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SSW 751
Fall 1976
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10/20/76

Preliminary Paper

The topic I want to study is whether removing chil-
dren 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 alterna-
tive 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 chil-
dren in placement as the more children the various child
care agencies have, the more money they get from govern-
ment. The cost of maintaining such a system is enor-
mous and the results are limited considering the expen-
diture. 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 sin-
cerely interested in helping to re-unite families, given
the vested interest they have in maintaining children
in placement?

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 indeter-
minate 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.