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Evaluation by Foster Parents of Services Received from The Children's
Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto: A Research Proposal

A Research Essay

Submitted to The Graduate School of Social Work
Waterloo Lutheran University

By

Barbara Allan, B.A.

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Social Work

April 1970

3815

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A. Problem Identification and Formulation

Identification of the Problem Area

The problem area is evaluation of service by foster parents.

Why I am Concerned With It

My concern with this problem stems first from a general concern for what recipients of service value or devalue in that service. There is sparse available data in this area. John E. Mayer and Noël Timms state that "For many years caseworkers have experimented with different ways of helping people. Curiously, the resultant innovations have stemmed not from the client's perception of what is helpful, but from the practitioner's. Moreover, with few exceptions, the effectiveness of help has been judged by the persons offering, not receiving, help. In a word the client has rarely been asked what kind of help he wants or what he thinks of the help has has been given." (Mayer, pg. 32). Secondly, my concern stems from the fact that of many foster homes recruited and licensed, many are soon lost without clear reason from the agency's point of view. It is hoped that if foster parents are encouraged to evaluate the service they expect or receive, new ideas for service and/or its differential use in foster homes might result in better maintenance of foster care for all concerned.

How I Became Interested in the Problem

My interest evolved through at the Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto, North Branch, where there was concern for the great loss of foster homes. While there are no immediately available statistics

on the percentage of homes lost, North Branch found that it was losing more homes than it was opening over a period of one year. The homes lost were usually new ones which, after one placement, closed. Indeed, there had been a growing concern about this problem area throughout the city's whole agency. Also, many foster homes broke down, asking that the child be replaced. A pilot project for intensive service to certain separated families, their children in care, and the foster parents involved soon showed that percentage-wise, fewer homes were being lost with this additional services. With this additional service, no foster homes broke down for a child nor were any closed during the first year of the pilot project. Then the question may be asked "why?" What did these foster parents find in service that encouraged them to continue, to be involved? What methods of service helped or didn't? If these homes can be maintained, what did "drop-out" foster parents in other units, indeed across the city, need that they did not find in service? As I reviewed literature on foster parenthood, the great confusion between agency and foster parents in regard to roles, duties, etc. pointed to a need for clarification between the two, one source of which would be foster parents' evaluation of service.

What Is its Source?

The source of the problem, then, may to be a confusion between agency and foster parents about their mutual working arrangement, including their roles, functions, philosophies, etc. The source of the problem evolves, then, from practice. This can be seen through workers' experience and the literature.

Why the Problem is Relevant and Important to Social Work?

Social work as a profession has an obligation to constantly review and, if necessary, revise service. Clients' or foster parents' evaluation of service is one method of feedback about our service which, combined with workers' evaluations, knowledge of new and developing theories, etc., can give helpful suggestions for service improvement.

Today's society sees structures for grass roots feedback: tenants' relations boards, welfare rights groups, foster parents' associations. These groups ask to be heard. Perhaps we should hear them, consider them, and through this evaluation by the consumers of service, benefit from their ideas on improving our service.

As has been mentioned, there are problems of continuance with clients generally and with foster parents, who are of particular concern in this research proposal. If they discontinue service, perhaps we should contact them, ask why, and change our service to meet their need or at least clarify for them the rationale for our service.

The results of studies done have modified service techniques; for example, the study reported by Mayer and Timms pointed to a differential method of service for the working class than for the middle class. (Mayer and Timms, pg. 38-39). Perhaps our research proposal could yield similar indications for differential methods of service for foster parents.

Another benefit of an evaluation of service by its recipients is explained by Helen O'Rourke: the exploratory study she describes "...has given the Administrators and the Board of Trustees a good picture

of the consumer's view of the agency and its practices." (O'Rourke, pg. 477). Since, of course, boards and administrators are involved in any change in policy and service and since the current trend is to hear from the consumer, an evaluation of foster parents of the service they receive could be meaningful to the board and administrators as they struggle to improve policy. We see, then, that the problem is relevant and important to social work both in terms of its potential to lessen loss of foster homes and in its potential to offer innovative ideas for improved services.

Its Relation to Existing Social Work Knowledge, Practice or Research

Existing practice flounders often in its conception of service to foster parents who find this inconsistency confusing. This may be one reason foster parents, frustrated, drop out of service. As far as the writer knows, existing practice does not employ any method of foster parents' evaluation of service beyond informal chats and foster parents' associations which likely draw the more active and involved foster parents. There seems to be no detailed evaluative follow-up for "drop-outs" (although there may be one interview or a telephone call) nor for dissatisfied foster parents in active service. Therefore, implementing this kind of research - foster parents' evaluation of service - into our existing practice would seem to have profitable implications for improved service.

B. Survey of Literature on the Problem

The survey of literature related to the research proposal is plenteous as ~~it~~^{it} refers to client evaluation of service, but sparse in terms of foster parents' evaluation of service, hence the present research proposal with the hope that this aspect of social work will be examined.

This section of the paper will deal with existing literature on client evaluation of service in terms of the kind of study done, or proposed; the instrument; the population; what was assessed; the time element of the study; data analysis; and the implications of these studies for the present proposal. Secondly, we will examine pertinent literature on foster parents as it indicates the need for the research proposal.

Literature on Client Evaluation of Service as the Problem

In the studies reviewed, not all of the above categories are available, but, when available and considered relevant are included in the following paragraphs.

1. The Kind of Study Done or Proposed

Most of the literature reviewed on client evaluation of service made use of the "formulative-exploratory" (Sellitz, Jahoda, Deutsch, Cook, pg. 50) research design. Three studies, two of which implemented a pilot study or a demonstration could be labelled "pre-research". (Burton, and Kaplan, Wilson, Beck).

2. The Instrument Used

Under this title, both the instrument used and who administered it will be discussed.

(a) interviews

Interviews were heavily relied on in client evaluation of service, either in the client's home, his institutional room, or in an office. In most cases the interviews were given only to clients but in some, similar interviews were conducted with workers (Mayer and Timms; Gochros) or worker experience sought (Gedanken -). Dorothy ^{Fahs}~~Tahs~~ Beck states that current research interviews are likely to occur outside client treatment time (but during on-going service); immediately after the intake interview; at home while the case is still active; or as a follow-up to a closed case. (Beck - pg. 390) The timing of interviews varied among the studies used for this paper. Some interviews were given at the first and last treatment session(s). (O'Rourke, Brandrith and Pike) Some were given at termination and then a follow-up interview occurred (Siegel). Some were follow-up interviews only, perhaps based on change as it would appear to have occurred since the case records were made (Wilson; Kogan, Hunt and ^{Bartelme}~~Bartelone~~; Ballard and Mudd; Wasser; Siegel). This seems to be the favoured method. Sometimes only an intake interview was held to evaluate client expectation of service (Lynn) or two interviews were held before and after the initial treatment session. (Overall and Aronson)

(b) use of agency records

Case records have been used to rate the client as a basis for follow-up interviews (Siegel; Ballard and Mudd); as a background for the interview (Wasser); and as a basis for formulating a schedule for the case-work process used (Kogan, Hunt and ^{Bartelme}~~Bartelone~~). The use of records is not mentioned often, but remembering that these studies concentrate on client

evaluation of service, this is understandable.

(c) questionnaires

Often included in the interviews used for client evaluation of service are questionnaires. They may be a method of structuring the interviews. Questionnaires from the studies reported revealed a variety of structures. One had factual questions at the beginning followed by an unstructured discussion where clients then chose which statement from a scaled prepared selection of statements best suited their situation (Siegel). Burton and Kaplan's reported study involved a 54 item questionnaire where data-finding and open-ended questions were used, the interviewing person recording the respondent's answers. Sometimes a schedule of representative statements is checked by the client. (O'Rourke) In the case reported by O'Rourke the schedule was created by the workers and had open-ended spaces at the end of the questionnaire. Questions suggested by the Libo Preference Form P.D.A. were used to tap five aspects of the therapist's behaviour in the study reported by Overall and Aronson. A pilot study to test the questions was used and then the questionnaire administered orally to clients. Some questionnaires are designed to obtain factual information, problem identification and level of problem solution. (Brandreth and Pike). In the study reported by Kogan, Hunt, and ^{Bartelme}~~Bartelone~~, data from the follow-up interview was scheduled by the interviewer after a question was asked, a free answer given, a specific statement "reflected back" under a predetermined category, and the chosen statement scaled by the interviewer. Similarly, in the study reported by Wasser, clients were asked structured questions with

specified answers for client selection and open-ended questions whose answers were immediately recorded or summarized.

(d) personnel administering the instrument

Many (almost half) of the studies reported did not refer to who administered the instrument, although this seems a crucial part of evaluating the validity and reliability of the instrument. Fewer "non-workers", whether they be students, employed researchers, or special interviewers for the research were used in administering the instrument than were workers, whether they be the actual workers the client has or had, ^{or} another workers. Edna Wasser says that the reliability of caseworkers' judgment has been established to some extent and that the caseworker is the logical research interviewer in social work. (Wasser, pg. 423). The number of studies examined in this light which did mention who administered the instrument were only 12, so that this difference in choice of administrator of the instrument may not be meaningful.

Three studies used, it seems, only one interviewer (Kogan, Hunt, and ~~Bartelme~~ ^{Bartelme}; Overall and Aronson; and Overton). This could be one effective way of heightening reliability; that is, if there is worker bias, at least it is consistent.

(e) additional instruments used

Two reports were of clients' meetings with workers to evaluate aspects of service (Thomas and Shea; Overton). Elizabeth Lauder and Delores Taylor advocate foster parents' group meetings to discuss foster family life, agency and foster parents' roles. (Lauder, pg. 60 and Taylor, pg. 380). Mailed questionnaires have also been used (Siegel),

as were letters and telephone calls (Burton and Kaplan; Gochros; Wasser) Wasser found ~~that~~ the direct visit was least anxiety-provoking for the client. (Wasser, pg. 427). Tests and schedules were used in combination with semistructured interviews with one group. (Gochros). In one case, a letter evaluating foster parenthood and the worker was submitted to Child Welfare via agency personnel. One study utilized detailed interviews, information from the Department of Welfare, interviews regarding psychological reports, and reports of training supervisors in combination with the client's evaluation of the service. (Brecher, Kilguss, and Stewart).

In one study, cases not used - about one half of the total - were analysed according to the worker to supplement the clients' evaluation (Brandreth and Pike) and in another, where the success of service would supposedly be better if a demonstration casework team of three workers and one supervisor to do intensive work with a limited (35) caseload as opposed to the regular (175) caseload were set up, a control group of families from standard caseloads selected at the beginning of the project with the same criteria as the experimental group, was used. (Wilson)

3. Population of the Study

Again, one is amazed at the diversity of the population or sample size chosen. Several studies merely cite the number of participants in the evaluation project (Mayer and Timms; Wasser; O'Rourke; Gochros; Ballard and Mudd). While the reports of these studies may have given selection criteria, they do not tell what percentage of the

total client population is represented. Other studies engage all admissions or all referrals in their studies (Linn; Brecher; Kilguss, Stewart). Studies also used stratified random samples, one using a 25% sample (Siegel), another a 10% sample (Burton and Kaplan), another using this method to determine limited caseloads for study (Wilson).

Some selected cases where change had been assessed by the worker (Siegel; Kogan, Hunt, and ~~Bartelone~~^{Bartelme}). Some used a selected sample or random sample (Kogan, Hunt, and ~~Bartelone~~^{Bartelme}; Brandreth and Pike; Overall and Aronson). Variables in population representation varied from very few to very many, both in terms of client characteristics or situation and in terms of problems identified.

4. What Was Assessed

The studies consulted had had clients evaluate such things as:

1. the worker. (Mayer and Timms; O'Rourke; Siegel; Burton and Kaplan; Kogan, Hunt, and ~~Bartelone~~^{Bartelme}; Gochros; and Wasser)
2. treatment. This could include therapist behaviour and techniques. (O'Rourke; Burton and Kaplan)
3. casework received (Mayer and Timms)
4. the client-worker relationship (Overall and Aronson; Thomas and Shea; Gochros)
5. the service (Overton, Siegel)
 - (a) expectations of service (Linn)
 - (b) who seeks service (Brandreth and Pike)
 - (c) problems brought to service; services received; and results (Brandreth and Pike; Kogan, Hunt, and ~~Bartelone~~^{Bartelme}; Gochros; Beck; and Wasser).

6. the agency (O'Rourke; Kogan, Hunt, and ^{Bartelme}~~Bartelone~~; Wasser)
7. factors in continuance (Fowler)
8. impact of a poverty program (Brecher, Kilguss, and Stewart)
9. the meaning of hospitalization to patients (Linn)
10. the impact of economic dependence, employment, and family status on a client group - (Wilson)
11. foster parents' and/or workers' role - (Gedanken; Nadal; Taylor)
12. foster family life - (Mrs. D.A.H. unidentified foster mother ; Lauder)
13. other resources - (Gochros)
14. self-judgment and/or present situation - (Siegel, Wasser).

As can be seen, broad areas of service have been evaluated by clients, although there is a dearth of such evaluation of service by foster parents.

5. The Time Element Involved

In considering how much time is involved in planning a research proposal, one should consider the actual time needed for data collection (both from records and interviews, etc.) and analysis; the amount of time allowed to lapse between points A and B, for between which times evaluation is requested; the time limits inside which potential evaluators are selected; the total time needed for the study. Information from studies available is often not complete; for example, one study conducted 4-5 interviews, each lasting 1½ hours, but no mention is made of time (if any) spent on records or analysis (Mayer and Timms). Two studies spent one and four meetings of unknown duration between worker and client groups to gather data (Thomas and Shea; Overton). One study used only one office visit (Overall and Aronson). One used three initial interviews

and the terminating one. (Brandreth and Pike). One letter was the only data collection time spent in one evaluation (Mrs. D.A.H.).

The time period for which evaluation was asked varied. From immediately before to immediately after the first interview was the time lapse in one case. (Overall and Aronson). One group was interviewed within 48 hours of their admission to a hospital regarding their expectations. (Linn). Another was interviewed during the first three and final interviews to evaluate what occurred in between these times. (Brandreth and Pike). Another was interviewed at termination and then eight months later. (Siegel) and yet another one year after termination. (Gochros). Two other groups had follow-up evaluative requests 5 and 5-10 years after termination respectively (Kogan, Hunt, and ^{Bartelme} ~~Bartelone~~; Ballard and Mudd).

Selection of clients for evaluation of service came by giving year of closure; for example, clients whose cases were closed in 1961 (Siegel); by choosing cases active between two dates; for example, January 1/63 to March 31/64 (Brandreth and Pike); by stating the number of years the case has been closed (Kogan, Hunt, and ^{Bartelme} ~~Bartelone~~).

Finally, total time needed for the studies varied from 18 weeks (Linn) to 3½ years (Kogan, Hunt, and ^{Bartelme} ~~Bartelone~~ and O'Rourke).

6. Data Analysis

Detailed description of data analysis is infrequent in the studies reviewed. However, examples will be given of how some studies were analysed. In some studies, client statements were categorized and/or scaled, sometimes by the person who read the case record and did the

interviewing (Siegel), sometimes by one or more independent analysts (Linn), and sometimes by client and worker and then this was checked by an independent judge who tested the validity of this method and found it to be good (Kogan, Hunt and ^{Bartelme}~~Bartelone~~, pg. 39). Then five independent judges rated the scalings. Client evaluation of change was compared to a movement scale evaluation of them at the time of case closing. One study was simply analysed by categorizing reactions to a group under plus, minus, or mixed. (Burton and Kaplan). Brandreth and Pike report analysis of a study where there was comparison of client evaluation of service at the opening and closing of the case and of the worker's added opinion in order to make a judgment of the effectiveness of service. Then tabulation of data by a research committee was done and analysis and write-up of the study by the chairman of the committee and a staff member. In the study using the control group (Wilson), method of analysis is not discussed beyond the fact that the standard and control groups were analysed. The report of a study by Ballard and Mudd refers to utilization of abstracts from case records, estimating change and clients' movement score where an estimate of change from a -2 to a +4 rating was given during counselling. Then ratings of "desirable change", "no change", or "undesirable change" regarding problem identification and client change were given according to the interviewer and the client.

How the Proposed Problem for Research is Tied in with the Existing Literature: Implications for the Proposed Research Project from the Literature Reviewed on Client Evaluation of Service.

There is much to be learned and applied from the literature

reviewed - and before moving into the literature on foster parenting - in regard to the present research proposal.

1. Population

Since there are currently 1,223 foster homes operating under the Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto it would, of course, not be feasible to have all foster parents evaluate the agency's service. In one study, the cases not used in the sample were analysed on the basis of the social worker's judgment of whether counselling resulted in improvement and it was found that the improvement rate was the same as the sample and, therefore, concluded that the sample represented the total population. (Brandreth and Pike, pg. 35). While we are not assessing "client change", such statements reassure us somewhat that a sample that does indeed fairly well represent the whole can be found. However, the formulative-exploratory study is informally considered for its range of cases examined more than it is concerned with representativeness of size, according to Alfred Kahn's diagnostic table of studies. (Polansky, pg. 58).

From the literature reviewed we can find some helpful hints in determining our sample. The sample should include both clients who are "improved" and "not improved" (Siegel, pg. 349). In our case, since we are not asking foster parents whether they have "improved" during service, but to evaluate the service, we would want to include active, presently involved foster parents and those who voluntarily terminate. Hunt, Kogan, and ^{Bartelme}~~Bartelone~~ cite limitations in the study they report in that there was no control group nor was the sample random

(Hunt, Kogan, and ^{Bartelme}~~Bartelone~~, pg. 102). Our study's "control" group could be the group of foster parents no longer in service, whether it be due to their forced situational circumstances (death in the family, etc.) or to their disillusionment with service, etc. Our sample will also be a random sample - a stratified random sample.

Kogan, Hunt, and ^{Bartelme}~~Bartelone~~ say that their report is of an exploratory study and, therefore, the sample is small. (Kogan, Hunt, and ^{Bartelme}~~Bartelone~~, pg. 14). If the studies being exploratory justifies a small sample, we must also remember to make the sample large enough so that if a certain percentage of foster parents are unavailable, the sample size will still be meaningful to evaluation.

2. Instrument and Data Analysis

Interviews utilizing prepared questionnaires for structure in the interview are often used in exploratory studies. This idea appeals to the writer, especially if the interview contains some open-ended questions where the "reflecting back" technique is used. The interview reflects back a prepared and pre-categorized statement which the evaluator (in this case the foster parent) feels best fits his situation. This would seem to eliminate more researcher bias than if he later categorizes a recorded evaluator response. Kogan, Hunt, and ^{Bartelme}~~Bartelone~~ state, "The short-cut method of quantifying ex-client attitudes by immediately reflecting back of scaled statements during the interviews appears to be satisfactorily valid, especially in the case of valuation of help by the ex-client." (Kogan, Hunt, and ^{Bartelme}~~Bartelone~~, pg. 95) These techniques also seem to give the client (or foster parent) more freedom to explore and

evaluate than do "yes"- "no" questionnaires. Besides, if these questionnaires are mailed Kogan, Hunt, and ^{Bartelme} Bartelone state there is usually poor response. (Kogan, Hunt, and ^{Bartelme} Bartelone, pg. 26)

However, the writer feels that some "yes"- "no" data collection questions at the beginning of an interview may relax the evaluator. This brings us to the question of use of case records. The writer feels that case records (from both the homefinding department and the caseworker involved) should be utilized for some data collection, as criteria for selection of our sample, and as a reference back from foster parent statements around such matters as degree and kind of worker involvement.

Where the interviews should be held is a question worthy of consideration. The writer feels that the interview should be determined both by what is available and by where the person being interviewed is most comfortable. In the case of foster parents, either a home interview or an interview in the agency office would seem most likely, unless the decision were made to administer it to a group of foster parents at a regular foster parents' association meeting. In this case, however, the population would less likely be representative of the whole as "drop-out" foster parents would not be present and the foster parents who were present would be the most involved and active ones. Wasser says that a direct visit without client (foster parent) preparation is the least anxiety-provoking for the client (foster parent in this case). (Wasser, pg. 426).

3. The Researcher

Siegel says that one research to do the pre-study, the instrument application, and the data analysis eliminates any bias to at least one

person and, therefore, makes it constant. (Siegel, pg. 347). However, due to the large number of foster parents, to make our proposal feasible in time, several interviewers put through the same training process and with each following through the three stages Siegel mentions seems more feasible.

Should the researcher be a worker, whether the involved worker or another worker? Our proposal will suggest that the researcher not be a worker. Linn points out that patients (his evaluators, where ours are foster parents) may be defensive or be saying what they feel they ought to say (Linn - pg. 221). It has also been pointed out that an interviewer without any knowledge of the casework process eliminates one area of bias in the instrument (Kogan, Hunt, and ^{Bartelme}~~Bartelone~~, pg. 28), and it should be added, especially if the interviewer is from the agency or with the case involved. Therefore, we suggest a researcher not involved with casework or the agency being evaluated.

4. Time

Since our evaluation is not based on "change" - or not primarily - no established "A" to "B" period during which time change is assessed is really required. However, it would seem important as a selection limit to take our sample from active foster homes during a certain period and from cases closed for a certain period. Also, it seems important to have foster parents who have had a reasonable amount of time in service evaluate that service. The writer would suggest that the population of cases open during 1969 and closed during 1969, ~~where the foster parents have been in service at least one year~~ be used as a basis for the sample

selection. We saw from the literature that the time-lapse between service and follow-up or within service interviews varied greatly, so there seems to be no definitive guidance from the literature. Kogan, Hunt, and ^{Bartelme} Bartelone say that five years after the case is closed is too long. (Kogan, Hunt, and ^{Bartelme} Bartelone, pg. 13). A time-cost analysis should be prepared through the agency budget and is not included in this paper.

Reference will be made to these ideas as the paper moves into discussion of methodology.

Literature on Foster Parenting as the Problem

As has been mentioned, the literature on foster parent evaluation of service is minimal, although much has been written generally on foster parenting, usually the result of workers' viewpoints. However, recent literature does point to the need for attention to foster parents' viewpoints.

An Institute at Yeshiva University for foster parents on foster parenthood presented material for them "...from an unusual (emphasis mine) and helpful point of view ~~insofar as~~ the focus was actually on the foster parent, based on dynamic understanding of placement from the viewpoint of both child and foster parents." (Appelberg, pg. 99).

In Foster Parenting: An Integrative Review of the Literature, the authors say that none of the clinical writings addressed themselves properly to the problem of the foster parents' hazy perceptions of the caseworker's role as a problem in their relationship (Taylor and Starr, pg. 379).

In a study regarding tasks of workers who license foster homes,

"...results showed that supervision and consultation for the licensed foster mother was rated low in importance compared to such tasks as making a home investigation, interpreting regulations, evaluating results of the study and making a recommendation for or against licensing" (Costin, pg. 12) when workers were asked to list tasks of their licensing function and that these items were also rated low in importance to the licensee. (Costin, pg. 12)

The need for attention to foster parents generally, then, is implied, as it is specifically in regard to role clarification between agency and foster parent about worker-foster parent roles, about ^{kind} ~~kind~~ of service required by foster parents and about other specific areas.

Watson says foster parents' expectations need clarification. (Watson, pg. 336) Bigley agrees, adding to that the need for clarification of agency and foster parent roles, relationships, and specifies that "expectations" would include those regarding services on the part of the agency and themselves. (Bigley, pg. 212)

The workers' conception of a client (in this case, a foster parent) often varies with the client's self-perception, as do their views of service. One report on foster parents says that although the workers were uncertain, there was evidence of the foster parents' agreement on their self-images and that they "...likened themselves to natural or adoptive parents..." (Nadal, pg. 210). In a study of post-adoptive service, the clients saw the service quite differently than did the workers. The caseworkers saw this service as "help", whereas the parents saw it as "probation", although clients felt they did receive some help and

suggested what made a difference or didn't, how they were helped. (Gochros, pg. 320-323). There may be value in having foster parents evaluate their "postplacement service", too.

The previous paragraph equates "client" with "foster parent" for convenience in making a point. However, the writer apologizes for this because this very fact is a key issue in service to foster parents. Is the foster parent a colleague or a client? asks Lawder ^{Lawder} (~~Lawder~~, pg. 57). Nadel raises the issue, too, of whether the foster parent is conceived of as a colleague. (Nadal, pg. 209). Bigley says there is confusion as to whether foster parents are clients, voluntary members of an agency team, employees or colleagues. (Bigley, pg. 212). Weaver advocates their being members of an agency team. (Weaver, pg. 343-344).

How foster parents conceive themselves and are conceived by workers in regard to the above obviously has implications for the kinds of service desired and given. Gedanken says foster parents receive "social work", not "casework" as they are not seen as clients. (Gedanken, pg. 512). Miller says that workers assume that foster parents do not have problems or do not want help. (Miller, pg. 216). On the other hand, Watson says that foster parents bring needs to the agency to have them met by a child and that workers should identify these needs and take care to meet them so that the foster parents can meet the child's needs. (Watson, pg. 336). The editor's page of Child Welfare, Volume 46, says that many believe in casework alone with foster parents and of the "...role confusion that this misconception creates for foster parents and its effect on the compensation and recruitment of foster parents and on the entire development of foster family service." Obviously, there

should be some mutual definition of the kind of service expected and given by foster parents and workers. Of course, there are some kinds of service required by the Child Welfare Act, but beyond this, there could be flexibility in service according to need if foster parent and worker mutually defined these. The value of the client-worker relationship is recognized by L.B. Coston who says that it may release potentialities in the foster parent and that consultation can develop out of supervision (Coston, pg. 11).

Finally, let us look briefly at the minimal existing evaluation by foster parents in an effort to stress the need for more attention to their viewpoint. Mrs. D.A.H., an unidentified foster mother who wrote a letter to Child Welfare says that caseworkers don't tell every detail of the child's past, that they are general, but not specific. She speaks of problems of contact with natural parents (Mrs. D.A.H., pg. 12). Gedanken says, too, that foster parents have difficulty with the "natural parents" issue. Foster parents, she says, are often against agency policy of working with the children and with natural parents, including the child's visits home. (Gedanken, pg. 515). Perhaps a parallel in evaluation of agency service to postplacement adoptive service can be made to foster parents' feelings. It was found in one study that these parents found no significance between helpfulness and age, experience in social work or adoption, marital or parental status of workers, or agency auspices of the worker but that four or more postplacement interviews and clear interpretation by the worker of the postplacement visits helped more. (Gochros, pg. 323). Again, in reviewing the literature

on foster parenting, Taylor and Starr say that, "The only available data from foster parents reveals the following:

...Fifty per cent perceived the caseworker as a helpful person with ongoing supervisory responsibilities

...Twenty-five per cent perceived the caseworker as a pastor or good uncle

...Thirteen per cent perceived the caseworker as a homefinder

...Ten per cent perceived the caseworker as an emergency repairman

...Twelve per cent were confused. (totals do not add up to 100 per cent because more than one response per parent was possible." (Ambinder's study reported by Taylor~~or~~ and Starr, pg. 379).

From the above paragraphs, then, we can see that the literature points to a need for attention to foster parents' viewpoints; to a need for mutual worker-foster parent role clarification; to a need for clarification by worker and foster parent of whether foster parents are clients, colleagues, or?; to a need for differential service agreed on by worker and foster parent; and for a need for further evaluation of service by the foster parents.

"One of the major operating headaches in foster care is instability; that is, the dropout of homes and the replacement of children." (Wolins, pg. 580). "We should help foster parents express their disagreement with our ways and come to a resolution for teamwork", says Gedanken. (Gedanken, pg. 515). Taylor and Starr ask what workers can do to clarify parents and workers' roles, among other problems. (Taylor and Starr, pg. 380). They suggest, as does ^{Lawder}~~Lauder~~, foster

parent get-togethers to discuss mutual problems (Taylor and Starr, ^{Lawder} pg. 380 and ~~Lauder~~, pg. 60). Foster Parents' Associations are blossoming throughout the province and yet, as these draw likely the most active and involved foster parents, it is felt that the "silent majority" of malcontents and the drop-outs should also be heard from, hence the research proposal.

How the Proposed Problem is Tied in with the Existing Literature:

Implications for the Research Proposal from the Literature Reviewed on Foster Parenthood

What we have learned from the review of literature on foster parenthood can be broken down into four areas: the need for foster parent attention; implications for what should be assessed in the research proposed; indicated variables from the literature; and implications for who should do the research.

1. The Need for Attention to Foster Parents

This has been dealt with extensively above but the literature reviewed would seem to be supportive of the proposed research.

2. Implications for What Should be Assessed in the Research Proposed

From the above literature, it would seem valuable to assess the following:

1. agency-worker - foster parent roles
2. agency and own self-concept of foster parents as clients, colleagues, or ?
3. expectations of service
4. help wanted (for example, see ^{Lawder} ~~Lauder~~, pg. 58)
5. what problems exist in foster parenting

6. what should be shared, what unique in regard to responsibilities and decisions (Taylor and Starr, pg. 379)

3. Variables Indicated

1. the expected duration of a child in care predicts the kind of home needed (physical care for short-term and mental and physical care for long-term) and worker supervision implied. (Murphy - pg. 76). Length of time expected for a child to be in care may then relate to parents' evaluation of service as service will relate to that factor.
2. The kind of child placed in the foster home. The foster parents come with needs to be met by a child. The agency should acknowledge and meet these so that the child's needs can be met. (Watson, pg. 336). The kind of child placed related to the child requested may be a variable in foster parents' perception of service.
3. The age of the child. The likelihood of a successful placement was decreased as the age of the boarded child increased in one study (Parker, pg. 42).
4. The number and age of "own children" in the foster home (Parker, pg. 63-73).

These variables and others will be included in the research proposal.

4. Implications for Who Should Do the Research

Our previous suggestion for a researcher not involved with the agency is supported by the fact that "...typical is a strong wish on the part of the foster parent to withhold, a wish often stemming from fear of

exploding unacceptable attitudes, of losing self-esteem by such an exposure, and of losing the child. The caseworker is perceived - with some justification - as a real or potential threat." (Nadal, pg. 210).

C. Research Design

The choice of the basic research design is an exploratory study because it has the function of "providing a census of problems regarded as urgent by people working in a given field of social relations" and a study "...can be thought of as falling into the category corresponding to its major function". (Sellitz, Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook, pg. 51).

Rationale for the Choice of Design

This design was chosen because no significant literature was found on what foster parents feel about the service they receive from a social service agency; because their role as defined by agencies and themselves has never been clear or universal and such a study might help define their role; and because agencies so often lose many foster parents and one would wonder whether this is a reflection of service.

D. Research Methodology

Questions for Study

The questions for study are primarily two:

1. Do foster parents feel that services is/was effective for them?
2. Can they identify components of service that helped or hindered them?

These questions, when specifically formulated in a data-collection instrument, would assess worker; client-worker relationship; agency; foster parents' self-concept as client; colleague or ?; service expected and received; factors in continuance; foster parents' concept of their role; and worker's; and problems of foster parenthood.

Hypotheses in the Study

1. That foster parents' expectations of service will vary from workers' perception of the same and that service to be given should be mutually defined early in service.
2. That foster parents' actual needs for service will vary, indicating a need for differential service with various kinds of foster care.
3. That foster parents would like a clear, mutual definition of their role, the social worker's, and the agency's in dealing with the child, his natural family, and the agency. This should likely be handled early in service.
4. That foster parents would like to feel that they are partners in service rather than supervisees, clients, etc.

Major Variables

1. rural - urban residency. "Rural" will be defined as outside the metropolitan Toronto city boundaries but for any foster home licensed by the

Metropolitan Toronto Children's Aid Society and "urban" as any licensed home within those boundaries. The rationale for this variable is that more intensive service is likely given to the foster homes more accessible to the agency which is located in the city. More malcontent with service may be found from rural foster parents and would indicate more emphasis on service to them.

2. age of foster child. This term will be operationalized by having categories of under 1 year, under 2, etc. up to 16 where a child is no longer in care except under special circumstances which will not be included in the research population. The rationale for this variable is found in the results of a study reported by Parker who found that the likelihood of a successful placement decreased as the age of the child being boarded out increased (^{Parker}~~Barker~~, pg. 42). Again, this may point to more intensive service in homes with older children and may make a difference in the foster parent evaluation of service.

3. the length of time the foster parents have had foster children. This term will be operationalized by a scale ranging from under 1 year; 1 year; 1 to 2 years; 2 to 3 years; 5 - 10 years; over 10 years. ~~Under one year is not included as it is felt that parents who are asked to evaluate service should have at least one year's experience.~~ The rationale for this variable is that "newer" foster parents may conceptualize service differently than those who have been with the agency for several years and are used to older methods of service. This variable may point to a need to spend more time with "older" foster parents to explain the rationale for current services.

4. the number of "own" children within five years of age of that of the

foster child. Again, this is based on Parker's report where the rate of success is lower if such children exist (Parker, pg. 63-73). The rationale for this variable might be relevant to selection of foster homes or need for concentrated service in that expected problem area.

5. whether the child is a "non-ward", "temporary ward" or "Crown Ward".

These terms are operationalized thus: a non-ward is a child in agency care with no court order who could be reclaimed by a parent at any time; a temporary ward is a child in whose case wardship has ^{been} granted to the C.A.S. on a temporary basis, usually from one month to two years and the child is only returned to the parent(s) through the Court; a Crown Ward is a child in whose case wardship is granted to the Crown permanently and where parental rights to the child are relinquished. The rationale for this variable is that starting with the non-ward through to the Crown Ward, natural parental access and likelihood of the child's being removed from the home decrease; that is, our foster parents' evaluation of service may show more discontent in the homes where there is natural parent involvement and the threat of losing the child as in the case of non-wards. This may point to more concentrated service with these foster parents or to more careful selection of foster parents who would be able to handle such stress.

6. whether the child placed was the kind of child requested; for example, some couples ask for a female child from 3-6 and then are begged by the Agency to take a 10 year old boy. Age, sex, race, physical or emotional disabilities would operationalize "kind of child". This variable is chosen because, as Watson says, foster parents bring needs to the agency to have them met by a child (Watson, pg. 336) and while the child should

not be inappropriately "used", of course, sometimes foster parents' discontent may stem from not having needs met that could be met with more care in matching child and foster parent.

7. worker's involvement. This can be operationalized mainly by number of interviews (2/month; 1/month; 1/2 months, etc. up to ^{3 months} ~~1/year~~) and whether service was clearly defined. The rationale for this variable is the finding in an adoptive parents' postplacement evaluation where these two variables did make a difference in their feelings about that service. (Gochros, pg. 323).

Research Population

The total population will be the foster homes currently licensed under the Metropolitan Toronto Children's Aid Society but only the homes of the total 1,223. Also included in the total population will be those homes closed during the period of one year, 1969. The latter are included so that "drop-outs" and "malcontents" can be asked to evaluate service.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

Stratified sampling will be used as we will divide our total population of foster homes into sub-populations, strata, according to the variables mentioned. Since our variables are not mutually exclusive, our strata will be determined by producing every possible combination of variables in a foster home and then categorizing all foster homes into one of these strata; for example, urban foster home with no "own children" and with one 16 year old foster child, a Crown Ward, in a home which has been in service 3 years. The worker visited three times yearly and service was clearly defined. The child was the kind requested. These

combinations of variables seem complicated and will evolve many strata, yet seem to be the only way to represent all of the kinds of cases open and to hypothesize the interrelationship of variables. (Freund, pg. 195) A simple random sample of 20% will then be taken from each stratum and the subsamples combined to form the total sample, thus giving us a stratified random sample. (Sellitz, Jahoda, Deutsch, Cook, pg. 526-527). The initial material regarding division of the total population into strata can be obtained from the case records of the homefinding department and any other department involved with the foster homes.

Data Collection Methods

As has been mentioned, case records can be used to determine the population and sub-populations to be used. Then interviews based on a questionnaire with some factual questions to ease the foster parents' tension with a new person will be given. The interviews will also have some open-ended questions designed to elicit assessment of the aforementioned areas. Pre-categorized "reflecting-back" techniques will be administered by researchers not connected to the agency for reasons already given in this paper (the reluctance of foster parents to say what they really think). The number of interviewers will depend on the sample size, the time and money available after a time-cost analysis is prepared by the budgeting personnel of this large agency. Workers could perhaps be utilized to give the information from the case records as this will be factual and, therefore, not bias the study. Again, this would depend on agency determination of how social work staff should spend their time. It may be more financially profitable to have these same independent

research interviewers obtain the information needed from case records. Home or office interviews will be conducted according to the foster parents' comfort and situation.

Problems in Using Data Collection Instruments

Reliability refers to whether or not the results of the study would be the same if the collection of evidence were repeated (Sellitz, Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook, pg. 50). One of the handicaps in the present instrument in terms of reliability may be the personal approach in the interviews administering the questionnaires. Despite the fact that foster parents would be told that the interviewer is not connected to the agency, their replies may still be somewhat different than they would be if questionnaires were to be anonymously mailed to the agency. Room must be made, too, for worker-foster parent bias in selecting the pre-categorized "reflecting-back" statements and for variations in interviewers. However, the use of case records for purely factual information; the selection of a representative stratified random sample; interviewers trained in the same way regarding how to administer and analyse the data; and the pre-categorized statements for "reflecting-back" rather than (potentially biased) interviewers' recordings later being categorized seem to aid reliability, as does the structured method of evaluation as opposed to foster parents' group discussions. Reliability could also be tested by having all the interviewers test run a few of the same cases and correcting the differences, if any, which result from their administration of the interview.

Validity refers to whether the results of the study are correct.

Problems in validity with this research project would be foster parents' bias in evaluating the agency; their poor memory of what happened in regard to service; their misconception of their own and the agency's role in service. In some cases, validity can be checked by going through case records and by interviewing the worker involved. Case records could be used to check the personality strength and strength of the ^{home} ~~name~~ from the application after the interview so as not to bias it.

Generally, other problems may evolve in this method of data collection. We may be unable to locate some of the ex-foster parents designated for interviews by the sample selection. We may find resistance to interviews, perhaps due to foster parents' fear of the interviewer's confidentiality in relation to the worker or agency with whom they are involved. On the other hand, foster parents may try to say the "right" thing, to please, in their evaluations. There will indeed likely be many problems that can only be anticipated and worked through as the questionnaire is prepared and administered.

Plans for Analysing the Data, Including Statistical Techniques

From the factual data and categorized reflected-back statements, attempts will be made to correlate variables; for example, do most of the foster parents dissatisfied with service live in rural areas?; do foster parents who are satisfied with service see their workers more often than those who do not?, etc.

Statistical techniques will include only a statistical description of results rather than the cross-relationships of variables, although statistical mean and modal variations of certain key variables may be

sought; for example, how many - the mean average - of urban versus rural homes are satisfied with a certain area of service?

E. Conclusions Expected and Implications of These for Social Work Practice, Theory and Knowledge

1. Conclusions Expected

Conclusions expected are that:

1. Foster parents will generally want to be perceived as partners with the social workers and agency, not as clients. This will mean more sharing by the worker and more "in service training" with the foster parents (plural) in regard to the child's background and the agency plan for him.
2. Foster parents will want their roles and the agency's/worker's clearly defined.
3. Foster parents' expectations of service will include more material help (extra money for school trips, shoes, etc.) and less "friendly drop-in and check-up" visits.
4. Help will be sought in areas dealing with natural parents and the child's visiting them. This may be seen through a negative evaluation of the agency's philosophy of keeping the natural family in touch unless the child is a Crown Ward.
5. Problems in foster care may deal with feelings of inadequacy in handling an emotionally disturbed child; in handling their (foster parents') own feelings about the natural parents, fear of losing the child; in feeling they are on probation from the agency, are asked to act as real parents, but are not allowed to do so, etc.

2. Implications of Expected Conclusions for Social Work Practice, Theory, and Knowledge

We may find that we should trust foster parents more and include

them in our knowledge of and planning for "their" child's future, that they should be definitely perceived as team partners, not clients, both in practice and literature.

We should also define worker/agency and foster parents' roles mutually early in service.

Differential service will be required for various kinds of foster parents and various kinds of children placed likely related to the variables determining our strata; for example, we may find a need for greater concentration with foster homes where adolescent male non-wards are placed than in homes whether there is a 6 year old Crown Ward.

There will undoubtedly be an indication for recruitment of more foster parents so that we may be more selective in placement and can also spend more effort to give the foster parents the kind of child they want and feel they can handle.

Finally, it is hoped that if foster parents get the chance to say what they like and dislike and are aware that efforts are being made to please them, continuance in service may improve.

Conclusion

A research proposal for foster parents' evaluation of service has been discussed. Although the instrument is not prepared, the proposal as a backdrop to that instrument has tried to illustrate its pertinence and some of its problems. The literature would seem to back the proposal and the writer believes that this kind of evaluation which may point to some areas of service neglected and to other areas where service could be differential, may lead to greater continuance in foster parenting.

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