Child Development Experts Study "Multiple Mother" Effects

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In a current Child Development research program, four-year-olds are the subjects of the second phase of testing. Although this child is not one of the group involved in the program, she is the same age.

Child Development Experts Study

"Multiple-Mother" Effects

By Carol Calhoon, H. Ec. Jl. 4

Mothering and its effect on child growth is the subject of current child development research.

This home economics research includes measurements of development and adjustment of three groups of children, each having different conditions during their first few months of life.

Under general direction of Dr. Glenn Hawkes, head of the Child Development Department, the study is led by Dr. Bruce Gardner and Dr. Damaris Pease.

"Other researchers have noted that children having multiple-mother conditions during early childhood have had faulty physical growth, inadequate personal development and even mentally retarded attitudes. Our hypothesis is that there is no difference in their final growth, but at this stage of the research we are unable to determine final results," Dr. Gardner said.

Data are now being classified on the findings of the first phase of testing, completed in December, 1959. At this time all of the children had been tested at the two-year-old level.

In the experiment are 118 children. Group A includes infants who lived in the Iowa State home management houses for one quarter before being placed in foster homes and then adoptive homes. Group B consists of infants who resided in private homes with foster parents before they were adopted. Children in both groups were born to unmarried mothers and released for legal adoption. They were selected by the Iowa Children's Home Society, which also supervised the placement and adoption of the infants.

Group C infants were born into complete families and presumably received normal mothering in their own homes, according to Dr. Gardner. These babies were selected in Des Moines.

Only full-term infants were accepted, "full-term" being a minimum birth weight of 51/2 pounds.
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pounds. Sex differences were controlled as much as possible within limits of infant availability.

The information being collected is classified into medical, psychometric, and physiological. The medical data consists of the birth history and reports made by the examining physician. The Gesell Developmental Schedule estimates psychometric data in four areas: language, motor, adaptive and personal-social. Impressions of the psychological examiners are also recorded during the examination.

The complete test requires about one hour, depending on the age of the child, the ease of developing communication and other factors, according to Dr. Hawkes. The tests are conducted at the Iowa Children’s Home Society in Des Moines or in the Child Development Laboratory in Fisher Home Management House basement.

"Ideally, we would like to continue the tests until the children reach maturity, but because of costs and staff limitations we are not sure of the final tests," Dr. Gardner explained. They will possibly finish when the children reach school age.

Financial support to conduct the research was received from the Elizabeth McCormick Memorial Fund. The study was begun in 1955 in cooperation with the Iowa Children's Home Society.

Answers to quiz, page 18