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Prof. Tendler

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### Preliminary Paper

The topic I want to study is whether removing children from a home under the guise of protective services or for any other reason is the most effective way of providing help to families where such an action has been indicated. There is a question of whether placing a child is always the best plan for both the child and family and whether child welfare agencies are unduly biased in favor of placement without exploring alternative plans that could avoid separating the child from the family.

There are 29,000 children in placement on the New York City bill. The cost of maintaining these children in placement are many thousands of dollars per child. There is also a vested interest in keeping these children in placement as the more children the various child care agencies have, the more money they get from government. The cost of maintaining such a system is enormous and the results are limited considering the expenditure. Whenever a child is removed from the home the goal is ALWAYS the eventual return of that child to its home as soon as such a plan is feasible. How effective are these child-care agencies in working toward this goal? Can services be provided to families where children would normally be placed without resorting to placement? In short: Are children placed unnecessarily without a thorough exploration of alternative approaches to providing help to avoid placement? What is the quality and quantity of services provided to a family by a child-care agency once a child is placed and are child-care agencies sincerely interested in helping to re-unite families, given the vested interest they have in maintaining children in placement?

*What is unnecessary?*

One hypothesis I may want to test is that a child will benefit more by remaining in a home where conditions of neglect exist and supportive services are provided to alleviate the causes of the neglect than if the child is separated from the home, with the resulting fragmen-

tation of the family and confusion over what the focal point of treatment should be. I also maintain that it is cheaper to keep a child in the home and provide services to the entire family than to place the child for an indeterminate period of time on the pretense that the child is being "protected."

I feel that this project is important because the great emphasis on placement as a mode of treatment found in the child welfare system is wrong from a moral and social point of view, and is expensive to maintain. This system poses a threat to the institution of the family, upon which our society is founded, because it does not work to strengthen families that are weak, but instead breaks them up with little hope for the future under the guise that children are being helped. This is deceitful. It is questionable that the state, in assuming the role of parent, provides better care for a child than its own family could if more supportive services were provided to strengthen the family. ~~It was removed from its home.~~

Your concern & indignation for the "shut down" of children's families in the way placement processes are used is a good starting point for the research. However, to move it from a value position or opinion you'd need to give more precise thought to how you can study the question. At the moment it's too global & not formulated enough to look at in a systematic way. Your concern - Do you want to look at whether child care agencies are effective in reuniting families? or do you want to look at whether agencies that are asked to place children examine alternatives before placement? Either of these questions is more susceptible to a research approach than the general range of questions you've raised. Or do you want to look at situations in which children referred for placement were kept with families and what the outcome of these decisions was? Once you decide on what among these other questions you raise would be strategic for study - one can begin to develop a plan. Perhaps we should talk more about this -

Nov 17 - after class  
discussion w/ Prof  
Tendler