

Child Welfare in Israel: An Overview of Institution Care, Foster Home Care and Adoption

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... Child welfare in Israel has come a long way since Henrietta Szold.

... (the call is now to liberation) from some of the practices and prejudices of the past three decades in order to move on to the decades ahead.

Introduction

Israel has often been described as a child-centered culture. This is not only due to parents' desire to provide their children with goods and opportunities the parent could not have as a child, but it is also a manifestation of values concerning the role of children in preserving the continuity of the State and its culture, and of Jewish peoplehood. For these reasons child welfare services in the broadest sense have been a major area of interest for government and for private, voluntary philanthropic organizations in Israel during past decades. Private foreign philanthropy, in particular, had been drawn towards child welfare as a major area for its participation and concern for Israel to be expressed. Thus, over the years there has developed a number of impressive child welfare agencies that are independent of government and are financially and ideologically self-sufficient enterprises. We will return to this issue of public and private volunteer agencies after presenting some basic parameters of Israeli child welfare.

Today's child welfare services reflect the ideologies, the historical developments and needs of the Jewish community in Israel and Palestine during the past 50 years. Only a few

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¹ Joseph Neipris, "Social Services in Israel," *The Israel Economist*, August, 1967, pp. 156-160.

attempts have been made to separate each of these threads and analyze systematically their impact upon Israeli child welfare policy and practice today.^{2,3} In this article we will focus primarily on contemporary child care issues, programs and research and make some observations on future trends in Israeli foster care, particularly institutional care and adoption services. We will *not* discuss here programs for delinquent (institutionalized or other) children or for retarded children, but will concentrate on normal dependent youngsters who for reasons of dependency have been placed away from home.

Institution Placement

The use of residential care for dependent children is very widespread in Israel. The reasons for this can be found in the mass influx to Palestine of orphan and dependent children beginning with the pogroms in Russia in the early 1800's (which resulted in the founding of numerous orphan homes such as the Diskin and the General Orphan Home for Girls which still function today), continuing with the arrival of thousands of homeless children from pre-and post-war Europe, and ending with the mass immigration of Jewish

² Eliezer Jaffe, "Substitutes for Family: On the Development of Institutional Care for Dependent Children in Israel," *Journal of Jewish Communal Services*, Vol. 44, No. 2, (Winter, 1967), pp. 129-144.

³ Avraham Doron, "The Development of Children's Allowances in Israel, 1948-1967," *Keshet*, Spring, 1969, pp. 132-142 (in Hebrew).

families from Islamic countries to Israel after 1948. All three of these waves of immigration necessitated the founding of institutions, kibbutz youth groups and children's villages to house, nurture, and educate the new arrivals. It was impossible for the Jewish community in Palestine to provide foster families or other forms of family surrogate care for these children due to the severe lack of housing at the time and the sheer size of the immigration. While there were some reservations about the mushrooming of children's institutions and villages, the necessity for providing immediate mass housing left little choice.⁴ One must also keep in mind that congregate settings were not entirely alien to the political leaders of the newly-created Israel, many of whom were strongly identified with collective living, life on the land, and the potential for using the institutional setting as an educational vehicle and for imprinting specific values believed necessary for pioneering in the new country. Thus, over the years, several hundred institutions and collective children's settings were founded by the government, by labor unions (the Histadrut), by quasi-governmental organizations such as Youth Aliyah, and by philanthropic women's organizations such as WIZO (Women's International Zionist Organization), Pioneer Women, Mizrahi Women, and others.⁵ In 1949, 3.74 percent of the Israeli child population in the age group 0-18 were reared away from their own homes, primarily in institutions.⁶ In 1958 this percentage was still the same, accounting for 26,196 children between 0-17 years old; of all the children living away from home in 1957,

⁴ Sophia Berger, *Final Report of the Palestine Orphan Committee of the J.D.C.*, December, 1928, Jerusalem.

⁵ Ministry of Social Welfare, *Guide to Boarding Homes in Israel*, Jerusalem, November, 1968, (in Hebrew).

⁶ Esther Appelberg, "The Request for Child Placement in Israel," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Summer, 1957), pp. 366-377.

78.5 percent were in institutional placement.⁷ In 1960, 68.2 percent of all Israeli children living away from home were living in 142 institution settings for dependent children.⁸

In contrast to the basically European-born child population living in institutions before 1956, the population since then has changed drastically. A study by Jaffee, in 1964, of 665 randomly selected children living in institutions for at least two years found that 70.3 percent emigrated from Islamic countries (as compared to 58 percent of the total child population in Israel in 1964 having been born in Islamic countries).⁹ The study noted that 68.2 percent of the children came from broken homes, 69.2 percent of the children's parents were receiving public welfare and only 17.8 percent of the parents had completed primary school. The group studied appeared to be quite similar to many public assistance families in Israel. The near-cessation of mass immigration to Israel since 1960 and the gradual departure from institutions by children who came with the three earlier waves of immigration resulted in the availability of institutional placements and often funds and staff were in search of clients. Consequently, there has been a shift in recent years towards utilizing children's institutions for the housing and education of low income educationally deprived Israeli children of Middle-Eastern origin.

This shift to residential care for deprived children represents one of the major issues debated in Israeli child welfare today. On the one hand, are dedicated educators and researchers who claim that institution settings are ideal vehicles for providing compensatory

⁷ Chana Silberthal, "Institution and Foster Care," in M. Smilansky, et al., (eds.), *Child and Youth Welfare in Israel*, Jerusalem: Szold Institute, 1960, p. 203.

⁸ Research Division, Ministry of Social Welfare, Israel. Unpublished surveys, 1966.

⁹ Eliezer Jaffe, *A Survey of Characteristics and Attitudes of Institutionalized Dependent Children and their Parents*, Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1967.

education and for removing pressure from many poor large families in Israel.^{10,11,12} On the other hand, equally dedicated social workers, educators, and researchers believe that poverty and the problems of education of children from poor families should be handled in the child's own community by means of improved governmental services and day schools rather than by artificial selective institutionalization of children.^{13,14,15}

In the midst of this debate, Bettelheim¹⁶ and Wolins¹⁷ have recently emerged as leaders in the advocacy of the kibbutz as a model environment for promoting attitudinal and cognitive development in children. Wolins in particular, making little differentiation between good and bad foster homes, turned from American foster care with dismay and began exploring group care in various countries as an alternative resource. He was particularly impressed with the idea of the kibbutz youth group as a high-powered instrument for spurring value change and intellectual achievement for deprived children.

¹⁰ Reuven Feuerstein, *The Meaning of Group Care Within the Residential Setting for the Development of the Socio-Culturally Disadvantaged Adolescent*, Youth Aliyah Specialists Seminar, Jerusalem, June, 1969, mimeo.

¹¹ Arye Eflal, "The Education of Backward Youth," *Dapin*, July, 1966, (in Hebrew).

¹² Martin Wolins, "Group Care: Friend or Foe?," *Social Work*, January, 1969, pp. 35-53.

¹³ Carl Frankenstein, "Youth Aliyah and the Education of Immigrants," *Between Past and Future*, Szold Foundation, 1953, pp. 248-266.

¹⁴ Eliezer Jaffe, "Substitutes for Family: on the Development of Institutional Care for Dependent Children in Israel," *op. cit.*, p. 134-139. See also: Eliezer Jaffe, "New Thinking Needed at Youth Aliyah," *Jerusalem Post*, November 12, 1968 and "Youth Aliyah and the Israeli Family," *Jerusalem Post*, December 19, 1968.

¹⁵ Esther Appelberg, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

¹⁶ Bruno Bettelheim, "Does Communal Education Work? The Case of the Kibbutz," *Commentary*, February, 1963, pp. 117-125. See also: *Children of the Dream*, New York: Macmillan, 1969.

¹⁷ Martin Wolins, *op. cit.*

He congratulated Israelis for not being "swayed by tradition and by overwhelming psychological arguments in favor of a family-based socialization" and for our courage "in striking out on a new course—child rearing in group settings despite pressures from ill-advised Western, mainly American, professionals."¹⁸ However, in the interest of perspective, and because of the disproportionately high place that many non-Israelis have awarded the kibbutz in the total Israeli child welfare spectrum and in their theories of group care, it is essential to point out that in 1968 only 3.5 percent of the total Israeli population lived in kibbutzim,¹⁹ only 5.3 percent of all children placed by public welfare agencies in 1965 were placed in kibbutzim,²⁰ and the research findings on the emotional, cognitive and attitudinal benefits of kibbutz life and other forms of group care in Israel (and elsewhere) are still extremely mixed and tentative. The author, for example, found dependent institutional children significantly more "healthy" on a series of mental health scales than children awaiting placement, but "normal" children living at home showed better overall scores than the institutional children.²¹ This study showed that in some areas the group setting made a positive impact on the child and in other areas a negative impact. One of the negative features was that institutional life often fostered feelings of depersonalization and demoralization in the child and tended to sever valued ties with the child's family.

Youth Aliyah, a large child-caring program

¹⁸ Martin Wolins, "Another View of Group Care," *Social Work*, January, 1965, p. 22.

¹⁹ Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstracts of Israel*, 1969, No. 20, Jerusalem, September, 1969, pp. 28-29.

²⁰ Ministry of Social Welfare, *Children Placed Out of Their Own Homes, 1964-1965*. Nissan, 1966, p. 9, (in Hebrew).

²¹ Eliezer Jaffe, "A Study of Effects of Institutionalization on Adolescent Dependent Children," *Megamot*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (June 1968), pp. 357-565 (in Hebrew).

of Hadassah and the Jewish Agency, has been a primary frame of reference for much of the research on group care in Israel. Youth Aliyah had over 10,000 children in care in April, 1969, about 66 percent in institutions and youth villages, 27 percent in kibbutzim, and another 7 percent in special, mostly individual and treatment-group, settings.²² Empirical research on Youth Aliyah's work thus far consists basically of three studies, those of Feuerstein and Krasilowsky,²³ Amir,²⁴ and Wolins.²⁵

Feuerstein and Krasilowsky cite findings from their research that the group environment resulted in a number of improvements for deeply disturbed adolescents treated in a controlled and planned relationship in a Youth Aliyah village where other groups of normal children were living. Based on individual follow-up of 43 treatment group children three years after the group was disbanded the researchers claimed "an absolute lack of delinquent behavior . . . , almost all of the eligible boys were accepted by the army . . . , achievement in academic, social and professional areas compared to their initial level of functioning . . . , significant favorable changes in emotional structures and ego functioning in a great percentage of children . . . and a strong feeling of group belongingness . . ."²⁶ The Feuerstein-Krasilowsky project, while representing an innovative approach to clinical work with disturbed adolescents, is severely marred as a research study by very serious methodological shortcomings. No control group was compared with the treatment

²² Youth Aliyah, *Statistical Report for the Period 1-1-69, 1-4-69* (mimeo. in Hebrew).

²³ Reuven Feuerstein and David Krasilowsky, "The Treatment Group Technique," *The Israel Annals of Psychiatry and Related Disciplines*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring, 1967), pp. 61-90.

²⁴ Yehuda Amir, "Adjustment and Promotion of Soldiers from Kibbutzim," *Megamot*, Vol. 40, No. 2-3 (August, 1967), pp. 250-259, (in Hebrew).

²⁵ Martin Wolins, "Group Care: Friend or Foe?," *op. cit.*

²⁶ Reuven Feuerstein and David Krasilowsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83.

group, clear criteria for "favorable changes in emotional and ego structure" and "feelings of group belonging" are not spelled-out (preventing repetition of the study by other scientists), and no attempt was made to take into consideration the possible effects of life experiences during the interim period between the treatment and the follow-up period. The absence of a control group is especially unfortunate since the normal children in the youth village might well have filled this requirement and were handily available. In view of these problems it appears that little can be deduced as yet concerning the usefulness of the treatment-group technique until further studies examine it in a more adequate fashion.

Amir's excellent research on the effectiveness of kibbutz-born, kibbutz-reared, and non-kibbutz soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces found that kibbutz-bred soldiers ("largely educationally deprived youngsters . . . mostly referred to the kibbutz by Youth Aliyah"), surpassed the general army population in two respects: in their personality scores at induction and in the extent of their volunteering. Youth Aliyah has made a strong case for the success of group life based on Amir's research, although Amir pointed out that the achievements for the kibbutz-bred group were closer to the non-kibbutz sample than they were to the kibbutz-born group on most variables tested including measures of intelligence, level of education, knowledge of Hebrew, advancement in rank, and suitability for command positions.²⁷

The study by Wolins deserves special attention because of its scope and potential impact on child welfare theory. Wolins studied the effects of group care vs. home rearing on children in four countries (Israel, Poland, Austria, and Yugoslavia). The three variables which were believed to differentiate between group care and home-reared children were intellectual development, psychosocial maturity, and development of values.

"Intellectual development" for group care and own home children was tested by means of

²⁷ Yehuda Amir, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

the Raven Progressive Matrix test. Israeli findings were derived by comparing Raven scores for newly admitted kibbutz youth group children with long-stay children admitted to the kibbutz in previous years. Although the long-stay kibbutz children showed a Raven test average 21.5 points better than the new arrivals this otherwise significant finding is inconclusive since the two groups were incomparable; the newly admitted children were generally of Middle-Eastern and culturally deprived backgrounds while the long-stay group were, as Wolins himself noted, "much brighter children admitted in earlier years . . . (thus) the comparison may be improper."²⁸

A second more reliable study of the kibbutz' impact on intellectual development involved retesting the newly admitted group two years later; in that study an average group gain of 8.07 points was obtained on the Raven test, however, and this was pointedly not noted as being a statistically significant gain. Wolins' conclusion concerning intellectual development was that "intelligence of children living in a variety of group settings and over relatively long periods of time is generally equivalent to that of normal children residing with their parents." In other words, group care does not harm cognitive development.

"Psychological maturity" was measured by "mean stage of responses" and "positive-negative tones" obtained from children on 8 TAT cards. Reliability (concensus) between a clinical psychologist coder and an education student coder was 69 percent for the "stage" responses and 93 percent for the "tone" responses. Wolins found that in most instances the mean stage of responses is not significantly different for the subjects and their roughly age equivalent controls.²⁹ He added, however, that when statistical differences did occur "they invariably favor the group care children . . . and . . . especially on four TAT cards the kibbutz group scored higher than controls . . ." He also found that "the percentages of "positive tone" favor the children in group

²⁸ Martin Wolins, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

care whenever a distinction does exist. Nevertheless, the search for statistically significant, clear-cut differences between the comparison groups provided inconclusive results. Wolins then had a clinical psychologist rate 50 pairs of home and group care children from Austria, Poland, and Israel on a five item rating scale (level of cognition, degree of egocentrism, extent of manifest conflict, social conformity, and relationships with male and female sex peers) resulting in a global measure of "maturity." Agreement between the two psychologists on their global rating of maturity was 79 percent. Next, the psychologists' global rating for children in group care was compared, "whenever feasible," with staff judgements. Although the percentage of agreement between psychologist and staff is not given, Wolins noted that "the correspondence is highly revealing and encouraging." Using the psychologists' global rating of maturity, Wolins found institutional children in Israel and Austria about equally mature" as their home-care children counterparts. Kibbutz youth children were found to be significantly more mature (P.02) than home-care children, and Polish home-care children tended to be (P.07) more mature than Polish institutional children. Assessing both the projective tests and the global ratings of maturity Wolins concluded cautiously that "group care *need not necessarily* result in marked psychosocial handicaps."³¹

"Development of values" for home-care versus group-care children was studied by comparing the degree of agreement between the children's values and the values of adults in their settings (i.e., only adults in group settings were used as criterion groups). Values of both the adults and the children were obtained by the means of a sixty item value-inventory scale composed of five sub-scale components: orientation to others, controlled achievement, competitive achievement, individualism, and detachment. In each country the mean value score for children in group-care and home-

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

care settings was compared with the mean value score for adults in the group settings. Wolins concluded that "values of children in group care, seem to move into some conformity with expectations (of adults) . . . Kibbutz youth group children tend to draw nearer . . . to kibbutz-born children and to adult expectation . . . Austrian Kinderdorf residents appear much like children living at home . . . The other group settings have made some, although apparently less impact on the values of children in their care." On closer inspection the "tendency" noted for kibbutz group children to take on values of kibbutz adults is rather small and statistically insignificant for every one of the value sub-scales. For the long-stay kibbutz children, where one would expect the most success in identification with kibbutz values, there is only a 4.21 mean difference on "other orientation" (kibbutz children are more other-oriented than adults); a -.13 difference on "controlled achievement" a +.06 mean difference on "competitive achievement," a +.25 mean difference on "individualism," and a -.40 mean difference on "detachment." Furthermore, analysis of the data shows that the home children have values more similar to those of kibbutz adults than to those of long-term kibbutz children in three out of five of the value areas studied (-.17 on other-orientation, +.10 on controlled achievement, and +.15 on individualism), home children are more competitive oriented (-.25) and more detached (-.65) than kibbutz adults.³³

The findings from Wolins' research do not show significant advantages of group care (even in powerful environments such as the kibbutz) over home-care on any of the three variables he studied. The study itself is greatly weakened by the lack of tighter controls for the groups compared and especially by the lack of more precise information concerning the characteristics of and the methods used for selecting the home-care groups in the four countries studied. Wolins felt that his findings

³² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³³ *Ibid.*, Table 5, p. 49.

refuted Bowlby's expectation that "older institutional children would show unhappiness and very unfavorable social attitudes," but in all of the three studies of Youth Aliyah children, including Wolins, *no one* studied the child's "happiness," choosing to relate to him more as an object than as a person with emotional as well as educational needs. The most that we can say about group-care in Israel at this stage is that it gives very mixed results, and even that statement must remain a tentative one until more conclusive research comes along.

Perhaps the major trap in research on group-care in Israel is in the tendency to think in terms of universal or dichotomous solutions for a wide range of family and child welfare needs. Because of the frequently value-laden and ideological approaches to child care in Israel attempts to widen the service spectrum have often been neglected. With time, as governmental services begin reaching into local municipalities and the quality of public education and welfare improves, the issue of institutional care versus other programs for deprived children will be diluted considerably. It is in this light that large educational institutions such as those operated by Youth Aliyah and the Histadrut will eventually begin to plan for the future.

One promising, but little known placement resource for dependent children in Israel is the kibbutz foster home (as differentiated from the kibbutz youth group or *chevrat noar*). The Recha Freier Agency³⁴ has attempted to develop an innovative kibbutz foster family model, but has made relatively little headway due to its lack of adequate professional staff and the lack of coordination between the kibbutzim and the social agencies referring children for placement.

In summing up this discussion on the kibbutz as a placement resource for children,

³⁴ Recha Freier, *Let the Children Come*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961. See also: G. Rosner and E. Jaffe, "The Kibbutz as a Placement Resource for Dependent Children," *Mibifnim*, (July, 1968), pp. 210-217, (in Hebrew).

and the disproportionate interest of foreign researchers in this particular setting, the comment made by Kraft (1967) is most appropriate:

The non-Israeli specialist can fall into a number of traps in trying to grasp the kibbutz experience. The first is to envision the kibbutz as a kind of primitive-idealistic democratic enclave where the sophistication operates only on the spiritual and intellectual level while daily life is stripped of its rat-race elements and people automatically accept the virtues of simple fare and stark equality—a sort of spiritualized welfarism engrafted on a Greek city-state. The second trap is to comprehend the kibbutz as a movement of self-conscious sociological pioneers, only incidentally Jewish, who see themselves as deliberately evolving the prototypical community of the future. There is still a third trap, to think of the kibbutz as the inspirational social force of Israel, the innovative front and rural super-ego of the state.

We can avoid these traps and we will be on safer ground if we think of the kibbutzim simply as advanced rural settlements, with a highly cultured and politically alert population. The settlers are not utopians and not quite an elite group, although they do harbor in their midst an extraordinary nucleus of dedicated human beings, the now aging "founding fathers" and their immediate disciples. The kibbutz movement is now about sixty years old. Soon a fourth generation of kibbutzniks will attain adult membership in the settlements. We can take this to mean that the experimental stage is over and that the kibbutz movement has achieved stability and relative permanence. At the same time, however, the kibbutzim are gradually losing prominence, status, and power in Israel society, since the mystique of kibbutz pioneering continues to grow less attractive to youth, and the kibbutz membership, while stable, continues to diminish relative to the general Israel population growth.

Infant Homes

Nearly twenty institutions for infants, some of them housing up to two hundred babies and

toddlers, exist in Israel. Epstein's survey in 1950 of seventeen institutions for infants pointed out the serious lack of individual care, the lack of social work and psychological staff to prevent institution overstay and abandonment by parents, and the accent on physical nurturing of the infants without caring properly for their emotional needs.³⁵ The author's subsequent study of a large Jerusalem baby home found the picture described by Epstein much the same nineteen years later.³⁶

In an attempt to create practical changes, the author undertook a twenty-month demonstration study in a baby institution to assess the gap in services for children in institutional care, to prevent institutional "overstay," to co-ordinate and involve workers from social agencies with institutional social services, and to develop direct counseling by institutional social workers for the parents of institutionalized infants as part of long range planning for those families. These goals were all implemented during the course of the study. In all, thirty-three "hard core" cases were treated by the research staff. These were children whose parents had apparently lost interest in them by not visiting and who had been left in the institution for a very long time. At the conclusion of the study 42.1 percent of the thirty-three children were either returned home or headed for return home; 43.8 percent were in, or headed for foster care, and 14.1 percent remained in the institution or were moved to another institution. The principal (86 percent) reasons for children remaining in the institution were related to home situations wherein the mother was chronically ill, divorced or engaged in criminal behavior. Professionally trained social workers and an extensive number of contacts with the family were significantly (P.05) associated with the child's being returned home or being placed in

³⁵ Yehuda Epstein, "The Care of Babies and Infants in Closed Institutions in Israel," *Megamot*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (1950), pp. 347-364.

³⁶ Eliezer Jaffe, *De-Institutionalization of Babies: A Case Report of an Unsuccessful Attempt at Planned Change*, Academion, Jerusalem, 1969.

a foster home. Unfortunately, upon conclusion of the demonstration period the institution did not retain the social services established during the study and reverted to its pre-research functions. The executive body of the institution did not see the institution as a multi-faceted social service agency, but merely as a medically-oriented stop-gap domicile for infants.

Research on institutionalized babies by Cohen-Raz has confirmed earlier evidence of poor psycho-motor ability, apathy, and sensory deprivation found in similar studies of institutionalized and non-institutionalized infants elsewhere.³⁷ Despite this evidence, private philanthropy abroad continues to support Israeli institutions for babies and the prestigious Israeli voluntary organizations which operate baby homes have met no appreciable interference from government welfare agencies responsible for licensing institutions and standards of care. One might suspect that public welfare agencies, which refer a good portion of the children admitted to the baby homes, may be less dissatisfied with the infant homes than they claim to be. At any rate, private philanthropy's independent role in child welfare and the lack of a national, integrated master plan for public and private services in this field have resulted in a patch-quilt network of public and private services with much overlapping between them.

Foster Home Care

Within the range of child placement settings utilized in Israel is foster home care. In 1964-1965, about 16 percent of the 6,015 children placed away from home were placed in foster homes.³⁸ This was a large increase over earlier years when the foster placement rate was 5 percent of all children placed and

³⁷ Reuven Cohen-Raz, "A Clinical Motor Test for Nursery School Age," School of Education, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1968.

³⁸ Ministry of Social Welfare, *Children Placed Out of Their Own Homes, 1964-1965*, op. cit. p. 9.

³⁹ Ministry of Social Welfare, *Welfare Services for the Young Child*, Jerusalem, 1967, p. 5.

the change represents both the rising standard of living in Israel as well as a policy change concerning the place of foster care as a welfare service. Silberthal noted that in 1958 only 222 children were placed by government welfare services in foster homes, primarily due to poor economic conditions, but also because of the feeling among senior welfare staff that natural parents would not accept the threat of a substitute family, and that "older children, educationally difficult children required professional treatment."⁴⁰ The author,⁴¹ Epstein,⁴² and Ragolsky,⁴³ however, mentioned the need for expanding foster care as well as own home care as alternatives to institutional care. Research by Gold, *et al*, found that higher board rates (or foster parent salaries) would greatly enlarge the number of available foster homes without endangering the quality of their service.⁴⁴

As a result of these studies, as well as the rise in living standards and the recent increase in availability of professional manpower, the number of foster care placements has tripled in recent years. There is still a tendency now and then to dichotomize between foster care and group care, but as other social services have begun to develop such as day care, homemaker service, and family counseling, foster care and institution care are becoming accepted as only two of many potential resources for families in

⁴⁰ Chana Silberthal, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-208.

⁴¹ Eliezer Jaffe, "Child Welfare in a Developing Country: Dimensions of Foster Family Care in Israel," *Saad*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (March 1969), pp. 24-29, (in Hebrew), Republished in *International Child Welfare Review*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (May 1969), pp. 15-23.

⁴² Yehuda Epstein, *op. cit.*

⁴³ S. Ragolsky, "Children in Foster Families in the Jerusalem District," *Saad*, Vol. 1 (1957), pp. 107-109, (in Hebrew). See also: Judith Livnat, "Social Background Requiring Institution Placement for Infants," *Saad*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1964), pp. 51-53.

⁴⁴ Tamar Gold, *et al. Motivation and Eligibility of Families Who are Candidates for Foster Parenthood*, Paul Baerwald, School of Social Work, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1965, (in Hebrew).

trouble. The development of new services, however, hinges on the flow of funds, both from the private and public sector, away from institution care to additional forms of care. For Israel, one factor which might help existing volunteer agencies and philanthropists move in this direction could be the establishment of a University-operated non-profit professional child care agency which would demonstrate varied child and family care methods, evaluate results in a controlled way, and serve as a research and clinical training laboratory for child and family welfare personnel. Such an agency could operate as a catalyst for change and would by its nature confront existing public and private agencies with the need for program evaluation and innovation. Because of the need to act under pressure of continued immigration, during the past 20 years relatively little inventory has been taken of what we have learned during this period and how this knowledge can serve us in the future. As pressures have eased, a number of the child welfare agencies have begun to reexamine their programs, study post-facto what has been accomplished, and test empirically some of the wisdom and knowledge gathered thus far.

Adoption

The number of court hearings involving adoption of children in Israel has grown steadily over the past years, from 44 cases in 1950 to 257 in 1967, while the number of children under 19 years of age increased only 1.9 times during the same period.⁴⁵ In contrast to other countries such as the United States and England, Israel has more adoptive parent applicants than children available for adoption.

An analysis of data from the files of the Israel Ministry of Social Welfare⁴⁶ showed that 30.6 percent of the natural mothers of

⁴⁵ Eliezer Jaffe, *Adoption of Children in Israel*, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1969, p. 5., (mimeo.)

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

adopted children were under the age of 19, 50.9 percent were between 19 and 25 years old, and the remainder were over 25 years old. The majority, 63.1 percent, of the natural mothers were of Middle-Eastern (Sephardi) origin, 28.1 percent of European-American (Ashkenazi) origin, and 8.8 percent came from various geographical origins. Most of the children (88.1 percent) adopted by non-relatives between 1952 and 1967 were born out-of-wedlock, and there seems to be a strong positive correlation between the increase in the number of adoptions each year and the increase in illegitimate births. Only 8 percent of the natural mothers of adopted children were married, 10 percent were divorcees, and 2 percent were either separated or widowed.

In contrast to the natural mothers of adopted children, 67.5 percent of the adopting parents in 1966 came from European or American background and only 22.2 percent came from Middle-Eastern background. In other words, the dominant pattern in Israeli adoptions is one of Sephardi children being adopted by Ashkenazi parents. This is an interesting finding since the coloring of the Sephardi child, as well as other features, often differs from that of Ashkenazi children. Yet Israeli adoptive parents seem not to find this as great a barrier to accepting the child as is the case with interethnic adoptive applicants in other countries (Fanshel, 1957;⁴⁷ Schapiro, 1957;⁴⁸ Woods and Lancaster, 1962⁴⁹). There has been some recent interest in theoretical research in Israel on Kirk's hypothesis concerning the adoptive parents' acceptance or rejection of difference as a major determinant

⁴⁷ David Fanshel, *A Study in Negro Adoption*, New York: Child Welfare League of America, 1957.

⁴⁸ Michael Schapiro, *A Study of Adoption Practice: Adoption of Children with Special Needs*, Vol. 3, New York: Child Welfare League of America, April, 1957.

⁴⁹ F.J. Woods and A.C. Lancaster, "Cultural Factors in Negro Adoptive Parenthood," *Social Work*, October, 1962, pp. 14-21.

of successful adoptive placement.⁵⁰ Israeli adoptive parents' apparent insensitivity to color and social background of the adopted children may be related to the parents' awareness of the common historical antecedents of the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities in Israel, and their very close religious ties, nationalistic sentiments or desperation may also be factors. The Israeli situation in regard to inter-ethnic adoption provides an excellent research laboratory for testing Kirk's hypothesis as to which adoptions succeed and other theoretical issues such as those recently raised anew by Jensen⁵¹ concerning the influence of heredity and environment on intelligence.

Adoption of children by relatives in 1966 accounted for 41 percent of all adoptions that year, while 59 percent of the children adopted in 1966 were adopted by non-relatives. England's study⁵² of a random sample of 82 adoptions occurring during 1964 revealed that of the 33 adoptions by relatives studies, 66.9 percent involved children adopted by the spouse of the child's natural parent, usually a widowed or divorced mother. An additional 15.2 percent of the adoptions by relatives involved children orphaned from one or both parents where grandparents or another relative initiated the adoption. Another not unusual phenomenon (in the Middle-East) concerning extended kinship ties was found in England's study; 12.1 percent of the adoptions by relatives involved situations where the natural parents "gave" one of their children to a childless uncle or aunt of the adoptee.

⁵⁰ David Kirk, *Shared Fate*, Glencoe: Free Press, 1964.

⁵¹ Arthur R. Jensen, "How Much Can We Boost I.Q. and Scholastic Achievement?", *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 339, No. 11 (Winter, 1969), pp. 1-123.

⁵² Yitzchak England, *Adoption of Children in Israel: The Implementation of the Law.*, Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1969, pp. 36, (in Hebrew).

Without going into details concerning the Israeli adoption law⁵³ it is important to note that all Israeli adoptions, public, private, relative and non-relative, require a written report and recommendation to the district court by a social worker. Data available for 1966 showed that 59 percent of all adoptions in Israel were private (i.e. agreements for placement reached without involving a public welfare agency), while 41 percent of the adoptions were planned and carried out by the Ministry of Social Welfare or by the welfare departments of the three large municipalities (Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa). As the supply and demand for adoptive children increases, the municipal and national adoption services have begun to look at ways to coordinate their activities and increase cooperation between them.

In contrast to institutional care, government adoption services are highly personalized. For example, when the adopted child reaches adulthood and can by law request access to his case record, each case is reviewed to determine whether the material should first be presented orally to the adoptee by the Ministry of Social Welfare chief adoption officer to soften any shocks which the record may hold concerning the child's past. This is an innovative feature which typifies most adoption service in Israel.

Two areas connected with adoption that have been somewhat controversial in Israel recently and which require further study concern services to girls pregnant out-of-wedlock and services to unwed mothers who choose to keep their child. While some claim that there is a distinct tendency by public welfare agencies to counsel pregnant girls towards relinquishing the child, this allegation has not been clearly documented. On the other hand, there does not yet exist a well-developed, coordinated social service program to follow-up and financially and emotionally support

⁵³ *Adoption of Children Law*, Sefer Hachukim, No. 317, August, 1960, (in Hebrew).

unwed mothers who opt to keep their babies. The number of women for whom these follow-up services are needed is not known. Many welfare workers believe that the number is negligible because of the surreptitious accessibility to abortion in Israel,⁵⁴ however, it is quite possible that given such follow-up services more women would choose to give birth rather than to have an abortion. As yet there are no homes or shelters for pregnant girls in Israel as exist in other countries, presumably because of the lack of need for these settings. Most of the girls who need to be away from home during the pregnancy are placed in "foster homes" supervised by public welfare adoption agencies.

Field Studies on Dependent Children

In recent years there has been a sharp increase in the number of empirical research studies undertaken concerning dependent children in Israel. Most of these studies have tended to concentrate on hypotheses related to group care. In this particular sphere Israeli research has isolated variables significantly associated with differential placement outcomes, e.g. children who act-up, live with a stepmother or live alone with a father, and who are assigned to non-professional case-workers tend to be placed in institutions.⁵⁵ In another study, the author found significant value differences among members of various professions, (i.e. social workers, public health nurses, students, etc.) regarding their selection of intervention strategies for families in

⁵⁴ Roberto Biachi, et al, *Childbirth and Prevention of Childbirth Among Women in the Tel Aviv-Yaffo Area*, Mifal Hashichpul, Jerusalem (circa 1960), pp. 3-4, 9-10. See also: R. Bachi and H. Matras, "Contraception and Induced Abortions Among Jewish Maternity Cases in Israel," *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, Vol. 40 (April, 1962), pp. 207-229.

⁵⁵ Eliezer Jaffe, "Correlates of Different Placement Outcome for Dependent Children in Israel," *Social Service Review*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (December, 1967), pp. 390-401.

crisis.⁵⁶ A number of studies focus on attitudes and values of staff members in institutions for dependent children. These studies revealed great ambiguity among institutional directors concerning the functions of social workers in institutions,⁵⁷ divergence between certain staff practices and formally avowed goals of institutional care,⁵⁸ and staff impressions that younger children (ages 8 through 10) experience more difficulty in adjusting to institutional life.⁵⁹

As Israeli child welfare agencies begin to exploit research as a tool for policymaking, for quality control, and for public support, there will be a corresponding increase in the knowledge accumulated in this field. The opening of four University level schools of social work during the past decade in Jerusalem, Ramat Gan, Haifa and Tel Aviv will undoubtedly result in the availability of trained researchers for child welfare during the years ahead.

Summary

Child welfare programs for dependent children in Israel tend to concentrate on institutional care, primarily because of the availability for this type of facility as compared to others and because of the historical respectability associated with group education and ideology-orientated group life.

⁵⁶ Eliezer Jaffe, "Professional Background and the Utilization of Institutional Care of Children as a Solution to Family Crisis," *Applied Social Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (January, 1970), (in press).

⁵⁷ Rivka Iruş, et al. *Definition of the Social Work Function in Closed Institutions for Children: The Actual and the Desired*, School of Social Work, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1964, pp. 1-36, (in Hebrew).

⁵⁸ Eliezer Jaffe, *Staff Values and Practices as Barriers to Child Care Goals*, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1969, pp. 1-22, (mimeo).

⁵⁹ Research Division and Child Care Dept., *Children in Long-Term Institution Care*, Ministry of Social Welfare, Jerusalem, August, 1963, pp. 13-14.

Recent trends show a decrease in the use of institutions in favor of a broader range of social services based in the local community and in regional centers.

Two distinct welfare systems or networks of services operate in Israel, the governmental (municipal and national) and the voluntary or private. Foreign philanthropy, coming to the aid of indigenous welfare groups, have tended to determine basic Israeli child welfare policy and the dominant direction of services by establishing major organizations and programs around ad hoc needs as they perceived them. As the nation's needs changed private Israeli child-caring organizations responded to them in varying ways, depending on the organization's degree of ideological entrenchment, financial resources, and the penetration of information about child-care developments. Ironically, in Israel's socialist-orientated state where master planning and national coordination of resources are highly developed, this is not the case with child welfare where the national government has traditionally been relatively passive and laissez-faire towards private welfare enterprises. Lacking government long-range direction and a well conceptualized strategy for integrating the public and private welfare systems, each has had to find its own way over the past 20 years, its own resources, its own manpower, its own clients, and its own practice knowledge.

Private child welfare has gravitated towards a concentration of areas of service that are visible, that are not related to asocial or deviant behaviour (including mental retardation, illegitimacy and delinquency), and that are philanthropically "marketable" (e.g. babies, orphans, immigrants, etc.). The public child welfare system has picked up the residual services concentrating on such areas as income maintenance and services to delinquent, retarded, handicapped, and chronically ill youth. Development of homemaker services, family counselling, foster home care, detention centers, work with street gangs, etc., have all remained the primary responsibility of the public agencies. (During the past few years

Israeli parents of retarded and crippled children have organized their own organizations, and begun to federate them to pool resources, in order to spur public services and to fill gaps in services, but the large voluntary women's organizations have pointedly avoided these categories of children). Certainly there is some value in the public-private division of labor and in the harnessing of diverse resources, but the price for this has been compartmentalization of services and of client groups, differential quality of services to select population groups, and an uncoordinated, unconceptualized national welfare plan. It seems to the author that one of the most important goals for the next decade or two in child welfare should be the planned integration of the private and public welfare systems. One of the steps in this direction could be the establishment of a National Social Planning Council located in the Prime Minister's Office, for the purpose of advising the Prime Minister and other groups about alternative national directions for welfare services in Israel. All major welfare agencies, public and voluntary, as well as universities, would be represented on the Council. The Council could be sub-divided into divisions according to areas of service such as Income Maintenance, Family and Child Welfare, Corrections, Medical and Rehabilitation, and Leisure Time Activity services. Each division would assess issues related to its sphere of work, give sub-committees special assignments, commission research studies, and make recommendations to the Council. Each division would send elected representatives to the Council Executive Committee where the total welfare picture could be reviewed resulting in policy recommendations, position papers, and research documentation which would be forwarded to the Prime Minister. If nothing else, the Council would provide a forum for communication, and sharing of information, and perhaps for joint undertakings between the various member agencies. Failing a national organization, local public and private agencies could use a similar model.

As the country industrializes and urbanizes and is faced with rapid change, the ability of its welfare services to meet these changes is crucial. Child welfare in Israel has come a long way since Henrietta Szold. We may now have

to liberate ourselves somewhat from some of the practices and prejudices of the past three decades in order to move on to the decades ahead.



Artists: Shimon Keter - David Kozach