Israeli Families in New York: Their Utilization of Social Services and Unmet Needs*

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Intact Israeli families in New York were found in this study to be mostly undecided about their future plans regarding their stay in the United States. This state of "limbo" was reflected in specific patterns of utilization of social services, and in six major areas of concern and needs. Some policy dilemma and guidelines on ethnic dimensions in the delivery of social services, conclude the paper.

ALTHOUGH Israeli immigrant communities have been growing in several metropolitan areas in the United States, there have been no baseline data which could guide social welfare policy makers as to their needs for social services. Most of the handful of social science studies on Israeli immigrants limited themselves primarily to motives, attitudes and intentions of Israeli students and professionals.[1] Those studies produced generalizations on Israeli immigrants, irrespective of the methodological limitations of demographically skewed samples.[2]

The purposes of this study were to: (1) provide a systematic baseline information on Israeli families in New York City, (2) describe differential patterns in their utilization of social services, (3) describe specific areas of concern and unmet needs and, (4) suggest policy guidelines regarding the planning and the delivery of more responsive social services for this emerging ethnic group.

The key concepts of the study were needs assessment,[3] utilization patterns of social services[4] and ethnic dimensions in the delivery of services[5]—all central notions in social work practice and planning.[6] It was assumed that studying ordinary families and their coping mechanisms would provide a basis for studying also more disturbed families and individuals.[7]

Three major establishments recently raised interest in a more practical and realistic understanding of Israeli emigrants. The Israeli government is alarmed by the magnitude of emigration of its citizens.[8] Policies are considered and fragmentedly introduced to reach out for potential returnees and to prevent further emigration. Also alarmed are several American Jewish organizations by the decrease of Jewish communities due to demographic changes in life expectancy, migration patterns, ethnic assimilation and the lack of Jewish immigration. These concerns brought the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, for instance, to clarify its values, to change its policies and to legitimize the rights of Israelis to choose their place of living. This resulted in the Federation's becoming more responsive to the personal and ethnic needs of the Israelis by seeking to "reach out to them, get to know them and come to understand them".[9] Finally, a few American research institutes have started to express interest in the emerging Israeli community as a distinct ethnic group, whether to learn more of the impact on intergroup relations of immigrant communities,[10] or to study their impact on the labor market as newcomers.[11]

Design and Methodology

Making a head count of most immigrant groups is unreliable due to problems inherent in recording human movement in general, and in the U.S., in particular.[12] In the case of the Israelis abroad this is even more complicated since many tend to postpone the decision about the permanence of their residence and it becomes even harder to tell when these temporary sojourners become permanent expatriates.

Because of such sampling constraints an exploratory study using primarily descriptive survey methods was undertaken. Eighty-six intact families, each with at least one child, were interviewed purposively as a non-probability quota sample to reflect three independent variables relevant to the purpose of the study. Information was gathered on a total of 355 individuals: both spouses and 183 children. The families were selected: (1) by borough of residence, one-half from Queens and one-half from Brooklyn; (2) by sub-ethnic background, one-half Ashkenazi and one-half Sephardi families; and (3) by length of stay in the United States, one-half

* This article is based on the author's Doctoral Dissertation on: "Israeli Families in New York City: Utilization of Social Services, Unmet Needs and Policy Implications", Columbia University, School of Social Work, 1983. The research was partly supported by the Institute on Pluralism and Group Identity of the American Jewish Committee and by the Conservation of Human Resources, Columbia University.

[1] Paul Ritterband, "The Determinants of Motives of Israeli Students Staying in the U.S.," *Sociology of Education*, 42, No. 4 (Fall, 1969); Aharon Fein, "The Process of Migration: Israeli Emigration to United States". Doctoral Dissertation, School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University, 1978; Dov Elizur, "Israelis in the United States: Motives, Attitudes and Intentions", *American Jewish Year Book*, 1980.

[2] Drora Kass and Seymour Martin Lipset, "Israelis in Exile", *Commentary*, November 1979; Drora Kass and S. M. Lipset, "Jewish Immigration to the U.S. from 1967 to the Present: Israelis and Others", in Marshall Sklare, (ed.), *Understanding American Jewry*, Transaction Books, 1982; Federa-

tion of Jewish Philanthropies of New York, "Services to Jews from Israel". Communal Planning Committee Memorandum, Dec. 1978.

[3] Jonathan Bradshaw, "The Concept of Social Need", *New Society*, 30 March 1972; George Warheit, Roger Bell and John Schwab, *Needs Assessment Approaches: Concepts and Methods*, U.S. Dept. of H.E.W., Pub. No. (ADM)79-472, 1979.

[4] See for example J. McKinley, "Some Approaches and Problems in the Study of the Use of Service: An Overview," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 1972.

[5] Eugene Litwak and John Dono, "Forms of Ethnic Relations, Organizational Theory and Social Policy in Modern Industrial Society". Mimeographed, Columbia University, 1976; Shirley Jenkins and Barbara Morrison, "Ethnicity and Service Delivery", in Jenkins, *The Ethnic Dilemma in Service Delivery*, New York: The Free Press, 1981.

[6] On the centrality of these notions in social work see Jacob Kellner and Constance D. Tadros, "Change in Society and in Professions: Issues in the Emergence of Professional Social Work", So-

cial Service Review, 41 (1966); Alan D. Wade, "In Pursuit of Community: A Platform for NASW" in W. C. Richan, (ed.), *Human Services and Social Work Responsibility*, Second NASW Professional Symposium, Washington, NASW, 1969; Jona M. Rosenfeld, "The Domain and Expertise of Social Work: A Conceptualization", *Social Work*, May–June, 1983.

[7] The bases for such an assumption may be traced in E. Bott, *Family and Social Network: Roles, Norms and External Relationships in Ordinary Urban Families*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1971.

[8] Zion, Rabi, "Emigration from Israel". Supplement to the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics, No. 10, *The Central Bureau of Statistics*, 1976; Zion Rabi, "Emigration from Israel, 1948–1977". *Riv'on Le'Calcala*, (Hebrew), 1978; Shmuel Lahis, "Report on the Israelis in the U.S." *The Jewish Agency for Israel*, November, 1980.

[9] Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

[10] Geraldine S. Grant, "New Immigrants and Ethnicity: A Preliminary Research Report on Immigrants in Queens". The Ethnic Studies Project, Queens College of CUNY, October 1981.

[11] Marcia K. Freedman, "Newcomers from Abroad: Legal and Illegal Immigrants in New York City", Conservation of Human Resources, Columbia University, August, 1980; Marcia Freedman, "The Labor Market for Immigrants in New York City", *New York Affair*, Vol. 7, #4, 1983.

[12] George W. Barclay, *Techniques of Population Analysis*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1957.

"newcomers" (in the U.S. between one to three years) and one-half "old timers" (in the U.S. between four to ten years).

"Snowballing" referral,[13] the major sampling method, was diversified by three complementary community explorations: spectators of an Israeli Film Festival were approached, local Israeli food stores and restaurants were visited and "Hebrewized" Israeli last names were selected arbitrarily from phone books. Some discretion in the final sampling of the families did exist; however, the following criteria that were used minimized the effect of personal bias. (1) Only sub-ethnically homogeneous Ashkenazi or Sephardi families were interviewed. (2) Both husband and wife had to have lived in Israel at least ten consecutive years. (3) The sample was limited to actual or potential immigrants. Thus certain Israeli families were excluded: (a) officials of the Israeli government, semi-government and business with a commitment to return within a definite time period upon the completion of a definite task; (b) full-time students supported by grants from Israel, from an American-Jewish or any other organization which committed them to return to Israel with the completion of their studies; (c) families who on arrival included an adult United States citizen.

Still, since the distribution of the Israeli population in New York along the selected key variables is unknown, generalizations of the findings are somewhat limited and should be treated cautiously.

Findings

Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The households studied were: (1) residing in highly concentrated Jewish areas in both boroughs (75%); (2) small, nuclear families, three-quarters of which had either one or two children;

(3) young, the husbands' median age was 34 years; (4) in reasonably good health, both physically and mentally; and (5) pulled to the United States, in most cases, by the husband's initiative, the primary reasons given being to reunite with family in the United States, to improve job opportunities, or general curiosity and adventurousness.

The employment characteristics of the families were similar to what Freedman found in other immigrant groups.[14] About two-thirds were self-employed in small ethnic enterprises, usually consisting of family and compatriot networks. Significantly fewer wives were employed in New York than in Israel and of those employed, many were experiencing a strong downward mobility.

The families in the sample were a typical cross-section of Israeli society in two areas: in their level of education and in their levels of religiousness. Their average annual family income was close to the average of the New York City family.

Two-thirds of the families reported being undecided about their future plans regarding their stay in the United States. This finding is central to the study and is presented to explain several areas of need and patterns of utilization of social services. It also led to the conclusion that Israelis in New York may best be characterized as a "community in limbo".

An additional area of ambivalence was their feelings toward Zionism. Confusion and disillusion characterized several of the respondents although the Israeli and Jewish identifications of the majority was strong. However, these strong Israeli and Jewish identifications did not significantly affect the families' intentions to return to Israel.[15]

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[13] Elizur, op. cit.

[14] Freedman, 1983, op. cit.

[15] For similar findings, see Fein, op. cit.

Utilization of Social Services

In exploring the patterns of seeking help and by which they were utilizing social services, these factors were cross-analyzed: (1) socio-economic and socio-demographic variables such as age, household size, income, and education;[16] (2) socio-cultural variables such as religiousness, identification and life styles;[17] (3) coping roles undertaken by primary group supports and their functions in relation to bureaucratic social services;[18] and (4) ethnic dimensions of service utilization.[19]

Entitlement Programs: In general, the findings suggested that utilization rates of entitlement programs, such as public assistance, unemployment benefits, food stamps, social security, etc. were insignificant. Several explanations could account for this phenomenon. First, the focus of the study on intact families *a priori* selected a self-supporting group.[20] Second, at least 50 percent of the families did not qualify for public benefits since they had not built up their entitlements. Further, there are the usual psychological and institutional barriers to using such services shared by everyone.[21]

A third possible explanation for the insignificant use of entitlement programs could relate to psycho-social barriers particular to Israelis who came to

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[16] McKinley, op. cit.

[17] Ibid. Also Judith Rabkin and Elmer Struening, "Ethnicity, Social Class and Mental Illness in NYC." Working Paper No. 17. New York: Institute on Pluralism and Group Identity, 1976.

[18] Eugene Litwak and Henry Meyer, "A Balance Theory of Coordination Between Bureaucratic Organizations and Community Primary Groups", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, June 1966.

[19] Jenkins, *The Ethnic Dilemma . . .*, op. cit.

[20] Bott, op. cit.

[21] See for example Barbara McClure, "Alien Eligibility Requirements for Major Federal Assistance Programs." Congressional Research Service. Report No. 81–10 EPW, January 9, 1981.

the United States expecting to improve their economic situation. In case of failure they were emotionally committed to return to Israel. Therefore, the option to turn to public welfare services was hardly taken into consideration. But even when the need for formal help was admitted, additional barriers could persist such as language and the general understanding of the fragmented American social service system.

Jewish Charities: The insignificant utilization of entitlement programs was substituted in part by Jewish charities. When need grew, and primary group supports either did not exist or failed to be helpful, several families (16%) turned to, or were helped by discretionary charities of local rabbis. Interest-free loans, secret almsgiving, tuition discounts in nurseries, schools and summer camps were the major forms. These alternative resources facilitated access to services in ways closer to family patterns and cultural group values.[22]

Education and Recreation: Seventy percent of the school age Israeli children were enrolled in all levels of American-Jewish schools. The proportion reached nearly 80 percent of pre-schools and elementary school age levels.

Most of those who reported using community centers and after-school programs were utilizing facilities under Jewish auspices such as Y's and synagogues. The proportion of children of eligible age using summer camps exceeded 80 percent.

These findings challenge the popular image of the Israelis, that they live isolated from local Jewish communal services and that they assimilate in high rates into the greater American society.[23] In several areas, the findings of this study suggest the contrary, that a significant proportion of Israeli families

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[22] Litwak and Meyer, op. cit.

[23] Kass and Lipset, op. cit.

are actively integrating into an American-*Jewish* "melting-pot".[24]

Counseling and Guidance: A different phase of Jewish integration emerged in the instances of resort to counseling and guidance, although utilization rates were too small to draw extended inferences. Personal social services of three types were identified: that in Jewish schools, in Jewish family services, and in congregations or synagogues. These institutional types might be considered to reflect different deliberate choices made regarding "how Jewish" a source was sought.

A broader insight on the families' help-seeking attitudes was gained by introducing them to four hypothetical cases in which a counselor had to be selected. In general, respondents were found more reserved about turning to an American-Jewish agency, since they felt they were psycho-socially "marked-off." Israeli professionals or local rabbis, on the other hand, were more likely to be perceived as their "own group" and thus responsive to the ethnic dimensions of their needs.

Variation in Utilization by Key-Variables

Significant differences of service utilization were identified in families residing in Queens from those residing in Brooklyn and in "newcomers" from "old-timers". Interestingly, the families' sub-ethnic background (Ashkenazi versus Sephardi) failed to influence patterns of service utilization. While the limitations of the sampling procedures should be kept in mind, these findings suggest that class, locality, and other social conditions—such as migration mo-

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[24] Simon N. Herman, *Israeli and Jews: The Continuity of an Identity.* New York: Random House, 1970; S. N. Herman, *Jewish Identity: A Social Psychological Perspective.* New York: Sage Publication, 1977.

tives, primary group supports and environmental circumstances—may account more for variations in service utilization than the ethic origin of the families. Similar conclusions were suggested by Steinberg[25] in which he challenged those arguments which directly related socio-economic differences to ethnic traits.

Queens versus Brooklyn: Relatives were more available for families in Brooklyn and they were more relied on than for families in Queens. The lower socio-economic status of the families in Brooklyn probably compelled them to depend on such supports more than those living in Queens. Families from Brooklyn also used significantly more income supports and Jewish charities than those residing in Queens. Furthermore, a substantial proportion of Israelis in Brooklyn lacked the coverage of any health insurance (26%), whereas in Queens such incidents were unrecorded.

The enrollment of Israeli children in Jewish schools was significantly higher in Brooklyn than in Queens (85% vs 67%). However, since difference could not be attributed to inter-borough variations in the level of religiousness, "supply-side" and other environmental circumstances should be looked for as possible explanations. They could include differences in the reputation of local public schools and in the ethnic mix of their students, and differences in the discretional eligibility policies for Jewish school tuition discounts between the two boroughs.

In the analysis of hypothetical help-seeking patterns, rabbis emerged as significantly more popular counseling options in Brooklyn than in Queens. In Queens, professionals with the best credentials were more common. This dif-

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[25] Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1981.

ference could be attributed to language barriers (inferred by levels of education) and to the lower level of income among families in Brooklyn.

"Newcomers" versus "Old-timers": Three major differences were found in service utilization patterns between Israeli "old-timers" and "newcomers". First, "old-timers" more often used services in which payment was required. Unlike "newcomers" who used primarily free guidance services through school counselors or rabbis, "old-timers" tended to purchase counseling services in the marketplace. The utilization of recreational services was also more common among "old-timers", probably reflecting their higher socio-economic status and a more settled style of life.

Second, despite their higher socio-economic status, "old-timers" were more likely to collect public benefits than "newcomers." Their ability to prove eligibility as well as their improved familiarity with the American social service system could possibly account for this pattern.

Third, "old-timers" presented a trend of more often using Jewish services such as sectarian schools for their children in the higher grades, involvement in Israeli or Jewish self-help groups, or the hypothetical selection of American Jewish counseling. This trend was supported by the "old-timers" tendency to observe more traditional and religious practices than did the "newcomers".

Major Concerns and Needs

The study revealed six major concerns and needs in the area of personal social services, education, health and economics. They were: a sense of general social isolation; the wives' low level of adjustment; the families' ambivalence about their future in the U.S.; the children's education; health risks and economic condition.

To determine these areas, an integrated approach of needs assessment was used. It combined information gathered on felt needs, on socio-economic conditions, and on patterns of service utilization. Normative and comparative approaches in the analysis of data were also employed. Although such an integrated approach is not the only one available for the assessment of needs, it is often regarded by social workers as basic to the discovery of gaps between needs of a population and the provision of resources to them.

Social Isolation: A sense of general social isolation emerged in most of the interviews. It was well summarized by one respondent who said that "For the mainstream Americans, we will always remain aliens; for the black, we are white; by American Jews, we are not welcome; and, among ourselves, we are suspicious." The intensity of such an emotional state varied among the families as a whole, between each one of the spouses and the children. It was further exemplified by the more secular families and by those who did not have extensive primary group supports. For such families, the lack of organized systems of mutual aid raised fears of times of severe need. Thus, one-third of the respondents translated these concerns as a need for a local Israeli center. Such a separatist social agency was expected to provide a response to the families' isolation by: (1) offering a place to socialize with their own group in their own community; (2) getting organized around issues of self-help and; (3) providing information, referral and counseling services, all in the Hebrew language. Among the "newcomers", nearly half (46%) felt that such a center could be the best response for their sense of isolation.

Wives' Adjustment: Over one-fifth of the respondents (21%) reported experiencing the social isolation of the wives as

a strong mental stress. Wives also reported significantly lower adjustment levels than their husbands and more concern about the future plans of the family. These feelings of discontent prevailed in over one-third of the "newcomers" and were hardly apparent in the "old-timers" group. Furthermore, over 50 percent of the "old-timer" wives reported a highly satisfied level of adjustment to life in the United States. Thus, either the adjustment of Israeli wives is relatively slower than that of their husbands, or the unadjusted wives pulled their families back to Israel.

Four findings in the study could account for the Israeli women's maladjustment. First, in most cases the husbands were the primary initiators of migration, and the wives had joined reluctantly. Second, in the United States, wives experienced a 25 percent drop in labor-force participation and a strong downward occupational mobility. This meant, for numerous women, either to live as shut-ins or to feel degraded at work. Third, there are major differences between the work-related American social welfare system and the one the wives were used to in Israel. There, several employment policies are mother-and-child oriented, e.g., reduced hours for women in the year following childbirth or for those having at least two children under the age of twelve when work absence is approved due to the illness of children. Most localities also have excellent networks of kindergartens and day-care centers.[26] The lack of these types of public supports in the United States, in addition to the general hardship of migration, compelled several wives to change their life style and renounce employment.

The last argument for the wives'

lower adjustment level could be attributed to their somewhat fewer significant primary group supports in the United States than they had in Israel. Their husbands, in contrast, had more primary group supports in the United States. Thus wives tended to worry more often than their husbands about the future plans of the family in the United States and about their relations with extended family in Israel.

Families in Limbo: As already discussed, two-thirds of the families reported uncertainty regarding the permanency of their stay in the United States. Of those, only 12 percent identified this state of ambivalence as emotionally stressful. For most of the families such uncertainties were not perceived as a strain. In this issue, passage of time intensified rather than alleviated strain. Thus, among the "old-timers," the proportion of families experiencing the stress of "limbo" reached nearly 20 percent. This was especially the case in families with older children, since their willingness in the future to return to Israel was becoming less predictable.

To be in a stressful state of "limbo" meant primarily to feel suspended between two places, or to sense some sort of a "split soul," i.e., to live physically in the United States but emotionally in Israel. A state of this kind involves a mental resistance, or sometimes a failure, to undergoing the process of "Americanization". There is a difficulty in accepting the finality of the act of migration which is further accentuated by the attitude of the people in Israel, who always welcome returnees. To accept the mental status of immigrants brings a sense of national betrayal of the patriotic (Zionist) ideals they were raised on in Israel, namely, the capacity for self-sacrifice for the future of the Israeli collective. Their present individualist and enterpreneurial desires in the

26 Marjorie Honig and Nira Shamai, "Israel" in Kamerman and Kahn, (eds.), *Family Policy.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

United States are in direct conflict with those ideals. A prolonged stay in the United States also involves other types of identity conflict: feelings of estrangement, alienation, rootlessness and temporariness which often lead to a general sense of marginality accompanied by various levels of anxiety. At those times, the "American Dream" may turn into a dream about the return to Israel, followed by a grave realization that an easy way back may no longer exist. It might also create the shame of admitting failure, which could necessitate the emergence of added mechanisms of rationalization.

Israeli-Type Education: Like most immigrant groups, most Israeli families object to the integration of their children into American society. But unlike most immigrants, this objection is strongly related to their emotional state of "limbo". They wish to maintain an Israeli national identity not only as a source of pride but also to facilitate return to Israel. Indeed, that identity is in jeopardy, in a kind of "no-win" situation, for the Israeli, because local Jewish schools primarily emphasize religious content, while the public schools avoid explicit ethnic or religious education, leaving those roles to the families. Thus, Jewish schools become a compromise, a "second best". Several secular parents yearned nostalgically for the Israeli secular public school system. There, as students, they were raised on "Jewish consciousness" as members of a majority group in their own sovereign state. They were acquainted with the bible as the sourcebook for Israel's history and with religious beliefs and practices without being required to adopt them personally.

In this study, both spouses were most frequently distressed by the future of their children, in general and specifically by the lack of national-Israeli dimensions in their education. Thus a

separatist need for an Israeli-type secular public school surfaced among one-fourth of the respondents. This need was felt by one-third of the families in Queens, a proportion twice as high as in Brooklyn. The difference may be attributed to other findings in the study, namely that families in Queens were more likely than those in Brooklyn to be concerned with the education of their children, to fear general assimilation, and to score "high" on Israeli and Zionist identities.

Health Risks: Thirteen percent of the families and the same proportion of children were found not to be covered by any type of health insurance in the United States. They have also dropped payments for health coverage in Israel. All those cases involved residents of Brooklyn. Thus, about one-quarter of the Israeli families sampled in Brooklyn were risking, if not already suffering, the financial and mental concomitants of a major illness. This condition was hardly addressed by the respondents as an area of concern. However, the implication of this finding is grave enough to justify its inclusion in a normative category of need or the respondent as a "population at risk".[27] Furthermore, two-thirds of those cases reported an annual income under $15,000, supporting previous findings in which a strong association was reported between low family income and the lack of health coverage.[28]

In the few cases of health crises encountered in the interviews, it was up to the extended family (where there was

27 Bradshaw, *op. cit.* Rosalie A. Kane, "Lessons for Social Work from the Medical Model: A Viewpoint for Practice", *Social Work,* Vol. 27, No. 4 July 1982.
28 Lois Monteiro, "Immigrants Without Care," *Society,* September–October, 1977; Lash, Sigal and Dudzinsky, *State of the Child: New York City II,* Foundation for Child Development, New York, June 1980, p. 85.

one), their financial ability and their good will to see that medical bills were covered. If these did not exist, Jewish charity became the last resort. This finding means that families outside the health care system most probably receive episodic and fragmented services for acute conditions. But above all, they do not receive the benefits of preventive or health maintenance services that a regular source can provide.

Economic Condition: A state of financial stress was rarely revealed by the interviewees. However, one-quarter of the families reported an annual income of less than $15,000 in 1981 and nearly ten percent reported less than $10,000. These data, in itself, are not sufficient to infer an incidence of poor families. But this study has also revealed that 16 percent of the families received some form of Jewish charities such as tuition discounts, interest-free loans and secret almsgiving. Half of those reported income levels under $15,000. Low income and receipt of charity were more significant among families in Brooklyn, where one-third reported an income of less than $15,000 and over one-fourth reported having been helped by Jewish charity. Furthermore, the few cases of unemployment, food stamps, and Medicaid benefits were also primarily reported in Brooklyn. The combination of low income, reliance on charity, the

collection of public benefits and the lack of health insurance draws attention to the overlapping elements of a potentially poor or near-poor group of Israeli families in New York City. Since most of these groups are likely to reside in Brooklyn, their normative categorization as a "population at risk" is further justified.

The table below summarizes these six areas of concern and need by presenting: (1) their proportion in the total sample; (2) the sub-group in which they are predominant; and (3) the proportion of that need or concern within the predominant sub-group.

Guidelines for Policy and Research

The major finding of this study was that in the absence of other options, ambivalent and undecided Israeli families tend to integrate primarily into the local American-Jewish "melting-pot". This "community in limbo" enrolls most of its children in local Jewish schools and in Jewish recreational activities. For several families, this is a compromise of their explicit needs for services and activities geared to maintain an Israeli national identity separately from that provided by the American-Jewish community.

Applying the socio-psychological theories presented by Herman on

Areas of Major Needs and Concern: Their Proportion and the Sub-Group in which They Are Predominant

Areas of Major Need and Concern	Percent of Total Sample	Sub-Group in which Predominant	Percent of Sub-Group
1. Social Isolation (Desire for Israeli Center)	31	"Newcomers"	46
2. Wives Adjustment	21	"Newcomers"	37
3. Families 'in-limbo'	12	"Old-timers"	18
4. Education (Desire for Israeli-type school)	24	Queens	33
5. Health Risks (No insurance)	13	Brooklyn	26
6. Economic Condition (Use of Jewish Charity)	16	Brooklyn	28

Jewish identity,[29] it seems that despite the overlap and the interrelatedness between Israeli and American Jewish identities, Israelis are both conscious and sensitive to the boundary lines running between those two. However, the marking-off elements between American-Jewish and Israeli identities are not always clear. For some Israelis, the distinction between membership group and non-membership group is confusing. They tend to exclude themselves emotionally both from American-Jewish and from local Israeli communities but especially from the American society at large. Such a sense of exclusion reflects in part their marginality. Those marginal Israelis feel emotional barriers in several dimensions, often accompanied by feelings of isolation, insecurity and estrangement.

The wish to maintain a separatist national-ethnic identity was expressed through the need for more responsive ethnic services at the local service delivery level. Concretely, an Israeli-type school and an Israeli social center were called for in New York City, in the Hebrew language and within an Israeli cultural framework.

In order to deal with these separatist needs, a policy analysis is suggested. Its level of analysis does not get into specific programming and administrative structuring in the technical sense, but is rather a general guide to action, a cluster of overall decisions to rationalize policy choices.[30]

When dealing with the need for separatist services, three major counterparts of an Israeli-Jewish system should be considered: the Israeli government, American-Jewish organizations and the Israeli-ethnic private sector in the United States. These three systems are

strongly interrelated, although in an unstructured manner. Each provides a variety of services to the Israeli and American-Jewish community. The focal question for policy-makers is: In what ways should each system incorporate Israeli ethnic factors in the delivery of services and through which organizational levels should that take place? Whichever of the three counterparts should take the initiative, it will have an impact on the functions of the other two.

Israel's quandary in taking an active role in the provision of separatist services is the most controversial one of the three sub-systems, due to its ambivalence towards Israeli families who migrate to New York. If the government of Israel was to consider the findings of this study, an Israeli-type full-time school could be its first priority for a service program.

However, at the national level, Israel faces a crucial dilemma in deciding whether to start such a program. It is concerned that the existence of an Israeli educational system in the United States will support and facilitate the move from Israel to the United States. On the other hand, officials are aware that such a school could slow down and interfere with the process of integration and acculturation to American society through the enhancement of national Israeli identity. The lack of information on possible outcomes of such a school is Israel's major reason to defer decision at the policy level. However, deferring decision is not an optimal alternative.[31]

In contrast to Israel's ambivalence toward its compatriots, the American-Jewish organizations have a clear commitment to any Jewish group in the United States. In reference to Israelis, several separatist programs were started

[29] Herman, *op. cit.*

[30] Alfred Kahn, *Theory and Practice of Social Planning.* New York: Russell Sage, 1969, p. 137.

[31] Amitai Etzioni, *The Active Society*, Glencoe: Free Press, 1968, p. 264.

recently in local Jewish social service agencies to address their ethnic needs better. These programs were staffed with Israeli professionals. The present dilemma of the organized American-Jewish community is: under what circumstances and to what extent should Israeli identification be included in the delivery of social services; would that lead to more emphatic help or to undesired further segregation? The further question is: what services are needed for which subgroup and under what arrangements? Data in this study suggest that the families' recency of migration, their geographic locale and social class could be important variables to address as a way to approach those questions. For example, American-Jewish organizations might want to consider not only the separatist ethnic needs of the Israelis, but also the health and socio-economic conditions of those who are in the lowest social strata—the Israeli poor and the near-poor congregated primarily in Brooklyn. A contributing health insurance program could be considered as one option to address this need. Since most cases of health emergencies in families lacking coverage can be expected to be handled by Jewish charities, it may be cheaper to subsidize group insurance than to handle each case on an individual basis. Such cases are not unique to Israelis, thus additional Jewish groups who share similar risks might be included in such a program.

The Israeli-ethnic private sector is the third counterpart of the system which provided separatist programs for Israelis. The most extensive part of this sector is in the area of entertainment. There is also a great variety of Israeli professionals who have developed a strong basis of ethnic clientele (i.e., lawyers, doctors, etc.). The nature of any such private sector is to fill the gaps in the "market" in areas not addressed by public or voluntary auspices. Thus this

counterpart will primarily respond to areas of inaction by the Israeli government or American-Jewish organizations. Depending on their involvement, the share of the private sector will vary.

Such an analysis suggests that both the State of Israel and American-Jewish organizations have to weigh their roles in providing services for the Israelis. While each of the two may judge this group differently, they do have related interests. Those interests could be addressed in three ways: (1) separately by both systems, (2) through coordinated efforts or, (3) some combination of both (1) and (2). From the findings of the study it is suggested that options (2) or (3) are better alternatives than the present situation, i.e., option (1). Some coordination could benefit both parties more than the present fragmentation. Clarification of concrete areas of common interest should be made by further unravelling basic facts and values and by deciding on functional boundaries and levels of coordination.

To implement such a coordination, more accurate information is needed on the size of the Israeli communities in major geographic areas. Value judgments could follow by assigning priorities to needs and programs including functional areas for intervention (for example, social casework and group health insurance by American-Jewish agencies, an Israeli school by the Israeli government). Finally, it should be decided on what organizational levels the programs will be coordinated: national, middle management or local.

The goals of this exploratory study were too limited to provide extended conclusions on all the above aspects. Additional research may be required on: a) other subgroups of Israelis, such as, singles, divorced, separated and deserted, the poor and near-poor and mixed marriages of Americans and Israelis; b) the characteristics of service

utilizers from the "supply-side" (the service providers) perspective and, c) longitudinal studies to learn the major phases and dimensions of maintaining an ethnic identity or further integrating. Such studies may shape the mutual concerns of Israel and the organized American-Jewish community in a democratic way, which in turn may enhance their responsivness to the needs of an emerging ethnic community in the United States.

Twenty-Five Years Ago
in this *Journal*

It is a paradox of social work that the practice of community organization, which so profoundly influences the nature and scope of social services, is the least developed professionally of the basic social work methods. In training for this method, there is no general agreement on broad objectives, on what should be taught, the nature of education, who should be educated, and how field work and class work should be integrated. There is not even agreement upon what constitutes appropriate material for classroom teaching. The project therefore faced a formidable challenge: to establish a frame of reference and guiding principles which would create a basis for significant and uniform progress for the future. While the challenge has not been completely met, the result does represent an important step in the right direction.

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June, 1960