

Criteria for Qualitative Measuring of Institutional Work

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AN old subject, to be sure, but one which most of us ponder daily, in our efforts to do a good job—this finding of a *measuring rod* by which we can judge our work. Children come to us from broken homes. They remain with us for a period of years. They leave, and resume their places in the community. In passing through our hands—what has happened to them? What have we done for them or to them? How far have we measured up to the job of the family which, under ordinary and normal conditions would have reared this child? How can we evaluate the role of parent which we play? Do our children fit as well, less well or better into the life of the community than those reared in their own homes? These are some of the questions we ask ourselves repeatedly—and find it hard to get the answers. Some of us have made exhaustive studies of our young people after they have left the home—through personal interviews, questionnaires, etc.—only to reach the conclusion that these studies are of little value in helping us to formulate standards—from a psychological point of view.

Standards for Institutions Caring for Dependent Children have been formulated and published recently by the Child Welfare League of America. Most of us have them, and they are of great value to us as guides up to a certain point. It is the psychological standpoint that we wish to consider in our presentation.

How can we measure our work? People are always saying, we must give the child a substitute for his home, by placing him in another private home. *Let us have done with this fallacy.* There is no substitute for the child's own home—once that home is broken and he must leave it. Neither the home of a relative nor a friend, a foster home, nor an institution can take the place of that original home. But there are things which we can do. We can use a successful home as the measuring rod for our job as a child-caring agency. And it is this method of measuring which concerns us at this time.

We plan to take a so-called successful normal family, analyze it, consider the elements and factors which go to make for its success, and use these findings as criteria for qualitative measuring of our work in institutions. In order to be able to define a "successful family" we must consider

what are the fundamentals necessary to make up that social group. A family within itself grows, changes, and develops from day to day. In order to get a picture for study, we must look at it at one point in its progress. A family is a sympathetic group with father, mother and one or more of their own children. The home is traditionally a place where its members can bring their jobs, their enthusiasms and ambitions; their sorrows, troubles and failures. They can be themselves. They can safely give vent to their emotions. In the family they can expect tacit or open approval of conduct, however extravagant, or can hope to have it challenged on a friendly basis.

There are certain family satisfactions for the child. In the first place, the family gives status to the child. The fact that he was born in a certain family gives him status and knowing who he is gives satisfaction. Every child has the feeling that he knows his own family. This is more than the need for affection. The child has a place in the family because of "who it is" and not because of accomplishment or appearance or I. Q.

He has a sense of security, a feeling of belonging to someone, and a definite place. His position as a member is established long before he enters the world. In a family set-up the child knows that he has father and mother and is part of them and has opportunities to observe normal relationships between parents and members of the family group.

Children in normal family homes today have freedom of speech, freedom of action, freedom of the home itself. The sense of possession, plenty of fun, unhampered movements, few restrictions are all permissible in well-regulated normal homes where parents have a sympathetic attitude and understanding.

There exists among children in the normal family a definite sense of importance. Children are made much of. They are rewarded, they are corrected, they are reprimanded, they are praised and made to feel in one way or the other that they are constituent members of the family group.

In American homes today you will find a spirit of cooperation which has been a unifying factor in family growth and development. The family federation, the family coun-

cil, the sharing of joys and sorrows, etc., develop this spirit of cooperation among the members of the family. Regardless of the desires and inclinations for individual and selfish assertion, the spirit of cooperation which exists, acts as a stabilizer for the preservation of the family unit.

The power of family affection is the strongest thing in the world. The highest expression of love is found in the family. It is that something, that strong power which makes people hold together no matter what comes.

As in a shop or a school, the test of the family is the kind of workers which it sends out into the world, because achievement of personality is through one's life job. The success of family life depends on the carrying out from the home certain attitudes learned there, making those things tell through one's profession and life work.

A good family provides opportunities for its young people to get acquainted. A wide range of acquaintances with both sexes is a necessity for the adolescent. A normal social life is necessary. Without this they may go on in life unprepared to get along with people. The family provides social contacts and makes an effort to develop pleasing traits of personality in children. Also a scale of values is set up so that children are taught how to live a well-rounded life and to have a proper attitude toward work and leisure.

In line with this thought is the fundamental sense of loyalty which the normal family fosters among its members. This sense of family loyalty cements the unity of the group and forms basically the normal family union.

The child has need of parental authority, direction and training. He learns early to respect his parents' authority, getting satisfaction from the feeling that the parent has power and possession, which he in his turn will some day achieve.

In his early life he finds protection in social competition, the family assuring him against struggles, bullying, etc.; playmates, toys, equipment are provided; the introduction to academic learning; the development of good habits and sex instruction, all come from the family.

• Taking for granted that the family supplies the three fundamental needs of the child: a home, a share of success and some experience in the world as it is—what more is there with which this family must concern itself? There are three basic human urges or drives which must be met. The first of these is affection. Yet many people who love their children, antagonize them at every turn and have no helpful influence whatsoever. Therefore, added to love, there must be in the second place, respect. But even love and respect combined will often prove entirely inadequate. It is possible to love and respect a parent, but at the same time, be so unhappy and insecure in the home, that the child may grow up unadjusted and unstable in character.

Therefore, the third quality in the parent which must exist is understanding. Given these three factors of love, respect and understanding, any parental relationship has a fine chance of succeeding.

The family uses various ways to promote these satisfactions. *Justice* within the family is carefully administered. By a process of *sharing of family possessions* and problems the *family solidarity* is developed. A *share of responsibility* is given the child as a means of preparing him for adult life; *companionships* within and without the family are fostered; *obedience* to the ones in authority is taught, *family festivals* are planned and participated in by all; *family councils* for the welfare of the group are held, and a *healthy outlook on life* with a generous *dose of humor*, all combine to make for a well-rounded entity.

Briefly having pointed out a few of the psychological factors which make for the success of a good family, let us see how far we can use them as a criteria for measuring our work of preparing children for adult life. Assuming that the child-caring agency has sufficient funds, a personnel with social vision, and an opportunity to carry out a comprehensive program, the question arises: can the institution (whether on the cottage or congregate plan) give to its wards the satisfaction that the family group provides?

Pause with me for a moment, and consider the past. Institutional placement of children in the past was quite different from what it is at the present. Children were placed in homes because there was nowhere else they could go. The whole philosophy of institutional placement had been negative. The institution was a last resort. Today an enlightened, or perhaps we should say a conscience-stricken generation has done much to improve the conditions of childhood in general. Camps, for rich and poor alike have arisen by the hundreds; nursery schools for social adjustment of wee folks have become important. Child labor is for the greatest part eliminated; dental, medical, psychiatric clinics and vocational guidance bureaus have all come into being as aids to childhood in the past generation.

In line with general improvement of childhood conditions has come improvement in institutional care. Institutions are adopting a positive philosophy. Perhaps they have as much to offer as any home can give—in some instances unquestionably more; as in the instance of group contact and social adjustment, rightly estimated by camps and boarding schools as of great value.

Let us examine the factors which make a successful home, and try to determine how far the institution can apply them in its effort to take the place of that home.

The family is made up of father, mother and children. As previously stated no one can take the place of a child's own parents. If, as is very often the case, there is a sur-

living parent, the institution fosters the tie between the parent and the child in order to keep the contact fresh for the time of the child's return to its own parent. In substitution for the missing parents the institution has a director as father, cottage mothers or councillors as mother-substitutes, and own brothers and sisters, or other children to take the place of them. An adequate home, good food and clothing, educational opportunities, character training, etc., we are taking for granted.

The family gives love. The child in a home, having been deprived of parental love, through death or disaster, must have others to love, and to be loved by. Fortunately the period of self-love followed by recognition of parental love endures but a short time as the sole love-experience of children. Gradually the horizon widens. Other persons contribute love values until many outside the family group expose the child to attitudes and actions which satisfy his hunger for love. Children in institutions who have a surviving parent, continue to receive love from him, and to pour out affection upon him. Brothers and sisters still cling together in bonds of love. New children become as brothers and sisters to the child. The personnel (assuming that it has the kindly human sort of people that are needed for child-care work) supplies plenty of love to the children—true it is not "smother" love; not the protective, overpowering, subjective and possessive love with which many parents in their selfishness bind their children to them. It is a more objective and less stifling love, and can be quite satisfying to the child.

The family inspires respect. There is mutual respect between father and mother, and children are taught by example the value of respect. Father and mother respect the rights of their children, and expect in return that their children shall learn to respect the rights and privileges of others, as well as to learn to respect themselves.

In an institution, the director and the personnel stand in exactly the same place. Children are given private wardrobes for their possessions; personal property rights are respected; things are used but not abused. There is a courtesy and genuine kindness of manner which reflects itself in the attitude of the children. This lies directly within the province of the head of the house to set the example.

The family gives understanding. Try to remember that this is a successful family we are holding up—an ideal family, let us say. And even the most ideal family often fails here. It requires highly trained specialists in this complex society in which we live today to unravel some of the difficulties we find ourselves facing with our children. Understanding hearts are things to pray for—and in humility to hope for; understanding heads are just as im-

portant, however; and it is here that the institution can compete with the home to its advantage. Executive directors and superintendents are trained through educational advantages as well as through years of experience in working with children. They are not novices—they are prepared by study and experience to cope with childhood's difficulties. They do not say, "Well, he comes by it honestly. Sam's mother does the same thing," or, "He is stubborn and willful just like my wife's people." Children are understood because they are studied objectively, and their actions are interpreted in the light of study and knowledge, not guess-work. The director of an institution knows where to seek help, knows the values of psychiatric study, vocational guidance, etc.; and uses these sources to help him in understanding the child. He trains his personnel to follow his findings in a helpful way. The institution is well able to understand the children.

The successful home gives a child a sense of security. Can we in institutions do that? When a child is born into a family he already has status. He was expected. He is part of, and he belongs to the family. The home is broken, he loses that place. He comes to the institution. Can we give him status? Not in the sense of his original status—no one can do that for him. What can we give him? A sense of security? Most assuredly. A child who is at the sufferance of a relative or friend or in a boarding house, remains there as long as the members of that family are willing to bear with him. He is never quite sure how long that will be. In an institution he is, along with many others, "in the same boat," a member of a group that is governed by many people, and he learns that his position is secure. The community is protecting and caring for him. He belongs. His food, clothing, education, recreation, are adequately provided for; he does not feel the tension of struggle for mere existence. He lives a simple daily life, his health is safeguarded, he is pleasantly rewarded for his good conduct and he is encouraged to meet disagreeable and painful experiences in a constructive way. The institution can provide for a feeling of security.

The successful family gives the child a sense of importance. Can we? Yes, by giving him opportunities to shine in his own field. The child of limited intelligence can help to make the garden and grounds beautiful—he can proudly display for the admiration of many eyes the fruits of his labor in the form of flowers for the tables, and fresh vegetables to eat. The mechanically inclined child can help the handy man to mend the chairs, to tinker with the radio, or mend the little ones' toys. He can be important, and useful. The brilliant child can give Friday-night children's services; he can help in the study hour; children with artis-

tic ability can participate in glee clubs, orchestra, modeling and painting clubs—in fact, with its wide variety of interest, every child can feel important in his ability to do some outstanding thing in the Home. There are many offices in a large home where a child who is older can exercise his sense of responsibility; gaining a certain self-respect by being useful at household tasks, giving assistance at office jobs, running errands, etc.

The successful family provides the child with a feeling of authority over him. It is not good for children to have a sense of responsibility too early; they must know that there is a wise and kindly person who is guiding their steps until they are prepared to take over the job alone. They must feel this authority if they are to know the satisfaction of protection it gives. In an institution there has in the past been too much and too long drawn out protection through authority. Sufficient authority is easily provided; the task lies in not over-emphasizing that authority. This can be worked out by the director in staff conferences with his personnel, from time to time.

The successful family provides for widening of acquaintances. No one will question the ability of the institution to do this as well. To begin with, the family is larger; a child selects several of his own age to pal with right under the same roof. He exchanges visits with friends; belongs to after-school literary, athletic, nature study and Scout groups; gradually adding to his group of friends until he emancipates himself from the limited attachments which held him as a younger child. The introvert is encouraged to come out of his shell; the extrovert is taught to control and direct his activities.

The family gives the child freedom—freedom of speech, choice, action. Before we consider whether the institution can do this as well, let us think a moment about this much-discussed subject. In order not to go too greatly into detail, let us assume that what we mean by freedom is something short of license. Freedom, rather to choose between worth while things; freedom to express desires, wishes, opinions. Even the most successful family today finds that a task of magnitude. Our youth is forever crying for more time to do this, that, or the other thing which seems important to him; he is incensed at the long hours of study, and short play periods offered him; he rebels against the planned curriculum for leisure hours. All of life being a matter of compromise, we are forced to yield now; and ask him to yield again. So it is with institutional freedom. The children can have unhampered movements up to a point; the feeling of possession can be guarded; the right to express likes in styles of clothing; in choice of vocation, in manner of recreation; in desire for privileges, can all be

worked out satisfactorily through conferences, or family councils. There is plenty of time for play, for uninterfered-with projects; for self-expression through the arts. Children who are highly individual can be helped to work out a satisfactory plan which will include all the necessary routine of group life and yet have sufficient individuality to supply their needs. This is done in progressive schools successfully. The set-up is similar to ours.

In the ability of the director and his personnel to give a greater and ever greater measure of freedom to children as they grow older, lies the success of their work.

The family prepares its children for life after they leave the roof-tree. The test of the family's success is the kind of workers which it sends out into the world, because achievement of personality is through one's job. Attitudes toward life, learned in the home, reflect themselves in the manner of work done later in life. If these things are true, what can the institution do about preparing its youth to meet the demands of adult life? The institution has undeniable opportunities to render its wards fit to carry on in adult life. It has the means to study each child for vocational guidance through the intelligent use of psychiatric diagnosis and guidance. It has the means to provide the child with sustenance till he has completed his studies; it has illimitable opportunities to teach lessons in tolerance, courtesy, perseverance, cooperation, and good sportsmanship. Here again, the qualities of the people in charge are responsible to a large degree for what benefits of environment are derived by the wards.

The family fosters in its children a sense of loyalty. A child raised in an institution can be taught to appreciate the situation of its surviving parent, to remain loyal to its blood ties, at the same time to feel a sense of loyalty to the guardian who stands in place of the parent temporarily. Children grow to love the institution, the people who care for them, the children who share their life. There need be no conflict in the sharing of loyalties in this respect.

The family gives its members privacy. In this day of small, compact apartment-house life, is it true that even successful families can always provide privacy for its members? Some very successful families have six or more children: can they give all their children privacy? Do children between the ages of 8 and 14 want much privacy? How much? When? These are questions to consider when asking ourselves, can the institution give its members privacy? The privacy a family which has one or two children can give is absolutely not obtainable for children in institutions. Often it is not desirable—as witness the growth of camps and schools to keep children in groups. Under the cottage plan of care, children can have private

rooms or share them with one or two other children. In private homes only the very "comfortable" families can provide separate rooms for its children when there are three or more in a family. In congregate homes, children sleep in dormitories, of six or more to a room. The children are inconvenienced by the noise of others at times, but unless a child is nervous or ill, he soon accustoms himself to sleeping through noises. Older children can be given cubicles or separate rooms, where their privacy is maintained. Screens can be used to good advantages where space is limited.

Yes, we say it is possible to provide in an institution the essential psychological factors that go to make up a successful family life for the child. The burden of responsibility for the carrying out of such a program lies with the superintendents and directors of institutions. What are they doing to make this kind of life possible for the child? Are they really living up to their standards and ideals? In order to impress others, we sometimes hear executives talking about the progress of their work—as though they were actually doing the things they talk about. In reality, it is their way of expressing their wishes and hopes of doing the things they describe. This brings us to the role of executive director—does he believe in the necessity of

carrying out these ideals; and how far is he willing to go in order to bring about the practice of them?

His job is not an easy one. In relation to his board he has to be a high-powered salesman; selling new ideas, progressive planning, better welfare; to his staff he has to be a teacher, with all the painstaking methods of pedagogy, he must inspire them with the desire to offer to their charges a spirit of understanding and sympathy; to the children under his care he has to be psychologist, impartial friend, as well as father; to the parents he is an interpreter; to the community, a social worker spreading the knowledge of true social vision; and to his own immediate family, a participating member of the family circle that he may measure his success there as he does in his work. A real man-sized job, I take it.

If he is all of these things, he will be able to read and interpret life as it changes around him. He will weed out the fads of the day and seek after the truth which can stand the test of time and usage. Because a thing is new, it is not necessarily better. He will recognize this and hold to the things in the old order which have proven their worth, and grasp eagerly for the information and help which comes with world progress.

Institutional Care for the "Normal" Child as Seen by a Psychiatrist

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(Abstract)

THE presentation, based largely on experience in the study of children at Bellefaire, Cleveland, Ohio, covered an attempt to determine the effect of institution living on the emotional life of the so-called average child. The psychiatrist was described as a "neutral" member of the institution staff, as a person who had the advantage of being an advisor without the disadvantages of disciplinary or administrative responsibility. A number of case situations was presented to emphasize the general conclusions drawn from the study of these children, but none of these cases are described in this abstract. They served, briefly, to emphasize the fact that practically none but adequate children of good general personality balance were studied.

In describing his observations and interpretations, emphasis was put on the psychological concept that children who require placement, for whatever reason, are more dependent and less secure than others, and that they are, in that sense, emotionally crippled. Note was also made that children unconsciously seek parents or parent substitutes whether they have originally had good or bad parents or none at all. In brief, an attempt was made to point out that placement is only a substitute form of care. To further draw a parallel between the children who might be placed in institutions and children in their own homes or boarding homes, attempts were made to show that emotional difficulties normally arise in the normal family drama, even though the sense of security, which is sometimes shaken in the child's own home, is more difficult to maintain or regain in placement situations.

Stress was laid on the fact that the interpretations made by the author were of limited value because of the possibly limited amount of institutional experience (640 children) drawn on and because subjective impressions are difficult to avoid under the best of circumstances. "Evidence" of emotional reactions by the children was divided into two principal headings—"Subjective" and "Objective." They follow:

SUBJECTIVE

1. *Happiness* was roughly defined as a conscious sense of security. The impression was given that children in institutions have about the same measure of happiness

as children in other types of placement. If there is a difference, it is in favor of the institution children, especially where they remain several years. *Happiness* becomes consciously more satisfying as the placement is prolonged, and the observation was made that this may be exaggerated in keeping with the children's fear of the end of their stay. This would mean prolonged dependence, a potential personality handicap.

2. *Complaints* against the type of treatment were interpreted as being usually direct and superficial. Some of the more resistant types of children object to coming and staying at an institution, and they are usually difficult personalities wherever they happen to be. Briefly, the nature of complaints made is *not characteristic* or *grave*.
3. *Reactions against institution placement* were observed, especially where children attended "city" schools. The difficulty may be related to the reminder of dependency and insecurity. It is difficult to confirm the impression that the frequency and nature of these reactions are exaggerated. On the whole, however, they do not signify serious dissatisfactions to any appreciable measure. Children are usually quite satisfied.
4. *Affection needs and demands*. These, it was believed, are largely affected by the type of institution (congregate or cottage, the latter being the better), and even more so on the affection needs and general emotional balance of the workers. The small children and a small number of adolescents seem to have a good measure of "love" in the give and take sense. The middle group seems to sense it least. The suggestion was made that they are psychologically in the "group" era, and that they, therefore, need parental love less. Examinations were given to show that old-fashioned institutions usually represented the depriving parent, and that later ones tended to sense too little the need for stimulating and satisfying children's love "needs." Institutions of the right sort may help to develop in the child a strong love for the Alma Mater. In some instances this may endanger their attitude towards return to their own family remnants, but even here it may represent great value.