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A Comparative Study of Foster Homes and Group Homes

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

According to Fritz Redl there is a crisis
in the children's field.

> So many very disturbed children, of the
> degree and variety of disturbance we
> happen to produce en masse in our society,
> are so far beyond the grip of the old
> concept of 'foster home care' that we
> can safely say: As an institution for
> the safe-guarding of the mental health
> of vulnerable children, the foster home
> of yesterday is either extinct or not
> sufficient any more. It is an obsolete
> answer to a current problem of huge
> proportions. Why, then , don't we who
> know this become more vocal about it? (1)

Zira de Fries echoes Redl's concern "A
problem that continues to be of major concern, however,
is the appropriateness of the use of foster family
care as the predominant way of caring for neglected
children". She goes on to say that it is unrealistic
to expect that most children and in particular, dis-
turbed children, can sort out their place in the in-
tricacies of foster family care, even with a great
deal of help. It is similarly unrealistic, she sug-
gests, to perpetuate the idea that replication of a
family situation is the best possible kind of care for

1. Fritz.Redl, "Crisis in the Children's Field",
   American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, XXXll (1962)
   p. 775. -

2. Zira de Fries, "Foster Family Care for Disturbed
   Children--A Nonsentimental View", Child Welfare,
   44, (1965) p. 74.

disturbed children who have been neglected, abandoned, or abused. The risk of rejection by the foster parents is too great. She holds that antiquated ideals must be discarded and workable substitutes found.

What is the risk of rejection? An examination of foster home loss per year gives an impression of the amount of movement which appears to be occuring. A study done in 1964 by the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto shows that in 1963 that agency lost 218 of its foster homes or approximately 82.6% of its gains in homes, adding only 46 homes to its roster. This fell far short of the number of new homes needed so that the report notes that the agency is barely meeting the every day placement requirements let alone matching the children with prospective foster parents. Moreover, if 218 homes out of approximately 550 are lost, nearly one third of the agency's foster children were moved that year.[1]

Statistics from the Provincial reports of the Family and Children's Services of London and Middlesex County show a similar trend. See Table 1.

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1. L. A. Beaulieu, To Obtain and Retain--That is the Problem, The Catholic Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto, 1964.

Table 1

	1966	1967	1968	1969
Carried over	241	261	267	287
New homes	114	105	122	86
Total	355	366	389	373
Closed homes	94	99	102	86
Carried forward	261	267	287	273

The agency maintains approximately 275
foster homes at any one time so that again approx-
imately one third of its foster homes are closed
each year. This entails moves for at least 100
foster children each year. This figure only in-
cludes movements from homes that are closed; the
total number of moves from foster homes to another
living situation are not known at this time.

It is obvious then that there is a
phenomenal turnover in foster homes. Zira de
Fries has suggested that we need to find a substi-
tute. A review of the literature which follows
in Chapter Two points towards the use of group
homes as a viable alternative. Many agencies have
begun to experiment with the use of group homes
and are finding them quite successful. What ap-
pears to be needed at this time is scientifically
gathered data of a comparative nature to substantiate
the more subjective judgements of the literature
so far.

The Family and Children's Services of
London and Middlesex County (here after referred to
as FCS) has begun to do research in this area with
a pilot study to determine the degree of independ-

ence achieved by group home graduates.[1]

The Child Welfare Branch of the Department of Social and Family Services of the Province of Ontario has expressed an interest in research in this area and is particularly interested in the development of a means of comparative evaluation.[2]

What is proposed then is a comparative study of foster homes and group homes.

The Review of the Literature which follows includes a review of articles pertaining to the current crisis in foster homes and a description from the literature of what a group home is.

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1. "Group Foster Home Care: Pilot Study", unpublished report of the FCS, August 9, 1968.

2. Letter received by the FCS from Mr. Edward Magder, Assistant Director of Child Welfare, Department of Social and Family Services, August 14, 1969.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To further illustrate the extent of
movement necessitated by the use of foster homes
it is useful to look at a study done by Walter J.
Ambinder.[1] He studied the records of 410 foster
children between the ages of 8 and 15 in Detroit
to discover the amount of movement from home to
home from the time of birth to the child's present
age.

He found that the typical 13 year old
has been "through the mill"; he has moved four to
five times during his life, or an average of more
than once every three years. Moreover as the child
gets older there is an increase in the rate of
placement. He notes that in the agency under study,
the chance of a relatively permanent placement for
adolescents is quite dim. He also found that the
child who is placed late tends to 'pack in' a large
number of placement changes during a short period,

1. Walter J. Ambinder, "The Extent of Successive
    Placements Among Boys in Foster Family Homes",
    Child Welfare, 44, (July 1965) p. 397-398).

TABLE 2

Age	No.	Average No. of Placements	Range
8- 9	60	2.63	1-10
9- 10	60	2.90	1-11
10- 11	60	3.25	1-11
11- 12	60	3.55	1-11
12- 13	60	4.07	1-12
13- 14	60	4.86	1-13
14- 15	50	5.68	1-13

TABLE 3

Age of initial Placement	Average No. of Placements by Age 15.
0- 2	6.60
2- 4	6.00
4- 6	5.28
6- 8	4.00
8- 10	5.33
10- 12	5.16

Walter J. Ambinder, p. 398.

for example the child placed between ages 8 and

10 shows .88 placement failures a year till he is

15 and the child placed betwee the ages 10 and 12

experiences 1.24 failures during the next four

years. (See tables 2 and 3).

The Department of Welfare of Saskat-

chewan conducted an extensive study of its foster

home program in 1968 and reached the following

conclusions:

> 1. Generally foster parents come from
> lower income levels, have minimal for-
> mal education, and do not belong to
> community groups or organizations.
>
> 2. The most frequent motive stated for
> becoming foster parents was to provide
> companionship for their own children.
>
> 3. Foster parents were more concerned
> with tangible matters than with the
> problems of raising foster children.
> Foster mothers saw their job as provid-
> ing physical care. Foster fathers saw
> their job as disciplinary...
>
> 4. Many foster parents experienced little
> or no reaction to the foster child
> leaving their home. While seventeen
> percent felt some loneliness, only
> six percent stated they felt any con-
> cern for the child's future.
>
> 5. Foster parents did not express any
> desire to adopt their foster child,
> unless the adoption could be sub-
> sidized.
>
> 6. Foster parents were confused about
> responsibilities and whose job it was

to do what.[1]

This sort of information certainly raises serious questions regarding the type of care foster children receive. The report also points out that foster parents tend to opt out in times of crises whether they are about the child, the foster family, relatives or any other upset in their life situation. Also, they tend to have difficulty investing in the child and are often substandard economically and physically. The report concludes that there is a need for "weeding out" the poor homes and for building up better resources.

Betty Graham, the Director of Child Welfare of the Department of Social and Family Services of the Province of Ontario points out that some societies have attributed the scarcity of available foster homes to paying too low a rate.[2] She adds, however, that in situations

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1. *A Study of the Foster Home Program*, The Department of Welfare, Regina, Saskatchewan, 1968, p.1.

2. Betty Graham, "Boarding, Hoarding, and Fostering," *Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies Journal*, (March 1969), p. 1-3.

where the rate has been raised the resulting
slight increase in new homes is shortlived and
disappointing. She laments the fact that some
societies put on a special campaign to recruit
new foster homes but never look into the reasons
why they have such an unusually rapid turnover of
open homes and a dangerously damaging replacement
rate for foster children. She states that too
many children are moved too rapidly from home to
home without adequate preparation and questions
whether it is because they don't fit the pattern
of these foster homes, like square pegs in round
holes, and perhaps should not have gone there
in the first place.

Vincent Bocchini gives a vivid account
of what it is like to be a foster child. He states
that he finds he is unable to hear the phrase
"foster home" without mentally adding the word
"jungle". His transitory foster home life was
like a jungle in that as a tiger cub grows and
develops, so grows and develops a foster child as
he is shuttled about, learning rapidly through
necessity to distrust all strangers, to see himself
as unwanted, to run the gamut of deprivation and

degradation, to barely survive. He adds that he
has been physically ill only for the want of a
warm, lasting, human relationship, a rare thing
in his foster home experiences.[1]

Susan Barkley tells what it is like
to be a foster parent in a society which is
quite skeptical of foster parents. She states
that it bothers her that a minister can say "If
your foster homes haven't changed since I was a
foster child, kids are better off in an orphanage".
It bothers her that foster children lash out
bitterly at foster parents as they did at the
Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies
Conference in London; it bothers her that when a
man appears in court, the fact that he was a
Foster Child is used in his defence because it is
a common assumption that his needs could not
possibly have been met.[2]

1. Vincent Bocchine, "The Foster Home Jungle",
   Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies
   Journal, (April 1970), p. 5-10.

2. Susan Barkley, "How and Why to Organize Foster
   Parents", OACAS Journal, (March 1969) p. 4-9.

Annette Wigod surveys the foster home problem in great detail.

> The foster-family system, set up with
> such high hopes to provide a warmer
> human environment in place of institu-
> tional care, has managed to enlist only
> a few exemplary homes. Instead, the
> families are frequently marginal mem-
> bers of the community who are too often
> economically unstable, socially dis-
> organized and emotionally disadvantaged:
> whose lives and families and house-
> holds are either disordered and un-
> disciplined, or rigidly inflexible
> and authoritarian. (1)

Miss Wigod goes on to say that many of these families are hardly able to maintain them- selves and rear their own children let alone pro- vide a stable and nurturing family environment which is curative, for our community's parentless and often, severely disturbed children. She adds that these foster parents cannot cope. They tele- phone the agency frequently for advice in dealing with the most trivial problems of child management and resort to desperate, wholly unsuitable, and often damaging disciplinary measures. They also frequently ask that children in their care be moved.

---

1. Annette Wigod, "Lets Ask the Middle Class",
   OACAS Journal, (March 1969) p. 10-15.

She describes the vicious circle of
the initially insecure, disadvantaged child who is
put into a marginal, incompetent family where his
difficult behaviour irritates and alienates the
family. As a result they punish or reject him,
reinforcing his image of himself and the adult
world. He reacts by behaving badly and is then
asked by the foster parents to be moved. He is
placed in another such family with the circle
beginning again.

She states that we know that foster
children manifest an increasing number of severe
emotional problems as they continue in foster
care and that the problems and the severity of
problems is directly related to the number of
foster homes experienced.

She criticises the myth that incom-
petent foster families can be 'developed' and
points out that few of our foster parents have
even had a secondary-school education, let alone
any special education or experience which should
lead them (or us) to believe they have any ability
to handle a disadvantaged child. Moreover, most
of our foster parents have barely enough money to

get along on and conseqently the primary purpose of these families seems to be to add a little extra money to the family income. She holds that lower- or working-class families by and large are not good foster families. They do not know how to care for the disadvantaged disturbed children we place with them despite their good intentions.

As a result of these inadequacies she holds that foster children suffer agonies of anonymity, deprivation, and fragmentation from inferior and changing parenting. They do not turn out well. Fostering as it now exists is pathogenic.

The alternative, she notes, may be to abandon it entirely in favor of other solutions such as group homes or children's villages as some authorities are suggesting. She believes herself that there is some hope of recruiting from the middle class and so improve the quality of foster homes. She concludes that disadvantaged children require and deserve the most nurturant, the most restorative environment that our society can provide.

Richard Haitch states that "A careful look at the picture of to-day's child in foster care... shows a damaged child--one who has often

been been a witness to physical strife between

his parents, to verbal battles, profanity, des-

tructiveness, and sexual abuse or immorality. The

child who needs foster care usually has known little

peace."[1]

He points out that the security which

comes from the constancy of parents' love for

each other and for their children, is scarcely

known to the child who needs foster care. Quick

shifts from indulgence to indifference or to un-

reasonably strict demands confuse him. Temporary

or permanent desertion or separation by parents

is common to this type of child. He enters an

agency's care feeling unloved and rejected and

with little hope that his needs will be met. Dis-

trust, anger, a feeling of unworthiness, absorp-

tion with his own hurt, longing to love but fearing

to love--these are the kinds of feelings that often

characterize a child as he enters foster care

according to Haitch.

He further notes that foster care has

1. Richard Haitch, Orphans of the Living: The
    Foster Care Crisis, Public Affairs Pamphlet
    No. 418, (1968, New York) p. 3.

changed from being largely a temporary home for
displaced children to a service to the neglected.
The children entering foster care from deserted
and troubled homes bring with them a complex set
of personality problems. Adjustment to foster
care would be difficult for the normal child;
add to that a badly scarred psyche and there is
little hope.

As one of the possible alternatives
to the present situation Haitch gives the example
of a demonstration project in Washington D. C.
where six group foster homes were set up in June
1963 and the foster parents hired to run them
received a salary in addition to full reimbursement
for food, clothing and other costs of child care.
Five foster children--long-term cases, with little
chance of returning to their own homes were placed
in each foster home. The project was so success-
ful that in early 1965 eleven more homes were
added.

Haitch states that group care remains
for some children the best answer. Some, especially
teen-agers, find more permanence, more security,
in the routine of well-ordered group care than

with an isolated foster family.

He quotes Dr. Leon Eisenberg, director
of the department of psychiatry at Massachusetts
General Hospital in Boston, "Is it not time...
that we re-examine the very nature of foster care
itself? The instability of foster homes, the
shortage of adequate homes, the inability to pro-
vide continuity of worker, supervisor, and foster
parent--all these factors combine to suggest that
group homes deserve to be given more weight in
planning."[1]

He also quotes Professor David Fanshel
of the Columbia University School of Social Work
on this matter. "Children who come into foster
care are youngsters who need the best we have to
offer. For some children, well-run, small group-
care facilities--say for 50 children--could offer
a kind of security and enriched interpersonal ex-
perience never available to them before. However
a goodly number of foster children in the United
States live in communities where the city fathers
and United Fund people have been unwilling to

_____

1. Ibid. p. 24.

face up to the need to build such facilities."[1]

Professor Fanshel also states that when the heat is on and the children are not moving out of congregate shelters or hospitals, standards are lowered--sometimes drastically-- and applicants are accepted to serve as foster parents who normally would be rejected, all because communities are unwilling to spend more than a pittance to care for a homeless child.

K. Trimark, Head of the Child Care Department of the Thunder Bay Children's Aid Society, writes that "In 1969 , we recognized an increasing need for a total re-assessment of our foster home program. This is continuing to be done now and, in the process, certain disturb- ing features have become clearly identifiable. I think we have been aware of some of these prob- lems, but for various reasons, such as large caseloads and pressures of work generally, we have not been able realistically to accept our own limitations and inadequacies of service."[2]

---

1. Ibid.

2. K. Trimark, "Remodelling the Foster-Care Program", <u>OACAS Journal</u>, (April 1970) p. 1-4.

He goes on to express concern re-
garding the unevenness of service to foster par-
ents. Some homes are receiving good supervision
but there are others where the supervision has
been sorely limited. The relationship between
the agency and foster parents has not generally
been satisfying for the latter in that foster
parents do not consider themselves part of the
agency and receive little real recognition for
the work they do. Often more is expected of
foster parents than is reasonable in that many
of the children they are asked to care for are
suffering from various degrees of emotional
disturbance. Some children, consequently, do
not fit into normal foster homes for they are
unable to accept substitute parents because of
their unhappy experience with their own parents.

Significantly, Mr. Trimark points out
that because of this his agency has in 1969
commenced a group home program designed to meet
the needs of those children who have had several
unsuccessful foster home placements. In this
particular program the group home parents function
more as therapists than parents and are given

extra professional support on a regular consistent
basis by a professional group worker. The philos-
ophy for using the group home according to Mr.
Trimark is that through this program the children
will be offered a more stable home environment,
interested and concerned parental models of a dil-
uted nature and the opportunity for the children
to freely act out their conflicts, frustrations
and anxieties within their peer group, under the
supervision and guidance of a trained social work-
er.

Mr. Trimark affirms quite strongly
that Group Homes do work. He gives as the basis
for this statement that very tangible results
have occurred; for example, there is evidence
that Crown Wards are stabilizing and continuing
their education. He also noted in 1969 a mark-
ed reduction in emergencies and crises caused
by behavioural upsets or emotional outbursts
that undermine the security of the child in the
foster home.

There is obviously then a good deal
of recent literature pointing out that there. is
in fact a real crisis in the use of foster homes.

Much of the literature points to the use of group homes as a viable alternative. The next section of this chapter will deal with a description of group homes, from the literature currently available.

GROUP HOME

The Child Welfare League of America defines a group home as "one providing care for a small group of children in a family-type setting where the emphasis is on meeting the specialized needs of adolescents or seriously disturbed youngsters for whom institutional care is contraindicated, or on the study and/or treatment of disturbed children through the use of this setting."[1]

It further describes one agency's group home program as useful for a child,

> not ready or able to relate to the more personal demands of regular foster family living and particularly stemming from poor identification with parental figures, and or in need of a smaller, more intimate group setting...Also to provide milieu for growth by virtue of experiencing placement per se as a therapeutic experience. (2)

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1. Group Home Programs, Child Welfare League of America, Inc., (New York, July 1961) p. 4.

2. Ibid. p. 5.

The report also notes that group composition is particularly important and suggests the following:

> a) A group is limited to two children with severe acting-out difficulties.
>
> b) It is helpful to have some children who are more stabilized to act as a positive core...
>
> c) It is important to consider the length of time the other group members have been in the home before a new member is added. (1)

Martin Gula in a booklet on group homes prepared for the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare quotes the following guideline used by one agency:

> We expect to be able to help girls who have shown such behaviour as stealing, disobedience, truancy, defiance, withdrawal, running away etc., if they have sufficient inner strength to develop control of their behaviour. In evaluating a teenager we try to determine her potential to form healthy relationships with others her own age so that she can experience the satisfactions of being liked and getting along in a sharing environment. She must also show potential to relate to adults who will not expect a close personal relationship, but who will be consistent and accepting in their attitude toward her. (2)

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1. Ibid. p. 8.

2. Martin Gula, <u>Agency Operated Group Homes</u>, (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1964) p. 8.

The FCS in London differentiates child-

ren in Group Homes into three types:

1. The child who has functioned in
    a very stable manner and has a
    good deal of emotional strength
    and very positive identification
    with either natural family or
    previous foster family...

2. A child who because of the part-
    icularly stressful situation in
    his life during adolescence be-
    gins to react to this stress
    in a more primitive manner through
    negative acting out behaviour...

3. The third child using the facility
    in small numbers is the child
    whose pattern of behaviour and
    attitudes and feelings is that of
    a disturbed child...(1)

The staff in group homes follow two

models, the family and the institutional. The

family model can be seen as twenty-four hour care

by a married couple who have skill in working

with groups of children. The home has a mixed

family and agency atmosphere with professional

supervision maintained by the Agency which has

final authority on admissions and discharges.

Foster parents are salaried staff and are gener-

ally provided with supplementary cleaning help

and relief personnel. If individual foster par-

---

1. "Group Homes", unpublished report of FCS
    London, April 23, 1968, p. 4-5.

ents leave the home, the facility continues to
exist for the children.

According to Norman Herstein the
foster family in the group home is a matrix
of care based on already existing relationships
with values, feelings, thoughts, routines, ex-
pectations, demands and roles that have been un-
consciously worked out amoung the family members.[1]
Hopefully the child will be able to take what is
positive from the family and yet be allowed to
develop his own individuality and responsibility.

The institutional model, though more
expensive, lends itself to such development more
clearly. Trained child care staff are employed
and viewed as counsellors. House parents rather
than foster parents is the emphasis with less of
a family atmosphere. The facility provides con-
structive group living plus casework and in some
situations clinical services on an out-patient
basis. Remedial educational services might also
be provided for the child not quite ready for
community schools.

---

1. Norman Herstein, "What is a Group Home?" Child
    Welfare, (October 1964) p. 403-414.

There are a number of unrelated adults responding to the children's behaviour for limited periods of time and providing guidance and a generally therapeutic environment. This model is particularly useful for youngsters who are not able to tolerate the emotional demands of the family model. It also provides more professional care and may be able to cope with more disturbed adolescents.

Irving Rabinow plays down the difference in the two models and emphasises that "The success or failure of a staffing pattern depends upon the people involved. If they are truly interested in the youngsters, their work will show good results... if they do not care, they are of little value, whether as couples or as individuals."[1]

With regard to treatment in Group Homes Miriam Schwartz and Isidore Kaplan see group homes as providing the protective and supportive aspects of group living, a warm atmosphere, and an opportunity for normal community experience.[2] They see it

---

1. Irving Rabinow, "Agency Operated Group Homes," Child Welfare, (October 1964).

2. Miriam Schwartz and Isidore Kaplan, "Small Group Homes--Placement of Choice for Adolescents," Child Welfare, (November 1961) p. 9-17.

as meeting the special needs of adolescents in
terms of the adolescent struggle for independ-
ence which in the case of troubled adolescents
has been intensified and complicated by the un-
resolved conflicts about adult images as repre-
sented by their parents and as reflected in
disturbed behaviour. The peculiar placement needs
of adolescents demand such a facility in that
adolescents placed in foster homes frequently
overwhelm those caring for them as already point-
ed out. Many foster parents often react per-
sonally and cannot live with excesses and dis-
tortions of behaviour. Also, teenagers are gen-
erally too old and set in their ways to readily
adapt to the patterns and expectations of a fam-
ily. Moreover, adolescence is a period when hor-
izons need to be widened and new and exploratory
experiences tested out. The group home offers a
secure base to operate in and from, with the en-
couragement of independence and the development
of responsibility as a preparation for adult-
hood.

Irene M. Josselyn points out that the

peer group structures a framework of behaviour

patterns and supports the individual by giving

him security and encouragement.[1] Thus the signif-

icant question is "what type of peer group is the

adolescent going to identify with and conform to?"

The group home offers an optimum setting for the

development of acceptable and responsible values

and norms as it allows group decisions and devel-

opment but within a reasonable framework. For

instance, in the FCS in London the group home

adolescents decide on rules for the home as a

group with the assistance and guidance of the

staff. Thus this type of facility would seem to

be ideally suited to the type of child who has

difficulty accepting rules and discipline impos-

ed from above as these can be group centred and

originated, particularly if the children involved

can use group pressure and peer relations.

Generally, both individual casework

and group therapy are available in the group home

programs in the province. In the FCS in London

1. Irene M. Josselyn, "Psychological Changes in
    Adolescence," <u>Children,</u> 16 (March-April 1959)
    p. 43-47.

the social worker responsible for the home sees the group of adolescents weekly and deals with the day to day activity of the home and the group members. He also meets weekly with the group parents and assists them in understanding the adolescents in their care, in planning for them, and in working out problems. In addition they are helped to cope with the adolescents' behaviour through in-service training once every two weeks.

It would seem then from the literature that a group home is better suited than the present form of foster home to care for adolescents. A comparative study is certainly in order to determine on objective grounds if this is in fact so.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

Following Alfred J. Kahn's table of
"Differentiating Characteristics of Research"[1] , the
design of this research proposal is that of a
Descriptive study. Kahn defines the aim of this
study as being to assess characteristics of phen-
omena or to describe relationships between variables.
This description may be qualitative or quantitative
and may relate to a program or client group. More-
over this design lends itself to a comparative
study in that the data is collected in a statisti-
cally reliable and valid manner and is objective in
nature. The emphasis according to Kahn is empirical
rather than theoretical with the descriptive in-
formation being used for purposes of assessment.

In this study data will be gathered on
two groups, randomly selected from the foster home
and group home populations in Children's Aid Soci-
eties in Ontario. Comparisons will then be made
and implications drawn. The significant variables

1. Alfred J. Kahn, "The Design of Research", in
   Social Work Research, ed. Norman Polansky,
   (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1960)
   p. 58.

then are the two programs, foster homes and group

homes. The data gathered will relate to several

specific and objective forms of behaviour, which

can be easily assembled and tabulated. This data

will be collected throughout a specified two year

period as the particular forms of behaviour occur.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

The question for this study is "How
do children in Group Homes compare to children in
Foster Homes on the following objective phenomena:

1. School Grades,

2. Stealing,

3. Running Away,

4. Pregnancy,

5. Suicide attempts,

6. Crises and emergencies,

7. Institutionalization,

8. Contact with law enforcement agency,

9. Legal Convictions,

10. Moves."

These ten phenomena were chosen because
they are objective, factual, and easily defined,
recognized, and tabulated. The first five were
found by Dr. Leon Eisenberg to be common symptoms
among over 400 'problem' foster children that he
treated in the Baltimore area.[1] The latter five

1. Leon Eisenberg, "The Sins of the Fathers: Urban
    Decay and Social Pathology", American Journal
    of Orthopsychiatry, XXXll (1962) p. 15.

were chosen because they are objective indicators
of behaviour difficulties. School grades can be
recorded at the beginning of the study, and im-
provement, deterioration, or no change can be not-
ed at the end of the study period. Stealing is
a concrete easily identifiable form of behaviour
which can be readily tabulated for the duration
of the study period. It would include any theft
which comes to the notice of the child's social
worker. Similarly occurrances of running away
can be noted and counted. It would involve any
situation where the child has left his home with-
out explicit or implicit permission. Pregnancies
are quite objective and can be noted for each
sample group. Similarily suicide attempts are
recognizable forms of acting out behaviour which
usually come to the attention of the social work-
er. Crises and emergencies where the social
worker is called in to settle the difficulty are
again objective situations which are readily re-
corded and tabulated. They would constitute all
situations of an emergency nature where the social
worker is asked to intervene either by the child

or the substitute parents. Institutionalization involves placement in a treatment centre or a training school and again is factual and easily tabulated. Similarly contact with any law enforcement agency involves an objective incident usually related to aggressive or destructive behaviour. Legal convictions are self-explanatory and easily tabulated as are moves which involve changes in living situations.

It is suggested that out of the total foster home population in Ontario Children's Aid Societies fifty foster children be randomly selected in the age group 12 to 14 through the 'Single Random Sample' method. Similarly fifty group home children would be selected by the same method from the total group home population in Ontario. This method is described by Julius A. Jahn[1] and involves using a Table of Random Numbers wherein each subject in the population is assigned an identification number and a sample of the desired size is randomly selected from the Table.

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1. Julius A. Jahn, "Some Principles and Methods of Sampling", in Social Work Research, ed. Norman A. Polansky, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1960) p. 78.

These one hundred adolescents would
then be followed for the next two years and data
gathered by their social workers on the ten criter-
ia listed above. The workers would not be inform-
ed of the nature or purpose of the study but, rather
would only be asked to gather the requested data
in order to avoid bias.

Clearance would have to be gained for
this procedure through the Department of Social
and Family Services. The Child Welfare Branch of
this Department has already indicated an interest
in such a comparative study as already noted and
has suggested the use of several agencies.[1]

The data would be recorded on Form 1
for each of the selected children (see appendix)
and returned to the researcher at the end of the
two year period. Specific instructions would
accompany Form 1 regarding definitions of items
as already given above and directions for filling
out the form and returning it as well as the De-
partmental clearance.

1. Letter received by FCS of London from Mr. Edward
   Magder, Assistant Director of Child Welfare,
   Department of Social and Family Services,
   August 14, 1969.

The collected data would then be tabulated and arranged in Tables 4 and 5 for comparisons of the two programs. The data will be analysed in Table 4 according to the mean number of incidents per child for the two year period on each of the nine categories. In Table 5 the school grade performance will be analysed according to percentages in each of the three categories for the total sample in both the group homes and the foster homes.

As the adolescent's social worker will be the only one noting and tabulating these objective phenomena there is no built in check on reliability; that is, there is no way of telling if another person were tabulating these incidents if he would arrive at the same score. However, since they are quite objective and factual, it is not unreasonable to assume that another person as familiar with the adolescent's behaviour as the Social Worker would make the same tabulation. This in fact is why objective phenomena were chosen. To test reliability one could in a certain percentage of cases have the foster or group parents make

a tabulation as well and correlate the results
with the social worker's for a coefficient of
reliability set at .05. This would give scorer
reliability.

Validity is at least present in the
form of face validity in that because of the
objective phenomena used the data looks as if
it should be valid; that is, if one records
incidents of stealing there is a good chance
that that is in fact what one is doing.

Such practical factors as the follow-
ing all point to a high rate of usability: little
demand on staff time, low cost involved, and rela-
tive ease with which the data can be gathered.
Again the objective nature of the data makes for
this practicality. Subjective judgements are
kept to a minimum, tabulation is simple, and
little training is needed to gather the data
accurately.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on what has already been noted
about the drastic instability in foster homes and
the growing trend in Children's Aid Societies to
use group homes because of their apparent great-
er stability, I would expect to find that such
a comparison as suggested in this proposal would
be more favourable to group homes than to foster
homes.

If this does in fact occur, then based
on quite objective data, we could conclude that
in a number of pertinent areas of behaviour, group
homes produce better results than foster homes as
they now exist. In particular we would expect a
lower rate of stealing, running away, pregnancy,
attempted suicide, crises, institutionalization,
contact with the law, legal conviction, and move-
ment of placement: and as well a high rate of im-
proved school grades, in the group home programs.

The implications of such a finding are
far reaching. With regard to Social Work theory
and knowledge, the traditional view that children

need a substitute 'family' with mother and father despite the instability involved in foster homes, may need to be shifted to a view that a stable physical setting, a relatively stable peer group, and consistent, loving care and discipline by a number of trained adults may be more conducive to a healthy development than five or six foster homes by the age of fifteen.

The implications for Social Work practice are that if in fact foster homes are as bad as the current literature suggests and if group homes offer a sound alternative, then serious consideration would have to be given to extensive use of group homes to replace unacceptable foster homes for the adolescent age range. Furthermore research would be logical in the area of the use of group homes for younger children.

Moreover, there is a need to communicate this information to the community at large and arouse sufficient interest to generate public concern and willingness to pay for better services for children in care. The necessary services would be expensive, as is seen in the comparative cost

table in the appendix. Group home care costs between ten and eleven dollars a day per child whereas present foster home care runs between four and five dollars a day per child.

Thus to improve services to the children in our care agencies may come into conflict with taxpayers and will have to plan carefully to gain sufficient public support for such expanded services.

Despite the fact that a good part of the foster home program is pathogenic, there are good foster homes, and there is a movement to specialize foster homes. In such a situation high standards are maintained with foster parents being chosen as carefully as other staff, paid a salary, and trained either by the agency or at community colleges.

Such criteria as maturity, stability, warmth, insight, flexibility, communication skills, satisfaction with life, security, level of education, motivation, trainability, child rearing ability, and appreciation of the unique problems

of a foster child, are considered in selecting
these specialized foster parents.

In-service orientation and training
includes group discussions with foster parents, films,
panels, lectures, etc. It could also include
observation of experienced foster parents and the
live-in assistence of trained child care staff
in the early stages of fostering and at times of
crises.

Specific areas of concern in an
educational program according to Susan Barkley
should be developing increased skills with
children, discussions about discipline, the study
of child development from infancy to adolescence,
the unique problems foster children must face,
and the relationship between foster parents and
natural parents.[1]

Mrs. Barkley further suggests that
experienced parents be involved in dealing with
this whole problem by organizing Foster Parent
Associations and attacking such problems as

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1. Barkley, p. 5.

communication between social workers and foster

parents, upgrading their skills in child care,

and addressing the problem of foster home break-

down as a group. Such a group as it developed could

be given the responsibility of screening and

orienting prospective foster parents and could

be involved in training new foster parents through

the use of a buddy system whereby an experienced

foster parent is available for guidance, support,

and assurance. The organization could also sponsor

workshops with the agency utilizing experienced

foster parents and community and educational leaders.

Also advisory groups could be developed who have

special skills in dealing with particular problems

or age groups. Some form of relief help for times

of stress or illness could also be developed by

utilizing foster mothers who are past twenty-four-

hour-a-day care but who possess a rich background

in fostering. Such an Association could become

influencial as a pressure group which might have

more impact on governments than the agency.

Marnie Bruce points out that such organ-

izations could play a vital role in public relations..

She sees the Foster Parents Association's major

task as helping the public to see that fostering
                                              [1]
is an important and respectable public service.

Annette Wigod points out that "studies

of the characteristics of successful foster families

indicate that those of higher economic level, more

education, and a variety of middle-class values
                                        [2]
and attitudes are more apt to be successful." She

suggests that more foster parents be recruited

from the Middle Class, the white collar, profession-

al, and managerial groups as these groups seem to

be an untapped resource. To do this agencies

would have to increase the status of fostering

and communicate the nature of the present crisis

in fostering to these groups. To use parents from

these groups she adds that social workers would need

to be available as consultants rather than super-

visors.

Marilyn Ball suggests that in the

cases of children who are unlikely to be adopted,

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1. Marnie Bruce, "CAS Expectations from the Foster
    Parents Association", OACAS Journal, (October 1969)
    p. 8-11.

2. Wigod, p. 13.

the foster home be treated as a permanent place-
ment rather than the temporary emphasis which is
now nearly universally stressed by agencies.[1] This
might ensure a greater committment on the part of
the foster parents, particularly when the difficult
teen years arrive, and would function much like
subsidized adoption. A permanent contract could
be used to stress the nature of the arrangement
and stress would be placed on the foster parents
taking more responsibility for planning for the
child. The agency would reduce its role to a
supportive one for the most part.

What is being suggested in all of
this is that if foster homes are to be improved
then foster parents must be seen as agency staff
rather than as a hangover from our 'charity'
era. With such a change in attitude would come
added responsibilities, training, and expectations,
and hopefully more permanence and better service
to the children in the care of social agencies.
Such a change would probably place foster homes
on a par with group homes.

1. Marilyn Ball, "Permanent Foster Care",
    OACAS Journal, (June, 1969) p. 6-8.

APPENDIX

1970 Budget-Days Care-Cost Comparisons, London FCS

Setting	Days Care	Average Cost
Boarding Homes	126,757	2.88
Group Foster Homes		
Fee Type	1,700	7.27
Agency 1	2,620	9.68
2	2,620	9.57
3	2,040	8.45
4	2,620	8.69
Outside Institutions	18,555	18.45

Cost Comparisons including hidden costs.

Boarding Homes (includes boarding and foster homes)

Item	Average Cost
Per diem	2.88
Social Worker	.91
Homefinding	.36
General Administration	.31
Total	4.46

Group Homes (Agency)

Per diem	9.10
Social Worker	1.00
Total	10.10

FORM 1

Child's Number_____   Study Period_____

Categories	No. of incidents
Stealing	
Running Away	
Pregnancy	
Suicide Attempts	
Crises and emergencies	
Institutionalization	
Contact with law enforcement agencies	
Legal Convictions	
Moves	

Grades	Improved	Unchanged	Deteriorated

TABLE 4

Mean number of incidents per child

Categories	Group Home	Foster Home
Stealing		
Running Away		
Pregnancy		
Suicide Attempts		
Crises and emergencies		
Institutionalization		
Contact with law enforcement agencies		
Legal Convictions		
Moves		

TABLE 5

School grade performance of total sample

Home	Improved	Unchanged	Deteriorated
Group Home			
Foster Home			

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ment Among Boys in Foster Family Homes", Child Welfare,
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