers at an animal shelter, Gagné (2003) found that psychological need satisfaction mediated the relationship between greater autonomy support and lower turn-over. Similarly, in a sample of Canadian police officers, Otis and Pelletier (2005) found that those who perceived more autonomy support from their immediate supervisors had enhanced autonomous motivation for work and greater intentions to continue in their jobs. Taken together, these findings emphasize the far-reaching impact that psychological need satisfaction can have on the satisfaction and motivation of workers. Moreover, this growing body of research relating SDT to workplaces and volunteer settings provides support for applying SDT to aspects of foster parenting.

Connecting Self-Determination Theory to foster parenting. Noticing the overlap between the factors known to influence a foster parent's intent to continue fostering and SDT, Watson (2016) designed a study to determine if SDT could help to explain foster parent retention. In the only known study of this nature, licensed and no longer licensed foster parents in the state of Arizona were invited to complete a questionnaire assessing their retention status and their psychological need satisfaction. Retention status fell into one of three categories: intending to continue for six months or more, intending to discontinue in less than six months, and discontinued. Foster parents' satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness were measured using the Balanced Measure of Psychological Needs (BMPN). This scale was developed by Sheldon and Gunz (2009) and consists of 18 items that give a mean score for each need ranging from -24 to +24.

The study collected data from a large sample, with 524 foster parents completing the questionnaire. Of that group, 24.2% had discontinued fostering, 15.7% intended to discontinue within six months, and 60.1% intended to continue. A noteworthy characteristic of the sample was that 69.5% reported not attending a support group. Results from the BMPN revealed that as a whole, foster parents' sense of autonomy was the least satisfied (Mean = -1.38, SD = 7.28), followed by relatedness (Mean = 3.47, SD = 7.51), and finally, competence was the most satisfied (Mean = 7.94, SD = 6.60). In line with Watson's (2016) hypothesis that different retention groups would differ in terms of their perceived need satisfaction, it was found that retained foster parents had significantly higher perceived autonomy and relatedness satisfaction than foster parents who planned to discontinue within six months or who had already discontinued. This is consistent with SDT's suggestion that those with higher need satisfaction will be more likely to persist in their endeavours (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Contrary to Watson's (2016) hypothesis though, parents who differed in terms of retention status did not differ significantly in terms of their perceived competence. Although this finding was unexpected, it can be reconciled with Deci and Ryan's (2000) belief that each of the needs function individually, though in a compound manner, to influence motivation. In discussing the matter, Watson (2016) speculated that foster parents may have certain expectations of their competency as parents in general which may have led to the nonsignificant difference between groups. However, "only additional research can resolve the reasoning behind responses to the competence component" (Watson, 2016, p. 175). In acknowledgement of Watson's (2016) assertion that "this research has established that SDT is an appropriate theoretical lens through which to consider [foster parent] retention" (p. 162), further studies in this area will certainly be important for better understanding aspects of foster parenting. She recommends that future work

should pay particular attention to foster parent competence and should also examine need satisfaction among foster parents who attend a support group, given that the majority of the parents in her sample did not.

Summary of the Literature

To summarize the reviewed literature, Canada as a whole, and PEI in particular, are currently facing a shortage of foster parents (Bissett, 2016; Child Protection Act Review Advisory Committee, 2016). This situation is problematic because research has shown that caregiver stability is important for ensuring favorable outcomes for children in care. Not only does the provision of caregiver stability require children in care to be placed with foster parents as opposed to being placed in a group setting, but it also requires that these children have placement stability within the foster care system (Nowacki & Schoelmerich, 2010; Vanderwert et al., 2016). In other words, it is necessary both to recruit new foster parents and to retain current foster parents. According to the extant literature, current foster parents are the best recruiters of new foster parents and because of this, it is important to focus on keeping current foster parents satisfied (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2001). Research also shows that foster parent retention is greatly influenced by a variety of factors related to foster parent satisfaction, including foster parent relationships with Child Protection workers, perceptions of competency, and perceptions of control (Brown & Calder, 1999; Cashen, 2003; Cooley & Petren, 2011; Geiger et al., 2013; Leschied et al., 2014; MacGregor et al., 2006; Recruitment and Retention Committee Meeting, personal communication, June 16, 2017; Rodger et al., 2006). These factors each happen to have a place in SDT, a theory of motivation that suggests that all humans have an innate need to experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their environments. The satisfaction of these three basic psychological needs is associated with perseverance in any given

activity, whereas a lack of satisfaction is associated with decreased motivation to continue (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). With the aim of investigating whether SDT could, in fact, help to explain foster parent retention, Watson (2016) carried out a study that compared foster parent psychological need satisfaction with retention status. She discovered that parents who intended to continue fostering had greater autonomy and relatedness satisfaction than parents who intended to discontinue or who had already discontinued, providing evidence for the applicability of SDT in understanding aspects of foster parenting.

Present Study

To gain a deeper understanding of the facilitators and barriers in recruiting and retaining foster parents in PEI, the purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between psychological need satisfaction and foster parenting through exploration of the following research questions:

- 1) What are the basic psychological need satisfaction levels of foster parents in PEI?
- 2) How do foster parent basic psychological need satisfaction levels relate to general satisfaction with fostering?
- 3) How do foster parent basic psychological need satisfaction levels relate to the recruitment and retention of foster parents in PEI?

Method

Participants

All Regular foster families in PEI were invited to take part in a study about foster parent satisfactions and challenges. Kinship foster families were excluded from the study as kinship foster care is a specialized case wherein a child is deemed to be in need of protection by the Director of Child Protection, but family members step in to provide care for a child who is

related to them (Child Protection Act Review Advisory Committee, 2016). They are expected to discontinue fostering when the needs of that extended family member are met, and thus their experiences of recruitment and retention are distinct from Regular foster homes wherein foster parents care for children unrelated to them. Further, at the time that the research proposal was developed, there were only seven kinship foster homes in PEI which were too few for a meaningful, separate, quantitative analysis.

The majority of the foster parents who participated in the study were female ($n = 25$, 75.8%). Participants ranged in age from 27 to 72, with an average of 51.70 years ($SD = 12.56$). The average number of years spent fostering was 9.29 ($SD = 8.86$), with a minimum of 0.3 years and a maximum of 30 years. Participants had fostered between 0 and 180 foster children ($M = 26.48$, $SD = 38.31$). Foster home level classification information was also collected. Two respondents held a Regular Level 0 classification, six were Regular Level 1, 10 were Regular Level 2, seven were Regular Level 3, three were Respite Only Level 0, one was Respite Only Level 1, and one participant did not provide her level classification.

Procedure and Materials

Collaboration with Child and Family Services. The present study was developed through extensive collaboration with Child and Family Services in PEI. The relationship with the department began in April 2017 when Rona Smith, Director of Child and Family Services, was contacted by Dr. Philip Smith to ascertain whether the department would be interested in having an Honours student conduct research in the area of foster parenting. The inquiry was met with a resounding "yes," and Rona Smith contacted Maureen MacEwan, Provincial Coordinator of Child Protection Services, to set up a contact person from the foster care program. Alice Maund, a Resource Supervisor, agreed to be the contact person and on May 31st, 2017 a meeting was

held with Maund to learn about the recruitment and retention of foster parents in PEI.

Subsequently, there was an opportunity to continue learning about these aspects of foster care by attending a foster parent recruitment and retention committee meeting on June 16th, 2017.

Ongoing communication with Maund occurred throughout the process of drafting the research proposal to ensure that the study was relevant and appropriate to foster parenting in PEI.

The research proposal was approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) on August 28th, 2017. Following this approval, the Child and Family Services Senior Management Team reviewed the final survey instrument and had the opportunity to suggest any changes. All suggestions were taken into consideration and slight modifications were made. The revised instrument received continued approval from the UPEI Research Ethics Board.

Sampling procedure. Following approval from the Research Ethics Board at UPEI and the Child and Family Services Senior Management Team, all current Regular foster families were invited by Child and Family Services to participate in the study. Recruitment began at the annual Foster Care Fall College, a mandatory event for foster parents in PEI. During this event, the department's Communications Officer advertised and briefly explained the study. Next, foster families were contacted individually on October 4th, 2017 by a Resource Administration Assistant for the department. Contact occurred through both email and regular mail and included an invitation to participate (see Appendix 1), a participant information letter (see Appendix 2), a participant consent form (see Appendix 3), and a link to access an online questionnaire (email) or a paper questionnaire (mail). The mailed version also included an envelope with return postage addressed to Selynn Butler and Dr. Philip Smith at UPEI so that the questionnaire could be returned with ease. The invitation to participate asked for one response per foster home and

participants were able to choose whether they would prefer to complete the online version of the questionnaire, via the program LimeSurvey, or the paper version. A first reminder email was sent to all potential participants on October 11th and a second reminder email was sent on October 18th (see Appendix 4). Finally, Child Protection Services staff members reminded parents of the opportunity to participate in the study during cluster meetings held across the Island during the last week of October and the first week of November. The survey closed November 22nd, at which time analysis of the results began.

Participants were assured of their anonymity in the information letter and consent form; because Child and Family Services distributed the questionnaire, we did not have access to the list of foster parents. Foster parents were also guaranteed that it would not be possible for anyone to identify who did participate and who did not. Moreover, the questionnaire did not collect any identifying information, further ensuring participant anonymity.

The total number of Regular foster families as of September 2017 was 70 (L. Moore, personal communication, September 29th, 2017). Out of the families contacted, 34 responses were received. One wrote that she was a foster home support worker and not a foster parent, and so her data were excluded. This resulted in a final sample of 33 participants, and a response rate of 47.1%

Questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 78 questions, requiring approximately 25 minutes to complete. The majority of the questions were Likert scale, with four questions allowing for open-ended responses. Participants first responded to a series of demographic questions relevant to foster parenting: the number of years they have fostered, the number of children they have fostered, their foster home level classification, their sex, and their age. Next, parents were asked what prompted them to contact Child Protection Services to inquire about

becoming a foster parent, using a list of “yes” or “no” options adapted from the Canadian Foster Parent Survey by Leschied et al. (2014). Adaptions included adding the option "Encouraged by other foster families" and removing the item "Billboard advertisement." The remainder of the questionnaire was created by joining an adapted version of the BMPN, developed by Sheldon and Gunz (2009) and used by Watson (2016), with an adapted version of the Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey created by Denby et al. (1999) and used by Leschied et al. (2014) in their Canadian Foster Parent Survey. The remaining questions, including the open-ended questions, were author constructed and specific to recruitment, satisfaction, and retention. See Appendix 5 for the complete questionnaire.

Balanced Measure of Psychological Needs. The BMPN is a measure of psychological need satisfaction consisting of 18 items. Six items measure autonomy, or the ability to make choices for oneself, six items measure competence, or sense of effectiveness, and six items measure relatedness, or sense of connectedness to others (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Sheldon & Hilpert, 2012). Each need is measured by three positively worded statements and three negatively worded statements, forming a “balanced” scale. The positively worded statements in the BMPN were “derived from theoretical analysis and pilot work” (p. 328), traced to a study by Sheldon, Elliot, Kim, and Kasser (2001) that examined 10 different psychological needs proposed by different theories, including SDT. The researchers sought to determine which of the 10 proposed needs were most involved in self-reports of "most satisfying events," with the belief that psychological needs that are truly fundamental should accompany such events. To examine the needs, researchers had students describe their single most satisfying event from the past week, month, or semester and then respond to 30 positively worded statements about the event that related to need satisfaction (three items for each need). In support of SDT, Sheldon et al.

(2001) discovered that autonomy, competence, and relatedness were consistently among the top four needs implicated in "most satisfying events." The items used to measure autonomy, competence, and relatedness (nine in total) form half of the BMPN. The other half of the measure was developed by Sheldon and Gunz (2009) in a study that examined whether unmet psychological need satisfaction would motivate people to make changes to satisfy the unmet need. In this exploration, Sheldon and Gunz (2009) had students respond to the nine positively worded items measuring autonomy, competence, and relatedness that were used by Sheldon et al. (2001) and then they added nine negatively worded items so that they could examine need satisfaction and dissatisfaction separately. Together, the 18 items make up the BMPN. Scoring involves adding a satisfaction and dissatisfaction score for each need and then subtracting the dissatisfaction score from the satisfaction score to give an overall score for each need (Sheldon & Hilpert, 2012).

Researchers have discovered that the BMPN is a better measure of psychological need satisfaction compared to the Basic Psychological Needs Scale (BPNS), "the most widely used need-satisfaction measure" (Sheldon & Hilpert, 2012, p. 439). Referencing work by Johnston and Finney (2010) that found problems with the BPNS, Sheldon and Hilpert (2012) decided to assess and compare the BMPN as an alternate measure of psychological need satisfaction. They had 324 undergraduates complete the BPNS and the BMPN to evaluate the reliability and validity of each and to determine whether the BMPN was an improvement. A 5-point Likert scale was used, in which participants were asked to think about how true each statement was to them, with answer choices ranging from "no agreement" to "much agreement" (Sheldon & Hilpert, 2012, p. 442). They also had the participants complete a measure of subjective well-being to assess predictive validity. Reliability was measured with Cronbach's alpha and was

found to be .71 and .85 for positively and negatively worded relatedness, .71 and .70 for positively and negatively worded competence, and .69 and .72 for positively and negatively worded autonomy. After reverse scoring the negatively worded statements, the reliabilities for autonomy, competence, and relatedness were found to be .78, .79, and .78, respectively (Sheldon & Hilpert, 2012). In comparison, the BPNS had a problematic alpha coefficient of .46 for negatively worded autonomy. The study also examined inter-correlations of the three needs and found that the BMPN had more unique variance for each need (.46, .48, and .49 for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, respectively) than the BPNS. Moreover, Sheldon and Hilpert (2012) found evidence that the BMPN had improved construct validity compared to the BPNS. This improvement was determined through confirmatory factor analysis which examined each of the three needs and the two methods (satisfaction and dissatisfaction) as five latent factors. They found convergent and discriminant validity for each of the three needs and both methods of the BMPN, whereas the BPNS had problematic construct validity. For the BPNS, there was no significant difference in a model that did not distinguish between three separate need variables and one that did (as SDT specifies), and they did not find discriminant validity for the methods. In regards to predictive validity, Sheldon and Hilpert (2012) found that each of the need satisfaction variables measured by the BMPN had a significant and positive relationship with subjective well-being, in line with research that suggests that this should be the case (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon, Cheng, & Hilpert, 2011, Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon et al., 2001). Contradicting the extant literature, relatedness satisfaction was not found to be a significant predictor of subjective well-being for the BPNS. Moreover, the BMPN could explain more of the variance in subjective well-being than the BPNS could, showing

evidence of improved predictive validity. Taken together, these findings provide support for using the BMPN as a measure of psychological need satisfaction, compared to the BPNS.

In acknowledgement of the results of their study, Sheldon and Hilpert (2012) recommended that future researchers use the BMPN as three separate subscales of autonomy, competence and relatedness satisfaction, and that item wording can be modified slightly to fit a particular context instead of general life satisfaction. This recommendation was followed by Watson (2016), as participants in her study were asked to respond to each of the items while thinking about their experiences as a foster parent. She had the foster parents rate the statements using an 8-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (absolutely disagree) to 8 (absolutely agree), “in order to allow the data to be considered continuous for the purpose of its analysis with the selected statistical tests” (Lund Research Ltd., 2013; Watson, 2016, pp. 77-78). To allow for comparison between Watson’s (2016) findings and results from the present study, PEI foster parents were also asked to rate the statements using the same 8-point Likert scale, while answering each question as it pertained to their role as a foster parent.

Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey. The next part of the questionnaire consisted of items that focused on foster parent satisfaction. The 45 items were developed by Denby et al. (1999) to create the Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey. The items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree), with higher scores indicating increased satisfaction. Rodger et al. (2006) conducted a factor analysis for the measure using a large sample of foster parents in Ontario, and they found five factors that accounted for 34.7% of the variance in satisfaction with fostering. The first factor, "Perceptions About Agency and Child Workers," includes 14 items that relate to foster parents' satisfaction with their relationships with agency workers and child workers ($\alpha = .89$). The items focus on communication, being treated

like a team member, and respect from workers. The second factor, “Challenging Aspects of Fostering” consists of 13 items that measure “satisfaction with how the challenging aspects of fostering are resolved and dealt with” ($\alpha = .95$) (Leschied et al., 2014, p. 140). For example, conflict with workers, financial compensation, agency red tape, the fear of having an allegation of abuse or neglect, and dealing with a foster child’s difficult behaviour are all covered within this factor. The third factor found was “Perceptions About Foster Home Support Workers” ($\alpha = .88$). It is made up of four items, similar to items in the first factor, which focus on foster parents' satisfaction with their relationships with foster home support workers ($\alpha = .88$). The fourth factor is "Confidence and Satisfaction" and includes four items relating to foster parents' satisfaction with the type of children that the agency places in their care, feelings of competence, whether parents regret their decision to foster, and noticing positive changes in foster children (Cronbach's alpha = .73). The final factor, "Training," consists of four items that pertain to satisfaction with foster care training ($\alpha = .72$). With each factor demonstrating acceptable reliability, Rodger et al. (2006) recommended the use of these factors for future analyses.

Leschied et al. (2014) used an adapted version of Denby et al.'s (1999) Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey in their national survey of foster care in Canada and analyzed the results according to the factors recommended by Rodger et al. (2006). To allow for comparison, participants in the present study were asked to respond to an adapted version of the items used by Leschied et al. (2014). Adaptions to the measure were made following recommendations from the Child and Family Services Senior Management Team and involved changes to language (e.g., changing “agency worker” and “supervising worker” to “social worker”, “boarding rates” to “room and board rates”, and “biological parents” to “birth parents”) to ensure that the wording was most relevant to foster care in PEI. Changing the items to refer to social workers in general,

instead of specifying which social worker to think of when responding, made items in the third factor, "Perceptions About Foster Home Support Workers," the same as items in the first factor "Perceptions About Agency and Child Workers." Therefore, only the first factor was examined in this study, becoming "Perceptions About Social Workers." See Appendix 6 for a list of the items associated with each factor examined in this study.

Author constructed questions. The last section of the questionnaire consisted of a series of items created in collaboration with my supervisor. Items 70, 71, 74, 75, and 76 examined likelihood to encourage other families to foster (both in the past and in the future). Items 72 and 73 explored general satisfaction with fostering. Finally, items 77 and 78 were about retention. Participants were given the opportunity to provide open-ended responses in this section.

Results

Influences to Foster

Descriptive statistics were used to examine what prompted foster parents to contact Child Protection Services to inquire about fostering. Of the nine options, "other" was the most common response, with endorsement by 19 parents (57.6%). The responses "encouraged by other foster families" and "know other foster children" were the next most frequently cited responses, by eight parents (24.2%) and seven parents (21.2%), respectively. As a reminder, parents were able to choose "yes" for more than one option. See Table 1 for full responses.

Table 1

Influences to Start Fostering

Influences	No. of respondents out of 33	% of respondents
Television advertisement	0	0.0%
Radio advertisement	1	3.0%
Newspaper advertisement or article	6	18.2%
Information on the internet	2	6.1%
Parents fostered	3	9.1%
Encouraged by other foster families	8	24.2%
Know other foster children	7	21.2%
Was in care myself	2	6.1%
Other	19	57.6%

Psychological Need Satisfaction

Participants' autonomy, competence, and relatedness satisfaction were each evaluated by the BMPN, with six statements for each need (three positively worded and three negatively worded) (Sheldon & Gunz, 2009). An 8-point Likert scale was used: 1 (absolutely disagree), 2 (strongly disagree), 3 (moderately disagree), 4 (slightly disagree), 5 (slightly agree), 6 (moderately agree), 7 (strongly agree), 8 (absolutely agree). A composite score for each psychological need was computed by subtracting the sum of the ratings for the negatively worded statements from the sum of the ratings for the positively worded statements, providing a

possible range from -24 to +24 for each need. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Because scoring required a sum of the ratings for each need, a composite score could not be computed for participants with missing data for a particular need. Statistical information for each need is presented in Table 2, along with the number of participants that had complete data for that need.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness Satisfaction

Psychological Need	No. of respondents with complete data out of 33	Mean (possible range -24 to +24)	SD	Min. score	Max. score
Autonomy composite scores	30	1.17	6.28	-7.00	18.00
Competence composite scores	32	8.59	4.80	0.00	19.00
Relatedness composite scores	28	7.39	4.91	0.00	16.00

As outlined in Table 2, participants' autonomy satisfaction was the lowest, their relatedness satisfaction was higher, and their competence satisfaction was the highest out of the three psychological needs. The relatively large standard deviations for each composite score

reflect the variability within the sample in regards to need satisfaction, with autonomy satisfaction having the greatest variability.

The distribution of scores for each need was also examined visually. Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 show histograms of the distribution of scores for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, respectively.

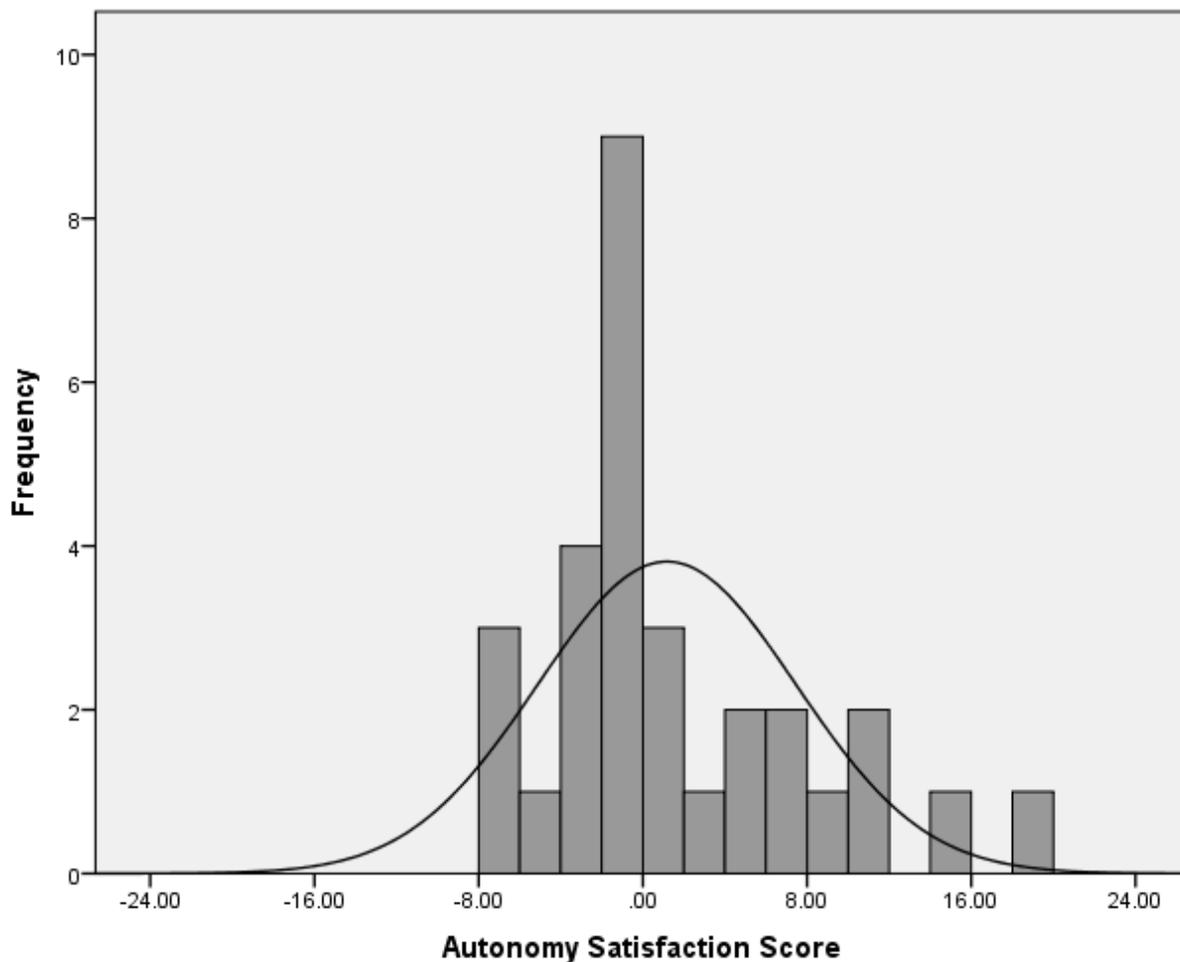


Figure 1. Distribution of Scores for Autonomy Satisfaction as measured by The Balanced Measure of Psychological Needs.

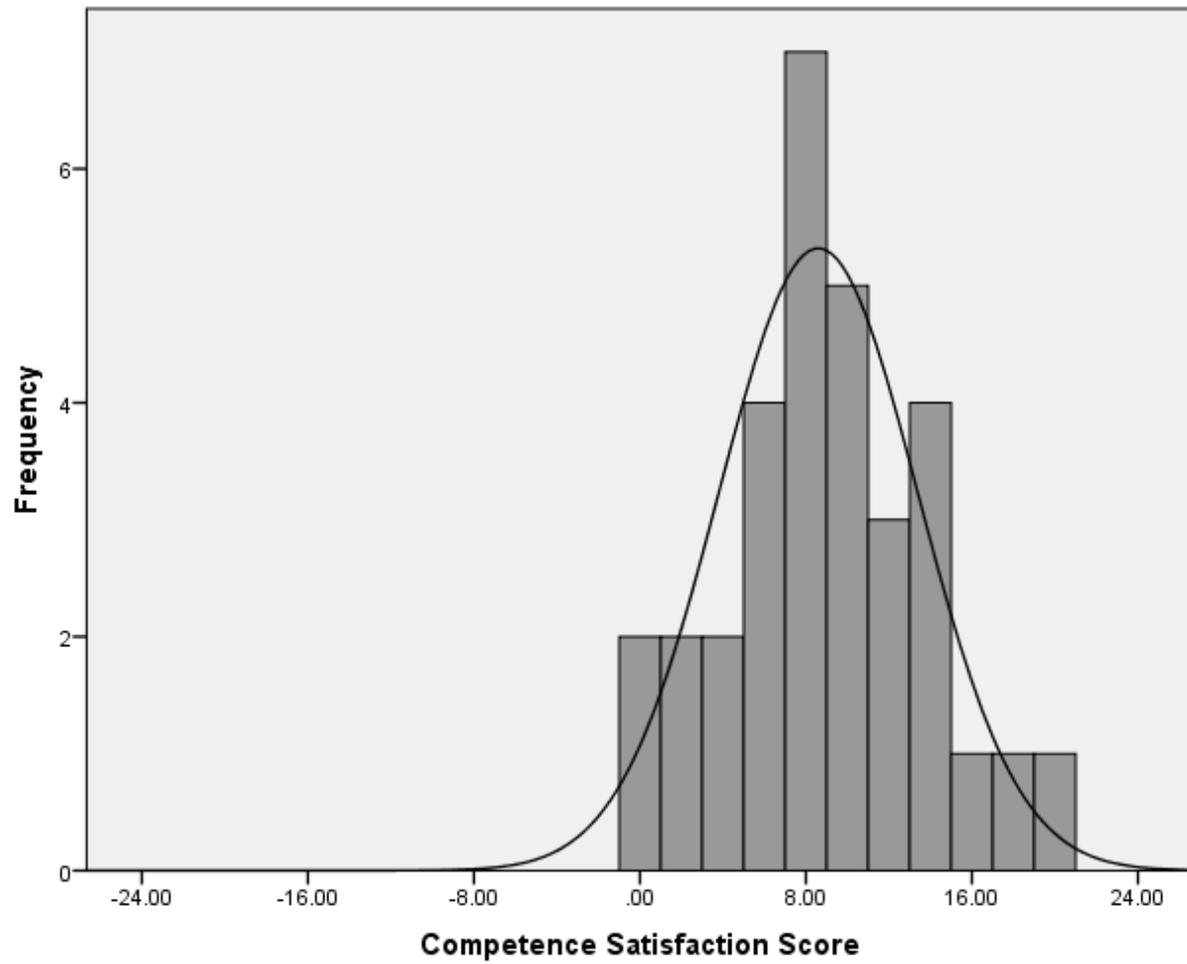


Figure 2. Distribution of Scores for Competence Satisfaction as measured by The Balanced Measure of Psychological Needs.

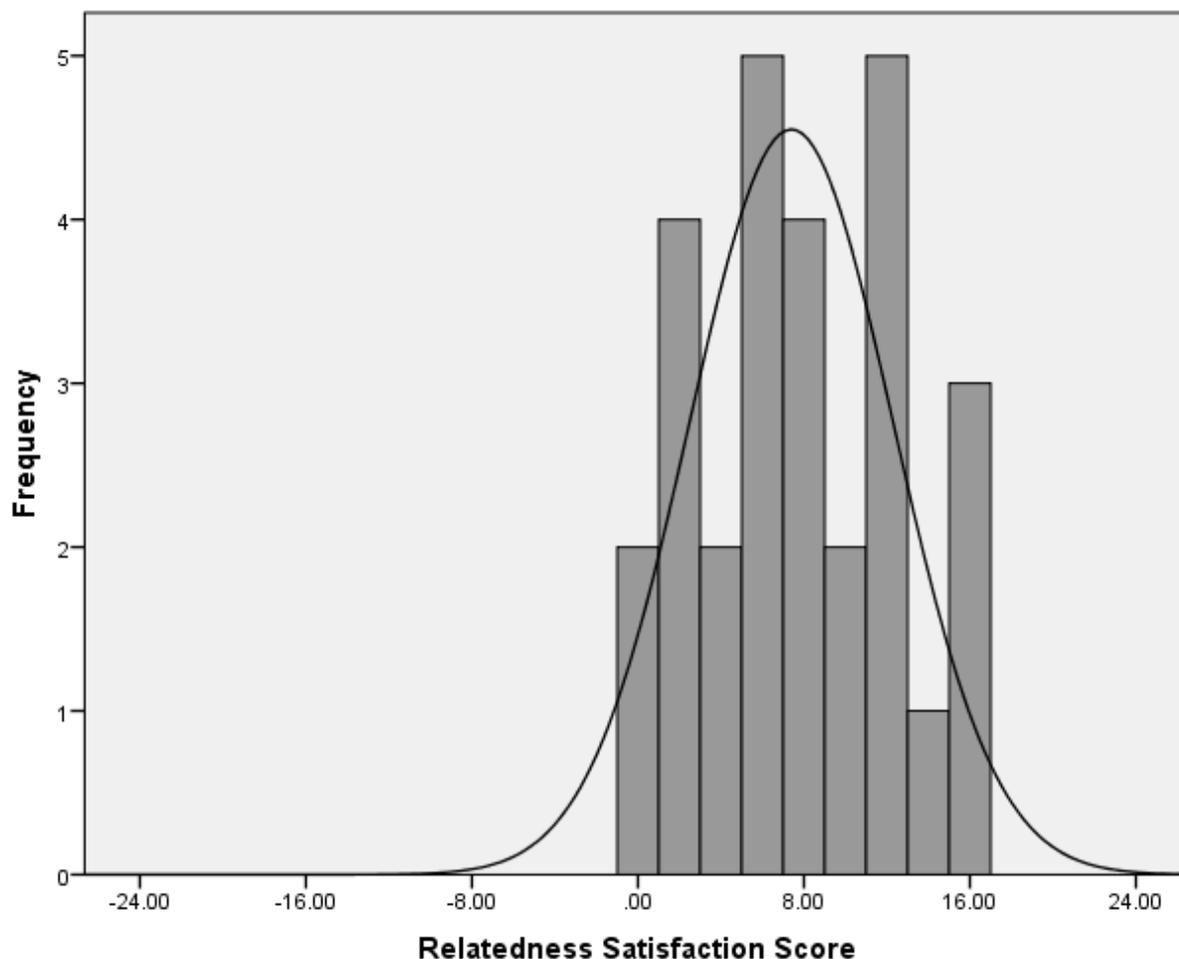


Figure 3. Distribution of Scores for Relatedness Satisfaction as measured by The Balanced Measure of Psychological Needs.

As shown in Figure 1, autonomy satisfaction scores were not approaching a normal distribution. In comparison, competence satisfaction scores and relatedness satisfaction scores were found to be normally distributed, as shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3, respectively.

Foster Parent Satisfaction

Foster parent satisfaction in various aspects of fostering was examined using 45 items measured on a 7-point Likert scale: 1 (completely disagree), 2 (moderately disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (neither disagree not agree), 5 (slightly agree), 6 (moderately agree), 7 (completely

agree), with the option of choosing “not applicable” (Denby et al., 1999, Leschied et al., 2014). Before analyzing the data, items 32, 39, 40, 41, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, and 50 were reverse coded, and any "not applicable" ratings were coded as missing values. Next, the data were analyzed according to the factors outlined by Rodger et al. (2006): "Perceptions About Agency and Child Workers" was renamed to "Perceptions About Social Workers" (items 25-38), "Challenging Aspects of Fostering" (items 39-50), "Confidence and Satisfaction" (items 52-55), and "Training" (items 56-59). Mean scores for each factor were calculated using pairwise deletion in cases with missing data. A total satisfaction score was also computed by calculating the mean of the ratings for the 45 items. Table 3 provides a summary of the descriptive statistics for each factor.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Foster Parent Satisfaction Factors

Factor	Mean (possible range 1-7)	SD	Min. score	Max. score
Total satisfaction	5.19	0.54	3.95	6.22
Perceptions about social workers	5.59	1.10	2.86	7.00
Challenging aspects of fostering	4.00	0.91	2.27	5.63
Confidence and satisfaction	5.98	0.92	3.75	7.00
Training	5.41	0.95	3.75	7.00

As presented in Table 3, respondents' satisfaction in dealing with the challenging aspects of fostering was moderate ($M = 4.00$). Respondents had higher satisfaction with their training ($M = 5.41$), and with their relationships with social workers ($M = 5.59$). Out of the four factors, confidence and satisfaction as a foster parent was rated the highest ($M = 5.98$). Total satisfaction in fostering was also moderately high ($M = 5.19$). One respondent out of 33 did not complete the Foster Parent Satisfaction section of the survey ($n = 32$).

Psychological Need Satisfaction and Foster Parent Satisfaction

The relationship between psychological need satisfaction and foster parent satisfaction was also investigated for exploratory purposes. Pearson's r was computed to assess relationships between autonomy, competence, and relatedness satisfaction, and Perceptions About Social Workers, Challenging Aspects of Fostering, Training, and Confidence and Satisfaction as a foster parent. Autonomy was found to have a significant correlation with Perceptions About Social Workers, Challenging Aspects of Fostering, and Confidence and Satisfaction. Competence significantly correlated with Perceptions About Social Workers, Challenging Aspects of Fostering, and Confidence and Satisfaction. Relatedness was found to have a significant correlation with Perceptions About Social Workers, and Challenging Aspects of Fostering. Table 4 presents a correlation matrix of the variables of interest.

Table 4

Summary of Correlations for Psychological Need Satisfaction Scores and Foster Parent Satisfaction Factors

Measure	No. of respondents with complete data out of 33	Autonomy	Competence	Relatedness	Perceptions about social workers	Challenging aspects of fostering	Confidence and satisfaction	Training
Autonomy	30	—	.51**	.27	.59**	.57**	.41*	.24
Competence	32	.51**	—	.37	.58**	.70**	.47**	.29
Relatedness	28	.27	.37	—	.56**	.49**	.25	.22
Perceptions about social workers	32	.59**	.58**	.56**	—	.52**	.57**	.47**
Challenging aspects of fostering	32	.57**	.70**	.49**	.52**	—	.49**	.25
Confidence and satisfaction	32	.41**	.47**	.25	.57**	.49**	—	.60**
Training	32	.24	.29	.22	.47**	.26	.60**	—

Note. * $p < .05$ (two-tailed), ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Recruitment, General Satisfaction, and Retention

Foster parents were then asked several questions surrounding recruitment. Twenty-nine respondents (87.9%) reported that they had encouraged other families to foster in the past. Only three respondents (9.1%) indicated that they had not done so. One participant did not respond to this question (3.0%). Those who reported having encouraged families to foster were asked to report how many families. Nine respondents (27.3%) reported that they had encouraged “5+” families to foster, two respondents (6.1%) reported that they had encouraged four families, 10 respondents (30.3%) reported that they had encouraged three families, six respondents (18.2%) reported that they had encouraged two families, and one respondent (3.0%) reported that they had encouraged one family to foster.

Participants were also asked about their future likelihood of encouraging other families to foster. The most frequent response, by 13 respondents (39.4%) was “definitely”, followed by “probably”, by 10 respondents (30.3%). See Table 5 for full responses.

Table 5

Likert Scale Responses to the Item, “In the future, would you encourage other families to foster?”

Response	No. of respondents out of 33 who indicated	% of respondents
Definitely not	0	0.0%
Very probably not	2	6.1%
Probably not	0	0.0%
Possibly	2	6.1%
Probably	10	30.3%
Very Probably	6	18.2%
Definitely	13	39.4%

In regards to general satisfaction with fostering, 12 respondents (36.4%) reported that they would describe their experience as “very good”, 17 respondents (51.5%) reported that they

would describe their experience as “good”, and three respondents (9.1%) reported that they would describe their experience as “fair”. No respondents described their experience of fostering as "very poor" or "poor." One respondent did not respond to this question.

The final quantitative question dealt with retention. The majority of respondents reported that they intend to continue fostering for five years or more ($n = 17, 51.5\%$). Five respondents (15.2%) reported that they intend to continue for 3-4 more years, nine respondents (27.3%) reported that they intend to continue for 1-2 years, one respondent (3.0%) reported that they intend to continue for 6-12 months longer, and no respondents reported that they intend to continue for six months or less. One respondent did not respond to this question.

Qualitative Analysis

A brief thematic analysis was conducted for responses to the four open-ended questions. This involved immersion in the data through several readings during which notes were taken. Subsequently, a code was generated for each response to encompass its overall meaning. The codes were then collated into themes by searching for patterns and finally, the themes were given descriptive titles. Of the total sample ($n = 33$), 27 (81.8%) responded to at least one of these questions. From the analysis, the following themes emerged that can be classified as facilitators or barriers to foster parent recruitment, satisfaction, and retention: rewarding aspects of fostering, awareness of the need for foster parents, strong relationships with the agency and social workers, poor relationships with the agency and social workers, issues surrounding control, and inadequate financial resources. Below, each theme is described and classified as a facilitator or a barrier. Additional reasons why parents are considering discontinuing that do not fit within one of the themes will also be detailed.

Facilitators.

Rewarding aspects of fostering. Throughout the written responses, many foster parents referred to the feeling of reward that comes with fostering. As stated by one participant, "It is a sacrifice but rewarding on a number of levels." Similarly, another participant discussed the strong sense of reward that they experience from fostering, "It is the most difficult job I have ever had, but also the most rewarding, and the most effective." This feeling of fulfillment was also implicated in foster parent recruitment and retention. Relating to recruitment, several participants responded that the feeling of reward from fostering was the main reason why they were inclined to encourage other families to foster. In addition to discussing the feeling of personal reward, participants also described the rewards of fostering for family members, "Rewarding and shows our family members to be grateful for everything we have." Other participants also referred to the rewards for the foster children when asked why they were inclined to encourage other families to foster, "Can have very positive effects on children in care, and on members of the foster family." Another participant alluded to the feeling of reward influencing their decision to continue fostering: "Overall a very positive and rewarding experience. Planned to foster for 5 years tops and are still here 16 years later."

Awareness of the need for foster parents. Equally as related to recruitment as the sense of reward from fostering was awareness of the need for foster parents in PEI. Many participants explained that the strong need for foster parents was the main reason why they would encourage other families to start fostering. For example, one participant stated, "Foster homes are greatly needed in the province for the children." Other participants responded that more foster parents are needed to reduce the number of children in group homes: "More good families are needed to keep kids out of group homes" and, "There are so many children who need a foster home. Group homes should only be short term."

Strong relationships with the agency and social workers. Positive relationships with the foster care agency and its workers were also found to influence the foster parenting experience. One participant applauded workers, "Excellent experience, wonderful people in the department as a support system." Another participant expressed their satisfaction in having the same resource worker for a number of years: "He has been very supportive and always there when I needed him." According to another participant who described having both excellent and difficult workers, the experience of fostering "...really depends on the worker you and the children in care have," demonstrating the importance of developing strong relationships with the foster care agency and its workers.

Barriers.

Poor relationships with the agency and social workers. In line with the previous foster parent quote, poor relationships with the foster care agency and its workers were also found to influence the fostering experience. Some participants described problems with the department including "department red tape," "high expectations from the department," and being a "low man in the system" who is not part of the "team." Other participants referred to issues with workers, including problems with communication. As described by one participant, "Unavailability of social workers due to stress leaves, time off in lieu of overtime worked, being seconded to other positions creates extended periods when you cannot get a hold of your child's worker. When a substitute worker does not have access to the original worker's phone messages, there are big gaps in communication." This participant also detailed communication gaps in relation to Family Service Workers scheduling visits: "There have been numerous times when visits have been cancelled and I have the child waiting at the door and no one shows up because no one remembered to call the foster parent. You really feel like the low man in these situations, like

your time is not valuable and you are just a faceless resource with no life outside fostering.” The lack of communication between workers and foster parents was also described as problematic when faced with an allegation of abuse: "No communication is allowed with a foster family under an allegation, sometimes for long periods and most times without foundation. I think more time by a worker has to be spent with families having difficulties, allegations or not. I think this abandonment is the main reason foster families quit." Another participant also asserted a relationship between problems with the foster care agency and quitting fostering: "The reason I wouldn't continue would have nothing to do with the kids and everything to do with social services."

Issues surrounding control. Another theme in the responses involved issues surrounding control; some participants described having trouble with situations out of their control and other participants alluded to feeling controlled. For example, one participant explained, "Overall it has been great, but there are situations out of my control where children have gone home and leave me questioning things." Another participant also spoke of the struggle of letting children go, against their judgement, concluding "...but for a foster parent the ability to let go is a prerequisite." In terms of feeling controlled, some participants found the restrictions involved in fostering challenging. When asked why they would be reluctant to encourage other families to foster, one participant listed, "Restrictions between family and close friends or neighbours. Supervision. Not able to let children do overnight sleepovers due to criminal record checks". Confidentiality, another restriction involved with fostering, was also mentioned as being a difficult aspect.

Inadequate financial resources. A final theme found within the data was the challenge of inadequate financial resources. Several participants commented that the

remuneration is too low. One participant explained, "Some of the children have such high needs it is almost a full-time job, it is not compensated that way unfortunately. The pay is quite low, just covers expenses really." Additionally, a couple of responses mentioned problems with respite care money. Two respondents also specifically pointed to inadequate financial resources as the main reason why they planned to discontinue in the next one to two years. One claimed that insufficient funds, and in particular, the low room and board rates, were the main reason influencing their desire to discontinue. The other parent detailed that they have to pay for haircuts, personal hygiene products, school supplies, and school trips out of their personal funds and that this was the main reason why they would stop fostering in the next one to two years. Taken together, these responses show that parents are feeling frustrated with the current foster care compensation, and they are willing to take action because of their frustrations.

Additional reasons influencing retention. It is also worth noting other reasons motivating parents to discontinue fostering that do not fit within the previously outlined themes. Two parents responded that, after fostering for an extended period, they needed a break. One stated, "It's exhausting and hard." Another foster parent also spoke of taking a break, but their reason was to start a family of their own in the future, adding that they would most likely return to fostering. Age was a concern for one respondent, while the time commitments of fostering ("monthly meetings, monthly home visits, and annual training") were problematic for another, providing evidence that retention is influenced by a variety of reasons.

Discussion

Main Findings

Results from this research provide several valuable insights about the experience of fostering in PEI. These main findings include positive psychological need satisfaction levels,

relationships between psychological need satisfaction and practical aspects of fostering, and exploration of particular facilitators and barriers to foster parent recruitment and retention.

Positive psychological need satisfaction levels. A primary goal of this study was to learn about psychological need satisfaction among PEI foster parents. The results revealed positive levels of need satisfaction for each of the three psychological needs postulated by SDT. Competence was found to be the most fulfilled ($M = 8.59$, $SD = 4.80$), followed by relatedness ($M = 7.39$, $SD = 4.91$), and finally, autonomy was found to be the least fulfilled ($M = 1.17$, $SD = 6.28$). Interestingly, the same pattern was found in Watson's (2016) study, with competence being the most satisfied ($M = 7.94$, $SD = 6.60$), followed by relatedness ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 7.51$), and then autonomy ($M = -1.38$, $SD = 7.28$). Although autonomy satisfaction was in the positive range in this study, it is important to note that autonomy scores were found to have the most variability. Moreover, whereas competence and relatedness satisfaction scores were normally distributed, autonomy satisfaction scores were not. These findings distinguish autonomy from competence and relatedness and necessitate exploration about the reasoning for each of the psychological need satisfaction scores.

One possible explanation for the difference between the distribution of autonomy scores and the distributions of competence and relatedness scores, and the fact that autonomy was the least satisfied need in the current study and Watson's (2016) study, may be related to factors inherent in fostering that hinder autonomy. Fostering is known to be a challenging job; as previously described, foster parents often feel that the agency has more control than them, and there are certain restrictions that must be followed (Recruitment and Retention Committee Meeting, personal communication, June 16, 2017). However, these characteristics of fostering that may hinder a foster parent's sense of autonomy are often aimed to support the safety and

well-being of the foster child. The foster care agency works closely with all of the parties involved in foster care: the biological family, the foster family, and the foster child. Because of the expertise of agency workers and their close contact with every significant member in a foster care case, it is sensible that they have a great deal of control in regards to decisions made. Further, restrictions such as confidentiality are intended to protect the child. While these aspects of fostering may be perceived as overly controlling by many foster parents, thus contributing to autonomy being the least satisfied need in two different populations, other parents may perceive these aspects of control differently.

The notion of locus of control distinguishes between an external locus of control, or feeling less personal control, and an internal locus of control, or feeling more personal control (Ryan & Deci, 2017). As Geiger et al. (2013) discovered that having a higher external locus of control was a significant predictor of increased likelihood to discontinue fostering, it is possible that differences in locus of control among foster parents could account for the relatively high variability of autonomy satisfaction found in this study. Scores ranged from -7.00 to 18.00, demonstrating that foster parents' perceptions of autonomy can vastly differ. Foster parents with an external locus of control may represent those who struggle with the restrictions involved in fostering and with decisions made by agency workers, feeling as though situations are out of their control. For example, they may believe that not enough information is shared with them about their foster child and that the confidentiality rules in place are overly restrictive. This group of parents would most likely consist of respondents with lower autonomy satisfaction scores. Conversely, other foster parents with an internal locus of control may include those who perceive that agency workers value their opinions when making decisions and do not view the restrictions negatively. Continuing with the example of confidentiality, these parents may be

more accepting when certain pieces of information cannot be shared with them. Reasonably, these parents would be more likely to have had higher autonomy satisfaction scores.

Relatedness satisfaction was found to be higher than autonomy satisfaction, and also higher than relatedness satisfaction in Watson's (2016) study. In fact, when comparing the present research with Watson's (2016) research, relatedness satisfaction differed the most out of the three needs. Although this finding could be for a number of reasons as foster care in PEI and foster care in Arizona are not entirely comparable, it is interesting to consider one particular known difference between the two samples. In PEI, it is mandatory that all foster parents attend monthly meetings led by Child Protection workers along with other foster parents in their region of the Island, whereas almost 70% of Watson's (2016) sample indicated that they did not attend a foster parent support group. It is possible that the monthly social support provided to PEI foster parents played a role in increasing their relatedness satisfaction, relative to the relatedness satisfaction of foster parents in Arizona who mostly lacked this type of support. Although these mandatory cluster meetings may be beneficial to the majority of foster parents, it is interesting to point out that one parent cited the monthly meetings as the main reason why they were planning to discontinue fostering within 6-12 months. This reveals the highly perceptive nature of psychological need satisfaction; what supports one person's relatedness satisfaction may actually diminish someone else's.

Competence was found to be the most satisfied need, and very similar values were obtained in this study and Watson's (2016) study. This consistency suggests a general sentiment of competence among foster parents and aligns with results from Cooley and Petren's (2011) research that discovered that foster parents reported high confidence levels in many domains of foster care. This finding may be related to personal characteristics, such as previous experience

parenting biological children that could elicit a sense of competence when parenting foster children (Watson, 2016). It is sensible to imagine that those who sign up to foster, a job that requires monumental dedication and hard work, naturally perceive themselves to be competent. It is also possible that aspects of the foster care system provide support for parents' sense of competence. As previously mentioned, a worker within the PEI foster care system spoke about specific training, known as Trauma Informed Care, that is intended to improve feelings of competency (Recruitment and Retention Committee Meeting, personal communication, June 16, 2017). Perhaps such initiatives are further contributing to, and supporting, foster parents' relatively high competence satisfaction.

Relationships between psychological need satisfaction and practical aspects of fostering. In addition to learning about the psychological need satisfaction levels of PEI foster parents, it was also important to investigate whether such psychological need satisfaction related to practical aspects of fostering. According to SDT, autonomy, competence, and relatedness satisfaction influence every domain of one's life, and so it was believed that these psychological needs would also relate to applied elements of foster care (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Using Pearson's r , several significant correlations were discovered between autonomy, competence, and relatedness satisfaction, and so-called practical aspects of foster care that were organized into the following four factors: Perceptions About Social Workers, Challenging Aspects of Fostering, Confidence and Satisfaction, and Training (Rodger et al., 2006).

Autonomy was found to have moderate positive correlations with Perceptions About Social Workers, Challenging Aspects of Fostering, and Confidence and Satisfaction. These findings demonstrate that autonomy has a widespread influence on various parts of foster care. Of course, with correlational data it is not possible to discern whether feeling more autonomous

leads to better relationships with social workers, or if better relationships with social workers lead to feeling more autonomous, for example, but both cases could indeed be argued. Likewise, for each of the other factors. These correlations may also represent bidirectional relationships. For example, foster parents who feel more control over their choices (i.e., more autonomous) may have more personal resources for handling the challenging aspects of fostering, such as agency red tape, and successfully managing these challenging aspects of fostering may also contribute to feeling more control and independence, thereby increasing autonomy satisfaction.

Conversely, it makes sense that this research uncovered that foster parents with decreased levels of autonomy satisfaction also had decreased satisfaction managing practical aspects of foster parenting. For example, Perceptions About Social Workers includes an item that asks whether a foster parent feels that their social worker treats them like a team member. Geiger et al. (2013) heard that when foster parents do not feel like a team member with Child Protection workers, they are left feeling helpless. The feeling of helplessness could also be described as having low perceived autonomy. Therefore, it makes sense that this research discovered a link between not feeling like a team member and decreased levels of autonomy satisfaction. Along with solidifying previous research, these findings underline the importance of autonomy to satisfaction in fostering.

Significant positive correlations were also found between competence and Perceptions About Social Workers, Challenging Aspects of Fostering, and Confidence and Satisfaction. The relationship between competence and Confidence and Satisfaction was expected, given the similarity in content between items in the two variables. For example, one of the Confidence and Satisfaction factor items asks whether the foster parent feels competent to handles the type(s) of children placed in their home. This quite obviously overlaps with the items that measure

competence as a psychological need. It is certainly more interesting to consider the other variables that correlate with competence. In regards to the correlation with Perceptions About Social Workers, this moderately strong relationship means that foster parents with decreased competence satisfaction also have decreased satisfaction in their relationships with social workers. Related to this, MacGregor et al. (2006) heard many foster parents discuss not feeling recognized by Child Protection workers to do their job competently. Taking these findings into consideration, perhaps when parents perceive that their competence is unrecognized by workers, this not only damages their relationships with workers, but also harms their self-perceptions of competence. Following this possible explanation for the correlation, social workers should put effort into providing positive feedback to foster parents and should be mindful when providing criticism so that it is communicated constructively, and not in such a way that could undermine competence.

The strongest correlation found in this research was between competence and Challenging Aspects of Fostering ($r = .70$). This relationship is particularly important to highlight, as the inability to handle challenges involved with fostering is known to predict parents who consider quitting (Leschied et al., 2014). Therefore, it is crucial to identify buffers that could help foster parents manage these stressors. This strong correlation suggests that a perception of competence may be one of them. Again, this is a situation where it is possible to imagine a bidirectional relationship: feeling competent could help parents successfully deal with the challenges of fostering, and successfully dealing with the challenges of fostering could increase competence satisfaction. This demonstrated relationship provides further justification for the necessity of supporting foster parents' competence.

Finally, in regards to relationships with competence, it is interesting to point out of the lack of correlation between competence and training. Pre-service training is designed to ensure that parents feel competent in their ability to foster, and so it may come as a surprise that this research does not support the conclusion that such training relates to feelings of competence. From a different perspective though, it may be that foster parents already feel competent before pre-service training and so this training does not significantly change their sense of competence. That is not to say that this type of training is not important – it is undoubtedly a necessary component of foster care – but that foster parents appear to gain competence satisfaction from other sources. Unfortunately, one respondent explained that their competence is not always acknowledged: "[the system] does not recognize the many attributes that many foster parents have that are outside their foster parent training." This presents an area that requires improvement within the foster care system.

Relatedness was found to have moderate positive correlations with Perceptions About Social Workers and Challenging Aspects of Fostering. While the items measuring relatedness satisfaction did not specifically refer to relationships with social workers, it was believed that foster parents would respond to these items with social workers in mind. The correlation between relatedness and Perceptions About Social Workers signifies that this expectation was most likely correct. This relationship and the relationship between relatedness and Challenging Aspects of Fostering provides further evidence for a common theme throughout the literature: forming strong connections with Child Protection workers can positively influence foster parents, while dissatisfaction in relationships with workers can negatively influence foster parents. As Watson (2016) discovered that relatedness satisfaction levels were significantly lower in foster parents who had discontinued or planned to discontinue fostering, compared to those who planned to

continue, the correlation between relatedness and Perceptions About Social Workers creates an important link between relatedness satisfaction with social workers, specifically, and retention. That being the case, Child Protection workers must appreciate that they have the power to influence how well parents handle the challenges of fostering and even whether they continue or not. Another implication from the moderate correlation with Perceptions About Social Workers is that relatedness satisfaction in fostering is not solely influenced by satisfaction in relationships with social workers. Foster parents may also satisfy the need for relatedness through other significant relationships, such as their relationship with their spouse, other family members, and the foster child, with each playing an important role in ensuring a successful fostering experience.

At this point, it is important to make two notes regarding the previously described correlations. Firstly, when multiple relationships are tested at once, there is a possibility of detecting false positives. Because this analysis involved Pearson's r tests between seven variables simultaneously, the potential for this occurrence must be acknowledged. Secondly, there was at least some overlap between items in different variables in terms of what they were measuring. For example, there would have been overlap between the latent variables being measured by relatedness items and items in the factor Perceptions About Social Workers, and competence items and items in the factor Confidence and Satisfaction, as previously explained. This similarity in content would have contributed to finding significant correlations. Nonetheless, though, the relationships discovered reveal meaningful links between psychological need satisfaction and practical aspects of fostering.

Exploration of particular facilitators and barriers to foster parent recruitment and retention. The findings of this study also provide important information about specific

facilitators and barriers in recruiting and retaining foster parents. As previously outlined, rewarding aspects of foster care, awareness of the need for foster parents, and strong relationships with the agency and social workers were all found to influence foster parents positively. First and foremost, many parents discussed the strong sense of reward that accompanies fostering. SDT proposes that activities that are inherently rewarding are intrinsically motivated, and ultimately, associated with greater persistence and better performance (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Therefore, it follows that PEI foster parents – who find inherent reward in fostering – are intrinsically motivated. This finding aligns with previous research about foster parents’ source of motivation, and is corroborated by data collected related to retention (Geiger et al., 2013). The majority of the sample (51.5%) reported that they intend to continue fostering for five years or more, demonstrating high persistence levels that would be expected when an activity is intrinsically motivated. This is great news for the PEI foster care system not only in terms of retention, but also in terms of recruitment. Throughout the fostering literature it is commonly known that foster parents are the best recruiters of new foster parents, and so the intrinsically motivated, persistent foster parents in PEI should be expected to spread good word about fostering to other potential foster parents (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2001). The large majority of the sample (87.9%) reported that they had already encouraged other families to foster in the past, and the majority of the sample also indicated that they would “very probably” or “definitely” encourage other families to foster in the future, providing further concrete evidence in support of favourable recruitment outcomes for foster care in PEI.

Being aware of the great need for foster parents in PEI also influenced many to continue fostering and to encourage other families to foster too. A possible explanation for why this is such a powerful facilitator may be related to the need for relatedness. SDT proposes that

relatedness can be fulfilled in several different ways, one being through contributing to others (Ryan & Deci, 2017). By noticing the need for foster parents and choosing to help fill the need, parents not only have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable children, but also in their own lives by improving their psychological need satisfaction. Undoubtedly, the reciprocal benefits of this prosocial behaviour are a key factor in promoting recruitment and retention.

Another key factor in recruitment and retention, which is also rooted in relatedness, is the quality of relationships between foster parents and the foster care agency and social workers. Parents reported that strong relationships positively influence their fostering experience and satisfied parents are more likely to continue fostering and to encourage others families to start (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2001; Cashen, 2003; Geiger et al., 2013; Rodger, 2006) Conversely, poor relationships with the foster care agency and social workers were found to negatively influence recruitment and retention of foster parents in this research and across other studies (Brown and Calder, 1999; Cashen, 2003; Geiger et al., 2013; MacGregor et al., 2006; Rodger et al., 2006). Specific concerns included department red tape, high expectations from the department, and communication. Communication was also found to be a problem for the PEI foster care system during the Child Protection Act review, and the results of this study provide elaboration on this issue (Child Protection Act Review Advisory Committee, 2016). Parents detailed that there are gaps in communication with substitute workers, with Family Service Workers, and following allegations of abuse. It is without a question that safety of the foster child is paramount and that allegations of abuse must be thoroughly investigated, but perhaps the manner in which these investigations are carried out could be improved. Several parents discussed the fear of false allegations and so better information sharing protocols during these

difficult times might help to ease the minds of innocent parents and avoid damaging relationships with the agency and social workers. Although it may not be seen as a particular recruitment or retention strategy, per se, building strong relationships with foster parents may be one of the most important tools that an agency has for keeping foster parents and for finding new ones.

Inadequate financial resources were another barrier to the recruitment and retention of PEI foster parents. Participants explained that room and board rates, respite care money, and compensation for expenses are insufficient. This is a particularly unfortunate barrier because even the most motivated and caring foster parent may not be able to continue if they cannot afford to do so. Improving this hindrance would require the provincial government to make foster care more of a priority when allocating funding, and this may require a shift in perception. Many people outside of foster parents may not recognize fostering as a 24-hour job, but this needs to be understood and appreciated by members of the government, especially when creating the budget.

Finally, issues surrounding control were also found to be a barrier to the recruitment and retention of PEI foster parents. As previously discussed, several parents described that situations out of their control and that feeling controlled negatively impacted their desire to continue fostering and to encourage others to foster. Ryan and Deci (2017) would explain these situations as diminishing a parent's sense of autonomy, and consequently, having a negative effect on their motivation. According to SDT, environments that lack support for autonomy can undermine intrinsic motivation and result in more controlled motivation, which is inevitably associated with poorer outcomes. The parents who struggle with issues surrounding control may have entered fostering intrinsically motivated and then developed more externally regulated motivation as a result of these conditions. To prevent and reverse this occurrence, it is crucial for the foster care

system to become more autonomy-supportive. This would entail more affordances of choice. While the nature of foster care may make it challenging to provide foster parents with choices in some aspects, it is important to maximize opportunities to make choices within the restraints. By making autonomy support a priority in the foster care system, foster parents would most likely have greater levels of satisfaction, thus improving the recruitment and retention efforts of workers.

Methodology

With only 70 Regular foster families in PEI, a relatively small sample size was to be expected for this study. Even so, a high response rate was anticipated given the strong commitment of foster parents, the various recruitment efforts undertaken, and the opportunity to choose between completing an online or a paper version of the questionnaire. Additionally, it was believed that the assurance of anonymity would help to attract participants as they would be free to voice their opinions and concerns without fear of repercussions. Unfortunately, though, only 33 foster parents completed the questionnaire. Because less than half of the eligible foster families participated, the results need to be interpreted with caution.

A benefit of the study was that it allowed for comparisons to be made with Leschied et al.'s (2014) study of PEI foster parents and with Watson's (2016) study of foster parents in Arizona. Leschied et al. (2014) assessed the satisfaction of PEI foster parents using the same factors used in this study, though their sample size was quite small ($n = 12$). In their study, Challenging Aspects of Fostering had the lowest satisfaction, followed by Training, Perceptions About Agency and Child Workers, and finally, Confidence and Satisfaction was the highest. In this study, with a larger sample size, the same pattern of results was found. Total satisfaction was also found to be almost the exact same across the two studies ($M = 5.14$, $SD = .80$ in Leschied et

al.'s (2014) study and $M = 5.19$, $SD = 0.54$ in this study). The consistency in these results is noteworthy; it demonstrates the stability of PEI foster parent satisfaction over time and supports the reliability of the results for each study.

Consistency was also found between the results of this study and the results of Watson's (2016) study. In both, autonomy was the least satisfied psychological need, followed by relatedness, and competence was the most satisfied. This congruence is important as it suggests that there are certain fundamental characteristics of fostering that exist across different populations which influence psychological need satisfaction. Further, this study followed Watson's (2016) recommendation to evaluate psychological need satisfaction among foster parents who attend a support group, and interestingly it was discovered that relatedness satisfaction displayed the greatest increase between the two studies.

Another advantage of the study was its use of quantitative and qualitative data, unlike the studies of comparison that only collected quantitative data. Although the majority of the questions were Likert scale, parents were also given the opportunity for open-ended elaboration about satisfaction, recruitment, and retention. This allowed for greater insights into the experience of fostering and provided context for the quantitative data.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study is its small sample size, with participation from only 33 out of 70 eligible foster families. Foster parents are very busy people, so it is possible that a lack of time prevented certain parents from responding. Although there is no evidence to support the notion that the parents who chose not to respond were more or less content with their fostering experience than those who did respond, it is also possible that this type of meaningful difference existed. For this reason, generalizability of the findings is limited.

Another limitation of the study was that the results did not invite categorization as expected, and this prevented certain comparisons from being made. A review of pertinent literature found that foster parents are often dissatisfied, and so it was believed that this dissatisfaction would also be present amongst a considerable proportion PEI foster parents. Instead, the study uncovered that parents were generally satisfied; no parents reported their experience fostering to be “very poor” or “poor”, very few reported that they had not encouraged other families to foster or did not plan to do so in the future, and only one parent reported that they planned to discontinue fostering within a year. These results did not allow for statistical comparisons to be made between the psychological need satisfaction levels of dissatisfied parents and satisfied parents. That being said, having too many satisfied foster parents is certainly not disadvantageous in a practical sense.

An additional limitation in regards to the results of the study was that “other” was the most frequently reported response when asked what prompted parents to begin fostering. Over half of the sample selected this option, meaning that the other eight options did not sufficiently capture possible influences to foster. Some participants selected “other” in addition to one or more of the alternative choices, whereas other participants only selected “other” in response to this question. While this allowed for a partial understanding of foster parent recruitment, a more thorough understanding would require further research.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should elaborate on the results of this study by collecting more in-depth qualitative data. Although participants had the opportunity to provide open-ended written or typed comments during this study, in-person interviews would naturally elicit more extensive information. Interviews could be conducted in a group format as an addition to regularly

scheduled cluster meetings to bolster participation levels. It would be important to learn more about facilitators and barriers to each of the three psychological needs with a particular focus on autonomy, given its relatively low satisfaction found in this study. Further, it would be important to collect more data regarding what influences parents to begin fostering. Interviews could clarify the frequently cited “other” in response to what prompted parents in this study to foster. This information would be helpful for developing new recruitment strategies supported by evidence. Interviews would also be useful for gathering more detailed information regarding retention. It would be beneficial to have the foster parents elaborate on the barriers to retention identified during this research, and to allow them to problem solve strategies for reducing these barriers. Collecting more information about the experiences of foster parents and sharing those findings with Child and Family Services would enhance the recruitment, and retention, and overall satisfaction of Island foster parents.

Implications for Foster Care in Prince Edward Island

This research provides several valuable insights for the PEI foster care system. First and foremost, the results reveal that PEI foster parents are generally satisfied with their experience fostering. Child Protection workers should be proud of this finding; it is a testament to their dedication to the foster care system and to improving Island families. Workers should also inform potential foster parents that many current foster parents reported that they plan to continue fostering for at least five more years and that they would recommend fostering to other families too. In this way, the findings of this research can serve as a recruitment tool. Moreover, in terms of recruitment, the results demonstrate the most effective ways to attract new parents. Most importantly, foster families should be encouraged by their social workers to spread the word about fostering, as many begin at the recommendation of another foster parent or through

having a connection with a foster child. This research also shows support for the utility of recruitment through various media outlets, as one-quarter of the sample were influenced to start either because of a radio advertisement, newspaper advertisement, or information on the internet. When devising future recruitment strategies, the Recruitment and Retention Committee should consider these findings.

The results of the study also show support for the cluster meetings. Out of the three psychological needs, relatedness had the biggest increase among PEI foster parents compared to foster parents from Arizona. As previously explained, one known difference between these two samples is that most of the foster parents from Arizona reported that they did not attend a support group, whereas support group attendance is mandatory for PEI foster parents (Watson, 2016). While various reasons could have contributed to this change, it is certainly plausible that the support that PEI foster parents receive at the cluster meetings played a role in increasing their relatedness satisfaction. In light of this, other foster care systems should consider adopting similar mandates for support group attendance.

In addition to these positive findings, this study has also highlighted areas of improvement for the PEI foster care system. Relationships with the agency and social workers, financial resources, and aspects surrounding control are most in need of attention. With each encounter with foster parents, social workers should be cognizant of how impactful these interactions can be. A lack of communication often causes or exacerbates problems; more effective communication with foster parents would go far in improving these relationships. Workers should ensure that foster parents can reach them easily, and when they are unavailable, substitute workers should be provided with all of the necessary information. If Family Service Workers are unable to make a scheduled home visit, foster parents should be the first ones to

know to prevent inevitable frustration from unnecessary waiting. Further, better communication protocols should be developed for families faced with an allegation of abuse. Improving these particular aspects of the foster care system would likely also positively influence relatedness satisfaction, and consequently, enhance foster parent motivation.

Social workers should also advocate for better financial resources for foster parents. They should explain to the government that some foster parents are planning to discontinue because of the low room and board rates, out-of-pocket expenses involved with fostering, and inadequate respite care money. In a province that is in dire need for more foster parents, it would be a shame to lose any of these dedicated individuals simply because they cannot afford to continue. The government should allocate more funding to the foster care program to prevent this from happening.

Support for autonomy within the foster care system could also be improved. Participants' autonomy satisfaction was relatively low, and they described struggling with situations out of their control and with feeling controlled by the restrictions involved in fostering. Foster children being sent home against foster parents' judgement, not being able to let foster children do overnight sleepovers due to criminal record checks, and perceived excessive confidentiality are aspects of the foster care system that are not conducive to autonomy satisfaction. While these protocols are in place for seemingly good reasons, it may be that the reasoning needs to be re-examined to strategize solutions that would improve a parent's sense of autonomy in these matters. For example, perhaps there is more information that could be shared with foster parents about foster children in their care so they are not left feeling like the rules surrounding confidentiality are doing more harm than good. A re-examination of the criminal record check requirement for sleepovers may uncover another less restrictive solution that would

improve the autonomy of foster parents while continuing to ensure the safety of foster children. Moreover, when the foster care agency deems it is safe for foster children to return to their biological family, foster parents should be consulted with as much as possible and any of their objections or opinions should be valued so that they do not feel like they have no control during these situations. Essentially, anything that involves a greater perception of choice is autonomy-supportive. It is also crucial to remember that improving support for autonomy also requires support for competence, through structure and positive feedback, and support for relatedness, through developing and maintaining positive relationships (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In essence, the foster care system must understand and appreciate that support for all three of the psychological needs is necessary to promote optimal motivation levels among foster parents and to enhance recruitment and retention efforts.

Conclusion

Overall, this research shows that the PEI foster care system has great potential to grow this necessary and valuable service by recruiting new foster parents and maintaining the current ones. PEI foster parents are intrinsically motivated and generally satisfied with their experiences fostering. This combination of motivation and satisfaction is evident by their intentions to continue fostering for at least several years and to recommend fostering to other families. To maintain optimal motivation and enhance satisfaction among foster parents, the foster care system should attend to the identified areas in need of improvement: relationships between social workers and foster parents, aspects surrounding control, and financial resources. This research also provides further support for the utility of SDT in understanding foster parenting. Autonomy, competence, and relatedness satisfaction were each found to influence various important aspects of fostering. Because of this, social workers should be educated in SDT so that they can better

understand ways to support foster parents, and ultimately, ensure safety and proper care for Island children in need of protection.

References

- Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2001). *Recruitment, training, and support: The essential tools for foster care*. Baltimore, MD: Family to Family Publications.
- Baard, P. P., Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2004). Intrinsic need satisfaction: A motivational basis of performance and well-being two work settings. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 34(10), 2045-2068.
- Bissett, K. (2016, June 21). Foster-parent shortage across canada reaching a crisis point. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/declining-number-of-foster-parents-across-canada-becoming-a-crisis/article30538343/?ref=http://www.theglobeandmail.com&>
- Boyd, D., Johnson, P., & Bee, H. (2015). *Lifespan development* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc.
- Brown, J., & Calder, P. (1999). Concept-mapping the challenges faced by foster parents. *Children and Youth Services Review*, (6), 481.
- Buehler, C., Rhodes, K. W., Orme, J. G., & Cuddeback, G. (2006). The potential for successful family foster care: Conceptualizing competency domains for foster parents. *Child Welfare*, 85(3), 523-558.
- Cashen, C. A. (2003). Foster parent satisfaction in nova scotia. *Canadian Social Work*, 5(1), 138-150.

- Child Protection Act Review Advisory Committee (2016). *Child protection act review: Advisory committee report*. Retrieved from https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/2016_child_protection_act_review_advisory_committee_report_.pdf
- Cooley, M. E., & Petren, R. E. (2011). Foster parent perceptions of competency: Implications for foster parent training. *Children and Youth Services Review, 33*, 1968-1974.
doi:10.1016/j.chilyouth.2011.05.023
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). *The 'what' and 'why' of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Deci, E. L., Ryan, R. M., Gagné, M., Leone, D. R., Usunov, J., & Kornazheva, B. P. (2001). Need satisfaction, motivation, and well-being in the work organizations of a former Eastern Bloc country. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27*, 930-942.
- Denby, R., Rindfleisch, N., & Bean, G. (1999). Predictors of foster parents' satisfaction and intent to continue to foster. *Child Abuse & Neglect: The International Journal, 23*(3), 287-303.
- Gagné, M. (2003). The role of autonomy support and autonomy orientation in prosocial behavior engagement. *Motivation & Emotion, 27*(3), 199-223.
- Geiger, J. M., Hayes, M. J., & Lietz, C. A. (2013). Should I stay or should I go? A mixed methods study examining the factors influencing foster parents' decisions to continue or

discontinue providing foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35, 1356-1365.

doi:10.1016/j.chilyouth.2013.05.003

Gillis, D. (2017). *Child protection act review released* [Press release]. Retrieved from

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/news/child-protection-act-review-released>

Government of Prince Edward Island. (2015). *Be a foster parent*. Retrieved from

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/be-foster-parent>

Hick, S. F., & Stokes, J. (2017). *Social work in canada: An introduction*. Toronto, ON:

Thompson Educational.

Johnston, M. M., & Finney, S. J. (2010). Measuring basic needs satisfaction: Evaluating previous

research and conducting new psychometric evaluations of the Basic Needs Satisfaction in

General Scale. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 35, 280-296.

doi:10.1016/j.cedpsych.2010.04.003

Leschied, A., Rodger, S., Brown, J., den Dunnen, W., Pickel, L. (2014). *Rescuing a critical*

resource: A review of the foster care retention and recruitment literature and its relevance

in the canadian child welfare context. Retrieved from

<http://www.canadianfosterfamilyassociation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ECM-FINAL-REPORT-LONG-Version-Oct-23.pdf>

Lund Research Ltd. (2013). *One-way MANOVA in SPSS Statistics*. Retrieved from

[https://statistics.laerd.com/spss-tutorials/one-way-manova-using-spsstatistics.](https://statistics.laerd.com/spss-tutorials/one-way-manova-using-spsstatistics.php)

php

- MacGregor, T. E., Rodger, S., Cummings, A. L., & Leschied, A. W. (2006). The needs of foster parents: A qualitative study of motivation, support, and retention. *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice, 5*(3), 351-368. doi:10.1177/1473325006067365
- Nowacki, K., & Schoelmerich, A. (2010). Growing up in foster families or institutions: Attachment representation and psychological adjustment of young adults. *Attachment & Human Development, 12*(6), 551-566. doi:10.1080/14616734.2010.504547
- Otis, N., & Pelletier, L. G. (2005). A motivational model of daily hassles, physical symptoms, and future work intentions among police officers. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 35*(10), 2193-2214. doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.2005.tb02215.x
- Rodger, S., Cummings, A., & Leschied, A. W. (2006). Who is caring for our most vulnerable children? the motivation to foster in child welfare. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 30*, 1129-1142. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2006.04.005
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Ryan, R., Bernstein, J., & Brown, K. (2010). *Weekends, work, and well-being: Psychological need satisfactions and day of the week effects on mood, vitality, and physical symptoms*. Australia, Australia/Oceania: ACU Research Bank.
- Reis, H. T., Sheldon, K. M., Gable, S. L., Roscoe, J., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). Daily well-being: The role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 26*, 419-435.

- Sheldon, K. M., Cheng, C., & Hilpert, J. (2011). Understanding well-being and optimal functioning: Applying the multilevel personality in context (MPIC) model. *Psychological Inquiry*, 22, 1–16.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Elliot, A. J. (1999). Goal striving, need-satisfaction, and longitudinal well-being: The self-concordance model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 482–497.
- Sheldon, K.M., Elliot, A.J., Kim, Y., & Kasser, T. (2001). What Is Satisfying About Satisfying Events? Testing 10 Candidate Psychological Needs. *Journal Of Personality And Social Psychology*, (2), 325.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Gunz, A. (2009). Psychological needs as basic motives, not just experiential requirements. *Journal of Personality*, 77(5), 1467-1492. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6494.2009.00589.x
- Sheldon, K., & Hilpert, J. (2012). The balanced measure of psychological needs (BMPN) scale: An alternative domain general measure of need satisfaction. *Motivation & Emotion*, 36(4), 439-451. doi:10.1007/s11031-012-9279-4
- Statistics Canada. (2012). *Families and Households Highlight Tables, 2011 Census*. Retrieved from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/hltfst/fam/Pages/highlight.cfm?TabID=2&Lang=E&Asc=1&PRCode=01&OrderBy=999&Sex=1&tableID=304>

- Strong-Boag, V. (2011). *Fostering nation?: Canada confronts its history of childhood disadvantage*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press.
- The Foster Family Assessment Report Guide. (n.d.).
- Vanderwert, R. E., Zeanah, C. H., Fox, N. A., & Nelson, I., C. (2016). Normalization of EEG activity among previously institutionalized children placed into foster care: A 12-year follow-up of the bucharest early intervention project. *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience, 17*, 68-75. doi:10.1016/j.dcn.2015.12.004
- Watson, K. L. (2016). *Seeking to Understand Motivation to Retain Foster Parent Licensure Using Self-Determination Theory (Doctoral dissertation)*. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Accession No. 10251644).
- Webster, L., & Hackett, R. K. (2007). A comparison of unresolved versus resolved status and its relationship to behaviour in maltreated adolescents. *School Psychology International, 28*(3), 365-378.

Appendix 1

Invitation to Participate (Online)

Dear Foster Parent,

My name is Selynn Butler and I am a UPEI psychology Honours student under the supervision of Dr. Philip Smith. My thesis research is investigating the facilitators and barriers in recruiting and retaining foster parents on Prince Edward Island. I am inviting all current Regular foster homes to complete the attached online questionnaire (see link below). You will also be receiving a paper version of the questionnaire mailed to your house and so you may choose to complete either the online version or the paper version. We are looking for one response per foster home. This questionnaire will take approximately 25 minutes of your time. Your participation in this study will provide valuable information to enhance foster care on PEI, and thus support Island children in need of protection.

Please click this link to access more information about this research, the consent process, and the online questionnaire:

Thank you for your time,

Selynn Butler
Principal Investigator

Invitation to Participate (Paper)

Dear Foster Parent,

My name is Selynn Butler and I am a UPEI psychology Honours student under the supervision of Dr. Philip Smith. My thesis research is investigating the facilitators and barriers in recruiting and retaining foster parents on Prince Edward Island. I am inviting all current Regular foster homes to complete the attached questionnaire. You will have already received an email with an online version of the questionnaire and so you may choose to complete either the online version or the paper version. We are looking for one response per foster home. This questionnaire will take approximately 25 minutes of your time. Your participation in this study will provide valuable information to enhance foster care on PEI, and thus support Island children in need of protection.

Please refer to the participant information letter and the participant consent form before completing the questionnaire.

If you have chosen to complete the paper version, please mail the completed questionnaire in the stamped and addressed envelope provided at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your time,

Selynn Butler
Principal Investigator

Appendix 2

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER (Online)

Dear Foster Parent,

You are invited to participate in a research project about foster care on Prince Edward Island conducted by Selynn Butler under the supervision of Dr. Philip Smith in the Department of Psychology at the University of Prince Edward Island. This study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of Psychology 4900: Honours Thesis.

The aim of this project is to investigate the facilitators and barriers in recruiting and retaining foster parents on Prince Edward Island. Currently, there is a need for more foster parents on the Island and so gaining a deeper understanding of the satisfactions and challenges involved with being a foster parent is important to guide future recruitment and retention strategies. As a participant, you will be asked about your experiences as a foster parent. You are invited to complete a questionnaire online via LimeSurvey, an online survey platform, or you may complete a paper version of the questionnaire that you will receive in the mail. We are looking for one response per foster home. This questionnaire is composed primarily of close-ended questions, but also leaves space for additional comments.

Participation in this project will take approximately 25 minutes of your time, and your participation in the research project will pose no harm to you. Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. You may stop your participation in the research project at any time, without penalty or prejudice. All information collected in the course of this project will remain confidential and no identifying information will be gathered. No one in Child and Family Services or the Prince Edward Island Federation of Foster Families will have access to individual responses. Only Selynn Butler and Dr. Philip Smith will have access to the individual responses gathered in this research project. Upon completion of the project, you will be given a report summarizing the results. All data resulting from the research project will be retained for a period of 5 years after the completion of the project, after which time it will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research project, you may consult with Dr. Philip Smith, ph. (902) 566-0549, email: smithp@upei.ca or Dr. Jason Doiron, Chair of the Department of Psychology, ph. (902) 566-0519, email: jpdoiron@upei.ca. For access to the full results of the research project once these are available, please contact Selynn Butler, ph. (902) 620-9136, email: selbutler@upei.ca.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER (Paper)

Dear Foster Parent,

You are invited to participate in a research project about foster care on Prince Edward Island conducted by Selynn Butler under the supervision of Dr. Philip Smith in the Department of Psychology at the University of Prince Edward Island. This study is being conducted to fulfill the requirements of Psychology 4900: Honours Thesis.

The aim of this project is to investigate the facilitators and barriers in recruiting and retaining foster parents on Prince Edward Island. Currently, there is a need for more foster parents on the Island and so gaining a deeper understanding of the satisfactions and challenges involved with being a foster parent is important to guide future recruitment and retention strategies. As a participant, you will be asked about your experiences as a foster parent. You are invited to complete a paper questionnaire, or you may complete an online version of the questionnaire that has been emailed to you. We are looking for one response per foster home. This questionnaire is composed primarily of close-ended questions, but also leaves space for additional comments.

Participation in this project will take approximately 25 minutes of your time, and your participation in the research project will pose no harm to you. Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. You may stop your participation in the research project at any time, without penalty or prejudice. All information collected in the course of this project will remain confidential and no identifying information will be gathered. No one in Child and Family Services or the Prince Edward Island Federation of Foster Families will have access to individual responses. Only Selynn Butler and Dr. Philip Smith will have access to the individual responses gathered in this research project. Upon completion of the project, you will be given a report summarizing the results. All data resulting from the research project will be retained for a period of 5 years after the completion of the project, after which time it will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research project, you may consult with Dr. Philip Smith, ph. (902) 566-0549, email: smithp@upei.ca or Dr. Jason Doiron, Chair of the Department of Psychology, ph. (902) 566-0519, email: jpdoiron@upei.ca. For access to the full results of the research project once these are available, please contact Selynn Butler, ph. (902) 620-9136, email: selbutler@upei.ca.

Appendix 3

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I consent to participating in research on the facilitators and barriers in recruiting and retaining foster parents on Prince Edward Island. I understand that all current Regular foster homes have been invited to partake in this research, and that responses will undergo descriptive statistics to identify satisfactions and challenges involved with being a foster parent.

I understand that my participation involves completion of an online or paper questionnaire which is composed primarily of close-ended questions, but also leaves space for additional comments. I understand that my additional comments will be used only if they cannot identify me.

I understand that my participation may serve as a benefit to me by advancing knowledge about the satisfactions and challenges that foster parents face, thereby allowing for improvement of the foster care system. I understand that there are no known risks of completing this questionnaire.

I have read and understood the material about this study in the Information Letter, and understand that:

1. My participation in the study is entirely voluntary;
2. I may discontinue my participation at any time without any adverse consequence;
3. My responses will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be gathered, and that no one in Child and Family Services or the Prince Edward Island Federation of Foster Families will have access to individual responses;
4. Once data have been submitted, I will no longer have the opportunity to request that my data be removed from the study;
5. I have the freedom not to answer any question included in the research;
6. I understand that my continuing with the study indicates consent.
7. I understand that I can contact the UPEI Research Ethics Board at (902) 620-5104, or by email at reb@upei.ca if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study.

Appendix 4

FIRST REMINDER EMAIL

Sorry to bother you if you have already responded, but this is just a reminder of the opportunity to participate in an important study about the satisfactions and challenges of foster parents on Prince Edward Island. Please note that this message is being sent to all foster parents because we are not keeping track of the names of those who have responded and those who have not to ensure that no one feels pressured into responding.

Please see a description of the research along with a link to the questionnaire below:

My name is Selynn Butler and I am a UPEI psychology Honours student under the supervision of Dr. Philip Smith. My thesis research is investigating the facilitators and barriers in recruiting and retaining foster parents on Prince Edward Island. I am inviting all current Regular foster homes to complete the attached online questionnaire (see link below). This questionnaire will take approximately 25 minutes of your time. Your participation in this study will provide valuable information to enhance foster care on PEI, and thus support Island children in need of protection.

Please click this link to access more information about this research, the consent process, and the online questionnaire:

Thank you for your time,

Selynn Butler
Principal Investigator

FINAL REMINDER EMAIL

Sorry to bother you if you have already responded, but this is just a final reminder of the opportunity to participate in an important study about the satisfactions and challenges of foster parents on Prince Edward Island. Please note that this message is being sent to all foster parents because we are not keeping track of the names of those who have responded and those who have not to ensure that no one feels pressured into responding.

Please see a description of the research along with a link to the questionnaire below:

My name is Selynn Butler and I am a UPEI psychology Honours student under the supervision of Dr. Philip Smith. My thesis research is investigating the facilitators and barriers in recruiting and retaining foster parents on Prince Edward Island. I am inviting all current Regular foster parents to complete the attached online questionnaire (see link below). This questionnaire will take approximately 25 minutes of your time. Your participation in this study will provide valuable information to enhance foster care on PEI, and thus support Island children in need of protection.

Please click this link to access more information about this research, the consent process, and the online questionnaire:

Thank you for your time,

Selynn Butler
Principal Investigator

	own way.	SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8
10.	As a foster parent, I am lonely.	AD1 SD2 MD3 SLD4 SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8
11.	As a foster parent, I experienced some kind of failure, or was unable to do well at something.	AD1 SD2 MD3 SLD4 SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8
12.	As a foster parent, I have a lot of pressures I could do without.	AD1 SD2 MD3 SLD4 SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8
13.	As a foster parent, I feel close and connected with other people who are important to me.	AD1 SD2 MD3 SLD4 SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8
14.	As a foster parent, I take on and master hard challenges.	AD1 SD2 MD3 SLD4 SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8
15.	As a foster parent, my choices express my “true self.”	AD1 SD2 MD3 SLD4 SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8
16.	As a foster parent, I feel unappreciated by one or more important people.	AD1 SD2 MD3 SLD4 SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8
17.	As a foster parent, I did something stupid, that made me feel incompetent.	AD1 SD2 MD3 SLD4 SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8
18.	As a foster parent, there are people telling me what I have to do.	AD1 SD2 MD3 SLD4 SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8
19.	As a foster parent, I feel a strong sense of intimacy with the people I spend time with.	AD1 SD2 MD3 SLD4 SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8
20.	As a foster parent, I do well even at the hard things.	AD1 SD2 MD3 SLD4 SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8
21.	As a foster parent, I am really doing what interests me.	AD1 SD2 MD3 SLD4 SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8
22.	As a foster parent, I have disagreements or conflicts with people I usually get along with.	AD1 SD2 MD3 SLD4 SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8
23.	As a foster parent, I struggle doing something I should be good at.	AD1 SD2 MD3 SLD4 SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8
24.	As a foster parent, I have to do things against my will.	AD1 SD2 MD3 SLD4 SLA5 MA6 SA7 AA8

For each of the following items, please use the following response scale:

CD = Completely Disagree

MD = Moderately Disagree

SD = Slightly Disagree

NDNA = Neither Disagree nor Agree

SA = Slightly Agree

MA = Moderately Agree

CA = Completely Agree					
NA = Not Applicable					
25.	Social workers share fully about the background and problems of children whom they ask my family to accept.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
26.	When I need to talk over my concerns about a child, I do not hesitate to phone our social worker.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
27.	My social worker treats me as if I am a team member.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
28.	I have clear communication with the worker regarding who should be responsible for transportation, doctor visits, school conferences and the like.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
29.	I am secure about the soundness of the decisions my social worker makes.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
30.	My social worker is available to assist me in handling special problems/needs of children in my care.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
31.	I receive as much service from my social worker as other foster parents.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
32.	The less I have to do with my social worker, the better off my home is.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
33.	Social workers respect my opinions regarding the foster child(ren) that are placed with my family.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
34.	It was clear what social workers expect of me as a foster parent.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
35.	Social workers are warm and friendly when I have distress/concerns as a foster parent.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
36.	I get positive reinforcement from my worker on my foster parenting approach.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
37.	Social workers help me solve problems with my foster child when they arise.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
38.	Social workers provide information about my foster child when I need it.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
39.	Conflict with the social worker occurs on a frequent basis.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
40.	Foster care room and board rates are insufficient.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
41.	Reimbursements for clothing, spending, etc. are insufficient.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
42.	There was respect for my family when we experienced a significant personal loss of a family member(s).	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
43.	My training requirements as a foster family	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4

	were met.	SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
44.	Agency red tape often interfered with my ability to care for my foster child(ren).	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
45.	The fear of being named in an allegation of abuse/neglect by a foster child affected my ability to care.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
46.	Losing children who I was fond of is a common concern I have.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
47.	Seeing children sent back to a bad situation is a common concern I have.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
48.	Dealing with the foster child's birth family is a common concern I have.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
49.	Dealing with the foster child's difficult behavior is a common concern I have.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
50.	I was challenged in my fostering by my own child(ren)'s resentment of and conflict with foster child(ren).	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
51.	When I felt I needed to talk over my concerns about a child, I did not hesitate to phone my worker.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
52.	I am satisfied with the type of children Child Protection Services places with me.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
53.	I feel competent to handle the type(s) of children placed in my home.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
54.	I have never had regrets about my decision to become a foster parent.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
55.	I saw positive changes in the children who were placed in my home.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
56.	The knowledge and skills I learned in foster care training were later reinforced by social workers.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
57.	The foster care training I received was based on my training needs that I felt were relevant.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
58.	Looking back, I was helped through orientation/pre-service training to anticipate many of the difficulties I later experienced as a foster parent.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
59.	Overall, I consider the training I have received about fostering as appropriate.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
60.	Positive programs, events, and activities are happening in this community to help children and families in a healthy way.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8
61.	I feel foster parents in my community have influence in the way our child protection systems respond to the needs of children and families.	CD1	MD2	SD3	NDNA4
		SA5	MA6	CA7	NA8

62.	I feel like our child protection systems respect the cultural values of the children, community, and my family.	CD1 SA5	MD2 MA6	SD3 CA7	NDNA4 NA8
63.	Foster children have adequate access to programs and resources to develop and maintain fluency in their first (or heritage) language.	CD1 SA5	MD2 MA6	SD3 CA7	NDNA4 NA8
64.	Child protection systems respond appropriately to the needs of children throughout their lifespan.	CD1 SA5	MD2 MA6	SD3 CA7	NDNA4 NA8
65.	I am satisfied that the child protection system in my community assesses risk to children in a way that does not penalize birth parents/families for poverty, lack of access to adequate housing, or other circumstances that may be beyond their control.	CD1 SA5	MD2 MA6	SD3 CA7	NDNA4 NA8
66.	I am satisfied that the child protection system in my community assesses risk to children accurately and with cultural sensitivity.	CD1 SA5	MD2 MA6	SD3 CA7	NDNA4 NA8
67.	I am satisfied that the resources and support for foster children in my community are equivalent to those available in other communities.	CD1 SA5	MD2 MA6	SD3 CA7	NDNA4 NA8
68.	Foster children have adequate access to programs and resources to develop and maintain their cultural identity.	CD1 SA5	MD2 MA6	SD3 CA7	NDNA4 NA8
69.	I am confident that the birth family, extended family, and child (if appropriate) are involved in placement planning for children in my community.	CD1 SA5	MD2 MA6	SD3 CA7	NDNA4 NA8

70. In the past, have you encouraged other families to foster? Y1 N2
71. If yes, how many families have you encouraged to foster? 1 2 3 4 5+
72. When asked about your experience fostering, do you describe it as...
- Very Poor
 - Poor
 - Fair
 - Good
 - Very Good
73. Additional comments about how you would describe your experience fostering:
74. In the future, would you encourage other families to foster?
- Definitely Not
 - Very Probably Not
 - Probably Not
 - Possibly
 - Probably

- f. Very Probably
 - g. Definitely
75. If you would be inclined to encourage other families to foster, what is the main reason for your inclination? Comments:
76. If you would be reluctant to encourage other families to foster, what is the main reason for your reluctance? Comments:
77. As a reminder, we are interested in learning more about foster parent retention. Which of the following best describes your thoughts about remaining a foster parent?
- a. I plan to continue fostering for 5 years or more.
 - b. I plan to continue fostering for 3-4 years.
 - c. I plan to continue fostering for 1-2 years.
 - d. I plan to continue fostering for 6-12 months.
 - e. I plan to continue fostering for 6 months or less.
78. If you plan to discontinue fostering within the next 6 months or 1 year, what is the main reason for this? Comments:

Thank you very much for your time and participation. If you have any additional comments or questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Selynn Butler
selbutler@upei.ca
(902) 620-9136

Appendix 6

Factor 1: “Perceptions About Social Workers”

25. Social workers share fully about the background and problems of children whom they ask my family to accept.
26. When I need to talk over my concerns about a child, I do not hesitate to phone our social worker.
27. My social worker treats me as if I am a team member.
28. I have clear communication with the worker regarding who should be responsible for transportation, doctor visits, school conferences and the like.
29. I am secure about the soundness of the decisions my social worker makes.
30. My social worker is available to assist me in handling special problems/needs of children in my care.
31. I receive as much service from my social worker as other foster parents.
32. The less I have to do with my social worker, the better off my home is.
33. Social workers respect my opinions regarding the foster child(ren) that are placed with my family.
34. It was clear what social workers expect of me as a foster parent.
35. Social workers are warm and friendly when I have distress/concerns as a foster parent.
36. I get positive reinforcement from my worker on my foster parenting approach.
37. Social workers help me solve problems with my foster child when they arise.
38. Social workers provide information about my foster child when I need it.

Factor 2: “Challenging Aspects of Fostering”

39. Conflict with the social worker occurs on a frequent basis.
40. Foster care room and board rates are insufficient.
41. Reimbursements for clothing, spending, etc. are insufficient.
42. There was respect for my family when we experienced a significant personal loss of a family member(s).
43. My training requirements as a foster family were met.
44. Agency red tape often interfered with my ability to care for my foster child(ren).
45. The fear of being named in an allegation of abuse/neglect by a foster child affected my ability to care.
46. Losing children who I was fond of is a common concern I have.
47. Seeing children sent back to a bad situation is a common concern I have.
48. Dealing with the foster child's birth family is a common concern I have.
49. Dealing with the foster child's difficult behavior is a common concern I have.
50. I was challenged in my fostering by my own child(ren)'s resentment of and conflict with foster child(ren).

Factor 3: “Confidence and Satisfaction”

52. I am satisfied with the type of children Child Protection Services places with me.
53. I feel competent to handle the type(s) of children placed in my home.
54. I have never had regrets about my decision to become a foster parent.
55. I saw positive changes in the children who were placed in my home.

Factor 4: "Training"

56. The knowledge and skills I learned in foster care training were later reinforced by social workers.
57. The foster care training I received was based on my training needs that I felt were relevant.
58. Looking back, I was helped through orientation/pre-service training to anticipate many of the difficulties I later experienced as a foster parent.
59. Overall, I consider the training I have received about fostering as appropriate.

Appendix 7**PERMISSION TO USE HONOURS PAPER**

Title of paper: Facilitators and Barriers in Recruiting and Retaining Foster Parents in Prince Edward Island

Name of Author: Selynn Butler

Department: Psychology

Degree: Bachelor of Science

Year: 2018

Name of Supervisor(s): Dr. Philip Smith

In presenting this paper in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an honours degree from the University of Prince Edward Island, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection and give permission to add an electronic version of the honours paper to the Digital Repository at the University of Prince Edward Island. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this paper for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professors who supervised my work, or, in their absence, by the Chair of the Department or the Dean of the Faculty in which my paper was done. It is understood any copying or publication or use of this paper or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Prince Edward Island in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my paper.

Signature [of author]:

Address [Department]: Psychology

Date: March 7th, 2018