

Mrs. F seemed to fit the model that was described in the literary sources in several areas. Housing was sufficient but not necessarily adequate. The living room was the only room visited and it contained a couch, loveseat, end tables, chair and entertainment center with a television. Mrs. F takes care of her severely retarded sister along with her two grandsons. The size of the home appeared small for this number of people. Clearly, from the observations of the home and furnishings, Mrs. F is living well below the poverty level. This is often typical of grandparents who are thrust into this situation. Even though it is difficult financially, the rewards from their companionship and love motivate her. Mrs. F worked until she took custody of her grandchildren and her husband and mother became ill. The subsequent death of her mother and then her husband left her with no choice but to quit work and be home to take care of her sister and the grandchildren. Although Mrs. F did not share her age in the interview, she appeared to be in her late 50's to early 60's. This is several years before retirement age and has had a definite impact on her income.

. Despite the living conditions and the burden of the role of caretaker for this group, Mrs. F remained positive about her role as grandparent and sister. She also spoke positively about the impact the grandchildren had had on her life. Grandparents in this situation are sometimes emotionally stressed to the point of depression but if this was true in this case, it was not evident. She related that she had a neighbor and several friends to who she could talk and that they were her source of social support. She works closely with the social worker from the

boys' school for help with referral of community resources and issues concerning the school.

Mrs. F had also endured the battles with the legal system involving the custody of her grandchildren. The biological mother of the children abandoned them by leaving them with Mrs. F for longer and longer periods of time with no contact. In one instance Mrs. F had to take one of the children to the emergency room because of illness. This was the first time she encountered the battle of rights and her ability to request or authorize treatment of the children in her care. For a time after this the children were taken into state custody. Mrs. F attempted to contact the mother with no success and was required to place an ad in the local newspaper announcing her intentions of adopting the children permanently. The mother relinquished her rights without a struggle. Mrs. F is still fearful that the mother might come back and decide she wants the children back in her custody.