

F F T A



Foster Family-based Treatment Association

## Annotations of Research in Treatment Foster Care

### Citation

Schofield, G., & Beek, M. (2005). Providing a secure base: Parenting children in long-term foster family care. *Attachment & Human Development*, 7(1), 3–25.

### Keywords

Attachment, secure base, long-term family care, parenting, family membership

### Research Question

Does a model of parenting developed within the framework of attachment theory promote trust, reflective function, self-esteem, autonomy, and a sense of belonging in children with extensive history of abuse?

### Method

*Subjects:* The study involved 52 children in long-term foster care under the age of 12 (range 4–11, mean age 10) with a plan of long-term foster care in 1997–1998. The plan for these children was to remain in foster care until adulthood. A follow-up review took place 3 years later in 2001–2002, and the researchers intend to follow the sample into adult life.

*Design:* The project was conducted in two phases. Phase one consisted of a questionnaire and social worker interviews to provide data on the children's histories, development, foster care placement, birth family contact, and professional support services, with a focus on child behaviors, relationships, and parenting responses. Phase two was used with foster carers to explore changes over time. The study was qualitative using in-depth interviews and some standardized scales.

*Materials/Measures:* Standardized scales used were Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, the Experience of Parenting Interview (ExPI), and the Family and Friends Interview.

### Results/Findings

The results are promising. Children did make marked progress in all areas according to interviews with foster caregivers.

### Limitations

The study group did not include older children and was relatively small. The training from attachment theory needs to be expanded to include the category of promoting family membership

and should be adapted for an older population. The theory seems to hold true even with children ages 4–11.

### **Application to Practice**

Foster caregivers who are well informed on the child's history of maltreatment and who are trained and supervised using developmental attachment theory to understand and respond to behaviors are more likely to increase the child's sense of identity and belonging. Training needs to be developed to support an already research-based approach to attachment theory, extending the principles to the foster care population.

### **Application to Policy**

This practice has the potential for making a major impact on foster parent retention and placement stability for children.

### **Contact Information**

Gillian Schofield, University of East Anglia, Room 1.11 Elizabeth Fry Building, Norwich NR4 7TJ, U.K. E-mail: [g.schofield@uea.ac.uk](mailto:g.schofield@uea.ac.uk)

*This annotation was written by Gail Biro, MSW, Vice President of Policy and Program Development at Neighbor to Family in Daytona Beach, FL.*