While foster families are prevalent and serve a critical role in our society, little is known about the communicative dynamics connecting the foster square (e.g., foster child, foster parent(s), birth parent(s), and agency). Guided by Family Communication Patterns theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), the goal of this thesis was to understand not only how foster families communicate, but also how foster parent-child communication impacts foster children as well as the parent-child relationship. Current foster parents (N=158) completed an anonymous online survey in which they were asked to report on their communication and relationship with a current foster child. Several significant findings emerged.

First, a positive relationship between shared family identity and both conversation orientation and relational closeness emerged. Second, communicative openness was positively associated with child’s strengths and relational closeness. Third, the interactional effect of communicative openness and conformity orientation significantly predicted child strengths. Lastly, both consensual and laissez-faire parenting styles had unique effects on foster-parent child relational closeness. These findings provide valuable theoretical contributions and ultimately help to establish a foundation for future research on the foster family form. Implications for understanding how shared family identity emerges and the role of openness in the foster family form are discussed.