A Comparative Study of Foster Homes and Group Homes

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A Comparative Study

of

Foster Homes and Group Homes

(A Research Proposal)

A Research Essay

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By

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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, disturbed children, can sort out their place in the intricacies of foster family care, even with a great deal of help. It is similarly unrealistic, she suggests, to perpetuate the idea that replication of a family situation is the best possible kind of care for


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 occurring. 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 everyday 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.

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

1. L. A. Beaulieu, To Obtain and Retain--That is the Problem, The Catholic Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto, 1964.
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<td>Carried over</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New homes</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>373</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closed homes</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carried forward</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>273</td>
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</table>
The agency maintains approximately 275 foster homes at any one time so that again approximately one third of its foster homes are closed each year. This entails moves for at least 100 foster children each year. This figure only includes 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 substitute. 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 appears 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 (hereafter 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.

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.

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.


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. 1 Ambinder. 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,

### TABLE 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Average No. of Placements</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1-11</td>
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<td>10-11</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1-11</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>1-12</td>
</tr>
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<td>13-14</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>1-13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### TABLE 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of initial Placement</th>
<th>Average No. of Placements by Age 15.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>6.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>6.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>5.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>5.16</td>
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for example the child placed between ages 8 and 10 shows .88 placement failures a year till he is 15 and the child placed between the ages 10 and 12 experiences 1.24 failures during the next four years. (See tables 2 and 3).

The Department of Welfare of Saskatchewan 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 formal 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 providing 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 concern for the child's future.

5. Foster parents did not express any desire to adopt their foster child, unless the adoption could be subsidized.

6. Foster parents were confused about responsibilities and whose job it was
to do what.

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. She adds, however, that in situations


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.

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.


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 institutional care, has managed to enlist only a few exemplary homes. Instead, the families are frequently marginal members of the community who are too often economically unstable, socially disorganized and emotionally disadvantaged: whose lives and families and households are either disordered and undisciplined, or rigidly inflexible and authoritarian. (1)

Miss Wigod goes on to say that many of these families are hardly able to maintain themselves and rear their own children let alone provide 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 telephone 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.

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 incompetent 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 consequently 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 Haltch 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 a witness to physical strife between his parents, to verbal battles, profanity, destructiveness, and sexual abuse or immorality. The child who needs foster care usually has known little peace."

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 unreasonably 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. Distrust, anger, a feeling of unworthiness, absorption 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

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 successful 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 provide continuity of worker, supervisor, and foster parent—all these factors combine to suggest that group homes deserve to be given more weight in planning."

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 experience 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."

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 disturbing features have become clearly identifiable. I think we have been aware of some of these problems, 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."

1. Ibid.

He goes on to express concern regarding the unevenness of service to foster parents. 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 philosophy 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 diluted 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 worker.

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 marked 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."

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)


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)

1. Ibid. p. 8.
The FCS in London differentiates children 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 particularly stressful situation in his life during adolescence begins 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 generally provided with supplementary cleaning help and relief personnel. If individual foster par-

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, expectations, demands and roles that have been unconsciously worked out among the family members. 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 constructive 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.

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."

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. They see it

as meeting the special needs of adolescents in terms of the adolescent struggle for independence which in the case of troubled adolescents has been intensified and complicated by the unresolved conflicts about adult images as represented 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 pointed out. Many foster parents often react personally and cannot live with excesses and distortions of behaviour. Also, teenagers are generally too old and set in their ways to readily adapt to the patterns and expectations of a family. Moreover, adolescence is a period when horizons 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 encouragement of independence and the development of responsibility as a preparation for adulthood.

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. Thus the significant 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 development 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 imposed 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

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", 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 phenomena or to describe relationships between variables. This description may be qualitative or quantitative and may relate to a program or client group. Moreover this design lends itself to a comparative study in that the data is collected in a statistically reliable and valid manner and is objective in nature. The emphasis according to Kahn is empirical rather than theoretical with the descriptive information 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 Societies in Ontario. Comparisons will then be made and implications drawn. The significant variables

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. The latter five

were chosen because they are objective indicators of behaviour difficulties. School grades can be recorded at the beginning of the study, and improvement, deterioration, or no change can be noted 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 occurrences of running away can be noted and counted. It would involve any situation where the child has left his home without explicit or implicit permission. Pregnancies are quite objective and can be noted for each sample group. Similarly suicide attempts are recognizable forms of acting out behaviour which usually come to the attention of the social worker. Crises and emergencies where the social worker is called in to settle the difficulty are again objective situations which are readily recorded 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 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.

These one hundred adolescents would then be followed for the next two years and data gathered by their social workers on the ten criteria listed above. The workers would not be informed 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.

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 Departmental clearance.

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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 following all point to a high rate of usability: little demand on staff time, low cost involved, and relative 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.
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 greater 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 movement of placement; and as well a high rate of improved 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 assistance 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.

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

1. Barkley, p. 5.
communication between social workers and foster parents, upgrading their skills in child care, and addressing the problem of foster home breakdown 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 influential as a pressure group which might have more impact on governments than the agency.

Marnie Bruce points out that such organizations 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 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 and attitudes are more apt to be successful." She suggests that more foster parents be recruited from the Middle Class, the white collar, professional, 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 supervisors.  

Marilyn Ball suggests that in the cases of children who are unlikely to be adopted,  

the foster home be treated as a permanent placement rather than the temporary emphasis which is now nearly universally stressed by agencies. This might ensure a greater commitment 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.

### 1970 Budget-Days Care-Cost Comparisons, London FCS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Days Care</th>
<th>Average Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boarding Homes</td>
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<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Foster Homes</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee Type</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1,700</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2,620</td>
<td>8.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Institutions</td>
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<td>18.45</td>
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Cost Comparisons including hidden costs.

**Boarding Homes (includes boarding and foster homes)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Average Cost</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Per diem</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homefinding</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.46</td>
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</table>

**Group Homes (Agency)**

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<th>Item</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Per diem</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>No. of incidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running Away</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Attempts</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Crises and emergencies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with law enforcement agencies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Convictions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Improved</th>
<th>Unchanged</th>
<th>Deteriorated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 4

Mean number of incidents per child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Group Home</th>
<th>Foster Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running Away</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suicide Attempts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crises and emergencies</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moves</td>
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### TABLE 5

School grade performance of total sample

<table>
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<th>Home</th>
<th>Improved</th>
<th>Unchanged</th>
<th>Deteriorated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Bibliography


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


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