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An examination of reasons for foster care: for children serviced by the Bureau for Child Care

Catherine Nichols

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AN EXAMINATION OF REASONS FOR FOSTER CARE: FOR CHILDREN
SERVICED BY THE BUREAU FOR CHILD CARE

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY
CATHERINE NICHOLS

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I must also extend thanks to the Bureau for Child Care in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for not only opening records to me but allowing me the use of the agency's library in my search for material pertinent to this study. Special thanks goes to Mr. A. A. George, Director of Research at the Bureau, for his unselfish help in obtaining definitions that were necessary for this study.

My deepest gratitude go to my Mother and Father, Mr. and Mrs. Lee Nichols. Had it not been for their unrelenting help and encouragement this would not have been possible.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

Upon considering the welfare of any child, it is believed that preservation of the child's own home should be the first and foremost objective. Nevertheless, many children must be cared for away from their homes and families in spite of efforts to preserve family ties.

In years gone by, foster care was a service for children whose parents were cruel or too poor to provide for them. Today foster care is looked upon as a treatment for a temporarily disturbed parent-child relationship, and is ideally available to any child, regardless of economic circumstances, whose family cannot give him a satisfactory home experience.¹

When foster care is recommended for a dependent child, he is placed either in a foster home, or in an institution, depending upon his individual needs.²

It is generally believed that children who cannot live with their own parents, direly need substitute parents who can give them the love and understanding that was absent in their own homes. They should also be given the assurance that they will, if possible, return to their own families.³ For others, institutional care is most desirable, in that it provides group living. Group living is, especially, effective with adolescents who have experienced serious difficulty with their parents, and consequently cannot accept other parental relationships. These children can begin anew,

²Ibid., p. 4.
³Ibid.
whereas placement in a substitute home might foster associations with their past experience.¹ Even though institutions offer an immediate solution for children experiencing this type of problem, experts in the field of child welfare believe that no child should remain in one indefinitely.²

Although the needs of the dependent children should guide us in placement decisions, actually the types of resources immediately available often determine the kind of placement made. Neither the foster home nor the institution may offer a complete solution. The question is not foster home care versus institutional care, but which form of substitute care seems most desirable for the welfare of the child concerned. Those who are engaged in providing foster care for children have a grave responsibility in making sure that the basic needs of each child are met; and that he is placed in the setting most capable of meeting these needs.

In the city of Philadelphia, efforts have been made to increase the effectiveness of the existing Child Welfare Services. In 1951, a home rule Charter was adopted. One of the purposes of this Charter was to delegate certain child care responsibilities to the Department of Public Welfare; which in turn affected all child placing agencies including the Bureau for Child Care. Although these agencies were serving a large number of children, there still remained a vast number of children who needed service. This observation stimulated the writer's curiosity and desire to examine the reasons which gave rise to the great need for foster care, hopeful that

²Ibid.
this study might depict the problems which occurred.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study were to enumerate and discuss the reasons for foster care for children served by the Bureau for Child Care. These reasons were considered from three points of view, namely:

1. Reasons for placement as seen by the referring agency.
2. Reasons for placement as seen by the Bureau for Child Care.
3. Reasons for placement as seen by the parents (or parent substitutes).

Method of Procedure

The case study method was employed to secure information relative to the reasons for placement. The sampling method by regular intervals was utilized in the selection of the cases during the years 1953 through 1957. The writer examined the Bureau's active files, and every tenth case was chosen which resulted in a representative sample of fifty-five. A schedule was formulated which served as a guide in gathering and organizing case material.

The library method was also utilized in that the writer reviewed professional literature pertinent to the nature of the study. The Home Rule Charter was examined in order to understand more clearly, the foster care program in Philadelphia. Interviews were held with the Director of Casework Services and the Director of Research in order to acquire valuable information relative to the completion of the study.

When the study was undertaken, it was deemed necessary to define terms relative to the reasons for placement. The Department of Public Welfare of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania provided the following definitions:
INCOMPETENCE

Incompetence is defined to mean an illness or condition which lessens the capacity of the person to use his customary self-control, judgment and discretion, conduct of his affairs and social relations, as to make it necessary or advisable for him to be...supervised or under guidance. The term shall also be constructed to include lunacy, unsoundness of mind, and insanity.

DISABILITY

Disability is defined to mean, where the father or the person giving principal support to the family is one suffering from a physical condition ...including feeblemindedness, habitual drunkenness, and drug addiction.

ABANDONMENT

Abandonment means conduct on the part of the parent which evidence a settled purpose of relinquishing parental claim to the child and of refusing or failing to perform parental duties.

DESERTION

If any husband or father being within the limits of the Commonwealth, has or hereby and after separated himself from his wife or his children, or from his family without reasonable cause...shall be arrested by the issue of a warrant for his arrest.

NEGLIGENCE

Any child or children under the age of 16, who is/are destitute, homeless, or dependent...or who have no parental care or guardianship.

The Court may exercise its powers:

1. Upon the petition of any citizen, resident of the county, setting forth that a child is neglected...or dependent and is in need of the care and protection of the court.

MARITAL DISCORD

DUE TO THIS NOT BEING A LEGAL TERM any sociological definition can be utilized. It is decided upon if a case is known to Domestic Relations Court for any reason whatsoever....
Scope and Limitations

This study included fifty-five Negro children served by the Bureau for Child Care, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, during the years 1953 through 1957. Their age range was from three weeks old to fourteen years old. All of the children studied were placed in foster homes or in the agency's institution. Because of the methodology utilized in selecting these cases for study, all possible reasons for foster care may not necessarily be included. Other limitations included the limited time allotted the writer to make the study and the limited knowledge of research on the part of the writer.
CHAPTER II

DESCRIPTION OF SETTING

Origin

The establishment of the Bureau for Colored Children grew out of a need for additional foster care service for Negro children. The Negro population was increasing steadily, and the existing social agencies experienced great difficulty in making their services available to the children in need of them. Interested persons recognized this serious lack in community resources and decided to put forth efforts to secure foster care services for these children.

The move for service to these destitute children was initiated by Mrs. Syrene E. Benjamin, who had formerly served in the capacity of executive secretary for a child care agency in the city of Philadelphia. In 1927, she opened her home to Negro children; and the first child who was received for care was a boy committed by the Juvenile Court.

In 1929, the Bureau for Colored Children was incorporated and received its Charter under the laws of the state of Pennsylvania. The Charter contained eight articles which expressed the community's desire to serve humanity.

Its first article stipulated that the name of the corporation be 'The Bureau for Colored Children.' The second article stated that 'The corporation is formed for the care, protection, and to provide for the welfare of colored children in destitute circumstances, and to maintain a shelter and their placement in

---

suitable homes.

With the depression years came the need for more and more children to be placed in foster care. The primary reasons for placement were the lack of financial resources to keep the homes together, and minor delinquent problems presented by older children. The Bureau's clientele increased tremendously, and it sought additional space and better facilities for its children. Consequently, a shelter was opened in 1929, and the agency was able to serve twenty-three children. In 1939 the Farm and Vocational School, which was a residential school for boys was established at Pomeroy, Pennsylvania.

In 1933 the agency received its first state appropriation and was thus able to render the kind of service it desired. In 1943 it was admitted to the community chest with the chest subsidizing its income.

World War II also had its impact on the problem of foster care for children. Many parents were engaged in employment and as a result, children were left on their own and were unsupervised. The Bureau again found it necessary to expand its services and seek adequate space to render efficient service. In 1944, the Allderdice School for Girls (formerly, the Western Home for White Children) was given to the Bureau. This move alleviated the space problem and met its need for expansion of services. The Bureau has continued to operate at this location.

In keeping with the trend toward integration, the Bureau's Board of Directors decided to consider changing the agency's name so that the name would no longer designate racial identity. Thus, in 1955, the agency formed a new Charter.

\[^{1}\text{Ibid., p. 9.}\]
Its first article was changed to read 'The name of the corporation shall be The Bureau for Child Care.' The second article stated 'Its purpose is to care, protect and to provide for the needy children.'

Organizational Structure and Personnel

The Board of Directors, which was first in the line of authority at the Bureau, was formed at the time of the agency's establishment. It constituted the governing body of the organization; and was composed of civic leaders who were interested in child welfare. This board was responsible for the entire operation of the agency, ranging from admission of children for service to obtaining adequate funds for the maintenance of the agency.

The Executive Director, second in the line of authority, was responsible to the Board of Directors. She handled all administrative responsibilities and public relations for the agency in the community.

The Department of Social Service constituted the majority of personnel in the organizational structure of the agency. This department was composed of four divisions, namely: Intake, Homefinding, Placement, and The Farm and Vocational School. There were forty caseworkers employed by the Bureau; thirty-six in Intake, Homefinding and Placement; and four connected with the Farm and Vocational School.

In addition to the clerical staff, there was also a shelter staff which functioned night and day in serving the agency's children housed (on the third floor of the administration building) in its shelter. The shelter staff consisted of two house mothers and one assistant. Other disciplines represented included a physician, a dentist and a psychologist.

1Ibid., p. 56.
Services

The Bureau’s basic function involved the services given by any child placing agency. It rendered both temporary and long term care to some eight hundred or more children who, for various reasons, needed care away from their homes and families. These children were placed in foster homes and in the agency’s institution. The majority of the children receiving care were in foster homes.

The Bureau did not give service to children in their own homes; and it had no adoption program. However, when children were placed in foster homes and the foster parents decided to adopt them, the Bureau handled the adoption proceedings.

Health services were available to the children under care, namely: medical and dental services. These services were provided for within the agency organization. Additional medical services were provided by the outpatient clinics of the various hospitals in the community. Psychological services to the children were handled at the agency.
CHAPTER III
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GROUP STUDIED

In developing the study, the writer felt that it was essential to include some of the similar social factors which characterized the group studied. According to Wilson and Ryland

It is necessary to understand the similar characteristics as well as the dissimilar characteristics of groups because there might be similar cultural factors that contribute to each individual problem.¹

Thus, the similar characteristics studied were age, sex, race, religion, source of referral, and type of placement made. Although some of these characteristics may not necessarily be of special value to this study, others will suggest areas wherein more consideration might be given, especially, in terms of alleviating some of the needs which give rise to the need for placement. The latter will be discussed in detail in a later chapter.

Age

An examination of the age range of the group studied clearly pointed out the fact that most of the children received for care were between birth and three years old. The second largest number of children received for care were between the ages of four and six years old. This indicated that the twenty-eight between birth and three, and the fourteen between ages four and six, were children who came into care in their "formative" years of development. According to English and Pearson

A child is not born emotionally prepared to deal with the frustrations and dangers of the outside world...he learns from parents who take care of him adequately. The formative years of the child's life are very important because in these years, he begins to develop and obtain the emotional adjustment that is necessary for normal maturation. The child whose needs are not met when he comes into the world, who is neglected and unwelcomed, is a deprived child and will find it difficult to function.1

The youngest child who came into care in the "formative" years, was three weeks old. The largest single group of children (nine) were two years old. In the seven through ten years old group, there were seven children who came into care. There were six children in the eleven through fourteen years old group. An examination of the seven through ten years old group and the eleven through fourteen years old group revealed that as the children got older, the need for foster care lessened.

A child needs parents who can provide the type of care in the home which will help him to feel secure and happy. If the home is not a stable one, it nurtures an environment which is open to conflict and frustration. The writer wishes to emphasize that the majority of the children studied, were children in their "formative" years, and had already been deprived of the chance to develop to maturity with their own parents.

Sex

In studying the sex distribution of the sample, it was clearly indicated that as a whole, more male children came into care than did female children. It was further indicated that the majority of these male children who came into care were in their "formative" years of development. From a theoretical point of view, this information had no significance to

factors that influence the need for placement. Table 1 shows the age range and sex distribution of the group studied.

### TABLE 1

**AGE RANGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION OF THE FIFTY-FIVE CHILDREN STUDIED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE AT PLACEMENT</th>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth to 3 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 6 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 10 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 14 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Race**

The fifty-five children studied were all of the Negro race. Even though the agency had been operating under an integrated Charter for four years, it only provided service to Negro children. Its purpose for doing this was due to the fact that there were still more agencies serving whites in the community than there were serving Negroes.¹

**Religion**

All of the fifty-five children were of the protestant faith.

¹Interview with Mrs. Edith J. Johnson, Director of Casework Services (Bureau for Child Care, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, October 17, 1958).

²Ibid. (November 12, 1958).
The agency only renders service to children of the protestant faith...in rare cases it services children of other faiths and this is only true when such children come into care without the agency having a knowledge of their religious affiliation...children in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, who require foster care, are placed by the Juvenile Court according to the religious faith of their parents.¹

Source of Referral

Generally, the bulk of the referrals to the Bureau came from the Philadelphia County Juvenile Court. This was done by direct and indirect commitments.

There are two types of direct commitments: the type of direct commitment that involves commitment of delinquent children, with the full responsibility for their support and care being delegated to the Bureau by the court...and the type of direct commitment which includes children who have no relatives, or both parents are incapable or incarcerated. These children are directly committed to the Department of Public Welfare for placement with the Bureau for Child Care, by the Court.²

Indirect commitment involves all of the children that are committed to the Department of Public Welfare, by the court, for placement with the Bureau. In this, both the Welfare Department and the Bureau share in the joint responsibility of caring and planning for the children.³

There were forty-five children referred to the agency by the Philadelphia County Juvenile Court. This number constituted the majority of the total number of children referred. Usually children referred directly by the court to the Bureau, were children who needed foster care because of behavioral problems. The remaining ten children, in the group selected, were referred to the agency by the Department of Public Welfare.

¹Ibid. (November 12, 1958).
²Ibid. (January 12, 1959).
³Ibid.
The Home Rule Charter of 1951 gave the Department of Public Welfare the right to share in the responsibility for the welfare of all children in child care agencies. Section 5-700, of the Charter outlined the functions of the Department of Public Welfare. The functions stated were the following:

The Department of Public Welfare shall have the power to perform the following functions...it shall receive, care for and place dependent children...whose support is paid out of the city funds ministered by the city. In cases where the Department has placed children, it shall from time to time investigate the manner in which they are being cared for. The Department shall also care for and return them to their places of residence.¹

This agency referred children for foster care because it did not handle this type of service within its organizational structure. The writer concluded that the juvenile court played a major role in helping families, who could not help themselves, to utilize child welfare resources.

Type of Placement

Fifty-four of the children studied were placed in foster homes, and one was placed in the agency's institution. The foster home placements constituted the majority of the total number of cases studied. The one child placed in the institution, was a ten year old male. Placement of all of the children depended upon their individual needs. This in turn was the basis for the type of placement selected for them.

Each child who needs service is considered in the light of his life experiences and his present needs. The child with fragile ties to his own family especially needs foster home care...he

needs an opportunity to put down deeper roots than he can in an institution...¹

The child that is placed in an institutional setting is provided with the opportunity for group living. In this he learns to respect the rights and abilities of adults as well as their attitudes...²

Table 2 illustrates the types of placements made for the fifty-five children studied.

**TABLE 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF PLACEMENT</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
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<tr>
<td>Foster Home</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 2 showed that the majority of the children placed were in need of foster home care. The writer concluded that the children who needed foster home care were in need of substitute parents in a family situation to give them the love and understanding that their own parents had failed to give them at home.

CHAPTER IV

REASONS FOR PLACEMENT AS SEEN BY THE REFERRING AGENCY

Most of the children served were referred by a community agency. As has been stated earlier, the majority (forty-five) of the referrals came from the juvenile court. The remaining ten were referred by the Department of Public Welfare. In this chapter, the reasons for placement as seen by the referring agencies will be discussed. The various reasons for placement will be discussed separately for clarity.

Negligence

In examining the case records to determine the reasons for placement for the forty-five children referred by the juvenile court, seventeen children were referred because of neglect. Of this number, sixteen were referred because of negligence on the part of the mother; and one child was referred because of neglect on the part of the parent (mother) substitute.

The Department of Public Welfare referred eight children because of negligence. Seven of these children were referred because of gross neglect on the part of the mothers who received Aid to Dependent Children grants and failed to use them appropriately for the care of their children. One of the children referred came into care as a result of the father's misappropriation of the general assistance check received from the Welfare Department. The case of Robert P. illustrated the need for foster care as a result of the mother's gross negligence.

Robert, age eleven months, was referred to the Bureau by the Department of Public Welfare. The referral stated that the mother, who was receiving an A.D.C. grant, failed to feed and clothe the child properly. The mother used the money on
clothing and other luxuries for herself. Robert was found suffering from an acute case of malnutrition and very filthy in dress.

In Robert's case it was pointed out that the mother was an irresponsible person who failed to accept her responsibility as a parent. According to Doyle:

...some parents know nothing about maintaining a household or giving a child the physical care that he needs...when these parents are irresponsible and not mature enough to cope with their roles as parents, their children fill the files of many social agencies...¹

Disability

Ten children were referred by the court because of disability. John Nordskog states that

Alcoholism is generally conceived of as being a psychological illness that is acted out...the social consequences of it affect the alcoholic as well as his family...excessive drinking often arouses unbearable tensions and disturbed parental relationships and eventually leads to family rejections and breakdowns.²

Three of the children were referred because of alcoholic fathers; and three were referred because both parents were excessive drinkers. The case of Dorothy L. illustrated the need for placement resulting primarily from the father's alcoholism.

Dorothy, age one, was referred to the Bureau by the Juvenile Court. The referral stated that the father's alcoholism and his frequent physical abuse of the family was unbearable. It was ascertained that the mother and child were suffering extreme physical abuse and neglect by the father. It was also ascertained that the father, during his alcoholic states, tortured the child by removing the bed covers and pouring cold water on her.

The case of Dorothy clearly indicated that excessive drinking aroused unbearable tensions. It further emphasized the "illness" of the father as a result of alcoholism.

The case of Carolyn illustrated the need for placement as a result of both parents being alcoholics.

Carolyn, age three, was referred to the Bureau by the court. The child was frequently abused physically by the parents. She was often left alone in the home because of their pursuit for alcohol. The case was brought to the court's attention by the police who investigated an anonymous telephone call in regard to the child's welfare.

**Incompetence**

Seven of the forty-five referrals to the Bureau by the court were based on incompetence. The Department of Welfare referred two children because of incompetence. Six of the seven cases referred by the court were due to mental illness on the part of the mother, and one because of physical illness of the father. The two referrals from the Department of Welfare were due to physical illness on the part of the mother. The case of Gloria illustrated the need for placement because of mental illness on the part of the mother.

Gloria, age two, was referred by the court which stated that the mother, who had been confined to a mental institution on two occasions, was recommitted. In as much as the mother was unmarried and had no known relatives, the child had to be placed for foster care.

Gloria's case portrayed the need for foster care as a result of the court's interest in the child's welfare.

The case of Evelyn illustrated the need for placement as a result of physical illness on the part of the mother.

Evelyn, age eight, was referred to the Bureau by the Department of Public Welfare. The referral stated that Evelyn's mother
had to be hospitalized because of pre-natal complications. Due to the fact that the mother was unmarried, and there was no one to care for the child, foster home placement was requested.

Death

According to Kurt,

...death in itself is inevitable, and usually has limited factors behind its occurrence. It may occur as a result of illness or an accident; nevertheless, it can and usually does result in family dislocations...death of a mother results in total handling of parental responsibilities by the father... who usually finds it difficult to supervise the home and maintain employment at the same time...death of the father leaves the family responsibilities totally on the mother.¹

There were two children referred by the juvenile court because of death. One of the children was placed because of the death of the mother; and the second child was referred because of the death of the father.

The case of Artis illustrated the need for placement with death being the primary cause; and economic pressure the secondary cause.

Artis, age three, was referred to the Bureau by the Juvenile Court. The referral stated that the mother had died two years prior to the child's commitment for care. The father had tried to hold the family together through homemaker service but had failed to pay for the help he was receiving; thus, services had been discontinued.

The case of Paul illustrated the need for placement as a result of death on the part of the father.

Paul, age eight, was referred to the Bureau by the court which stated that the mother had found it difficult to assume responsibility for the care of the child since the death of the father. Paul was found in a naked condition in the home. The mother appeared to have been in a 'dazed' condition, and was unable to respond to conversation. Both she and Paul showed evidence of neglect.

Desertion

Samuel Lerner makes the following observation on desertion:

To a child, the father represents the natural protector and the person who gives him a feeling of security...in many ways the father is the controlling force in the life of children...he sets a pattern of masculinity for the girl in that he is a model for her future love object...for the boy he is a pattern of manhood...desertion by the father disturbs this normal relationship for the child, and a loss of the father means a loss of all that entails a comfortable home...thus, the child usually develops strong feelings of insecurity.1

There were two children referred by the Juvenile Court because of desertion by the father. Desertion, itself, is a tendency to avoid responsibility, usually where children are concerned.2 The case of Larry illustrated the need for placement as a result of desertion by the father.

Larry, age eight, was referred to the Bureau by the court which stated that the father had deserted the family and moved to another state with a paramour. The mother was quite 'broken-up' over the situation, and was unable to carry on parental duties. Larry had been unable to attend school and because of his truancy, the school authorities brought it to the court's attention. Larry was found to be completely without clothing.

Samuel Lerner further pointed out that

...a deserted child can also be disturbed by the mother's reaction to desertion by the father...her reaction might result in neglecting the child because of her feeling around her loss of security...in such instances the mother and the child need help.3

For Larry, the desertion of his father might have meant the loss of a pattern of manhood. The mother's reaction to the father's desertion of the family might also have contributed to the need for placement.

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2Ibid.

3Ibid.
Abandonment

There were two children referred by the Juvenile Court because of abandonment on the part of the mother. The case of Annette illustrated the need for placement as a result of abandonment on the part of the mother.

Annette, age two, was referred to the Bureau by the court which stated that the child had been found in the home alone. It was ascertained that the mother, who was unmarried, had not been seen for several days prior to finding the child alone. The police had investigated the home as a result of an anonymous person's telephone call.

Economic Pressure

One child was referred by the Juvenile Court because of economic pressure. In this case the father was unable to support the family because of his insufficient salary. The case of Reginald illustrated the need for placement resulting primarily from economic pressure, and secondarily from disability.

Reginald, age three, was referred by the court because the family was being evicted from the home. The family had no place to go to live and could not afford to pay rent. The father was a disabled veteran who had suffered a shoulder injury during World War II, and had, since that time, been unable to maintain a steady and dependable job. Reginald's father was receiving a V.A. check which did not adequately provide for the family.

Sexual Promiscuity

T. Lynn Smith states:

...the inability of many females to marry has fostered a great deal of deviant patterns of sex behavior, and is reflected in aggressive courting activities...some females find it necessary to accommodate themselves to a life of sex with many men.¹

promiscuousness on the part of the mother. The case of Gladys illustrated the need for placement because of the mother's sex behavior.

Gladys, age seven, was referred to the Bureau by the court because the mother was 'quite' promiscuous in her behavior with men. As a result of her behavior, the child was neglected. It was ascertained that the mother often left the child alone in the home, and lived with her paramours in the city. The mother made her living through gifts of money from her paramours.

Personality Conflict Experienced by Parent

According to Leontine Young

Unmarried parentage often brings disillusionment and desperation to the mothers involved...such mothers are neurotic mothers who have their own unresolved and conflicting needs, and can neither give the child the love that he may need nor the understanding that is necessary for his normal development.1

There were two children referred by the Juvenile Court because of personality conflict experienced by the parents. The case of Christine illustrated the need for placement as a result of the mother having personality conflict.

Christine, age two, was referred by the court who felt that the mother was experiencing some personality conflict. It was established that the mother had taken the child to an undertaking parlor, and asked the undertaker to bury the child. He, in turn, informed the police who arrested the mother for questioning. The mother admitted that she was in a serious financial dilemma, and did not want the responsibility for the care of the child. It was further established by the court that the mother was neurotic.

Personality conflict on the part of the mother was the deciding factor.

Behavioral Problem Presented by the Child

One child was referred by the Juvenile Court because of a behavior problem presented by the child. The case of Montez illustrated the need for placement because of his behavior; and the inability of the mother to

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cope with the problem.

Montez, age ten, was referred to the Bureau directly from the court because of chronic run-a-ways. He was truant in school attendance, and was a 'problem-child' in the home. Montez was the victim of divorce; his parents having separated two years prior to his commitment. Because of inability to live with his father, whom he had a great deal of admiration for, he resorted to running away.

The following table shows the sources of referral and the reasons for placement as seen by the referring agency.

**TABLE 3**

**SOURCES OF REFERRAL AND REASONS FOR PLACEMENT AS SEEN BY THE REFERRING AGENCY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REASONS FOR PLACEMENT</th>
<th>JUVENILE COURT</th>
<th>DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negligence</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompetence</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desertion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandonment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others^</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^Economic Pressure, Sexual Promiscuity, Personality Conflict Experienced by Parent, and Behavioral Problem Presented by the Child.

In reviewing the reasons for placement as seen by the referring agencies, there were twenty-five children referred because of negligence. Seventeen of this number (twenty-five) were referred by the court and eight
were referred by the Welfare Department. This number constituted the majority of the total number of referrals and reasons for care. The second number (ten) represented the number of children referred because of disability on the part of one or both parents. Incompetence constituted the third highest number (nine) of referrals. Seven of these referrals came from the court and two came from the Welfare Department. Death, Desertion, and Abandonment accounted for six referrals. Each classification consisted of two children. Other reasons for referral for placement included Economic Pressure, one; Sexual Promiscuity, one; Personality Conflict Experienced by the Parents, two; and Behavioral Problem of the Child, one.

The table clearly showed that most of the children who came into care were children whose parents were neglectful. Since emphasis, in the treatment of a child, is placed on improvement of his life situation, work with the parent to modify their ways and attitudes is often necessary.

According to Doyle

Parents who have personal problems they cannot solve, those whose needs have never been satisfied, the ones who suffer from indefinable tensions and insecurities...can never foster an emotional development for the child because they, themselves, have never achieved it...these parents constitute the vicious cycle of which warped personalities in children are perpetuated.¹

CHAPTER V

REASONS FOR PLACEMENT AS SEEN BY THE BUREAU

The focus of this chapter is on a discussion of the reasons for placement as seen by the Bureau. The Bureau saw several of the reasons for placement as being a combination of two contributing factors.

In considering the reasons for placement of the children in foster care, it is significant that the underlying factors be understood. An analysis of the many contributing factors that give rise to placement can enlighten one as to possible remedies. John Nordskog stated that "It is the social factors behind the social situation that adversely affect persons involved, and these factors should be the major areas of consideration."

Negligence

Of the twenty-five children referred by the social agencies because of negligence, the Bureau saw only fourteen of these cases as being primarily due to neglect. The remaining eleven reasons represented a combination of two factors. Ten of this eleven were due to neglect as a result of sexual promiscuity on the part of the mothers. Some of the mothers had resorted to prostitution, and others indulged excessively in extra-familial entanglements. Many of the mothers depended totally on the gifts of money which they received from their paramours. The case of Barbara illustrated the need for placement with sexual promiscuity on the part of the mother being the basic contributing factor.

Barbara, age twelve, was referred by the court because of neglect on the part of her mother. The child was in need of food and physical care. It was ascertained that the mother had several paramours, and would leave the child unattended to at their request. This mother had lived with several of these paramours often 'ended-up' being put out in the streets by them because of her continuous promiscuousness with other men while living with one particular paramour.

Another case wherein the need for placement was basically due to the mother's behavior is the case of Jimmy P.

Jimmy, age three, was referred by the court because of neglect by the mother. It was ascertained that Jimmy was one of nine children in his family group, all of whom had different fathers. Jimmy's father was a married man who had a family of his own, but supported Jimmy 'sometimes.' It was further ascertained that the mother depended on all of the children's fathers for support, nevertheless, they failed to support their children.

The Bureau saw one case of neglect as being due to unemployment on the part of the mother, as well as neglect. The case of Eddie illustrated these two factors.

Eddie, age three, was referred by the court which stated that the mother had decidedly neglected the child. It was established that the mother had been an A.D.C. recipient, but had been discontinued by the Welfare department because of her unwillingness to cooperate in locating the alleged father.

Disability

The Bureau saw disability as being the reason for placement in only nine of the ten cases referred by the court. In one case of disability the reason for placement was basically due to incompetence on the part of the father. He was an alcoholic, and his state affected the welfare of the child adversely. The case of William illustrated the need for placement as a result of an alcoholic father who was incompetent.

William, age eleven months, was referred to the Bureau by the court which stated that the father was a chronic alcoholic. The referral further stated that the mother was unable to care for
the child because of the father's need for care in his alcoholic state. It was ascertained that the father had a long history of alcoholism and hospitalizations, and as a result of these facts, the family had been slowly disintegrating since his first commitment.

Death

Of the two children referred because of death, as designated by the referring agency, the Bureau saw death as being the primary reason for the need for foster care. It greatly affected the family equilibrium.

A contributing factor to placement for one of the children was unemployment. In this case, the mother had been unable to secure a job after the father's death. In the second instance, the child was placed because of incompetence and the mother's state of depression because of the father's death.

Other Reasons

The Bureau saw the remaining reasons for placement as being the reasons designated by the referring agencies. It saw nine children placed because of incompetence; two placed solely because of abandonment by the mother and father; two placed because of desertion on the part of the father; and one because of economic pressure.

There were no cases referred solely because of marital discord; Nevertheless, marital discord is one of the basic contributing factors to placement for some children; such as in the cases of divorce and desertion.

The Bureau saw neglect as being the major contributing factor to the need for placement, in that fourteen children came into placement as a result of negligence by their parents. The Bureau saw sexual promiscuity as being the underlying factor in ten negligence cases referred, as designated by the
TABLE 4

REASONS FOR PLACEMENT AS SEEN BY THE BUREAU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REASONS FOR PLACEMENT</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negligence</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompetence</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandonment</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desertion</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

referring agency. The Bureau saw ten reasons for placement being due to incompetence, rather than nine as had been designated by the referring agencies. In this instance the Bureau saw one of the disability cases as being due to incompetence rather than disability. This accounted for the nine disability cases of referral rather than the ten as seen by the referring agencies.

The Bureau, as did the referring agency, saw two cases wherein death was the basic factor resulting in placement; two referrals because of abandonment; two referrals because of desertion. In looking at the other reasons, there were eleven cases wherein sexual promiscuity was the basic factor that gave rise to placement; one referred because of economic
pressure; two cases because of personality conflict experienced by the parent; and two cases referred because of unemployment on the part of the parents.
CHAPTER VI

REASONS FOR PLACEMENT AS SEEN BY THE PARENTS
(OR PARENT SUBSTITUTE)

This chapter is focused on a discussion of the reasons for placement as seen by the parents. Of the fifty-five children studied, only twenty-five of the parents were contacted in the transition of the children from their own homes to the Bureau for foster care. The remaining thirty parents were either never seen, or seen only when the children were being removed from the home by authorized forces.

Fifteen of these twenty-five parents were very hostile and negative toward the court authorities. All of them were charged with decided neglect of their children: five were guilty of improper feeding and clothing of their children; and three were guilty of decided neglect which resulted in malnutrition on the part of their children.

Twelve of the fifteen parents guilty of neglect, expressed feelings toward the court for interfering with their basic rights as parents; and as a result took no active part in planning for the placement of their children. These parents denied that they had been neglectful. Seven of these parents, who denied they had been neglectful, felt that their financial states were the reasons for the children not receiving proper care. The other five expressed no opinions at all. The remaining three neglectful parents were in agreement with the court's decision about them. These parents took an active part in planning for their children.

Two of the remaining ten parents, in the group of twenty-five that were
seen, requested placement for their children. These two parents were aware of their children's need for care which they could not give. One, who requested care, was a father who placed his child because of economic pressure with disability being the basic contributing factor. He was unable to secure a job with a salary sufficient enough to provide adequately for his family. The other parent, who requested care for her child, was an unmarried mother who had no other alternative but to request placement for her child. The case of Marie illustrated the mother's situation which resulted in her requesting placement.

Marie, age five, was referred to the Bureau by the Department of Public Welfare. The case came to this agency's attention when the mother, who had on several occasions tried to secure A.D.C. benefits, reapplied. The mother was at that time employed as a domestic worker in another state in order to support her child. Marie, who was one of three children, was left in the care of a caretaker, and the mother visited her in the home once per month. The mother found that the caretaker had been very brutal to the child, physically, in her absence; so much so that Marie had to be hospitalized for extreme physical abuse and malnutrition.

The parents of the two children, who needed placement because of death, were in agreement with the court regarding reasons for placement. The parents of the two children, who were placed because of desertion on the part of their father, were also in agreement with the court's decision as to reason for placement.

The one child who presented a behavioral problem, and who was labeled a "chronic run-a-way" was also placed because the mother requested help in handling this problem. Here again was a mother who was aware of her limitations in coping with her child's problem.

The remaining three parents, out of the twenty-five contacted, were incapacitated, mentally, and were not capable of making or agreeing with decisions made by the court. In one way or another, all of these parents
failed to provide the type of home and care necessary for their children's development. John Rose says that

...being a successful parent is a difficult task, in that parenthood entails responsibility for the child's emotional, social, and physical growth, and development. The parent who finds it difficult to adjust to proper handling of the child, does not find it easy to make a further necessary adjustment to the child that depends on him.¹

### TABLE 5

**REASONS FOR PLACEMENT AS SEEN BY THE PARENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REASON FOR PLACEMENT</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial deprivation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negligence</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desertion</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others¹</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Three parents were mentally incapacitated, and six parents did not reveal their feeling as to what they felt the reason for placement was.

In examining the reasons for placement as seen by the parents, the majority of the parents (seven) saw the reason for placement as being due to their state of financial deprivation. Three of the parents saw negligence as being the reason for the need for placement; two of the parents agreed that death was the reason for the need for placement; two saw disability as

as the reason for placement; two saw desertion as being the reason for the need for placement; and one saw behavioral difficulty as being the reason for placement.

Three of the parents were unable to decide on the reason for placement due to their states of mental incapacitation. The remaining six parents, classified under "others" took no part in the court's decision as to the reason for placement. These parents did not state one way or the other what they felt as being the reason for the need for placement of their children.
CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

There are many problem situations faced by parents in our society and these problems are reflected in family life. The chief victims of these tragedies are the children involved in the family situation; and they (like their parents) are trapped by circumstances which they cannot control.

When it is necessary for a child to be removed from his home and parents, usually persons, other than his own parents, must offer service to him. This service is provided through foster care, which is a temporary treatment for disturbed parent-child relationships. Foster care provides placement for these dependent children in either foster homes or institutions; this depends upon the individual needs of the children requiring care.

This study has attempted to describe the reasons for foster care for the children serviced by the Bureau for Child Care in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and point out the problems which occurred in the family situations that led to placement of these children.

In making this study, the case study method was employed. Selection of the cases was based on the regular interval method of sampling; taking every tenth case from the active files for the years 1953 through 1957. A review of professional literature pertinent to the study was made; interviews were held with the Director of Casework Service, and the Director of Research; and a review of the Home Rule Charter was made in order to secure information pertinent to the study. A schedule was formulated to be used as a guide in gathering and organizing case material.
The scope of the study included fifty-five Negro children served by the Bureau during the years of 1953 through 1957. All of the children were placed in foster homes and in the agency's institution. The study was limited to the time allotted the writer to make the study; and to the writer's research experience.

The services of the Bureau for Child Care were basically those of all child placing agencies; giving service to dependent children in the community. Its health program, foster home and institutional services, and its staff focused attention on the individual needs of a child in foster care. The agency has been concerned about the needs of children since 1927; and has continued to direct its program and services to the care of dependent children. Its progress and ideas were in keeping with the changes in the field of child welfare and society as a whole. This could be observed by the changes in its Charter from the original Bureau for Colored Children to the Bureau for Child Care.

It was revealed that the families of the children studied were inadequate in many ways in caring for their children; and most of the parents were unmarried. There seemed to be a near balance of males and females in the groups studied. Also, foster home placement was the most prevalent service given.

The ages of the children studied ranged from three weeks old to fourteen years old, which indicated that a large number of children needed foster care at different ages. However, this finding revealed that the majority of the children that came into care were between the ages of three weeks and seven years old. This pointed out the fact that most of the children were in their formative years of development; the period of life that a
child needs to be with his parents who are the important figures and models in a child's life.

Religion played no great part in influencing the need that gave rise to placement; in that the agency services were primarily geared toward children of the protestant faith. Race was also an insignificant factor in promoting the children's need for foster care. Here again the agency's services were geared toward the Negro children in the community.

In considering the sources of referrals from which these children came, there were two major ones, namely: Philadelphia County Juvenile Court, and the Department of Public Welfare. The majority of the children studied were referred from the court. This could be attributed to the fact that the court of the community had the responsibility for committing most of the children who required protection from physical abuse and emotional difficulties.

In reviewing the reasons for placement as seen by the referring agencies, it was found that negligence and disability were the dominant reasons why children came into care. Other reasons for placement as seen by the referring agencies were: unemployment, incompetence, desertion; death, abandonment, and behavioral problems as presented by the child.

In reviewing the reasons for placement as seen by the parents, financial deprivation was the most dominant factor in promoting the reason for placement. Most of the parents did not enter into plans for placement for their children.

The writer concluded that there seemed to be low social values and standards of behavior existing in the families studied; and these values and standards were not at all conducive to adequate and wholesome development for the children involved. The writer further concluded that there
was a great need for public and parental education in regard to sex and family living. If the community proposes to work for a sounder and better foster care program, the people in the community should first know what it involves.
1. Source of Referral
   A. Philadelphia County Juvenile Court
   B. Delaware County Juvenile Court
   C. Delaware County Child Care Service
   E. Other Private or Individual Agencies or Persons

2. Reasons for Referral As Seen by the Referring Agency
   A. Disability
      1) On the part of the Mother
      2) On the part of the Father
      3) On the part of the Parent Substitutes
   B. Incompetence (Physical or Mental Illness)
      1) On the part of the Mother
      2) On the part of the Father
      3) On the part of the Parent Substitutes
   C. Abandonment
      1) By the Mother
      2) By the Father
      3) By the Parent Substitutes
   D. Negligence
      1) On the part of the Mother
      2) On the part of the Father
      3) By both Parents
      4) On the part of the Parent Substitutes
   E. Desertion
      1) By the Father
   F. Unemployment
      1) On the part of the Mother
      2) On the part of the Father
      3) On the part of the Parent Substitutes
   G. Economic Pressure
      1) Insufficient salary made by the Mother
      2) Insufficient salary made by the Father
      3) Insufficient salary made by the Parent Substitutes
   H. Other Reasons

3. Reasons for Placement As Seen by the Bureau
   A. Disability
      1) On the part of the Mother
      2) On the part of the Father
      3) On the part of the Parent Substitutes
   B. Incompetence
      1) On the part of the Mother
      2) On the part of the Father
      3) On the part of the Parent Substitutes
   C. Abandonment
      1) By the Mother
2) By the Father
3) By the Parent Substitutes

D. Desertion
1) By the Father

E. Negligence
1) On the part of the Mother
2) On the part of the Father
3) On the part of both Parents
4) On the part of the Parent Substitutes

F. Unemployment
1) On the part of the Mother
2) On the part of the Father
3) On the part of the Parent Substitutes

G. Economic Pressure
1) Insufficient salary made by the Mother
2) Insufficient salary made by the Father
3) Insufficient salary made by the Parent Substitutes

H. Other Reasons

4. Reasons for Placement As Seen by the Parents

A. Disability
1) On the part of the Mother
2) On the part of the Father
3) On the part of the Parent Substitutes

B. Incompetence (Physical or Mental Illness)
1) On the part of the Mother
2) On the part of the Father
3) On the part of the Parent Substitutes

C. Abandonment
1) By the Mother
2) By the Father
3) By the Parent Substitutes

D. Negligence
1) On the part of the Mother
2) On the part of the Father
3) On the part of both Parents
4) On the part of the Parent Substitutes

E. Desertion
1) By the Father

F. Unemployment
1) On the part of the Mother
2) On the part of the Father
3) On the part of the Parent Substitutes

G. Economic Pressure
1) Insufficient salary made by the Mother
2) Insufficient salary made by the Father
3) Insufficient salary made by the Parent Substitutes

H. Other Reasons

5. Type of Placement

A. Foster Home
B. Institution
6. Identifying Data
   A. Age
   B. Sex
   C. Race
   D. Religion

7. Other Information
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