RESEARCH REPORT

Growing FGC/FGDM programs in Ontario: an organizational development investigation

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<div align="center">**Executive Summary**</div>

Family Group Conferencing (FGC) was introduced to Canada in the early 1990s. In 1998, a pilot project was run in one area of Toronto. In the intervening years the interest in FGC has grown. Nine provincial regions now offer FGC as part of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) palette. The processes leading to the expansion of FGC are assumed, but have not been formally investigated. How to replicate such success is thus not clear. Further, there also is no evidence base regarding the sustainability of the program.

This study was undertaken in 2016 to explore the organizational development process of FGC in Ontario, Canada. Specifically, it aimed to

- Identify the internal and external facilitative and inhibitory processes in promoting the shift to FGC use in child protection;
- Identify opportunities and threats to the program; and
- Identify processes that would lead to continued sustainability of the program.

Theoretical Orientation

A systems orientation to understanding organizational development guided this study. Systems theory recognizes that organizations respond to internal and external influences, and aim for stability and balance (Lewis, Lewis & Packhard, 2007). This theory acknowledges both technical and social dimensions of the organization and therefore allows for a holistic understanding of the complex interaction between these influences and their impact on organizational change (Lane, Munro & Husemann, 2016). Specifically, our study employed Jansson's (2013) understanding of organizational change by considering three areas of change: *practice* (what—regulations, processes, discursive practices and communication); *practitioners* (who—the actors or change agents involved) and p*raxis* (how—the means by which change takes place).

Methodology

The study employed exploratory qualitative research methodology with a combination of semi-structured long interviews, a focus group and a review of existing institutional documents. The study participants were chosen purposefully and invitations to participate in the study were extended to all ADR managers/coordinators, key informants (who had a long history with FGC in Ontario) and the manager of the FGC program at the George Hull Centre. Four ADR managers and four key informants participated in structured telephone interviews between January and March 2016. These interviews gathered information on facilitative and constraining processes in the initiation and sustainment of Ontario FGC projects, and to processes that might maintain or threaten its sustainability. Nine out of 12 Steering Committee members participated in a focus group in mid-June 2016. The focus group was intended to generate information similar to the telephone interviews, but from a provincial rather than regional or local perspective. The focus group process allowed for the triangulation --and thus the credibility and dependability --of the data.

Findings

The research participants suggested that a range of external and internal processes had led to the current state of FGC in Ontario. The *external processes* included:

- policy environment and child welfare discourses,
- availability (or lack thereof) of funding,
- relationship with Ministry,
- regional service culture,
- influence of First Nations,

- Amalgamation of agencies and
- Over-representation of minorities.

Internal processes included

➢ leadership at the PR and child welfare or transfer payment agency level,
➢ match (or lack thereof) between FGC orientation and agency's philosophical orientation,
➢ internal competition and disruptions such as internal funding decisions or staff turnover and
➢ program / service location.

These external and internal processes have influenced the program both positively and negatively. The study participants perceived the program as *successful*, citing an increase in referrals, buy-in by various stakeholders (child welfare practitioners, legal system and families), increasing use of family empowerment principles and changes in child welfare language regarding families and family partnerships.

Perceived FGC *strengths* included

▪ family and worker satisfaction with outcomes;
▪ growth in knowledge and awareness of the program;
▪ management buy-in;
▪ evidence of the integration of FGC into daily child welfare practice;
▪ individual champions in each region;
▪ committed and passionate coordinators;
▪ collaborative engagement between relevant partners;
▪ quality training offered through the PR (Ontario Provincial Resource); and
▪ a creative, innovative PR that advocates for FGC.

Opportunities identified to further anchor FGC within child welfare culture included

✓ increasing referrals to match the need for FGC;
✓ extending the FGC offering to families outside of child welfare, for example, in elder care or mental health; and
✓ using FGC to address issues of disproportionality in welfare.

Despite the successes, strengths and opportunities, there were concerns about the longer-term sustainability and viability of FGC. *Threats and weaknesses* were spoken to, including

❖ Erratic, insufficient Ministry funding which could disrupt the program as it impacts the availability and interest of coordinators, and undermines the credibility of the program with the courts, lawyers, child welfare workers and families;
❖ A potential change in the policy environment as this could eliminate FGC as an option sanctioned and supported by the state;
❖ The competition and distraction introduced both by similar programs and agency disruptions (such as the introduction of new data collection systems or staff turnover);
❖ The lack of understanding by some local child welfare leaders of the underpinning principles of FGC;
❖ Unpredictability of referrals;
❖ Challenges in matching the supply of coordinators to the demand for conferences;
❖ Concerns regarding quality assurance;
❖ A lack of relevant research examining regional outcomes;
❖ TPAs not always invested in FGC outcomes; and
❖ The limited capacity of the Ontario Provincial Resource (PR).

FGC remains vulnerable despite relatively long periods of investment in the program.

Diverse *strategies* have been employed to facilitate the adoption and maintenance of FGC. These include impacting the policy environment; careful preparation and incremental planning towards launching of FGC programs; use of internal champions to introduce FGC; community and interagency staff training to create familiarity with FGC; education and promotion using posters/newspapers/lunch & learns/media and building a program website; establishing formal committees and conducting informal discussions to build referral strategies; reaching out to ethno-specific communities; offering Rapid Response; paying attention to the field's needs; developing supportive multi-level leadership; and implementing high caliber training, mentorship and accreditation of coordinators.

Recommendations

This study demonstrates that agencies' use of a multi-level, multi-pronged approach using a systems lens facilitates FGC being woven into policy and practice. Building on strengths and maximizing the use of the limited available resources can counteract the vulnerability of FGC. Based on the findings, we make the following recommendations:

- Extend intentional organizational development needs towards the maintenance of FGC.
- Establish shared vision built on common interests across the relevant structures. This can be done by
  - Strengthening feedback loops to further legitimize FGC and construct common discourses that support FGC;
  - Identifying further opportunities for collaboration and enhancing relationships at senior decision-making levels in the province;
  - Because the child welfare agenda is increasingly informed by an anti-oppressive perspective, presenting FGC principles from a rights perspective;
  - Reviewing the conceptualization of FGC as an ADR mechanism to identify if this construction supports its primary function as a collaborative, collective planning tool;
  - Advocating for policy changes that further strengthen the entrenchment of family empowerment approaches;
  - Leveraging interested legal professionals to grow the demand for FGC;
  - Paying attention to increasing the investment of TPAs in FGC outcomes.
- Promote FGC culture by
  - Consolidating regional linkages between the PR and child welfare structures;
  - Expanding opportunities for reciprocal exchange and communication;
  - Making sure child welfare has strong representation at the PR;
  - Offering intentional cultural change through the professional development days focused on mastering family empowerment interventions, reflexivity and shared goals to shift the child welfare story, symbols and rituals towards family partnership;
  - Systematically identifying where the critical mass of support exists to purposefully use these individuals as catalysts of change;
  - Paying attention to the interests of child welfare workers;
  - Offering a range of family involvement and conflict resolution options;
  - Communicating quality standards that workers are not working effectively if they are not actively utilizing family partnership strategies.
- Manage the workforce by
  - Continuing the training, mentoring, accreditation and rostering of coordinators to create multiple opportunities for shared decision-making and reflexive practice;
  - Minimizing the vulnerability of coordinators by reviewing both the composition and deployment of coordinators;
- Establish active research agenda to inform deliberate planning.

Abbreviations

ADR   Alternative Dispute Resolution
CAS   Children's Aid Society
CPM   Child Protection Mediation
ED   Executive Director
FG   Focus group
FGC   Family Group Conferencing
FGDM Family Group Decision Making
OACAS Ontario Association for Children's Aid Societies
OCL   Office of the Children's Lawyer
PR   Ontario Provincial Resource
TPA   Transfer Payment Agency

Introduction

Family Group Conferencing (FGC) made its debut in the child welfare world in 1989 with the adoption of legislation in New Zealand that offered conferencing as a decision making process to families engaged with the child protection and/or juvenile justice systems. FGC has since taken root in a number of sites internationally. In 1993 child welfare conferencing arrived in Canada initiated by Gale Burford and Joan Pennell in Newfoundland. Legislation in 1996 made provision for FGC in British Columbia. Later, FGC was used in Alberta, and was introduced province-wide in New Brunswick (Schmid & Sieben, 2008). Developments in Ontario began with a Toronto pilot in 1998, a number of other programs emerging in subsequent years. Following collaborative work with other agencies in the province, the Ontario Provincial Resource (PR) was formally established in 2006. The PR supports FGC child welfare programs in the province by training, mentoring and certifying prospective coordinators.

Little is understood about the processes which support or inhibit the establishment of FGC projects. Indeed, the research pertaining to such initiatives has focused primarily on process outcomes related to participant satisfaction and improved child safety and well-being (Frost, Abrams & Burgess, 2014). Knowing that the principles supporting conferencing tend to be at odds with traditional child protection values and practices, one can assume that particular challenges exist in introducing conferencing into the child protection realm (Pennell, 2005). However, beyond Pennell's contribution, what these challenges are and how to overcome these have not been adequately explored in the literature. Neither is there any description of the forces that allow such programs to be sustained. While there are assumptions about why conferencing has grown in the province, it would be useful to determine common facilitators and challenges that have been experienced in introducing FGC to child welfare organizations. It would be helpful to understand how barriers have been addressed and to know how strengths have been built upon, and thus to expand knowledge regarding the organizational development of FGC. In particular, this study provides the PR with a deeper understanding of its organizational context and offers insights for strategic planning. The findings encourage individual agencies and ADR regions to reflect on their historical process, identifying strengths on which to build for the future.

The Conceptual Framework

In this section we present a conceptual framework that will be used to review the facilitative and inhibitory processes impacting the organizational development of FGC in Ontario. Family group conferencing initiatives involve change management and capacity development efforts. Jansson (2013) observes that 70% of organizational change efforts fail due to influences such as employee stress, disruption of routine organizational experiences and uncertainty regarding the organization's future. Successfully managing change is thus essential when attempting to introduce a conferencing project. Since our study is informed by academic literature relevant to organizational change broadly. We include in our review research examining organizational development as well as conferencing

Three areas must be considered in organizational change, according to Jansson (2013). First, what needs to be changed? This refers to *Practice, which* includes such facets as regulations, processes, discursive practices and communication. Second, who prompts change? These are the *Practitioners,* the actors or change agents involved. And thirdly, how does the change occur? *Praxis* describes the means by which change takes place.

Practice

The 'what' of change is determined by diagnosing the organizational context and so identifying areas of change (Morrison, 2014). Martin (2014) equates organizational development with developing individuals, teams and organizations. Organizational development might occur in the following four areas: human processes (including communication, decision-making, leadership and environment); techno-structures (design of organization, structure of tasks, nature of delegation and formalization);

human resource management; and strategy (the organizational culture and the organizations' positioning within and transactions with external environment) (Lalonde, 2011, drawing on Cummings & Worley, 2009).

Another way of understanding the 'what' of change is related to seeing organizational change as equivalent to change in the organizational culture. This paradigm suggests that change occurs on the level of symbols, myths and stories, routines and rituals, power, organizational structures, and control systems (Johnson, Whittington & Scholes, 2012).

Focusing on organizational culture is one way of addressing organizational development. Another is a systems lens, which suggests that change in one area is likely to lead to change in another. Indeed policy changes are implemented with the intention of effecting behavioural, practice changes. Because different parts of a system are interdependent, changes may unexpectedly result in unintended consequences, this potentially creating both opportunities and challenges.

Praxis

The process of organizational change (i.e. the *praxis* of bringing about change*)* may be dramatic, engendering radical re-creation. Alternatively, it may be of the 'fix and maintain', or 'build and develop' variety (Marshak, 1993, cited by Child, 2013, p.281), where shifts are both incidental and incremental. Change may also be either planned or emergent, the latter constituting learning from experience (Child, 2013). Further, change can involve the whole or only part of an organization (Child, 2013).

Child (2013, p.294), adapting Kotter's work (1995) suggests that planned change would involve the following steps:

1. Establishing a sense of urgency
2. Creating a guiding coalition
3. Developing a vision and strategy
4. Communicating the change vision
5. Empowering broad-based action
6. Generating short-term wins
7. Consolidating gains and producing more change
8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture

A systems approach to organizations identifies change as occurring either internally to the organization, or in response to external influences and shifts (Morrison, 2014). Organizations have to respond to major external influences, significant drivers being those affecting the field as a whole, for example, policies, legislation, competition, and funding (Child, 2005). To ensure their survival, organizations need to continuously gain legitimacy within the broader institutional environment (Llamas-Sanchez, Garcia-Morales, & Martin-Tapia, 2013). External processes thus often carry more weight in pushing change than internal processes do (Pennell, personal communication, July 2016). The internal impulses prompting change fall into the same categories as the internal areas requiring change, highlighted above under practice.

When dealing with praxis*,* it is important to take into account the extent of previous and ongoing change to which an organization may have been subjected. This is because the type and frequency of historical change and employees' experience thereof will influence how they respond to change (Van der Smissen, Schalk, & Freeze, 2013). In comparison to the private sector, change in the public sector tends to be more frequent, is politically driven and is hastily implemented, so that workers in public organizations are more likely to impede change efforts (Baratt-Pugh, Bahn, & Gakere, 2013). Employees are additionally more likely to resist change if they believe that their independence and freedom is being challenged (Nesterkin, 2013), but more likely to adopt change if they trust the organizational leadership (Smollan, 2013). Jansson (2013) identifies that change itself can be a form of continuity for an organization, rather than simply a disruption. Where change is recognized as a means of maintaining stability it is viewed more positively.

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Practitioners

When considering *practitioners,* managers play a key role, particularly middle managers (Baratt-Pugh, Bahn & Gakere, 2013). Such leaders are essential in shaping the organization as a learning organization. Learning organizations consciously and intentionally respond to internal and external influences. To do so requires the organization management to be reflective and to focus on the early identification of failing or inappropriate systems. This is done by attending to contextual processes, being aware of political influences, remaining oriented to the instrumental objective, promoting participation and mutual responsibility, admitting error, and testing out and adapting strategies and interventions (Friedman, Lipschitz & Overmeer, 2003; Starbuck & Hedberg, 2003). Learning gets disseminated through the organization, for example, through modelling (Friedman, Lipschitz & Overmeer, 2003). Managers carry out the learning on a structural level through strategic planning units. Learning is also implemented on a behavioural level by shifting the organizational culture or story, which involves attending both to material and discursive practices (Mouton, Just Norholm & Gabrielsen, 2012). In learning organizations employees feel involved and trust their managers. Such influences are more likely to engender the commitment of employees in change processes (Friedman, Lipschitz & Overmeer, 2003).

Change management is essentially a communicative process. Hence, relational interventions, whether formal or informal, are important (Baratt-Pugh, Bahn, & Gakere, 2013). Managers may prompt change by promoting shared meaning making regarding what is to be achieved and how it is to be achieved (Nystrom et al, 2013; Starbuck & Hedberg, 2003). This can be achieved by using unifying symbols and rituals. However, beyond positive communication, leaders need to reduce barriers to change, which in turn allows employees to experience benefits of change (Child, 2005). Further, by encouraging new insights, motivating employees, developing competencies and leadership, and facilitating collaboration and cooperation, managers may address the interests, conflicts and power dynamics within the organization, consider the social needs of members of the organization and facilitate organizational learning. Finally, rational planning may be another strategy for change (Nystrom et al, 2013).

Having provided an overview of change management theory, it is pertinent to consider the literature pertaining to organizational development and FGC. Pennell (2005, 2000) has articulated organizational development issues relating to conferencing. She takes into account both the internal and external environment, and identifies four areas of capacity building, namely leadership development, organizational development, community organizing and inter-organizational collaboration. She recognizes that state influences and external processes may be either drivers or inhibitors to the introduction of conferencing. In order to mainstream the conferencing model, she advocates for building partnerships with a focus on children's safety as a primary mechanism. She recommends that diverse groups, which include representatives from the agency, families and broader community, be involved in planning for the program. Additionally, a guiding philosophy should be developed, inclusive training be offered, policy be adapted, advisory committees be established, local plans be developed, and program evaluation be conducted. It is crucial to decide where and with what rationale to locate the program (whether internal to the child protection agency or externally). Buy-in from the courts is also needed, and clear procedures must be developed regarding the sanctioning process of family decision-making. Collaboration with external parties is not only required to ensure program credibility, referrals and court approval of plans, but also with regard to the resourcing of family plans. Community partners (such as children's mental health agencies, judges, other child welfare agencies, community services) need to be invited to participate in both program planning and conference implementation, and should be kept informed of the developments and successes of the program. Pennell (2005) further advises that internal capacity be developed, noting that internal supports are required if child protection workers are to consistently refer families for conferencing, and

for those doing coordination to be able to fully invest in the necessary preparation and implementation activities. Strategies include growing leadership supports at all levels of the agency and strengthening the competencies of coordinators through ongoing training and supervision. A facilitative culture must be established within the child protection agency and relevant processes and procedures that reduce barriers to using conferencing need to be introduced. Pennell (2005) also considers sustainability, suggesting that capacity building occur in conjunction with addressing the needs of frontline workers.

Rauktis, Mc Carthy, Krackhardt and Calahane (2010), using the lens of innovation introduction, highlight further processes for consideration. They suggest that a risk-averse climate in the USA has created resistance to FGC. Their study highlights that regional clustering of programs encourages exchange and support. FGC programs are more likely to be introduced where financial support is offered and there are sufficient social workers to also take on the coordination. Regions that were committed to service coordination were also more open to adopting FGC. Merkel-Holguin (2000) offers a matrix regarding key decision-making points when introducing an FGC program that considers internal policies and procedures, staffing and administrative matters, and coalition building.

In summary, organizational development can be viewed through a systemic lens. From this perspective, a change agent wishes to understand the system as a whole and have insight into how change in one part of a system will effect change in another. The impact of both internal and external processes must be understood. Internally, shifting organizational culture is a means of changing the system. The leader will adopt various communicative strategies to change the organizational discourse. This study considers which of the strategies above have been employed to advance FGC in the child welfare field in Ontario.

The Organizational Context

In the 18 years since the Toronto FGC project was launched in 1998, the organizational context has shifted. This organizational context is comprised of provincial actors (such as the Ministry, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) and the PR); the ADR structures; and the individual Children's Aid Societies).

Initially, interested child protection agencies were involving themselves in FGC initiatives because leaders within these agencies identified a need for greater family involvement in decision-making processes. In July 2005, the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services issued a policy entitled 'Child Welfare Transformation 2005: A strategic plan for a flexible, sustainable and outcome oriented service delivery model'. The 'Transformation Agenda' promoted an approach to child welfare that facilitated differential response and encouraged alternatives to court processes. Bill 210, Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, which came into effect in 2006, provided for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). Such legislative and policy accommodations were intended to decrease reliance on the courts, promote partnerships with families and streamline child welfare interventions to more effectively address family needs. In this policy, FGC was identified as a conflict resolution approach (rather than a planning tool) alongside Aboriginal Approaches, Child Protection Mediation (CPM) and 'Fourth Option' programs. The Ministry has set up ADR programs in each of the nine regions in Ontario. On behalf of the Ministry, Bay Consulting in 2012 conducted an investigation into ADR practices in the province, resulting in a document entitled 'Evaluation of the Child Welfare ADR Service Delivery System in Ontario – Final Report, February 2013.' The focus of this research was on the efficiency and efficacy of provincial ADR delivery. As a result, the Ontario Child Welfare Alternative Dispute Resolution Service Delivery System Working Group was established in 2014 to consider issues emerging from the report including service delivery, roles and responsibilities, accessibility, training, data collection and reporting, as well as relationship-building and networking. Accordingly, the Working Group made recommendations regarding funding, accountability and performance criteria; the relationship of programs with the Ministry; improved accessibility for a range of target groups; the integration of aboriginal approaches into ADR; strategies by which child welfare agencies could integrate ADR into

their collaborative practice options; the provision of regular training; and data-collection and data-sharing systems. A representative Provincial ADR Advisory Committee also recommended by the Working Group was established in 2015.

Since the introduction of the pilot in 1998 there has thus been the development of a formal provincial policy context for FGC. Along with this has come a service delivery framework. There is ongoing review of this policy environment.

The Study

Aim

This study explored the organizational development process of FGC in Ontario by focusing on what needed to change, how it was changed and by whom it was changed (Jansson, 2013). A systems orientation to understanding organizational development was adopted. Systems theory recognizes that organizations, like biological systems, respond to internal and external influences, and aim for stability and balance (Lewis, Lewis & Packhard, 2007). While systems theory attends to structures and their interdependence, contemporary systems theory focus also on the processes shaping such interaction (Scott & Davies, 2007). Systems theory, in acknowledging both technical and social dimensions, further allows for a holistic understanding of the complex interaction between these influences and their impact on organizational change (Lane, Munro & Husemann, 2016). Recognizing the complexity of change, this study, using interviews with FGC program management, aimed

- To identify the internal and external facilitative and inhibitory processes in promoting the shift to FGC use in child protection;
- To identify opportunities and threats to the program;
- To understand processes that would lead to continued sustainability of the program.

Research Methodology

This study utilized an exploratory qualitative research methodology with a combination of semi-structured long interviews, a focus group and a review of existing institutional documents. A qualitative approach was chosen specifically to be able to lift out complexity and nuance from the data. The study participants were chosen purposefully and invitations to participate in the study were extended to all ADR managers/coordinators, key informants who had a long history with FGC in Ontario and the manager of the FGC program at the George Hall Centre (there was no provincial coordinator at the time of the research).

Four ADR managers and four key informants participated in structured telephone interviews between January and March 2016. These interviews gathered information on facilitative and constraining processes in the initiation and maintenance of Ontario FGC projects, and processes that might maintain or threaten the sustainability of FGC. The FGC program has expanded to include the nine provincial regions. However, there has not been any formal assessment as to whether this growth will secure FGCs longevity in the Ontario child welfare world. Interviews allowed participants to elaborate and clarify their responses and to provide thicker meanings than would have been possible, for example, through a questionnaire. All interview participants were able to review their initial transcripts to offer corrections and identify whether any material should be deleted.

Nine Steering Committee members participated in a focus group in mid-June 2016. The focus group aimed to collect the same information as the telephone interviews, but from a provincial rather than regional or local perspective. Although three of the persons interviewed were also part of the Steering Committee, the focus group process allowed for the triangulation of and thus credibility and dependability of the data. Additionally, a focus group was chosen as it is an inexpensive method that offers quick results. The group members' interactions facilitated the stimulation of new ideas not raised in the individual interviews. It also permitted flexibility in probing. Because these focus group participants do not share the same status and thus power within the group, it is possible that

participants were reluctant to be candid in each other's presence. It was hoped that the researcher's experience in facilitating focus groups mitigated this potential negative dynamic.

To analyze the data, the researchers first identified categories and themes arising from individual interviews. Intersecting themes from the focus group were then distinguished in an iterative process to determine facilitative and constraining processes.

Formal ethics approval was received from the Wilfrid Laurier University ethics board and from the George Hull Centre.

Limitations.

As researchers we chose to understand the processes leading to successful programs. This allowed us to potentially offer direction for the replication of such processes by those wishing to launch FGC programs. The study thus focused only on those organizations that had successfully initiated and sustained an FGC program. The findings therefore speak to stories of success, and do not fully identify why certain programs did not succeed. The methodology and participant population do not allow for generalizability. Insights may be limited as the study sample was small;   only Ontario was considered, where child welfare services are delivered privately rather than through government; and only five out of nine regions were represented by the interviewees, . None of these was a rural region. Certain managers did not have a long history with the program, and could not always offer historical perspectives. However, the Steering Committee members held some institutional memory and supplemented such gaps. Nevertheless, the emergent findings add to the existing knowledge regarding the organizational development of FGC.

Findings

Eight persons participated in the interviews between January and March 2016. Four out of eleven ADR managers were interviewed, each representing a different region. A key informant was active in a further region. Thus five out of nine regions were covered. The remaining four participants were key informants who each have had long term involvement with FGC in Ontario. Two in this group had involvement with the Steering Committee. Out of the eight participants in individual interviews, P7 asked not to be quoted directly. The focus group with nine Steering Committee members was held in mid-June 2016.

Some participants referred to FGC as FGDM (Family Group Decision Making) or spoke only of 'Family Group'. For purposes of clarity only FGC is used in this report. Most participants spoke of the 'Provincial Resource' when meaning the Ontario Provincial Resource and the abbreviation 'PR' is thus used. Interview participants are designated with a 'P', focus group participants with 'FGP'.

The findings are presented in terms of the following themes:

- dimensions of the FGC program
- successful, established and sustainable
- the nature of change
- strategies for change

These themes were the most frequently mentioned ones and intersected in large part with the structure of the interviews and focus group. Please note that only selected quotes are presented. Certain categories are repeated under the different themes. For example, the issue of leadership pertains to the viability of the program, but having particular change agents is also a strategy for change.

Dimensions of the FGC Program in Ontario

The information below is drawn from the data. While we had accessed some background information before beginning the research, individual participants were asked about the dimensions of their particular programs. Because it would be easy to identify participants if explicitly connected to a program, participants are not linked to the data in this section.

Information was provided regarding

- The Ontario Provincial Resource (PR)
- The nature of institutional arrangements in terms of delivery structures and types of coordinators

Description of the Ontario Provincial Resource (PR).

As highlighted by participants, the PR, located in the George Hull Centre in Toronto, manages the coordinator register and roster. Training for prospective coordinators is delivered twice yearly. New trainees are mentored before becoming registered coordinators. Professional development days are offered twice a year.

There are 115 trained coordinators. Of these 85 are rostered, active coordinators. The remaining 30 are registered coordinators (trained but not currently active). A further seven are coordinators-in-training who are in the mentorship process. Of the 85 rostered coordinators, 23 are mentors. Twelve persons make up the training faculty.

There are nine ADR regions. One particular region has three managers, bringing the number of ADR managers to 11.

Until recently the Steering Committee comprised 10 persons, but a further two have now been added. Typically the program director, the PR coordinator and a George Hull administrator also attend the Steering Committee meetings, the director chairing the meetings.

Nature of institutional arrangements.

The length of time the programs have existed varies. The oldest began in 1998; one in 2001; another in 2004: the structure shifted in 2007 with the introduction of a single ADR access point; one in 2004 preceding the ADR legislation; and one in 2008.

The persons interviewed represented four different structures of FGC delivery.

Table 1
Types of FGC delivery structures in Ontario as Represented by Interviewees (N=8)

Type of Structure	Number of Interviewees
Single Access point ADR programs: Transfer Payment Agency (TPA) and delivery intersect (Service outside of a child protection agency)	3 (though only 2 structures represented in the study i.e. a key informant and an ADR manager came from the same region)
FGC only: TPA and delivery intersect (Service outside of a child protection agency)	1
FGC (TPA external) Service inside of a child protection agency	2
Ontario Provincial Resource	2

Historical and contextual reasons have shaped the five current delivery structures represented in the study. The oldest program was established collaboratively by child protection and children's mental health agencies in 1998, the referral and management point being set up within a children's mental health agency. In this region, a CPM program was already functioning independently. Traditional ADR approaches were being offered through a third agency.

In another region there had been a purchase agreement, a children's mental health agency offering FGC as a planning mechanism for families in 2004. Because they did not consider it part of their mandate to offer conflict resolution approaches, they declined the Ministry's invitation to become the ADR single access point for the region. The access point was then in 2007 established in another agency, the FGC service moving into that agency also.

The youngest agency accepted the provincial directive and established a single access point for ADR programs and also acts as the TPA.

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In two areas, FGC was launched as an in-house initiative by child protection agencies. One was established in 2001, the other in 2004. Both organizations initially resisted provincial government pressure to provide an external single access point ADR program. However, the agency that established its FGC program in 2004 will in future cede these services to a single, external access point, which is also the TPA.

The *type of coordinator* utilized varied across the different structures.

Table 2
Type of Coordinator

Fee-for-service only	2
Fee-for-service plus full time	3

Whether or not FGC coordinators are fee-for-service has shifted in some of the organizations. For example, a participant explains 'In the beginning the service was paid for out of child welfare dollars, but there was a fee-for-service coordinator.' Later, this position - which involved both service and FGC coordination- became a recognized position within the agency. With the infusion of provincial funding, [additional] fee-for-service coordinators were hired. More recently, this organization created internal positions for FGC coordinators.

The manner in which *referrals* are made appears to be relatively consistent across the regions. Referrals typically come from child welfare workers (child and family workers) and sometimes from supervisors. Referrals might also be received from case managers, kinship workers or other community service providers. First Nations child protection agencies might refer. Lawyers representing either the child protection agency or the family might also request a conference. Normally, the referral process follows on from a conversation with the family (this usually meaning the parent or caregiver) where assent is given. The referral goes directly to the FGC or ADR office, but in one region is first filtered through an internal child protection agency point person.

Table 3
Overview of Agencies Represented by Interviewees

Number of Coordinators in each region represented in the study	Number of **FGC REFERRALS** p.a. (extrapolated where funding limited further referrals in 2015)	Year of Operation	Are coordinators only doing FGC?
1 full-time FGC manager position, 1 full-time conference coordinator, 1 half-time intake worker/admin support staff and 12 fee-for-service (equivalent to 2 FTE)	100-122	18	
1 full- time FGC manager; 1 full time coordinator, soon to be 3 full time staff; 6 fee-for-service coordinators.	75	15	Also doing other types of family involvement conferences including Rapid Response Conferences
12-14 fee-for-service coordinators (based in children's mental health	144	12	

agencies or private practice); 1 full-time ADR manager			
1 full-time internal coordinator; at one point had an additional 2 trained external coordinators.	20-30	12	Also doing other types of family involvement conferences including Rapid Response
1 part-time manager; 5 fee-for-service coordinators	50	9	Doing FGC and CPM (Child Protection Mediation)

All participants indicated that programs have grown with regard to the number of personnel (employed or fee-for-service) involved.

There are thus diverse delivery structures including FGC service from within child welfare organizations and external service delivery. While a few FGC coordinators are employed in full time positions, typically as program managers or coordinators, most FGC coordinators are hired on a contract basis. In some cases, those offering FGC coordination are also functioning as coordinators for Rapid Response conferences or offer mediation

Successful, Established and Sustainable

Success of the FGC Program

All the participants identified the FGC program as successful, though, as indicated in the table below, various criteria were used to measure such success.

Table 4

Indicators of Success as noted by participants

Number of referrals	7
Agencies & families embracing the model (including ensuing cultural shifts)	8
Buy-in by legal system	1 + FG
FGC program responsiveness	2
Successful PR	2 + FG

Participants almost unanimously identified the increased *number of referrals*, and *stakeholders, agencies and families embracing the model* as indicators of success. P3 enthused 'There has been consistent growth each year.' FGP2 opined: 'The cases that are referred have increased significantly…in part because Societies and families have seen them as successful'. Agencies were using the service. P7 elaborated that the circle was widened often beyond family members of whom child welfare were aware; it was experienced as a child-friendly program; there was trust in the coordinators; and family members found the FGC process empowering. P1 identified the ensuing cultural shifts as an indicator of success. FGP1 confirmed: 'One of the best successes… is that the CAS staff…see the coordinators working with families and they've learned new skills. So those new skills are now integrated into the CAS and they engage families in a different way than they used to.' Participants identified legal system (courts and lawyers) buy-in as another indicator of success. FGP7 commented: 'Courts buy in…this may not be in all regions, but when judges are recommending this process… it catches fire… Sometimes someone…recommending it gets other judges to hear about it and then lawyers say "why can't we do that?".'

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Program responsiveness also suggested success. P4 noted: 'I define [success] as being available and able to provide the service promptly…Success is being able to reach out, educate and work collaboratively with partners to create the empowerment platform for the families.'

P8 reflected on the *success of the PR* and noted that it was standard setting and expanding to new populations that was important: 'We have… raised the bar on standards to become an FGC coordinator…we can stand behind the roster…we are strengthening our mentor group...Extending into the Francophone community is another terrific success.' FGP6 noted that the Steering Committee was a small group with a small budget, but nevertheless, as FGP1 highlighted, that the Committee, made up of volunteers, still existed was a success: '[O]ne factor is the longevity of it. There are many people who sat around this table in 2006-7 when we started. Many of them are still sitting around the same table.' FGP4 echoed this and elaborated 'It is a real coalition, very committed to work as a consensus building group'.

The Degree to which the Program is established.

The researchers wanted not only to know if the program was considered a success, but whether participants felt that the program had a solid foundation. The participants saw the program as established, but noted that there was uneven development across local programs. Table 5 provides a summary of the indicators of an established program as identified by the study participants.

Table 5

Indicators of an Established Program

Uneven development	8
Funding for service	8
Cultural alignments/shifts	8
Having visibility	1
Beyond the visionary	1

Development was uneven across the province, across regions and also sometimes within agencies, particularly where there were multiple branches. P7 commented 'The program is well established- but in pockets…Some teams are more likely to promote…FGC'. Focus group participants attributed this variation to historic processes and organizational cycles. FGP4 explained:

> *You might have a time when one local area just has the right combination … [but] you might have a period where one… area is struggling with even having referrals and one…area has low capacity for coordinating, then working on that gets corrected and there is some increase.*

All agreed that an indicator of an established program was agencies *finding the money* to ensure fluid service. In some cases, this has occurred. As P2 described, 'We ran into a funding hiccup this fiscal year. We said we can't accept more referrals… So the directors said "We will fund FGC out of the child welfare dollars".' P1 also emphasized this issue: 'All the CAS EDs [in our region]…decided that agencies with a bit more funding will assist the others in this period. That speaks volumes...'

Slotting into a values culture that supported FGC was another indicator of an established program. P5, internally located, emphasized 'this organization was one of the leaders… the culture was there to bring families more into decision-making…' Family involvement approaches were now deeply embedded in the organization, though P5 also saw FGC as a catalyst in this environment: 'Most of those shifts [towards rapid response and other family involvement approaches] are certainly influenced by FGC…FGC is the foundation of family-involved process in our organization'. P2 similarly underlined: 'The most important piece is that it fits philosophically with how we view ourselves and the service. ' P2 eagerly described what had transpired in the child welfare agency and regional environment in which she was located:

> *FGC found a more natural home amongst teams that were community based as they had the mindset… it took root even in a culture of what felt like "us and them" at that time. The culture shifted dramatically…FGC has definitely been part of this. Workers talk about going to FGC and*

seeing whole circles and needing to be transparent and hearing the plans come back, and believing till then that they had not been doing police work. And then saying "if it can happen for them, for this family, then why not for others?" … The managers thought it was so helpful…The transparency and the transfer of power began to become real…The court also began to change… plans have…been accepted. The Office of the Children's Lawyer (OCL) found it extremely helpful for children. Parents' counsel felt it gave the parents the best chance …Because of how we are structured, because the program is inside, FGC has touched every person in the organization: from the person cleaning up the room, to security, to how people get paid for food or transport (and questions about why FGC has this kind of budget), to IT (how do you bring people to participate using technology), direct service, foster parents, adoption…Weekend work is now part of how we do things.

Alternatively, FGC *shifting the agency culture* towards family involvement and family voice led to grounding the program in an agency. In some contexts, cultural shifts were substantial. In others, they have been less remarkable, but there has been some change in each context. Some of this change has occurred over a period of 18 years; some more quickly, perhaps accruing from the shifts in the province as a whole. All participants felt there was room for further change. Key shifts have included increased acceptance and use of FGC amongst a broad set of stakeholders, greater engagement of families in daily practice along with more formal options for involvement, reviews of traditional child welfare processes, increased support at macro levels, and practice shifts amongst coordinators. For example, P3 noted that there had been an increase of knowledge around FGC in the regional TPA and significant interest: 'In fact, some staff have left to go to other organizations where they could become FGC coordinators'. P7 observed cultural shifts in the courts, lawyers increasingly recommending their clients use ADR options and judges strongly recommending FGC. P1 felt that cultural shifts were evident as 'Everyone is much more open to listening to each other', and collaboration and increasing transparency occurred amongst relevant community and provincial organizations. P1 further observed:

*[FGC] has also shifted the child welfare societies a great deal…The language of FGC has infiltrated… the language of extended family members, for example, people expect there to be family members…All have kinship programs…They are making much more use of informal meetings with families…FGC has had a great influence on this field. It is really moving…People now say 'I **always** look at the family strengths'. (Laughing).*

P8 also witnessed FGC affecting the way other child welfare processes were being implemented: '[W]e are seeing a role for FGC in sorting out openness agreements…'

P6 identified a practice shift regarding conference coordination that was echoed by others: the more experienced coordinators moved between models, customizing approaches:

The grandmothers of the program… are proficient… in ADR and the models of FGC and can clearly differentiate the approach and be clear about the model they are practicing… Now through consultation, we might see if that fight is too central between family and CAS- then one might meet with the family and CAS and suggest that first do some mediation to resolve this issue before come to conferencing…This can work if the person is experienced, the less experienced people in their mentorship are trained to stay faithful to the model.

P5 confirmed this experience, explaining 'We [successfully] used our aboriginal FGC coordinator along with an experienced CPM mediator with a very contentious case with a First Nations infant…You have do enough of FGC to be able to be innovative.'

P8 commented on recent macro-cultural shifts provincially: 'OACAS actively and gladly took a seat at the [ADR Advisory group] table…this is huge and different… [M]ore than three child welfare societies said they would pay for the referrals out of their own budgets- that is a huge culture shift…'

Summing up, FGP6 noted that the use of FGC was no longer solely guided by the legislative mandate but by child welfare buy-in: '…there is a shift in workers' practice as they get closer and closer

to working with us and have more and more experience working with family group and this carries over into other interactions with their families.'

A further indicator of an established program was the evolution of a program *beyond a visionary leader*. 'It is no longer about me. It is about the program' emphasized P2. The *visibility of the program* was another sign of an established program, P1 illustrating 'If one googles FGC, our program is one of the first to pop up.'

In discussing the PR, P8 cautioned: '…there is still a way to go…There is still work to be done in establishing the PR as the locus, that place that everyone out there thinks about and connects with FGC.' In spite of gains noted, P6 cautioned that FGC culture had not been fully adopted provincially: 'There have been…the usual issues of vacillating between being more investigative or more cautious…to the other pole of engaging much more with families and their voice and participation…' Thus, although participants provided indicators of an established program, future sustainability was nevertheless a concern. This is discussed later, but first processes seen to affect the current state of the program are discussed.

Processes affecting the Current State of FGC Programs in Ontario

The participants offered their perspectives on both external and internal processes affecting the current state of the program. These processes impacted the development of the FGC program both positively and negatively. See Table 6 for the list of these processes.

Table 6
External and Internal Processes, as noted by Participants

External processes
Policy environment & child welfare discourses (8)
Funding(8)
Relationship with Ministry (3)
External competition (2)/ Regional service culture (2) Influence of First Nations (2)
Amalgamation (1)
Overrepresentation of minorities (1)
Internal processes
Leadership (8)
Internal philosophical orientation, program development and internal competition (6)
Program location (4)
Funding (2)
Staff mobility/turnover (2)

External processes leading to the current state of FGC programs in Ontario.

Various external processes impacting on the development of FGC in the province were highlighted. These are summed up in Table 7.

Table 7
External Processes

Processes	Success	Constraint
Policy Environment	Legislative changes of 2006	Limiting definition of ADR
Funding	Ministry funding to support the program	Unstable and inadequate funding

Relationship with Provincial Leadership	Support of and dialogue with Ministry representatives, OCL, OACAS, OAFM	Inconsistency of expectations; representatives turnover; focus on financial objective instead of program value; lack of understanding of the FGC model
Programs with similar philosophical basis	Collaborative community culture; intersection with First Nations	Competition

P2 recalled that the heavy court case load led to the introduction of ADR policy. Ultimately, however, it was the *shift in the policy environment* that all agreed was the most significant external factor, leading to a substantial growth in FGC programs. P2 suggested: 'The legislative changes [in 2006] were seen as an important factor leading to the current state of FGC programs in the province…'. Indeed, such policy change intersected with a shift in child welfare discourse towards a new focus on permanency, customized plans for children, and children being familiar with their culture, shifts which, according to P7, intersected with the principles informing FGC. P1 noted that workers who had dealt with the negative impact of the risk management culture were keen to embrace a different discourse: '[Risk assessment] was so rigid… They have said "Let's go back to the roots. Let's loosen up here". ' The policy change was not uncontroversial, however. P5 reckoned: 'When ADR came in… we had started already. We had some philosophical differences …' and P4 identified a constraint within the legislation, noting 'The wording of the legislation is not substantial enough to support the family's right to access the service'.

Not only did the new policy framework shift the discourse, but it led to FGC programs being launched. FGP1 related: '[t]he children's aid societies were instrumental…Established regions partnered with the new regions…and trained the coordinators, the TPA went out and talked to the CASs.' P3 believed the policy changes had so much positive impact because they were linked to *financial support*: 'Starting out with adequate funding we could start and grow the program, do the necessary initiatives and training, and get to the level the Ministry wanted.' P1 remarked 'We were one of the big sites to receive funding in 2009 and this eliminated many barriers.' While initial funding opened up possibilities, the conditions set were problematic for some. P2 suggested '…there were strings attached.' And the funding was unstable and unreliable. P4 complained '…it was never adequate to meet the demand.' P3 summed up 'Now the funding of the Ministry cannot support the referrals.' Insecure funding meant the creation of unacceptable wait lists. It also impacted the coordinator workforce. P2 stated: '[The fee-for-service coordinators] say it is great…to work in this organization…But then…they go and do other things when there is no funding, and then I have to wait … before they can…pick up the backlog'. P1 observed '…the program stoppage- like this year…affects the referral momentum and the work we have to do with practitioners and child welfare to get the program up and running again.' FGP6 spoke for the group when stating: [Irregular funding] is a **huge** threat across the entire province…that inability to count on being able to deliver all the service after all the promotion.'

A related external factor related to the *relationship with the Ministry*. A first issue had to do with regional inconsistency. P8 noted that the different expectations caused confusion and uncertainty, though P7 felt that it might have allowed for regional customization of ADR implementation. A second issue was the turnover in Ministry supervisors. P5 commented: 'There are constant changes within the Ministry and if we don't have someone invested in that process it is difficult to move forward. The challenges are around having to educate them around how the funding works'. FGP2 observed:' Some are amazingly supportive but not all ministry reps are as engaged in ADR…'. FGP5 was more positive about the connection with senior levels of the Ministry and suggested this boded well for sustainability:

'[E]ven when there are difficult decisions made about funding and other pieces there is an open avenue now to have that dialogue - …it is a piece they are still dedicated to'.

External competition was sometimes a negative influence. This could be other programs, P1 suggesting 'There was a bit of competition... In the last 2 to 3 years CPM has sky rocketed and in the region child welfare agencies clearly had a preference for CPM.' P5 referred to the differences of opinion between the child welfare that had hosted the FGC program and the locally designated TPA as diverting energy 'away from families'. However, according to P1, concurrent programs with a *shared philosophical base* also had influence: 'Wraparound was the frontrunner to look at family strengths and to ask 'How do you work to move things forward in a helpful manner rather than imposing?' Indeed, some participants spoke to the *influence of First Nations* culture on the use of FGC, P5 remarking that agencies with longer experience with First Nations communities were more inclined to utilize family involvement approaches though the agencies did not necessarily acknowledge this impact. But, as P2 pointed out, for it to be used, the program had to first have credibility amongst First Nations, this in part being linked to the quality of coordinator.

Although competition was an issue, this was mitigated in some contexts by a *collaborative regional service culture*. P1 described it this way: 'We don't look upon each other as competitors'. P2 observed: 'The wider community works together, and have been doing so for a long time. We are resource poor, so pool our resources together.'

Another external factor impacting the organizational development of FGC related to *amalgamation*. P5 observed that in amalgamating agencies 'we do not always have the same values in practice…We are having lots of discussions about mission and values.'

Finally, and very importantly, P8 raised an issue others had not discussed: 'An external factor that is exciting people and facilitating change is the enormous amount of pressure in child welfare to look at the *overrepresentation of children in minorities*…FGC can be a powerful intervention that addresses power in marginalized families...'

Internal processes

The internal processes also impacted the program in both positive and negative ways. See Table 8 for the list of internal processes and their impact on the program.

Table 8
Internal Processes

Processes	Success	Constraint
Leadership (CAS)	CAS management/board support/valuing FGC; opportunity for families to share their stories	
Leadership (PR)	Building partnerships; creating culture shift; growing with competency	Uneven uptake; need for child welfare interests to be heard more strongly; need to focus of better quality assurance and professional training
Match (or lack thereof) between philosophical	CAS buy-in, collaboration, increasing number of referrals	Uneven FGC uptake; breach of model integrity;

orientation of FGC and CAS agency		insufficient promotion of FGC among service providers
Program capacity and the matching of supply and demand		Difficulty to manage inconsistency of referrals among different localities
Location of the program in a CAS agency	Higher referrals; facilitation of culture change	Lack of neutrality
Internal opportunities	Expansion to previously un(der)represented groups	Need to increase general referrals

Internal management on the team, director and Board level was cited by all as an issue affecting FGC development. P5 asserted 'It's useful to have a strong lead or champion internally.' *Leadership* did not just need to come from child welfare managers, but also from those managing FGC programs. This issue is discussed further under the category 'change agents'.

The *match between the philosophical orientation of FGC and of the agency* played an essential role. The internal program development, such as the presence of other family centered approaches, sometimes was a positive factor in FGC gaining ground. As P5 noticed:

> This organization has been going this way- it all came together at the same time. The first shifts were towards early stages of kinship… and then with an impartial coordinator. If add into the culture the First Nations/Inuit teams, then you have to be thinking that way…. The foundation for family involvement had been there….

However, on the other end of the spectrum, unaligned agency activities led to *internal competition* for time and resources. P4 observed '[the child welfare agencies] have been through lots of changes. First transformation, then data base changes. Every time they have changes then FGC is not at the top of their agenda…' There was also competition amongst family involvement programs. FGP5 explained: '…if we have a Society that is seeing one approach and… is struggling to see the continuum and how they can be interconnected and help one another, they start fighting against each other and so then that may impact FGC and ADR…'. Further, it was challenging when *internal child welfare discourses* did not reinforce each other, P2 asking, 'who gets to decide regarding an adoption: the mom (adoption view) or the family (FGC view)? ' A related issue was staff perception of the program. As noted by P7, FGC was sometimes perceived as creating less work than court processes did and became a preferred option in part due to practical considerations. Challenges were related to *staff movement* in child welfare agencies. P5 elucidated 'I recently did consults with new staff, the turnover is a challenge.' P2 attributed uneven referral rates to 'stress.'

Internal *funding decisions* also impacted FGC programs. P4 observed 'Human resources, for example, are connected to funding…host agency values and support may be facilitative, but priorities shift in any large agency'.

For some the *location of the program* determined the success and grounding of FGC, though there was disagreement about the ideal location. P1 felt that their agency was ideal as a TPA: 'We are definitely seen as a neutral stakeholder in the community'. For P2 and P5, however, the location of a FGC program internal to child welfare was vital. P8 saw both advantages and disadvantages in each arrangement, but came down in favour of an external model: 'My bias is towards a separate program because…it is the perception of neutrality that is so critical.'

Sustainability (SWOT Analysis)

The findings suggest that there was some intersection between the external and internal processes that had affected the change effort towards institutionalizing FGC to date, and the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities influencing future sustainability. Strengths also overlap with

successes raised. Readers will thus note the repetition of some themes. Further because similar themes were raised in the different categories of the SWOT analysis, the strengths and successes are considered together, as are the weaknesses and threats.

Table 9
Strengths, opportunities, threats and weaknesses as indicated by participants

Strengths	Families & workers satisfied with outcomes
	Growth in knowledge & awareness
	Management buy-in
	Integration of FGC into daily practice
	Human capital
	Model integrity
	Regional autonomy
	Creative, innovative PR that advocates for FGC
	Incremental development
Opportunities	Increasing referrals to match the expected need for FGC.
	Reaching out/activating working relationship with more child protection agencies
	Reaching out to previously underserviced groups
	Extending the use of the program in senior care and mental health
	Addressing issues of disproportionately through FGC
Threats & Weaknesses	Unsustainable funding
	Ability to match supply and demand
	Insufficient promotion
	Inadequate buy-in
	Lack of understanding
	Level of quality assurance not reached
	Location of service
	Lack of research
	ADR definition constraining
	PR not as established as needs to be

Strengths and Opportunities.

Strengths: The participants identified a range of strengths. As shown earlier, a strength to which they regularly alluded was that both *families and workers were satisfied* with the outcomes. The *growth in knowledge and awareness of FGC and buy-in* was a strength. P1 observed: 'In the beginning…we were doing a lot of explaining to everyone…Right now the Office of the Children's Lawyer, managers and so on know how to do it.' P1 indicated that in many areas there was management buy-in: 'It is an advantage to have the EDs/Directors of Service at the table- that is huge. …People are still paying attention to ADR and see it as a vehicle of change.' Buy-in was demonstrated also by the recent financial contribution by various child welfare societies, FGP6 noting,'[W]hen we ran out of money, some societies stepped up and said we will actually pay out of our own budgets to make this service happen.' P2 saw strength in FGC becoming *integral* to the agency: 'The executive director is enshrining as much in policy as possible and the Board has to change it- this protects it.' FGC would thus not easily be dislodged: '…so it can't be just cut adrift. It is linked into our business here…We need to weave FGC in so tightly into who we are so one can't remove on thread to undo it…'

Human capital was seen as a strength from a number of perspectives. Sometimes this was an individual champion advancing FGC, FGP6 noting: 'In every local program you can point to a person who's had passion for FGC and carried the weight of building and developing this program'. The coordinators' ownership of the program, their maturity and the effective collaboration between program coordinators were further assets. '[W]e have some *wonderful coordinators* in our region…', P3 reported. P8 was enthusiastic about both the quality of coordinators and of the Steering Committee members: '[T]he people in this field are so passionate, so articulate and so skilled…' FGP1 added the importance of *partnerships at the local level*: '… one of the key components is a strong partnerships at the local level… then you've got stronger local programs.' P3 agreed:

> [T]he local community efforts and presentations have been an advantage for the program and has been very effective and worked well. Two to three times a year we have a practitioners' professional development day that we host to share concerns and positive stories. …We also have a working advisory group with representatives of all the CASs in the region, OCL and Legal Aid have reps and some from the First Nation communities we serve. Also an FGC coordinator from the roster. It is very successful.

The passion, commitment and competency of a critical mass of managers and coordinators translated into *model integrity*, FGP4 stating: '[T]hose who're the leaders, the coordinators, the mentors [have] strong commitment to model integrity.' There was a commitment towards ensuring the quality of the program. FGP1 claimed:

> We continue to…improve processes so that we are ensuring quality... [and] consistency within the service delivery across the province...We know the field has matured and we are trying to make sure who the people are sending into the field are able to integrate…in a way that the field expects.

P6 felt *regional autonomy* was important: 'FGC programs are structured and organized a bit differently in each region [and]…have developed in an organic way. This has been a strength.' P7 argued it was positive that the Ministry allowed each region to develop as they needed to, as this allowed investment in and responsibility for the regional program. Additionally, P1 considered the ability of certain regions to let *families choose which options* were relevant to them, rather than imposing a solution, was positive: 'In the early days we had the sense that the referral should come to **us**. Now we honour **their** choice.'

Having a *provincial resource* was an asset. Participants felt that the PR provided good leadership and was doing well regarding training. P3 praised the PR: '…they do a great job…The professional development days…are great… Overall the changes made to the training have been really good. We feel quite connected as we have a coordinator on that resource.' P3 concluded: 'Out of all the [ADR] methods offered, FGC has the strongest model: training, support through George Hull and the provincial resource. It seems it is the most developed...'

Finally, the focus group participants recommended maintaining the practice of *incremental growth* to ensure the success and the sustainability of the FGC, FGP6 advising: 'not biting off more than you can chew, not growing beyond your capacity to sustain successfully at a high level of quality.'

Opportunities: Regarding opportunities, P4 was optimistic: 'FGC will always exist, but the size and service capacity may be different. It is an excellent service that has a unique feel to it for both workers and families…You sense the empowerment; the families sense this; workers see a positive face to the family'.P1 had a similar view: 'CASs are demanding and asking for it.' Opportunities were also identified in the potential to reach out to *previously un(der)serviced* groups. P2 believed that there were still significant opportunities for increased referrals: '[T]here are the youth; also not all teams are referring'. The extension of the program to the Francophone community was according to P1 ...'an important step.' Further, workers were applying their FGC knowledge to other areas of child welfare practice: 'The more you try something and it works, people will try'. This could be further developed.

There were new opportunities to work with different child welfare programs. P4 explained: 'The plan now is to work collaboratively with the CAS family finders, especially for youth who are transitioning into independent living…it works beautifully.' Offering FGC outside of child welfare also was a possibility, P8 asserting: 'Opportunity lies in that there are many places in family's lives where this could be a relevant intervention.' Mental health and elder care were offered as examples. Finally, as noted previously, using FGC to address disproportionality in service was a further opportunity.

Threats and Weaknesses

The threat most often cited related to *irregular, unsustainable funding*. FGP3 reported: '[T]his lack of adequate funding ruins the whole concept of sustainability and capacity building…that's detrimental to the families…' P3 also was disquieted by the funding situation: 'Now the funding can't support that demand'. P1 echoed this concern: '[F]unding in this region ran out before the end of the third quarter… Other regions are now experiencing running out of money…There is some risk: practitioners…do it predominantly as a source of income…' P2, P5 and P7 were of the opinion that wait lists could potentially end a program, noting that funding interruptions ultimately undermined the program as potential referrers found other options and all stakeholders were not easily convinced to return to the program. P3 noted that it was important to maintain the momentum of referrals and thus rumours creating anxiety around funding had to be avoided. Participants felt the PR needed to 'Keep promoting, and advocating for funding.'(P4). P3 supported this and suggested 'A few things have gone to the media which perhaps they could get more into if they want to advocate for funding changes…' P6 recognized that '[A]dvocacy is important at the provincial table with the Ministry and other colleagues… to increase the funding.' The advocacy needed to be both with the Ministry and the OACAS, as one needed to advocate for active support of FGC, P6 suggesting 'There needs to be direct intervention with OACAS… bringing them on board with ADR in a more effective way'. Focus group participants supported this, and additionally argued for greater advocacy with the family court.

Program capacity and the matching of supply and demand was identified as a weakness by some and as a threat by others. P6 highlighted 'When we first started we were coordinating 20 coordinators, and now closer to 150- we have a lot more complex situations and more workload.' The availability of coordinators in relation to the number of referrals was an ongoing issue. 'We are victims of our own success as none of the programs can meet the sudden surge in demand' P8 maintained. P5 felt that it was essential that rostered coordinators be used: 'Some that have been trained are not accepted on the roster because referrals are down…before we could not proceed because we did not have the trained coordinators. Now surely we have to use them!' Supply and demand was more easily managed in urban centres but as FGP6 observed: '…in the North, for example, if the move goes from Sudbury to Kenora in terms of uptake, it's really hard for the ADR TPA to respond to this shift in the service…'. A related concern expressed by P7 was the physical distance between the coordinators in a spread out region, increasing the isolation of coordinators. The capacity of remote communities had to be expanded, FGP2 asking: 'how do we figure out how to support…across the north, how do we address these complex problems?' P7 implied that the PR needed to consider managing supply and demand and identify how to attract potential coordinators in an uncertain funding environment. Also, succession planning needed to be considered as some of the more experienced and connected coordinators were retiring. P2 felt the whole premise of part-time, primarily female coordinators needed to be reviewed.

Capacity issues related not just to coordinators, but as both P2 and P4 pointed out there were concerns about the load on supervisors in teams with high referral rates. P2 stated 'If a team refers 30 families a year- that is a lot for one manager…does the manager always need to be there?'

A further fundamental weakness was *insufficient promotion of FGC* within child welfare and amongst community service providers. This was an issue despite more people being informed about the FGC option. The problem was related both to inadequate funding and capacity, FGP4 maintaining: 'A large proportion of our budget, when we had the pilot…was simply to meet with supervisors, and talk

about it….. [Now] most coordinators…are hired just to do the work…' P2 registered her surprise that family members were not self-referring 'because FGC is deeply rooted in the community and well known' and many community members had participated in conferences. She attributed the low self-referral rates to 'meetings are painful' and perhaps to a sense that conferences are perceived as being needed only when 'things…have gotten so bad'. Another organization had developed a poster campaign to remind service users of FGC, P4 being convinced that 'I would only consider FGC well rooted when…every family involved with CAS knows their legal right to use this service.'

Although increased buy-in was named as a strength, a central concern remained *inadequate buy-in* at a number of levels. Cumulatively this amounted to a threat as it meant support for the existing policy environment could be rescinded at any time. P6 explained '…one of the things that is lacking is the leadership at a macro level… in the Ministry [although] it now has an increase in leadership.' FGP4 commented '…after the legislation… the whole team that brought that in left. So we didn't have partners in the Ministry for many years after that.' In addition to weak Ministry leadership, P6 added: 'The OACAS (Ontario Association for Children's Aid Societies) have never taken a strong leadership role… As long as they weren't behind this there was never a clear message from upstairs to value this as much as should have.' P1 also noted that at one point the lack of interest by the provincial leadership of the Ontario Association for Family Mediators had negatively impacted the work, but this had 'shifted recently'. P5 commented that not all transfer payment agencies (TPAs) were 'necessarily invested in the success of FGC…that creates a potential vulnerability as budgets tighten and mandates are looked at more closely'. The threat came also from within some children's aid societies, P4 suggesting: 'As for the service capacity, it depends on the support from the host agency and senior management at children's aid…' Participants suggested that consistent support might be missing because FGC was not being fully integrated into the CAS culture, FGP5 cautioning: '[E]ach individual CAS poses a threat to ADR…the threat then becomes anything that shifts or moves or makes it uncomfortable within that individual's CAS, whether it is a new executive director coming in, talk of lay-offs, changing office space…' P6 attributed this fragility 'to how the child welfare system is divided up amongst all these individual agencies, which can be a strength, but can also be a problem….' P6 added: 'A better province wide integration [would be useful] because child welfare is not centralized- the more that happens the better you can support the quality and the integration of the intervention'.

Inadequate promotion and buy-in in turn resulted in a *lack of understanding* of the model. FGP4 asserted: '[T]hat FGC is not just another family service, but it is really a… different paradigm... …is not always understood as well as it should be...' Lack of understanding resulted in service providers wanting to speed up processes inappropriately (P5). P1 described how some workers wanted service providers included in the private time, or tried to have the coordinator use court documents rather than receiving a condensed report.

In discussing the importance of attending to the *quality and integrity* of the program P1 was concerned that the necessary level of quality assurance had not yet been reached: '[I]f one has people that don't work enough or don't develop a deep understanding, or their skill set limits this or don't have enough background…then they can get pushed by the family or CAS.' P3 suggested the lack of formal accountability also fed into the quality assurance concerns: 'When folks are trained and out there doing the work and on the Provincial Roster and what happens when complaints come in? They are not our employees, they are contracted.' P8 also felt that the PR would have to focus more on quality assurance in the future: '[W]e are a hybrid between the educational institution and the regulatory body- we are sorting out where we belong …The field expects us to have a role in accountability'. FGP2 suggested that the training could be further enhanced to address more complex issues and thus quality. There were some tensions regarding further standardization. Although supporting quality assurance, P6 worried that the accreditation of coordinators 'can easily evolve into a mechanical process and lose the spirit… behind it.' P8 acknowledged 'There must be room for people's personalities, style and skill sets, but the

family needs to experience the service as consistent'. P5 went in another direction, strongly recommending that the PR consider the de-formalization of FGC processes in the province:

> [W]e are way too formalized. I was a stickler too…personally, but over the years with doing other kinds of conferences, it mirrors the model of the Maori people more: Bring people together, don't put it on paper, speak to them respectfully and compassionately…We have north Americanized it…I think I became flexible through doing stuff that I had to…I saw the struggles the family were having with the jargon and how things were being said.

 As noted earlier, the *location of the service* was seen by some as an indicator of success. It was also identified by some as a strength. Others identified it as a weakness. P6 observed: 'The [internal FGC programs] have had some difficulties in terms of the regional working together...because they have not conformed to the expected arrangement…Ironically the argument of having it all under a child welfare roof has meant that the ADR program is in many places.' P1 felt having FGC located in a child welfare agency was a fundamental risk: 'We need to keep the values and principles of FGC and can only do this if it is outside of child welfare.' However, P2 and P5 felt 'We have spent too much energy of the province on this debate' and argued for internal location of the service. Indeed, P5 identified the recent shift to using the TPA as an external single access point as a potential threat for the region: 'It is hard for child welfare to make these kind of shifts….In my organization…we have had FGC for so many years. But if it has to go to a third party [viz. the TPA] rather than an internal person where they had a relationship, [the child welfare workers] won't go externally.'

Another weakness P6 named was *a lack of research*, opining: 'There should be a part of the budget that is used for research as we did in the beginning…It would be great to do that across the province. It is so unique in each region…' P8 also felt this was a gap: 'We are such an evidence-based culture these days…' FGP6 also argued for this: 'We need to develop more research in the field to speak to outcomes, to demonstrate outcomes of FGC and ADR.'

P5 felt that the *definition of ADR* was limiting: 'ADR should be offered at the front door, but [family involvement approaches] are not seen as an ADR…', while P4 believed the ADR legislation needed amendment to compel workers to use FGC approaches where this was relevant: 'There are definitely advantages to giving CAS discretion in considering referrals, however, having more clearly established accountability mechanisms…would help'.

Yet another weakness expressed related to the *position of the PR*, P6 observing: 'The PR has always struggled at being an outside partner of the larger structure and network of child welfare… It has not been able to increase its funding sufficiently…' P2 felt that this was because the child welfare voice was not always heard by the PR and potentially by the provincial decision-makers: 'FGC is so radical. Without child welfare as a significant voice at the table it will not go anywhere…Bring child welfare to the table, listen and work with them. Treat them with dignity and respect. Individualize to each community. It may mean dismantling some structures of how funding is delivered'. P8 agreed, believing that FGC would only be successful and sustainable if one paid attention to everyone's needs: 'You have… early adopters, who want to move forward fast, and the other end who are resistant and then the bulk in the middle. One has to always pay attention to everybody'. P5 was also concerned about the child welfare voice, but put a slightly different spin on it: 'This is different to the advocacy required at a provincial level. At the local level it is recruiting social workers to make regular referrals and hence to see the value of FGC in their work.'

Hence, although there are some key strengths and potential opportunities, issues such as unpredictable funding, lack of buy-in, inadequate promotion, insufficient valuing of FGC principles, a struggle to address existing demand and insufficient inclusion all threatened the viability of FGC adoption and practice.

The Nature of Change

Having considered the processes affecting the success, rootedness and sustainability of FGC in the organizational context, the nature of the change that has occurred in developing the organizational capacity for FGC are now considered. Aspects regarding the planned/unplanned nature of intervention, and the degree to which change should be radical or incremental are examined. Phases within the change effort are defined.

Planned or not?

The initial inclusion of FGC as a service option was planned in all instances. As an example, P1 indicated that based on extensive investigation of best practice models, 'The change was sought out.' In P4's region, the change was also intentional: '… we worked with a plan to bring that shift… in our own host agency and within CAS.' In P5's agency, the change process began before the introduction of ADR legislation in Ontario, with considered investigation into family involvement models in the USA. Change '[w]as planned and certainly growth was planned.' In P7's region, targets for referrals were consciously set in some agencies in conjunction with the Ministry, agencies eventually exceeding the targets.

Radical or incremental change?

Participants overall felt that change included both radical and incremental elements, rather than being one or the other. The decision to go with FGC often felt radical, but typically the steps to introduce the program into the organizational context were incremental. P1 observed: 'For me there were two radical points. First, the sheer introduction of FGC by [a large local child welfare agency]…The second radical point was when the Ministry said they would establish an access agency and that the CASs should not have any control over the funding, over anything.' In contrast, in P7's region, a committee including the TPA and child welfare organizations was set up post-legislation, leading to some familiarity with the process. The decision to introduce ADR options, including FGC was thus not viewed as radical. Further, implementation was a step by step process because it was seen as important to build a solid foundation and to convince naysayers of the value of FGC.

Some argued that where there had been a match between FGC philosophy and the organizational culture, radical change was not required. P3 supported this last statement: '[C]hange was…more…incremental. The ADR program seemed to be a good fit.' Equally, however, P4 recommended incremental introduction where the FGC orientation did **not** match agency culture: 'It had to be incremental in the past and must continue to be now- it is a drastic shift for child welfare. One cannot just throw in such a foreign approach and expect it to be accepted…'

On the PR level growth also was incremental: 'What's good about that is that you are growing with your competency', asserted FGP4. FGP6 supported this: 'The change grew as our capacity grew… It took a long time for the shifts to happen, for the resources to be available, for the training to happen'.

Participants thus seemed to be suggesting that the introduction of the idea of FGC is radical. Because it is such a fundamental shift, once the plan to have an FGC program is adopted, it is well-advised to work incrementally, slowly gaining people's trust. Where the organizational culture is closer to that of FGC, change does not feel dramatic and incremental introduction is appropriate- especially as also in these contexts, naysayers and doubters have to be won over. While all participants insisted the introduction of the program was planned, it is not as clear whether the ongoing consolidation of FGC has been planned, or whether change there is instead emergent.

Identifiable phases within the change effort.

Not all the participants felt there were identifiable phases within the change effort, though some did notice different stages and indeed felt these were potentially cyclical. Thus, P7 felt there first was a phase of training and education, which included building trust with potential referring workers. In a second phase, the project had to demonstrate that service could indeed be offered promptly, and that the results would be positive. This might lead to a renewal phase, where new persons in the field would

be introduced to the FGC model, but where those that had already been involved were provided formal feedback on the performance of the project. P7 felt that the funding difficulties had interrupted this cyclical progression and that in many ways the foundational orientation to FGC would have to be repeated for the whole field. P4 noted with regard to her program:

> *This program is now 18 years old…The change phases are becoming repetitive…: buy-in, support on top levels (director and supervisors), in-house intensive promotion and consultation, increased referrals. But as soon as there are other internal training/organizational changes, FGC is the first to drop down the priority list. In addition there is the impeding factor of staff turnover. This pattern could happen on an annual basis, or over 3-4 years: no referrals, or too many referrals.*

Both P1 and P2 spoke about training having been more intensive in the earlier days of the program. P2 also clarified that certain structures and ways of doing things had to be formally changed in the beginning: 'Before, weekend work had been pretty rare…We had to negotiate with the staff and the union…There was the use of the building on weekends …And there was the insurance issue- are child care people covered…' P5 believed education and promotion was continually required: 'Keeping it alive and visible is important. Clarity on what it is and isn't is important.' There seem thus on the local level to be phases of orientation and promotion followed by a greater regularity of referrals. However, many processes can destabilize the consistency of referrals, requiring renewed promotion.

Pertaining to the PR, P6 did feel that there had been a shift from a less formal to a more procedural phase: 'Certainly taking on a much more serious role around accreditation of the coordinators shifted things to being more formal. We were initially very loosely organized.' P8 had similar observations, noting that there had been a visionary phase and that the organization now was in a phase that demanded greater uniformity. The phases incidentally also intersected with the leadership styles of the two program managers.

Strategies for change

Strategies for change identify how the change described above was effected. The strategies on which participants commented included who the change agents were; the degree to which roles were consciously considered; the informal and formal strategies used to promote change; the areas where structural change is required; and having a learning, reflective organization.

Change agents.

According to the participants certain individuals, particularly managers, had significant influence. P2 observed 'It is the manager's philosophical view that determines whether their team makes referrals or not'. P5 pointed out 'We have a lot of new managers coming in…[who] have used [FGC] and…they influence their team'. P1, for example, lauded the long-term efforts of the executive director of a key agency in the region and P8 praised a senior manager who had championed FGC and impacted provincial developments. Hence such change agents were sometimes actively sought out. P8 emphasized 'Every program manager that promotes the program is important. We need champions in each community.'

Nevertheless, participants maintained that effective change required a collective effort, change being created by a group of people rather than any individual. Change might begin with a leadership initiative, but a cascading down of responsibility from the Board down was required to support the change (P2). P6 represented others when saying:

> *Some of the good shifts have been because the child welfare agencies at all three levels (worker, supervisor, senior management) have developed a critical mass of valuing FGC…If an executive director supports strong procedural FGC policy, then it's considered seriously, s/he is the boss and it influences the culture. When [the staff] start to do it, they get influenced and it brings about a culture shift.*

P7 added that coordinators, family members who talked about the process with other families (for example, at court) and workers- especially new workers who had been previously exposed to FGC and had not been inducted into risk assessment models- who shared their experiences through informal conversations were equally important.

P6 identified the PR Steering Committee as change agents: 'Sometimes they are influencing rather than making decisions.' P6 added 'The mentorship is a very powerful model…they have a big voice to say if someone should become a coordinator, so they play a very important role'.

External change agents were also acknowledged. P6 felt that judges could be a stronger change agent and noted: 'OCL has been an amazing shift agency…Difficulties with coordinating and collaborating with lawyers have decreased considerably.' One participant noted: 'Not the Ministry! …it seems for them it has always been a dollar thing, motivated by funding issues rather than delivery issues at the front line.' This participant felt that the role of local and provincial leadership was thus essential in ensuring that the principles of FGC were promoted and were not diluted because of a focus on cost efficiency.

Conscious consideration of roles.

Most participants felt that roles and interests were considered in the change effort, though this was not always in the same way in each context. These included the role of the TPA, FGC management, coordinators, conference participation and PR membership. For example, P1 believed that agency roles were considered when identifying the most suitable organization to be a TPA in the region: 'In the child welfare agency they had a point person, a supervisor as an internal champion. They hired [one of the first mentors trained]. [Two coordinators] were trained... They really knew what they were doing.' For P2, roles were considered when assigning a person to lead the internal FGC initiative. The person coming into this position was a manager and it was felt this was appropriate. Change included consideration regarding the profiles for coordinators. P7 identified that in her region coordinators with no previous child welfare experience had been chosen as they approached the situation with a fresh set of eyes and were viewed as neutral by clients. Further, P2 noted that roles in the conference process needed to be cautiously reviewed, noting, 'another decision was who needed to be at the meeting: supervisor or frontline.' P4 also reflected on roles in the conference itself. This had been prompted by certain teams having high rates of referral, making it effectively impossible for the supervisor to be present at each conference.

As the PR has developed, roles on that level have been considered seriously. P6 explained:

[A] requirement to become a member is that you are sufficiently networked into your region and seen as carrying leadership in your region and so to be able to speak of what happens in your region. And that you are connected institutionally into your region… The person who is the PR coordinator is in charge of all activity of the PR with a lot of ability to delegate. Accountability and liability requires a plan.

Formal and informal strategies for change.

In most cases there was at least a one to two year period of discussion before the FGC program was launched. Prior to the introduction of the ADR legislation, the process was often sparked by a key individual hearing about FGC being successful elsewhere. This was followed by local discussions with partner agencies and/or FGC programs. For example, P4 reported:

[T]he agency ED at the time went to New Zealand on a 6 month sabbatical and learnt about the approach from the source. A pilot project was started in collaboration with the [local] CAS branch located and a CAS staff member was seconded to provide the service for one year, with referrals from that branch; financial support provided by the host agency and the CAS Foundation for the next 3 years.

Coordinators often were hired part-time before a full time position was created. P3, located in a TPA, remembered: 'I think it was about 2 years…' In contrast, in the area where there had not been an FGC history and a TPA was formed in response to the Ministry's policy directive, the process, as outlined by P7, was relatively rapid. As soon as the regional ADR committee was formed, the search for coordinators began and two persons were appointed and trained, referrals beginning soon after. Nevertheless, P7 felt strongly that this type of program could not be imposed and could only be effectively implemented through careful partnerships with the child welfare agencies and the workers. The impact of a policy directive and associated funding thus seems based on this example to shift the preparatory time line fairly dramatically.

In addition to cautious preparation prior to the launch of an FGC program, many different strategies had been implemented to introduce change, training (particularly in the early phases of the program) and informal discussion between coordinators and child protection workers seeming to be the most popular. Training was offered to child welfare agencies as well as community groups, in particular ethno-specific agencies. Members of the legal community and relevant groups such as child welfare mediators also were trained. Coordinators spent dedicated times each week at the respective child welfare agencies to create familiarity and build on informal referral mechanisms. Internal champions, formal committees, collaborations, posters, newsletters, annual reports, websites, team discussions and lunch and learns had also been utilized. Coordinators and ADR managers met for peer support. Word of mouth between workers and amongst family members was encouraged. Family members were actively invited to ask for FGCs. A strategy that P2 relied on was making 'public where the referrals come from, from which teams.' It seemed that while certain approaches were common across all the regions, each found the particular combination of strategies that suited their locality. These various strategies were employed to ensure '…a critical mass of frontline workers with some key and highly respected managers' (P6).

Certain strategies have been used not just to introduce but also to embed FGC. For example, P4 felt that consistent attention was required regarding promotion. 'FGC is a roller coaster I can't predict-things are always changing…As soon as one slows down numbers drop- every branch, every agency'. Expanding service to offer Rapid Response had further entrenched family involvement in two agencies. For these two agencies having FGC managed internally was also identified as an essential strategy: 'Trying to influence from the outside is trying to budge an iceberg- one is not trusted, one is judged, people feel you don't get it.' Additionally, P2 informed, 'We have had an FGC policy for at least three years…'.

The PR used training, such as professional development days as a key mechanism to ensure quality assurance and service consistency. P8 outlined further PR strategies: 'We are also providing materials, manuals, templates, practitioner materials to promote standardization and quality…We provide consultation support to programs…There was a newsletter... we will do it again. We do a regular email communication out to the field.' P6 said: 'We also influenced the region around how child welfare agencies understand FGC'. By being flexible and fluid and being 'open to hearing from the field, bringing it in, having a conversation, that going back' (FGP3) and by demonstrating successful advocacy with the OCL, for example, the PR was able to build trust and leadership. Additionally, P6 felt that the 'PR acted as a feedback mechanism to the Ministry.' FGP4 highlighted an example: 'The pilot project that we did informed the Ministry that this is successful…we made sure that a big part of the budget was tied to the research'. FGP1 emphasized: 'The legislation change came after there were a number of FGC programs around the province…the Ministry was interested in what was happening in these few small pockets and then they actually introduced some changes to the legislation…the field informed the change'. P6 further suggested: 'The Ministry creating an ongoing province wide ADR committee has been a good change… bringing together the leaders province wide.' P8 added: '[W]e are contributing [to the Advisory Committee] in a leadership way.' FGP7 noted the importance of media coverage: 'We have had really

positive media attention… which…was very helpful because it got conversation started…We have clients asking about it'.

Does the change needed for the introduction and maintenance of the FGC program involve the whole organization or only part of the organization?

The findings highlight that in the TPAs only the section that offered the service needed to change. As noted by P4, '[F]or the host organization, the change needed was minimal and only affects the front line staff.' P3 echoed this: 'Only part of the organization is affected, in terms of staffing, funding and program management. Our agency offers many programs, and the ADR program is a small piece of that.' However, in child welfare agencies, change needed to involve everyone. P2, P5 and P7 emphasized: 'The whole organization needs to change'. Moreover, certain structural changes were required, P4 noting that 'FGC is one of many programs at the host agency. Our structure is based on collaborative work with CAS, which is not unique to this program'. A Steering Committee, which later became an advisory group, had to be established. Initially the project had to set up processes for hiring and supporting coordinators, and introduced both individual and peer supervision.

A learning, reflective partner organization.

The participants all felt that the organizations in which they were located were at least to some extent learning, reflective organizations; and by implication, this learning culture had made room for the introduction of FGC. P2 was clear: '[W]e have always valued learning and reflection and listening to those who receive service…There are, for example, lots of ethical discussions regarding FGC.' P1 commented on the TPA, saying 'They run…groups to assist them in implementation and doing reflection. They have the advisory group, and we often bring up questions…there is a lot of reflection.' P3 added:

> Specific to the ADR program, we have students [doing research]…on a yearly basis…. Also, we participate extensively in community capacity building, networking and relationship building. We attend conferences and participate in other learning experiences. The organization as a whole has that general philosophy to support staff to …continue their education.

P7 saw learning and reflection incorporated in the willingness of the coordinators to participate in professional development days. The PR also was seen as a learning organization P6 stating:

> That is its strength….It is always reflective, looks at what it should do, should not do…[W]e have a mandate for training and ongoing professional development and there is a strong bias to build reflective practice into this. Mentoring…is built on reflecting on knowledge, practice, skills, biases and weaknesses.

Participants thus felt that a learning, reflective organization was the ideal host for FGC services.

Failed attempts.

The participants were asked if they were aware of agencies that had aimed to launch an FGC program in Ontario and had failed. An FGC program that had been functioning until it was shifted to an external access point was described. The explanations for the failure varied. While two felt the problem lay in moving the program externally, P6 observed: 'If key people change without a critical mass in the system and it does not have a life on its own, then the program fails ….'. A fourth participant believed: 'The CAS had an internal FGC model that worked well… They now refer to our program. There is not nearly as much as when they had the in-house model.'

Coordinators had difficulties engaging certain agencies. P8 noted: 'Some programs feel that they failed with a particular society, getting a particular society on board, engaged, and making referrals.' P4 ironically observed that even if the child welfare agencies did not always understand the value of FGC, 'The families always get it'.

Two participants had noted that First Nations communities had not always accepted FGC immediately. The FGC program needed to first establish credibility with the communities.

Participants emphasized that while failure was rare, programs typically had their up and downs. P6 underlined 'Some became very active and then inactive. Suddenly it takes off and then there is terrible lull again- mostly to do with the absence of core people that support it along its path'. P1 maintained: 'There is ebb and flow always- it is part of the nature of the thing'.

Summary of Findings

Jansson's (2013) framework of practitioners, practice, and praxis is used to provide a framework for summarizing the findings. A systemic lens is used to understand the praxis of FGC organizational development. A systems approach promotes a holistic view and as such allows an appreciation of the complex processes and relationships involved and an understanding of the intricate webs leading to current praxis (Lane, Munro & Husemann, 2016).

Practitioners.

There is a range of practitioners involved in delivering an effective FGC service.

- *FGC coordinators* prepare conference participants and facilitate the conferences themselves. The findings suggest that in Ontario, the FGC coordinators are mostly female and in the category of part-time, fee-for-service. The few employed full-time tended to be FGC or ADR managers. Some participants implied that women are being placed in a vulnerable position. Participants also suggested that the fee-for-service employment model also weakens FGC delivery, particularly where funding is unpredictable. Additionally, coordinators who worked a small number of hours often struggle to develop high level skills and competencies. Mentoring thus played a central role is ensuring quality.
- *Child welfare workers* typically make the initial referrals, and thus are central actors in the success of an FGC program.
- *Senior level child welfare staff* are also key players in driving the acceptance of FGC. This is evidenced by a number of child welfare agencies that committed financially to FGC and other ADR options when Ministry funding was interrupted. While these stakeholders' knowledge of FGC has increased, misunderstandings, particularly regarding the empowerment aspects of FGC, still existed.
- Ministry representatives and provincial associations, such as OACAS, OCL and OCPM are another set of players, who typically have only more recently become more invested in FGC.

Practice.

The data establishes a number of important practice shifts that suggest FGC is becoming integrated into child welfare activities in Ontario.

- Child welfare workers have referred to FGC in record numbers.
- These workers are increasingly involving parents/caregivers and members of the extended family in planning and conflict-resolution processes.
- Child welfare workers' language now often references expanded family circles.
- Working from a strengths-base has become part of the engagement with families, risk management approaches having less prominence than they did just a few years ago.
- Lawyers and the judges are more often asking for FGC service on behalf of families, as are community service providers.
- In some places, families themselves are beginning to ask for referrals to ADR options, including FGC.
- Pertaining to coordinators, experienced coordinators are able to move between ADR methods and often customize the intervention used to the particular family served.

Despite the positive directions emerging, concerns remain amongst the participants that FGC is being used inconsistently across the province. Some child welfare agencies are not referring to the program. There may be enthusiasm for the program within particular teams in agencies, others

disregarding FGC altogether. Thus, while there have been some important successes, FGC culture has not yet been ingrained across the board in Ontario.

Praxis.

External and Internal Processes: The findings demonstrate that a range of external and internal processes have led to the current state of FGC in Ontario. Although a number of programs existed prior to 2006, the reach of FGC increased dramatically after the introduction of the Transformation Agenda and the inclusion of FGC in ADR legislation. ADR was subsequently represented in each of the nine provincial regions. This presence was also due to the availability of funding through the Ministry. However, referrals have outstripped the Ministry's budget, requiring the child welfare sector to find alternative funding or to interrupt programming. The relationship with the Ministry has also affected programming. On the one hand, effective Ministry supervisors have supported the advancement of FGC, while on the other, new supervisors have not always been committed to or understood the value of FGC- as a consequence not advocating for the needed resources. Some participants emphasized the influence of First Nations agencies on the development of collaborative child welfare cultures that prepared the ground for the successful introduction of FGC. Internal processes related primarily to the presence or lack of supportive leadership and influential individual champions at multiple levels. Where agencies were already seeking less antagonistic options than presented by risk management approaches, FGC was welcomed. Program location was seen to influence the successful adoption of FGC, arguments being made both for the internal and external location of FGC. Ongoing education and promotion regarding FGC was required due to staff mobility, but the organizational capacity for such promotion often was unavailable.

Successes, Strengths and Opportunities: The study participants suggested there were many successes, indicated, in particular, by the increase in referrals, buy-in by various stakeholders, changes in child welfare language regarding families and family partnerships being increasingly woven into the daily practice of some child welfare workers and agencies. Family empowerment principles were being considered in other areas of child welfare work, such as adoptions. Experienced coordinators who worked intensively managed the process better, could move between interventions to customize service for families, and were more likely to reflect on their practice. Strengths included family and worker satisfaction with outcomes; growth in knowledge and awareness of the program; management buy-in; individual champions in each region; committed and passionate coordinators; evidence of the integration of FGC into daily child welfare practice; collaborative engagement between relevant partners; quality training offered through the PR; and a creative, innovative steering committee in the PR that advocates for FGC. Opportunities to further anchor FGC within child welfare culture existed. Referrals do not match the expected need for FGC and could thus be increased. There are populations within child welfare that could be served more consistently. Not all child welfare agencies are making referrals to FGC programs, and so could be activated to use the program. It was also suggested that FGC could be offered to families outside of child welfare, for example, in elder care or mental health. The issue of disproportionality could be leveraged, as FGC offered a partnership approach to engaging racialized families. Despite the successes, strengths and opportunities, there were concerns about the longer term sustainability and viability of FGC.

Threats and Weaknesses: The uptake across teams, agencies and the province was uneven pointing to various challenges. Weaknesses identified were the competition and distraction introduced both by similar programs and agency disruptions; the lack of understanding by leaders of the underpinning principles of FGC; concerns regarding quality assurance; a lack of relevant research examining regional outcomes; TPAs that were not necessarily invested in FGC outcomes; and the limited capacity of the PR. It was also a challenge to match the supply of coordinators to the demand for conferences, particularly because of the ebb and flow of referrals. At the time of study around 30 trained coordinators were not active. This appears to be a wasted resource. Building capacity in the

northern parts of the province was also highlighted as an issue. Rural areas were especially vulnerable to changes, particularly regarding the unpredictability of referrals. Local leaders had a profound impact on the breadth of FGC, and thus when leaders changed, there potentially was less emphasis on FGC. The primary threat was the erratic, insufficient funding provided by the Ministry. This issue alone has the potential of fundamentally disrupting the program as it impacts the availability and interest of coordinators, and undermines the credibility of the program with the courts, lawyers, child welfare workers and families. Participants emphasized that re-establishing a steady stream of referrals can take months, if not years. Lastly, a change in the policy environment could eliminate FGC as an option sanctioned and supported by the state. Noting the dependency of the program on policy and funding support, there is considerable anxiety that policy shifts and unsustainable funding could in most cases unravel the program. The first pilot was introduced 18 years ago, the most recent program 9 years ago. FGC remains vulnerable despite relatively long periods of investment in the program.

Strategies: While these threats and weaknesses merit serious consideration, the research does not make clear just why the longest program, which has existed for 18 years, has been able to survive the vagaries of inconsistent funding and ups and downs in referral rates. The PR has also been subjected to difficulties. There it seems the commitment to the value of FGC has maintained the involvement of a group of highly motivated and skilled members. Certainly, diverse strategies have been employed to facilitate the adoption of FGC in potentially hostile cultures. For example, impacting the policy environment has been crucial. Planning the introduction of FGC programs has been an advantage. Incremental change appears to have been appropriate in creating support for FGC. Developing supportive multi-level leadership has been a positive catalyst. The PR has developed trust in the caliber of coordinators through its training, mentorship and accreditation program. Intensive training with child welfare staff characterized the early stages of the program. Certain programs including the PR have become more formalized with time, both within agencies, regions and the provincial level.

Thus, many strategies have been utilized to address the challenges caused by internal and external processes. The continued vulnerability of the FGC program in the Ontario child welfare context suggests that leveraging current strengths would be useful (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2016). Building on strengths maximizes the use of the limited, available resources.

The figure below highlights the interrelationships between the study data.
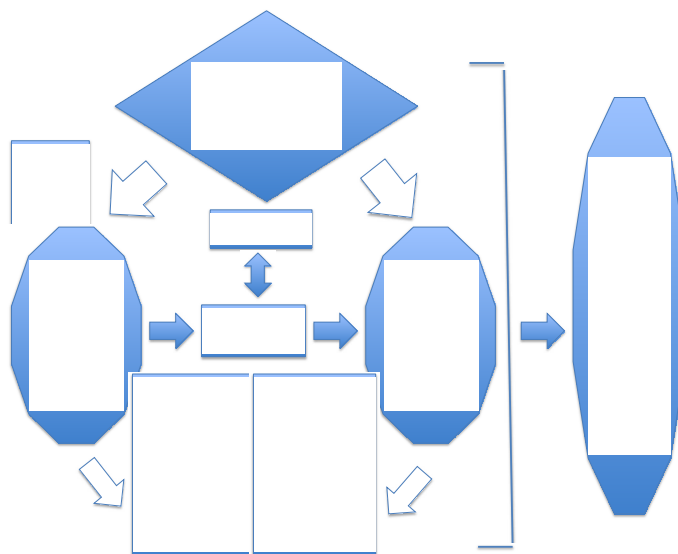
Recommendations

A series of recommendations emerges out of the study.

Deliberate planning was utilized to identify specific steps towards launching FGC programs. However, intentional organizational development was not generally evident regarding the maintenance of FGC, interventions appearing to be more ad hoc. Shared vision across the relevant structures, built on common interests, is imperative (Oswick et al, 2010; Maton, 2008). Strong feedback loops that reinforce the value of FGC need to be developed (Lane, Munro & Husemann, 2016). A weakness in current feedback loops was identified at senior decision-making levels in the province, where the program has not been consistently and actively supported. Provincial structures need to be included in the same way that child welfare agencies are, especially as legitimacy for the FGC program is still contested (Scott & Davis, 2007). Ensuring consistent, predictable sources of funding seems to be the most prominent concern that needs to be addressed. Relationships with the Ministry can be enhanced, deepening their investment.

Additionally, to strengthen the philosophical commitment to FGC across child welfare in Ontario, increased attention must be paid to provincial players such as OACAS, OAFM, and OCL. Participating in the Ministry advisory group seems a step in the right direction. Finding further opportunities for collaboration will deepen the commitment to FGC. Advocacy is one tool, but must be founded on furthering mutual understanding of the value of FGC (Oswick et al, 2010; Maton, 2008). Common discourses advance organizational development (Pieterse, Vlijn &Van Wagenberg, 2012), and on this level it is important to find a common voice. As the child welfare agenda is increasingly informed by an anti-oppressive perspective (Child Welfare Roundtable, 2009), the FGC principles could potentially be presented from a rights orientation. It may be appropriate to formally review the conceptualization of FGC as an ADR mechanism to identify the manner in which the framing of FGC as a conflict resolution mechanism has supported or undermined its primary function as a planning tool and as an essential family involvement approach. Based on such review, the PR might consider advocating for policy changes that further strengthen the entrenchment of family empowerment approaches. On an internal level, the work that has started in some agencies to review consistency of discourses across programs is useful. Quality standards in agencies need to communicate that workers are not working effectively if they are not actively utilizing family partnership strategies. Strier & Binyamin (2010) have suggested the politicizing of professional identity, and in line with anti-oppressive practice this may be an issue to consider.

According to the participants, the PR seems to be doing excellent work regarding the training, mentoring, accreditation and rostering of managing the registration and roster. On this level, there are multiple opportunities for shared decision making and reflexive practice (Strier & Binyamin, 2010). Nevertheless, it may be useful to review both the composition and deployment of coordinators. The study highlighted that one weakness was matching supply and demand, it being particularly difficult to regenerate the coordinator pool following interrupted funding. While an ebb and flow in referrals is to be expected, thought must be given to the maintenance of this very essential resource. The investments of time and money through training and mentorship require a significant return. While intentional planning that involves enhancing current strengths will maximize the insertion of FGC into child welfare culture, Lane, Munro & Hausemann (2016) note that planning may also result in unintended consequences. An unintended consequence to date is that part-time coordinators do not have the opportunities to deepen their understanding of FGC and hone their skills. One may thus need to consider whether or not there should be a minimum number of hours that are required and if supervision should be mandatory. It would seem that keeping this resource active is cost-effective and increases the number of persons directly invested in FGC success. Issues regarding the gender composition of the coordinator workforce should also be considered and mechanisms found to create greater income security for this group. The participants implied that the PR wishes to prioritize the issue

of quality assurance. This issue seems not to be as high on the agenda as funding or consolidating existing resources and thus may not need to be attended to immediately -unless it can become a strategy for strengthening a discourse of family partnership. The fact that ADR is regionally organized is a potential strength, Rautkis, McCarthy, Krackhardt and Calahane (2010) having observed that there is reciprocal support where agencies are clustered together.

It seems to us as researchers that the linkages of the PR with both TPAs and child welfare organizations are tenuous. Positively, Devolution of training and regional decision-making allow for local responses. Although organic growth is tied to notions of self-determination and thus should not be constrained, regional linkages between the PR and child welfare structures require consolidation. One participant spoke about the importance of representation at the PR, this facilitating reciprocal exchange.

As identified by the participants, in order to insert FGC and partner approaches into child welfare culture, active support from senior levels in Boards and top management are needed if the work is to be endorsed by frontline staff. It may be useful to reconsider intentional culture change processes (Carnochan & Austin, 2002) and to identify ways in which the child welfare story, symbols and rituals can be shifted towards family partnership. There may be opportunities to facilitate mastery of family empowerment interventions, reflexivity and shared goals (Carnochan & Austin, 2002). Communication is a central mechanism in facilitating joint understanding. The existing newsletters and regular electronic updates do publicize FGC successes, but are a uni-directional form of communication. Platforms that allow for reciprocal exchange are needed. The findings imply that both those child welfare personnel who predated risk management models and the more recent graduates who were not inducted to this approach are more receptive to FGC. It may be useful to systematically identify where the critical mass of support exists and to more purposefully use these individuals as catalysts. Offering a range of family involvement and conflict resolution options seems to be a factor strengthening the entrenchment of the FGC service, though at least initially there may also be an element of competition between various approaches. Another group that could be leveraged are those judges, lawyers and the OCL that have shown interest in FGC to grow the demand for FGC in the legal community.

As a caveat, it should be noted that although participants argued that the location of the programs was central to developing a family empowerment culture, one might infer from the observation because greater orientation to family involvement was noted across the board, program location on its own was not an essential factor in change. This study has, though, not been able to make any direct comparison between the institutional models.

Conclusion

The strategies suggested by Pennell (2005), namely capacity building, leadership development, organizational development, community organizing and inter-organizational collaboration seem to have been broadly followed in introducing FGC into the Ontario context. This study demonstrates that a multi-level, multi-pronged approach that uses a systems lens indeed is useful as it facilitates FGC being woven into policy and practice. Where FGC culture is being translated into daily child welfare practice, and the language and philosophy of a particular child welfare agency becomes more inclusive, it may, as one participant asserted, become harder to dislodge FGC. Bottom-up approaches seem to offer modest success, but it appears that only with the political buy-in of senior government and child welfare decision-makers will FGC become part of the regular palette of interventions offered to families. This is particularly so where the state is the primary or sole funder. It also appears that the change effort cannot be intentional only in the beginning phase. To sustain interest and support for FGC, it is crucial that regular review occurs to determine what maintenance efforts are required at the local, regional and provincial levels.

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